

Dear Julie Anne Peters,

Every teenager goes through phases; phases with our style and our preferences in general. Sometimes we even start to question our orientation. Maybe we'll notice that the girl across from us is hot, even though we, too, are girls. That's what happened to me. I was no longer looking at a girl and thinking, 'Oh, I like her top.' I was looking at her and wondering about going on a date with her. I didn't go shout it from the mountaintops, but I did look for a good book to hide myself in. While scouring the library I fell upon your book: *Keeping You a Secret*.

I was really able to connect with Holland, how she was ready for the normal life: a girl meets a guy, they fall in love, have sex, and get married, not necessarily in that order. She had Seth, her boyfriend, then suddenly she met Cece and her life changed. Her thoughts shifted and she learned about a new side of herself. I'm able to connect with that, the feeling that your world's been turned upside down and things aren't the way they should be. I was exploring a new side of my life and mind the same way she was.

As you wrote, "It's about getting past that question of what's wrong with me, to knowing there's nothing wrong, that you were born this way. You're a normal person and a beautiful person and you should be proud of who you are. You deserve to live and live with dignity and show people your pride." It's startling, realizing that you're out of the normal, even if that's not uncommon. It's terrifying and people can be cruel about it. But as I read this book, I knew I could be strong just like Cece and Holland were. It reminded me that being myself wasn't a crime; that it made me unique not different.

After I finished *Keeping You a Secret*, I made an effort to find other books like it. I read more of your books, such as *Far from Xanadu*, *Luna*, and *Define "Normal"*, as well as books written by others with similar content, for example, *Empress of the World* by Sarah Ryan. I love how these books make me feel like I have friends in familiar situations. Even though they're just book characters, they seem real. Sometimes their fictional actions give me the confidence that I didn't have, to do things that I otherwise never would have done. Like the confidence to turn this letter in to my teacher.

Your Literary Believer,
Sam Smith