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Dear Tamora Pierce,

In most of my life, I've spent it hiding. Crawling into a corner to let everyone else do the leading. After starting your book, I was able to crawl out of the corner a little. And as I read on, I inched out bit by bit, out of the corner I was mercilessly shoved into by the horror of facing one of the things I feared most. Being a leader that many people looked up to.

For too long I had relied completely on born leaders, as if they were vital organs. I was supported by them, I lived on them, and I survived because of them. Whenever there was that little (or in my case big) problem to be taken care of, all you had to do was blink, and it was fixed. Until everyone stepped out of the house for a few minutes to run errands and it was just left with my little sister, baby sister, little brother and I. That's when I was forced to make a stand or run and hide.

All was fine until my baby sister sticks a piece of paper in her mouth. NO, NO, NO! I love my baby sister. She's only six months old; she hasn't gotten a chance to live! I WILL not allow her to – I left the sentence hanging as I realized the reality of this all. I was in charge now! Everyone was looking to me to take a stand.

The ordeal eventually ended in body, but not in mind and soul. Every day I relived my shocking realization that I had had to do something. I HAD TO DO SOMETHING. What would have happened if I had allowed that sentence, that dreaded sentence, to be completed because of my fear? For weeks I fell through battles in my mind. Battles I couldn't understand, questions unanswered. Until I picked up your book, *Squire*.

As Kel becomes the second stage in becoming a knight, she's faced with many difficult instances. Ones in which she had to become the leader she sought to become. She had to make a choice when the spindren attacked her friends. SHE HAD TO DO SOMETHING. And as I realized that Kel and I both had to stand up and make an important choice, one she too was afraid of, a choice that would outline the way life went on, I began to come out of my shell I had willingly let wrap around me. Keep me safe from the outside world and the question that fought to get in. What would have happened? All that began to vanish, just as it had sprung up, as I let myself fall deeper and deeper into the soul of your story.

So as I live my life on, I look at the world differently. Much differently than I had before. I was a leader, whether I liked it or not. In fact, everyone is a leader, they just become one at different times. The time for me had come, and boy was I glad. Because now I had the answer to my question of what would have happened. My baby sister would have died, just like Kel's friends would have died, had she not been a leader. Me been a leader. And I can live with this answer, because I had made the right choice. A choice I am now proud of.

Sincerely,

Belinda Mahama

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