

Julie at the North Pole

Cheryl A. Price

Stephen Adams, Illustrator

AuthorHouse (May 29, 2015)

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With its focus on friendship, courage, imagination, and, of course, a bit of magic, this is a welcome addition to the compendium of Santa stories.

Ten-year-old Julie and her friends, the dream pony Algonquin and his charming spider guardian, Mickey Bright, undertake an adventurous journey to Santa's village in Cheryl A. Price's magical holiday tale, *Julie at the North Pole*.

Like other kids her age, Julie is losing her belief in Santa. But Algonquin and Mickey are determined to restore her faith. The three friends take flight for the North Pole on a cold winter night just before Christmas, meeting both dangers and friends along the way. When they finally arrive, they are surprised by what they find. Even though Santa has his village under guard to protect it from the world's dwindling belief in magic, the Mountains of Unbelief are growing higher and higher around it. Despondent and about to give up his Christmas Eve sleigh ride, Santa's hope is renewed when Julie thinks of a way to use a very modern method to convince him that the world still needs him.

Price weaves old and new together in a delightful way, using magic, myth, and technology to bring the tale to a satisfying conclusion. Stephen Adams's bright and lively illustrations bring the travelers' journey to life with color and whimsy. The book would benefit from additional illustrations in places where there are six to eight pages of text without art. The layout and design of the book are easy on the eye and facilitate reading aloud to one or more children. The front cover art is bright and engaging, and the back cover copy gives a good overview of the plot, although it mentions a "first journey" without giving any indication of what that prior adventure was. While Price also hints at the trio's previous troubles with the villains the travelers meet on their journey, she does not include enough information on the encounters to give a feel for what actually happened. Careful editing is also recommended to improve sentence structure and punctuation, especially the use of commas.

Price might also consider giving Julie's age as younger than ten, as studies have shown that a large percentage of children lose their belief in Santa earlier than that. Having a younger lead protagonist would make the story more believable to children between the ages of four to seven, for whom belief in Santa has begun to fade, as well as to their parents.

Price, a former editor for a Chicago suburban newspaper who holds Master's degrees in history, library science, and communication, has created a Christmas tale that will be fun for parents and children alike; its focus on friendship, courage, imagination, and, of course, a bit of magic, make it a welcome addition.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September 16, 2015)

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