

My phone buzzed with the notification as I sat in my cap and gown watching the commencement speaker. Another rejection letter. The literary agent informed me that she had read my novel and found it lacking. I was crushed. A few months and several rejections later, I started a boring job working as a technical writer for a construction company. I had begun to think that no one would ever value the storytelling skills I'd learned at BYU, that I could never let my light shine.

But in my downtime at work, I started writing a new book: a fantasy novel about a teenage girl trying to decide whether she believed in God, shapeshifters, and the Loch Ness monster. I saw belief in magic as a metaphor for belief in God, the source of light I had pondered so much during my time at BYU. Two years after graduation, I signed with a literary agent for my debut novel, *Loch Ness Mermaid*. Now I get to let my light shine as a fantasy novelist and tell faith-positive stories for young readers.

I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to study in the Creative Writing MFA program.