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The Princess in Black and the Perfect Princess Party **by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale, illustrated by LeUyen Pham**

Publisher: Candlewick Press, USA, distributed in NZ by Harper Collins

RRP \$22.99

This hard cover book is the perfect gift for the young child who likes fast-paced action and a hero to cheer for. Superman? Batman? No. The Princess in Black outwits monsters who eat goats – even on her birthday.

Princess Magnolia (aka the Princess in Black) is hosting a birthday party. Even as her friends arrive she hears the call. Between games, and while eating, she responds, cleverly disguising her departures from the group. She quickly changes, leaves her friends playing hide-and-seek or solving the maze, and defeats one monster after another.

The monster went back into the hole. They always did. Eventually.

Any young reader, ready for a 'real book' (hard cover and chapters, plenty of action, and a fun superhero) will enjoy having this book read to them, then reading it themselves. The language is fun. These authors do not pander to the reader – with names like Sneezewort and Hogswell, Frimplepants, Zinnia ...

Illustrations are full colour and bright, adding to the story in their interpretations of facial expressions and action.

This book is one in a series of *Princess in Black* stories.

Reviewed by Chris Wright

Author's websites:

www.squeetus.com/stage/main.html (Shannon)

www.dreadcrumbs.com (Dean)

Illustrator's website:

www.leuyenpham.com

