

## Little-Princess

**Marie-Paule Mahoney**

Luminare Press

(42pp)

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*Celebrating inquisitive childhood exchanges, Little-Princess is an edifying and delight-filled picture book about a new and fruitful friendship.*

A boy's horizons widen after he befriends a magical girl from the skies in Marie-Paule Mahoney's imaginative picture book *Little-Princess*.

In New York City, Sean has a sudden, unexpected visitor: A crown-adorned girl with buoyant, ankle-length blonde hair descends from the skies. She introduces herself as Little-Princess and tells of her journey down with the help of her friends—Cuddly Cumulus, a cloud, and Whistle Wind. As Sean introduces her to the sights in New York City, they compare their experiences of friendship, with Little-Princess's stories venturing as far as outer space.

*Little-Princess* progresses through an inquisitive, genuine conversation. The children, whose backgrounds are different, get to know each other in a steady manner, informing one another of their stories. When Little-Princess mentions seeing a "beautiful lady dressed in a green robe" with a "dazzling crown" who "danced on the water" and asks if she is "the queen of Earth," Sean draws from what he has learned at school: She is the Statue of Liberty, a gift to the US from France "to show their friendship." Their exploratory and curious conversations—in particular, Little-Princess's contributions—include inventive and fantastical details as well. Her friends in the skies include natural formations, the elements, and planetary bodies, all personified in a delightful way. At one point, she recounts talking with Reddish Mars every night by "calling out his name to the sky" and waiting for him to answer back using the same method. There are also subtle critiques of overreliance on technology embedded in the story: Sean attempts to impress Little-Princess with the hip-hop beats on his cell phone, a birthday gift from his friends, only to be outdone by her revelation that "Whistle Wind is our musician ... He plays billions of tunes and never the same one twice."

Matching these playful descriptions are outstanding whimsical illustrations that billow beyond the confines of the page. Bleeding onto and blending with their conjoining sections of written text, the depicted interactions and elucidated experiences of Sean and Little-Princess appear in soft, flowing pastels with rosy and cotton-candy-blue undertones. The combination of gentle shading with rounded, hazy outlines is artful and inviting. Both the characters—with their rounded, sparkling eyes—and their corresponding backgrounds, which burst with soothing colors and details, are drawn with dynamism and fluidity. In comparison, the "Fun Fact" pages at the end of the book, with their factual information on cumulus clouds, the Statue of Liberty, Mars, and rainbows, feel empty and unfinished because of their overabundant white space and large spans of text next to small, boxed-in photographs.

Their conversation spanning different atmospheric heights and locales, a boy from Earth and a princess of the skies learn about the wonders of their respective worlds in the resplendent picture book *Little-Princess*.

ISABELLA ZHOU (September 3, 2024)

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