

WONDER STRUCK

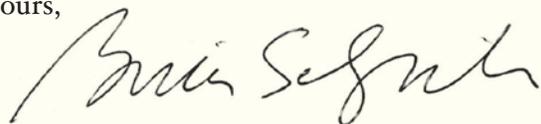
Dear Reader,

While I was working on *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, I happened to watch a documentary on TV called *Through Deaf Eyes*, about the history of Deaf culture. There were two moments in the broadcast that particularly struck me. One was a description of the transition from silent to sound movies in 1927, and what a blow it was to the deaf community. Before 1927, deaf people could enjoy film along with the rest of the hearing world, but after the transition to sound they were cut off from this form of popular culture. I had never thought about this before. Later in the documentary, there was an interview with a young deaf man who was raised by hearing parents. He talked about how they'd learned sign language and taught it to him. But it wasn't until he grew up and went to college, where he met other deaf people, that he felt for the first time like he'd found his "community." He discovered deafness wasn't just a condition but a long and rich *culture* with its own unique language and stories. I became intrigued by the idea that sometimes we find our heritage or the place where we belong, outside our biological family.

Along with a deep fascination with museums and a love of New York, cinema, and the theater, I brought in ideas from *Through Deaf Eyes* and began to create the stories that would become *Wonderstruck*. One of my goals was to figure out how to adapt the structure I'd created for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which tells a single story with words and pictures. Over the course of nearly three years, *Wonderstruck* evolved into a book that tells two separate stories, one in words, which takes place in 1977, and the other in pictures, which takes place fifty years earlier in 1927. (It also has over one hundred *more* drawings than *Hugo Cabret*!) The two stories weave back and forth and ultimately come together. Each story echoes and informs the other one; so in essence, you will find yourself reading three books—the one with words, the one with pictures, and the one created by their intersection.

Wonderstruck was a joy, a challenge, and a puzzle to put together. I hope you enjoy meeting Ben and Rose and joining them on their thrilling, dangerous, and unexpected adventures in New York City.

Yours,



BRIAN SELZNICK



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