

Dear Ms. Cynthia Lord,

Up until I was in fifth grade, when I bought the rubber duck-covered book titled *Rules*, I thought that there was nobody quite like my autistic brother (name of brother). I thought that I was the only girl lucky enough to have a (name of brother) in her life. I thought that there was nobody who would be able to say that they were going through the same things as (name of brother), or as me. But after reading *Rules*, I can understand that there *are* people like (name of brother) with autism. I understood that there are other girls who have a (name of brother). In *Rules* their names were David and Catherine.

Catherine was a 12-year-old girl who was happy to have her brother, and yet she sometimes couldn't understand him. Sometimes Catherine just wanted her brother David to be "normal". I know that (name of brother) is wonderful just the way he is, but I, too, would sometimes wish for that typical brother who everyone I knew took for granted. The brother who I could joke around with; who would hang out with me like my close friend, sometimes my enemy; and who could even understand me like we were one person. But with (name of brother) and me things were different. I never

could figure out exactly what to do. How do I make him smile or laugh? Do I truly understand him? I didn't know how to answer those questions before.

I identified David as the charming eight-year-old with a wonderful smile and passion for the video store. David, with his perfectly wonderful and unique *Frog and Toad* language used to communicate with Catherine, was the fictional version of (name of brother). But (name of brother), though he shared David's smile, has sports as his hobby. And (name of brother) does not use *Frog and Toad* as his sibling code, (name of brother) uses sports. Reading *Rules* was like reading a biography on my brother and me. It was enchanting.

When I met David, I pictured (name of brother)'s smiling face. (name of brother) would try to go to every Boston sporting event, as David loved the video store. (name of brother) can recite the final call of the 2004 World Series when the Red Sox won it for the first time in 86 years, just as David could quote a line from *Frog and Toad* like it was the alphabet. As for me, I would try to go over to my friend's house, rather than them coming to mine - as Catherine did - so (name of brother)'s outbursts would be hidden inside of

my house. Eventually, Catherine realized – and *I* finally realized – that who my brother is makes him special, and he deserves to be loved for that.

After *Rules* I can take a glance at (name of brother)'s face and know exactly what he is thinking. I can see when he wants to stop doing homework and watch the Bruins, Celtics, or Red Sox. I can see how he would do anything to be “normal.” But what I *really* see now is how (name of brother) is not the typical brother I once fantasized over - he is more. Thank you, Ms. Lord. Without you, there would be no *Rules*, and without *Rules*, the puzzle that was once my brother may have never been solved.

Sincerely,

(writer's name)