

Dear Chris Colfer,

There once was a time when I believed nothing good could ever come from reading a book about fairy tales. That if I read a fairy tale I was weak, I was a social outcast with no life ahead of me. I could not have been more wrong. We were once all young kids and we all read the same books, the ones with the fairy Godmother giving Cinderella until midnight to dance the night away with a prince (a pretty great curfew that I do not have). Where Aurora fell asleep and was awoken hundreds of years later by yet another prince, where Snow White travels the woods and is tricked by her evil stepmother into eating a poisonous apple. These worlds seem perfect, with princesses being in peril and yet having someone to come and save them, it seemed too impossible, too fake.

If you were to ask me four years ago what I thought of fairy tales I would've laughed in your face and told you they were high tales of things not possible. After much reading, and discovering that you had written a series of books about fairy tales, I was questioning at first, knowing that it was not really my kind of reading material. I read *The Land of Stories* anyway, and I was lost in the kingdoms of the princesses and princes. I discovered that our world is not perfect, we make mistakes every single day, and let me tell you something, so do Queens and Kings. I no longer found that reading fairy tales was for children, in fact, it's something I enjoy doing because it pulls you into a world where it is okay to stand out and it's okay to be different.

Before I read *The Land of Stories*, I was an outcast, sitting in the back of the classroom writing about worlds in my notebook, because every day I was bullied because I was different. If 16 year old me were to talk to 12 year old me, I would've told younger me that yes, the world is full of cruelty and jealousy and hatred, but if you search in the darkness, if you push through it, you will find your light. Around 2014 when I read your books, *The Land of Stories*, I may have seemed like a weirdo sitting there reading about twins falling into the fairy world and being the grandkids of the Fairy Godmother. But in that world, I felt okay, I finally felt like there was something to be happy about.

After much time I transferred schools, I left my prison and I formed my own world, one where I would not hide and back down. Now my personality is worn on my arm, you know what kind of person I am when you first meet me. "Every driven person comes from a mountain of pain they wish to keep hidden." (*The Land of Stories*) I owe this all to you Chris, who fought everyday against stereotypes, rose above those who brought you down, and not once faltered in your beliefs.

Without *The Land of Stories*, I'd still be sitting in the back desk, trying to blend into the walls, trying not to be seen. It's like you say "There's nothing wrong with you. There's a lot wrong with the world you live in." The world may want to drag us down, but we will fly above them all, because we believe we are all equal, and nothing can destroy the love we spread to others.

Sincerely,
Danika Firth