



On These Magic Shores

Yamile Saied Méndez

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In Yamile Saied Méndez's *On These Magic Shores*, a middle school girl takes care of her younger sisters after their mother disappears.

Minnie's mother is overwhelmed and overworked. Minnie tries to help by watching her siblings, but then they're left alone for an entire week without explanation. Minnie feeds her sisters, keeps them calm, and maintains appearances with the school.

Though she thinks she's too old to believe in fairies like her younger sisters do, Minnie can't deny that some of the help that they receive is without explanation. Her refusal to accept that fairies exist is put to the test as she makes friends, gets much-needed food, and contacts her grandmother, whom she's never met, for help.

Minnie is a headstrong, witty, and protective narrator who's determined to prevent her siblings' separation. She deals with every problem in her own way, no matter the consequences. Though she's smart and mature, she still takes on too much for her age, and none of the conflicts she faces are easy to solve or forget. These include a mean babysitter and being cast as Tiger Lily in *Peter Pan*, after which she has to come up with inoffensive alternative to the role.

Because she's Argentinian American, Minnie is also made to feel like she doesn't quite fit in. The challenges around her pile up until Minnie can no longer deal with it all herself. The mystery surrounding her missing mother is resolved in an unexpected way, and all of the help that Minnie received is returned. *On These Magic Shores* is a rich and magical novel.

REBECCA MONTERUSSO (March / April 2020)

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