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Dear Jennifer Donnelly,

I have always loved words. Long words, short words, any words that I could fish out of the endlessly flowing river of stories and bat around all day long like a cat toying with a trout. I lived through words and happiness, and I dreamed, that in time, I could make the lifeless words floating around in my head live through me.

Still, I struggled with my dream. I jotted down sentences and openings to stories on paper. Each day I would strive to find the magical door into the world of words that would let me play with their oh so fragile bodies made of printers' ink and paper. But as the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, maybe even years, I began to lose hope. Every now and then I would create something beautiful, but I still wasn't able to make the words dance across the page for me.

Then, I read your book, *A Northern Light*. Mattie's heart, filled to the brim with her secret desire to go to college and become a writer, mirrored my own heart so clearly that I felt a deep and unexplainable compassion towards your sixteen-year-old character. I was inspired by Mattie's braveness at leaving her family and friends to go to New York City. Especially knowing what her father would say when he realized she had gone and left him with even less hands to help him on their farm. If Mattie could find the courage inside her to become a writer, then so could I.

You would think that one little strand of hope couldn't accomplish more than one little task. Yet that was what drove Mattie on. One little strand of hope. Mattie said that hope was the worst sin. I would hardly call it that. A better name for it would be "The Best Source for Courage."

Just as Mattie found inspiration in Grace Brown's letters, so I found strength in your book. Even if I have not yet found the door into the world of words, I have found the will and courage to keep searching. I will make the words live through me, even if it takes some time to encourage them. I can almost see them dancing now.

Sincerely,
Hannah Soyer

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