



Princess Lizzie and the Sabotaged Magic Bicycle: Book 2

Dr. Van

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A tech-savvy role model with a compassionate heart, Princess Lizzie is a fun and welcome addition to the genre.

In Dr. Van's second Princess Lizzie book, *Princess Lizzie and the Sabotaged Magic Bicycle*, her heroine struggles with an unknown adversary while trying to get to the Hotel De Charm to accept an award. As with *Princess Lizzie and the Missing Magic Ball*, the illustrations are well executed, and the story is fresh and imaginative. The use of bright neon colors against saturated deep blue, purple, and orange, makes each page exciting to look at.

Dr. Van is more intentional in this book about the inclusion of "sly adult references" meant to enthrall parents. The result is a more consistent approach to her writing, committing to the use of an adult vocabulary and references to grown-up culture. Lizzie receives an award for developing the Positivity, Happiness, and Excitement Rater App (PHERA), which "could measure and analyze one's level of positive emotions," and gives a speech at "a non-profit organization with a mission to introduce underprivileged children to science and technology." These are all fairly mature concepts for the target age group and unnecessarily cumbersome for early readers. Adult reading companions may smirk at the familiarity of acronyms and mission statements, but this cleverness seems to undermine the book's intentions.

Princess Lizzie is again joined by her friend Monkey. On the way to the conference at Hotel De Charm, an owl flattens the tires on Lizzie's magic bike, and a raccoon steals her backpack. Lizzie suspects that they are acting on behalf of her "frenemy," Duchess Sauri Frown. In both instances, Monkey displays a desire to fight and even boasts about giving Raccoon his black eyes. It's all a bit vengeful, but in contrast with Lizzie's patience, Monkey's temper helps to highlight that it does pay to believe in yourself and not be guided by the wrongful acts of others.

Once they reach the conference and Lizzie delivers her speech, Duchess Sauri Frown, Raccoon, and Owl are found and taken away. Lizzie announces that she will be "engineering an app to measure negative emotions" because "we must not ignore the bad when we strive to measure for the good." It is a thoughtful concept, but again delivered awkwardly.

There is more technology and magic in *The Sabotaged Magic Bicycle*, and marked improvements over the first book. Her concept of creating a tech-savvy role model with a compassionate heart is fun and a welcome addition to the genre. While the emphasis appears to be on writing cleverly for parents, these books are still a bold step in a positive direction.

SARA BUDZIK (May 5, 2014)

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