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When The Stars Go Blue: A Novel



Synopsis

Winner of an International Latino Book Award
A dancer driven to succeed. A musical prodigy attempting to escape his past. The summer they share. And the moment it all goes wrong. Dance is Soledad Reyes's life. About to graduate from Miami's Biscayne High School for the Performing Arts, she plans on spending her last summer at home teaching in a dance studio, saving money, and eventually auditioning for dance companies. That is, until fate intervenes in the form of fellow student Jonathan Crandall who has what sounds like an outrageous proposition: Forget teaching. Why not spend the summer performing in the intense environment of the competitive drum and bugle corps? The corps is going to be performing Carmen, and the opportunity to portray the character of the sultry gypsy proves too tempting for Soledad to pass up, as well as the opportunity to spend more time with Jonathan, who intrigues her in a way no boy ever has before. But in an uncanny echo of the story they perform every evening, an unexpected competitor for Soledad's affections appears: Taz, a member of an all-star Spanish soccer team. One explosive encounter later Soledad finds not only her relationship with Jonathan threatened, but her entire future as a professional dancer.

Book Information

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Contemporary

Customer Reviews

In a risky career move, ballerina Soledad refuses an offer to join a dance company in order to play the role of Carmen with a Miami-based competitive all-male drum and bugle corp. Although the role and its opportunities are seductive, spending the summer with her new boyfriend, bugle-playing

Jonathan, and exploring their fresh, exciting love is equally compelling. As deep as her love is for Jonathan, Soledad finds herself strangely attracted to Taz, a Spanish soccer player—a development that threatens not only the couple’s love and trust but their careers as well. Ferrer understands the drive that consumes aspiring artists and athletes, and she conveys this single-minded absorption with charm and intensity. All three teens are likable, even lovable, and readers will empathize with their difficult choices. The story effectively depicts the excitement of performance, the intrigue of one girl traveling among 150 boys, Jonathan and Soledad’s steamy romance, and Taz’s courtly pursuit. Well written, with contemporary characters and an engaging story line, it lacks only the promise of a sequel to make it complete. Grades 9-12. --Frances Bradburn

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When the Stars Go Blue is an absolutely stunning novel about Soledad, an 18 year-old dancer in Miami who becomes involved with both a drum and bugle corp, and the corp's lead horn player. It is, quite honestly, one of my favorite books of the year. Unfortunately, it's also very difficult to review without spoilers (which explains why the publisher's book description is so vague). Since there aren't any reviews yet, I'll do my best to share why this (along with another recent read, Mindi Scott's *Freefall*) is one of my favorite young adult titles of the year.

First of all, this is the story of Soledad and her first love, Jonathan. The relationship between the two is extremely intense, magnified by the drum and bugle corps' trip around the country performing at fairs and festivals. Their relationship grows extremely quickly, and it Ferrer's outstanding writing swept me up in their romance right along with Soledad. However, Soledad also has doubts about their relationship and where it will go when they each possibly head their separate ways at the end of the summer. Ferrer brilliantly explores Jonathan's jealousy stemming from her friendship with a soccer player on the same fair circuit as the corp, Taz, and how it confuses and hurts Soledad, because she really does love and is devoted to Jonathan. There is nothing predictable and stereotyped about the way the characters react to the circumstances and obstacles in their paths, and I turned each page feeling the same doubts and confusion about the resolution as Soledad.

Secondly, the book feels like a love letter to the arts. I don't know what the author's personal experience is with drum and bugle corps, or her music/dance background, but her passion for the arts is clear. The story of Soledad's love for dance is just as compelling as her romance with Jonathan. I felt swept into a world I knew only a little about (I was in marching band, but nothing as sophisticated as drum and bugle corps) and loved each scene that brought me inside that world. This is made all the more interesting because the corps in *When the Stars Go Blue* is an all-male corps, so Soledad is traveling and performing with 150 young men. Even the chapter titles are inspired by music, I believe they're all song titles or lyrics--including the book title, "When the Stars Go Blue." When you read the book, be sure to notice these titles, as they're definitely part of the story (once I realized this a few chapters in, I went back and read them--such a wonderful element, like a musical roadmap to the story). If you love music, dance and the performing arts, this book will speak to that passion in a special way.

