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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ PICTURE BOOKS

Winkiedough Twinkletoe: Upon the Window Ledge

W.J. Buxton
Joshua Allen, illustrator
AuthorHouse (Feb 21, 2012)
Softcover $20.99 (36pp)
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There is a divide in the methodology of children's picture books: Some are intricately planned from beginning to end in order to address fundamental questions, fears, or dreams of children, while others arise more organically, from tales first inspired by or told to children or grandchildren. W J Buxton's *Winkiedough Twinkletoe* falls into the latter category. It is a story dedicated to the author's grandchildren that might hold appeal for a larger audience, as it invites readers to "learn how the dark is nothing to be afraid of."

Winkiedough Twinkletoe is the simple tale of Owen, a child who fears the dark, and a friendly star, Winkiedough Twinkletoe, who comes down from the sky to light his room for him. Winkiedough Twinkletoe tells Owen, "When I heard you say you were afraid of the dark, I hurried down to your window ledge so I could be your favorite star and keep the night as bright as the day, like you wanted!"

The illustrations are of good quality, cartoony and eye-catching to young eyes or old. A full palette of bright colors is used, and the drawings effectively communicate the story.

The major drawback of *Winkiedough Twinkletoe* is that there is very little for the audience to take away that might help the story resonate. Fear of the dark is an anxiety common, if not universal, to children, but there's nothing "real" here to comfort, just a star that has come to life. This is forgivable, of course—it is a story, not a pedagogical tool. But even within the framework of the tale, there is no real character growth. A problem presents itself (fear of the dark) and a fantastic magical entity comes and solves it. Owen hasn't really learned anything. By the book's end, the only resolution is that Winkiedough Twinkletoe has promised to come back every night and light up the sky for Owen.

The book is a cute tale, and one that small children might like and find comforting, but many young readers will wonder, "Is that all there is?" Worse, parents might find themselves struggling to explain why a child shouldn't fear the dark, even without his or her own friendly star—after all, Owen has one, right?

There is potential in Buxton's effort, and while many ingredients of a classic children's story are present, they don't mesh together in quite the right way. Still, parents of children who fear the dark might want to give *Winkiedough Twinkletoe* a try.

PETER DABBENE (September 13, 2012)

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