

HOLIDAY HOUSE



Dear Librarian,

Just a Story is my love letter to your library. I've loved libraries since I was five. My gram took me every week. We carted home stacks of books.

Fox in Socks was the first one I learned to read, but **On Beyond Zebra** was my favorite for its parade of monsters whose names began with Dr. Seuss's twisty imaginary letters. I spent hours inventing my own alphabets and drawing new monster menageries. I couldn't get enough. "Do you have more books with monsters?" I asked my librarian. She brought me **Where the Wild Things Are**.

JUST A STORY

JEFF MACK



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My dad reads to my little brother and me. My brother has apparently lost interest.

Forty years later, I was on a NY subway train sitting next to a teenager who was reading a graphic novel. He was absorbed by the story and seemed unaware of the people around us. At one point, he looked up and saw we had reached his stop. He leapt to his feet and dashed to the closing door. Too late! He had missed it. So what did he do? With a dazed look, he sat down and went back to his book.

There's a story there, I thought: a young reader grows so involved in a book, he's oblivious to the things around him. Perhaps they're the very same things he's reading about. Creatures? Scary ones? Yes, but funny too. A series of cliffhangers that keeps us all on the edge of our seats. And when it becomes too intense, he closes the book and walks away, leaving it for someone else to discover. Just like a book in a library.

I showed my sketches to my editor, Neal, and he asked "What if the whole thing happens inside the library?" Of course! This book could be my love letter to libraries and all the different types of adventure stories housed there.

And that's the story of **Just a Story**, a story that never would have happened if not for those weekly library visits with my gram. These days, my librarian makes a care package with my books. Once a week, she sets them safely outside wrapped in a paper bag with my name on it. Talk about love!

So thank you for all you do to keep us readers using our minds. You help us learn about the lives and ideas of others so we can discover and grow. Our world needs more readers, thinkers, and adventurers. We're all lucky to have you!



My childhood library in the 1970's.

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♥ JEFF MACK