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Little Wade and Watchtower: Abigail and the Great Gang Trap by Sean March

[Long version]

It's 1899 in New York City and a young girl begins a fantastical friendship with a boy ghost and a mysteriously humanlike mechanical gaslight lamppost—secret partners who aim to rid the city of the fearsome Longshadows gang.

A poor farm girl displaced to New York finds out quickly that her new city can be a dangerous place in this fast-paced first volume in the Little Wade and Watchtower middle-grade fantasy series.

When Abigail Reid's mother passes away, she and her dad move from the country to New York City where he works three jobs to support them. The young girl learns quickly that the city can be frighteningly dangerous for children when she is chased and cornered in an alleyway by a group of five brutal, ugly men—the dreadful and menacing Longshadows gang—only to be defended by an unlikely duo: a brave boy ghost and his partner, an immense man of metal with the fiery face of a gaslight lamppost—the Watchtower. The journey that ensues will captivate middle-grade readers in this period fantasy adventure *Little Wade and Watchtower: Abigail and the Great Gang Trap*, the thrilling first book in a new trilogy written by Sean March.

Little Wade is quite dapper...for a ghost. The mysterious boy wore a long, flowing, black tailcoat, black trousers, and a round-collared, white shirt underneath an ornate vest. To young Abigail, he looked clean, wealthy, well-educated, polite, and quite old-fashioned. For someone who was long dead, Little Wade's appearance was not surprising, unless you count the fact that he is a ghost.

His partner, the Watchtower, was a manlike being made of gears and metal, standing over twelve-feet tall and with the face of four panes of glass containing a flickering gas lamp: no eyes, no mouth, no nose. A formidable presence with gangly arms and being quite tall and thin, the lamppost man wore a distinguished suit, very finely tailored, with a brocade vest decorated with dozens of finely sewn silver gears which covered what appeared to be a skin of polished metal.

The Longshadows, the ruthless gangsters that control Abigail's neighborhood, had almost succeeded in capturing the devastated girl, until the motley crew were opposed by her newfound acquaintances: Little Wade and the Watchtower.

“The ten men loomed over her. Lit from behind the fiery light at the mouth of the alley, they cast ten long shadows over Abigail...They all suddenly heard whirring, clicking, clanking, hissing, knocking, popping, grinding, the sounds of some mechanism powering up. It sounded like something waking up and coming alive...Something lashed out and attacked, and the Longshadows all started screaming.”

The ghost and his gaslight lamppost partner have been secretly assisting New York City’s children since 1831. With her new friends’ help, Abigail discovers that she is far braver and more capable than she ever imagined, and that New York City can be a wonderful place. Together, they plan to set The Great Gang Trap and rid her neighborhood of the Longshadows once and for all!

Author March masterfully and vividly describes a New York City of another era with “fiery lamplights, uneven cobblestone streets pocked with slimy puddles,” filthy pavement lingering with smells of surrounding storefronts, men in top hats and long coats strolling alongside homeless vagrants and scavengers emerging from shadowy, grimy alleys of the Lower East Side, horses and carriages speeding by.

Readers of steampunk and fantasy and fans of historical fiction will delight in March’s imaginative renderings of this bygone era combined with an artistry of storytelling that is both eloquent and vibrantly graphic. Middle-graders will love the unending adventure, the winsome characters and their heroic feats, the historical fiction steeped in a steampunk backdrop in *Abigail and the Great Gang Trap*, the first volume in Sean March’s *Little Wade and Watchtower* trilogy series.

[Short version]

It’s 1899 in New York City and a young girl named Abigail begins a fantastical friendship with a boy ghost and a mysteriously humanlike mechanical gaslight lamppost—secret partners who aim to rid the city of the fearsome Longshadows gang. This poor farm girl displaced to New York finds out quickly that her new city can be a dangerous place in this fast-paced first volume in the *Little Wade and Watchtower* middle-grade fantasy series.