Thirdly, the character development is fabulous! Each character is multi-layered and has endearing and frustrating qualities--they feel like real people. Jonathan could easily have been one-dimensional, but he is a very compelling character. Taz, the Spanish soccer player, could have been the good-looking, cocky athlete, but he's complex and interesting. Even the minor characters, such as Raj, Soledad's dance partner, are funny and interesting. I so, so, so appreciate this. Sometimes in young adult novels, especially those targeted at young women, the secondary characters can be a

bit shallow, and that's certainly not the case here. Also, I love that the novel uses Carmen, the show the corps performs each night, as an inspiration, but it's in a subtle way. I was familiar with the story, but found myself reflecting on the similarities after I finished reading the book--not guessing as to the plot twists based on my familiarity with Carmen. I'm conflicted as to whether or not it would help or hinder readers who aren't familiar with the story to familiarize themselves with it. It's summarized briefly in the novel, and I feel like that's enough. Regardless, it's definitely not in the adaptation realm, but instead uses Carmen as a solid plot device. Finally, I loved the setting of Soledad's hometown of Miami, her relationship with her Cuban grandmother and the Cuban culture detailed in the novel (including frequent uses of Spanish words and phrases). I felt immersed in a world that's very different from my own, and I loved having the chance to visit it through *When the Stars Go Blue*. Note: I would highly recommend this book to adult readers. This is one of those young adult novels that many, many people of all ages can connect with. Soledad is an interesting and relatable character and her struggles and dreams feel very authentic. While this review is more effusive than I normally am, I really feel that it's much-deserved. Ferrer has written a book with interesting characters with complex emotions who I really cared about. *When the Stars Go Blue* has unique elements (such as the highly-driven dancer, the talented musicians, the skilled soccer player--all high achievers, the use of songs/music to subtly drive the story and the look into Cuban American culture) that make it stand out as a fresh and satisfying read.

Amazing book. It's a perfect read for any young adult interested in marching band, dancing, or romance in general.

From the very beginning, I was smiling. Soledad is an amazing character, so real and honest. Her relationship with Jonathan is very down to earth and exactly how you would think a relationship between two teenagers would be. Very passionate, intense, and simply emotional. After all, it is their first true love. They embark on a journey for the summer and along with it comes all the issues that occur in relationships. Don't get me wrong, this book is not predictable in the way most are nowadays. You live every moment with the characters, feel every emotion, breath every second. I admit I had a hard time putting this book down. I honestly did not want the story to end. I truly enjoyed this book cover to cover.

Soledad's life is dance. There is nothing she doesn't love about it and nothing she wouldn't do for it. That is until she meets Jonathan. He starts off as just another classmate and he tells her about his

bugle and drum corps group that is performing all summer a program called Carmen Revealed. He asks Soledad to be her Carmen, not only does she have the body, she has the fierceness in her dance that would make her an unstoppable force on their team. Soledad isn't sure if this is what she wants to do for her summer, instead of teaching ballet. But, as she falls for Jonathan she falls for the idea of her being Carmen, the star of the show. So the further they get from home the further Soledad and Jonathan's relationship grows, even though Jonathan's dad is none too happy about it. Jonathan and his dad have a very rocky relationship that only gets rockier as the tour continues. With Jonathan so angry and distant, Soledad finds comfort in a traveling soccer player named Taz, who though he is from Spain not Miami, easily reminds Soledad of home. Is Jonathan strong enough to stay with Soledad despite his dad's protests? Is Soledad even sure that Jonathan is the only thing she will ever need? This was a very moving and emotional read. I loved the passion with which Soledad danced and Jonathan played. It's always fantastic when you can read about someone with that much fire and heart for what they do. It wraps you up in it and makes you yearn for the thing you are passionate about, or makes you yearn to feel that passion for something. I really loved Soledad and how easy it was for her to love even when all her other decisions were hard to decide on. I was so team Jonathan, but about three quarters of the way through I had to move my loyalties on over to Team Taz. Taz was such a gentleman and barely expected anything from Soledad in return. I loved the little bits and bobs of Spanish throughout the novel, it helped remind you of why Soledad and Taz are so connected. I wish things could have been everything that Soledad wanted. I think her life will still be fantastic, and maybe even more so than she could ever believe. This would be a great novel for anyone whose life didn't turn out the way they planned and expected it to turn out. Soledad is a great role model for a life that was unplanned but is the only choice. Make sure you pick up this fantastic read soon, so you can feel your heart lift up and dance.

First Line: "Turning, soaring, feeling the hum of the strings like the caress along my skin, the notes from the brass and woodwinds swirling around my body like a cape." Favorite Line: "However, right now, with sweat running down his bare torso, every muscle in his shoulders and arms bunched and tense and that light turning his eyes dark and fierce?" Disclaimer: I was sent this item to review. This does not influence my opinion.

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