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Picture Books

Star Seeker: A Journey to Outer Space
Theresa Heine
Victor Tavares, illustrator
Barefoot Books
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In shades of midnight blue and golden light, the children in this book whirl, swirl, spin, swim, and dive as they wend their way across the night sky on an imaginary tour of the universe.

In an amalgamation of mythology, science, and adventure the young travelers make their way to the stars: “I’ll spin like a pinwheel / Through the Milky Way’s froth.” They visit the planets (“I’ll bake ginger cookies / On Venus’s soil / Stir up her volcanoes / And watch them all boil”) and encounter classic mythological beings like Orion and Mercury. As the night draws to a close, the tone of the book changes. The bespectacled boy and his female friend, who wears a different multi-colored outfit in every scene, slowly make their way back to earth for some well-earned sleep, “From the bright Star of Evening / To Earth I will glide, / And drift through her gravity / Just for the ride.”

The author, a teacher, said she likes to write from a child’s point of view, and this preference is apparent in the way she deftly couples scientific fact with fantasy: “I’ll swim across Jupiter’s / Gigantic gas sea, / Then thread up his moons / On a necklace for me,” or in this verse, “I’ll steal Neptune’s winds, / ‘Round his rings I will whirl; / Across his Dark Spot / Like a cyclone I’ll swirl.” She tells the story in poetic verse; each page packed with description in just four lines: “Like a comet I’ll zoom / Over Mars’s red crust, / And spy on his mountains / And valleys of dust.”

Heine has written several children’s books, as well as poetry for all ages. Her first book, *Elephant Dance*, also published by Barefoot, was nominated for the Nautilus Book Award. The illustrator is the winner of several awards, including honorable mention in the 2003 Society of Children’s Book Writers & Illustrators/Bologna illustration contest. In this book his use of an airbrush, watercolors, and gouache, a paint that is heavier and has more reflective qualities than watercolors, gives the reader a feeling of movement with the inclusion of swirling patterns and

streaks of color across the page.

An added bonus is six pages of outer space facts at the end of the book. Heine includes a page on the history of astronomy as well as an illustrated one-page primer on the solar system. There is also a brief synopsis of the nine planets in the solar system and two pages on the sun, moon, and stars, including a description of all the star collections mentioned in the story. She keeps it brief enough to engage the youngest of readers but includes enough fun facts that upper elementary age readers will find it fascinating.

Readers will need no invitation to hitch up a star or slide down the moon to enjoy this whimsical journey that will take them out through their darkened bedroom window and up into the star-scattered sky for a unique view of the world around them.

Cymbre Foster