

# Little Manhattan (2005)

Rated PG. Our ratings: V-2 ; L-1 ; S/N-2 . Running time: 1 hour 26 min.

*Ah, you are beautiful, my love;*

*ah, you are beautiful;*

*your eyes are doves.*

*Song of Solomon 1:15*

Eleven-year-old Gabe (Josh Little Manhattan Hutcherson) would have said "Yuck!" to the sentiments of the great Hebrew love poem. He was content to hang out with friends and ride his sidewalk scooter around the safe neighborhood of New York's Upper Westside. That is he was, until he enrolled in a karate class and saw again the girl he had known in nursery school, Rosemary (Charlie Ray). Not only is she beautiful in his eyes, but also she is far more skillful in karate. In his awkward way he manages to become close to her by asking her to practice their karate moves together, and the two embark on that funny/serious adventure known as First (or Puppy) Love. He gets into trouble from riding on his scooter beyond the neighborhood bounds set by his parents, but the time he spent with the object of his heart is worth the punishment meted out

to him.

The many scrapes, small triumphs and large disappointments meted out to him will be familiar to all who still remember what it once was to have one's heart captivated the first time. Gabe's life is a bit complicated by the fact that his parents, Adam and Leslie (Bradley Whitford and Cynthia Nixon) are near to a divorce yet still living in the same apartment for economic reasons—and his self-esteem is often deflated by Rosemary's superior karate skills and higher social and economic status. He tells his story via voiceover, which works well, recalling to me the many fond evenings when "The Wonder Years" was something our family looked forward to each week—as well it should. Like the TV series, the film has many delightful lines; perhaps my favorite being some advice about his love affair given Gabe's mother Leslie, " Maybe not everything is supposed to last forever. Certain things are like, like skywriting, like a really beautiful thing that lasts for a couple moments and then – you know? I know honey, love sucks." This film is the product of the married director Mark Levin and screenwriter Jennifer Flackett, the former having worked to near perfection his narrative technique while producing and writing the acclaimed TV series. Buy or rent this one for the whole family, and enjoy.