



The Perfect Prince(ss)

Bambi Nieves

Alison Nieves, Illustrator

Bright Dragon Books

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The affirming picture book The Perfect Prince(ss) follows a brave girl as she learns that she doesn't have to be perfect to be loved.

In Bambi Nieves's fantastical picture book *The Perfect Prince(ss)*, a wizard tries to force a princess to become the friend he remembers.

Princess Amina is hung up on perfection. She spends endless time applying her makeup, making sure her table manners are just right (even when her friends eat with their hands), and refuses to speak up about things that bother her. But when Keiran, a boy with magical powers, insists that she's not the perfect princess but instead should be the perfect prince he remembers her as, Amina's world falls apart. Keiran's rage triggers a magic spell that throws her from the kingdom. As Amina makes her way back to the castle, she learns along with Keiran and her friends that being yourself is enough and that one doesn't need to be perfect to be a princess.

Bringing together medieval elements like knights and dragons alongside the story of a girl learning to be comfortable with who she is, this book turns Princess Amina's story into an epic quest. After the wizard's spell transports her to a forest, she encounters a succession of obstacles: A small dragon threatens to eat her but accepts cupcakes instead; a school of ducklings disturbs the surface of a lake as Amina tries to see her reflection; and violent goats attack when she's at the gates of the castle. In each instance, Amina learns to adapt a little more, accept that it's okay to be different, and sacrifice an ideal of perfection that isn't always possible to reach.

The book's themes are subtle, as when Amina is welcomed to practice sword fighting among men who are bigger and stronger than her without commentary. However, some moments are jumbled and underexplained, including the central conflict between Keiran and Amina. Indeed, Keiran appears in the middle of the book without introduction or backstory, and because the plot revolves around his actions, this absence of details about him is discombobulating

However, the watercolor illustrations are rich and immersive, complementing the story well. They incorporate a wide color palette that includes sunny yellows, murky browns, and forest greens. The book's various locations and characters are honored within them.

Set in a magical kingdom, the affirming picture book *The Perfect Prince(ss)* follows a brave girl as she learns that she doesn't have to be perfect to be loved.

WILLEM MARX (April 24, 2026)

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