

Dear Readers,

Nearly every book has the same architecture — cover, spine, pages — but you open them onto worlds and gifts far beyond what paper and ink are, and on the inside they are every shape and power.

Some books are **toolkits** you take up to fix things, from the most practical to the most mysterious, from your house to your heart, or to make things, from cakes to ships.

Some books are **wings**. Some are **horses** that run away with you.

Some are **parties** to which you are invited, full of friends who are there even when you have no friends.

In some books you meet one **remarkable person**; in others a **whole group** or even a **culture**.

Some books are **medicine**, bitter but clarifying.

Some books are **puzzles, mazes, tangles, jungles**. Some long books are **journeys**, and at the end you are not the same person you were at the beginning.

Some are **handheld lights** you can shine on almost anything.



The books of my childhood were **bricks**, not for throwing but for building. I piled the books around me for protection and withdrew inside their battlements, building a tower in which I escaped my unhappy circumstances. There I lived for many years, in love with books, taking refuge in books, learning from books a strange data-rich out-of-date version of what it means to be human.

Books gave me refuge. Or I built refuge out of them, out of these books that were both bricks and **magical spells**, protective spells I spun around myself.

They can be **doorways** and **ships** and **fortresses** for anyone who loves them.

And I grew up to write books, as I'd hoped, so I know that each of them is **a gift** a writer made for strangers, a gift I've given a few times and received so many times, every day since I was six.



~ Rebecca Solnit