



Finalist speech for *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*

Rae Carson

I was a library kid.

When I was eight years old, I asked my teacher for the hall pass so I could use the bathroom. But I didn't go to the bathroom. Instead, I sneaked like a ninja to the school library. They'd just received a new Nancy Drew book, and by all that was holy, I was not going to let someone else get it first. But *all* the books in the new shipment were so shiny and delicious that I lost track of time. When I finally returned to class, my teacher gave me the stink-eye and asked what had taken so long. I told her I was constipated.

When I was eleven, I read my way through the middle school library in approximately three-point-five seconds. So I asked my mother if I could visit the glorious, treasure-filled public library after school. It was a tremendous journey for a shy eleven-year-old, but I was *The Girl With a Plan*. Using a map I'd purchased at a gas station with my own allowance money, I showed my mom exactly how I would get there, how very close it was to the police station (which meant I was *totally safe*), and pointed out the bus stop that would eventually get me home. It was with a hint of pride and a lot of alarm that she acquiesced.

When I was thirteen, on the very last day of the eighth grade, my school librarian gave me a book as a graduation gift. The cover was cracked and the pages were falling out, but it had my name on it. Yes, someone with *my name* had written a book. And when I held it in my hand, the heavens opened, light poured forth, and a choir of angels sang hallelujah, because

I knew it was everything I ever wanted. Not just a book with my name on it, but one as violently loved as the library's single copy of *The Secret of the Old Clock*.

Many years and many libraries later, my dream has come true. Thank you to my editor, the brilliant Martha Mihalick, my steadfast agent, Holly Root, my publisher, Virginia Duncan, and all the amazing people at Greenwillow and HarperCollins for giving this library kid a book with her name on it.

And thank you to the 2012 Morris Committee and librarians everywhere for making sure its cover becomes tattered and its pages torn.