



The Adventures of Maesee Peek

Janet Hébert

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A steampunk doll takes a worldwide journey in this tale about the irresistible appeal of home.

A beloved doll ventures on an unexpected journey in Janet Hébert's *The Adventures of Maesee Peek*. Whimsical and quirky like the titular doll, the globe-spanning escapades include fateful encounters and surprising turns, but ultimately confirm the belief that there is no place like home.

The product of parental ingenuity and love, handmade doll Maesee Peek enjoys the life of a cherished toy with a little girl named Elsie. But when Elsie's father accidentally drops the doll in the park after a tea party, Maesee Peek embarks on a circuitous adventure that takes her to an art gallery and even across the Atlantic Ocean to an Irish castle. Such adventures are a sharp change for a protected childhood companion, and Maesee Peek must contend with curious dogs, hostile weather, and strange girls as she makes her way home to her owner.

Whimsical illustrations accompany the narrative, complementing Maesee Peek's journey with attractive colors. The doll's design is highly appealing, reminiscent of steampunk and gothic stylings. Further reinforcing the steampunk aesthetic are clockwork motifs that decorate the pages. The bright colors, however, can serve as unwelcome distractions when incorporated into the text, which shifts fonts unexpectedly. These typeface and palette changes confuse the eye and sometimes make it difficult to parse the events taking place.

Maesee Peek's adventures are also punctuated with confusing asides, such as brief sojourns in prehistoric times, a description of French royalty, and the abrupt revelation that one character is actually a leprechaun. The transitions into these short sections are sudden, making it tough to follow the action at times. While these detours fit the theme of Maesee Peek's fanciful journeys, playing a sometimes welcome role and occasionally providing new depth for the doll's exploits, they also fall short of serving as timely and appropriate educational opportunities.

The Adventures of Maesee Peek offers an enjoyable global romp through the eyes of an extraordinary doll. The fun encounters balance the pervasive treat of Maesee Peek enduring the trip without harm. Combining whimsy and surprise, the toy's journeys provide enticing glimpses of various settings and locales while retaining the ultimate goal of returning to her owner. Underlying sentiments are those that any world traveler can sympathize with: taking in new and exciting sights is an enriching experience, but only because you can return home at the end.

VERNIEDA VERGARA (April 12, 2016)

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