

Reginald



in



Space

by
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Reginald loved outer space. He loved to look up at the deep, black sky peppered with bright, gleaming stars and imagine himself up there in the middle of it all. He wanted nothing more than to be an astronaut when he grew up. For his birthday, his parents had bought him a toy spaceship big enough to sit in. Every night before bedtime, Reginald would take a big plastic bowl that his mom had given him and put it upside-down over his head like a helmet. Then, he would take his book with big, colorful pictures of all the planets and sit in his spaceship like a real astronaut would.

When he was all prepared, he'd take off to distant worlds, sailing around the vast blue curve of Neptune, zooming past Mars in a flash, following the rings of Saturn around in a circle. He flipped from page to page, and his imagination led him further and further from his bedroom and further and further into outer space until he was standing on Pluto. From there he would try to spot Earth among the million little points of light that he could see. Then, from all the way across the solar system, he would hear his dad call him and tell him it was bedtime, and he would fly all the way back to his bedroom and climb under the covers. The spaceship just wasn't comfortable enough to sleep in.



Reginald talked about space all day, and sometimes this got him into trouble. One day at school, when his class was supposed to be reciting the months of the year in order, Reginald wasn't interested. Instead, he decided to recite all the planets in order of their distance from the sun. When his teacher heard him saying "Mercury, Venus, Earth..." instead of "January, February, March...", she got mad and sent him to sit in the corner.

But Reginald still couldn't think about anything but space. Later, during arts and crafts time, all the students were given crayons and told to draw pictures of their houses, but Reginald wasn't interested. Instead, he drew himself standing on Saturn with his spaceship and his helmet. When his teacher saw this, she got mad again and told his parents.

When Reginald got home from school that day, his mom and dad were angry with him. That night, they sent him straight to bed, and didn't let him sit in his spaceship or look at his book or wear his helmet. Reginald was furious. 'It's just not fair,' he thought.

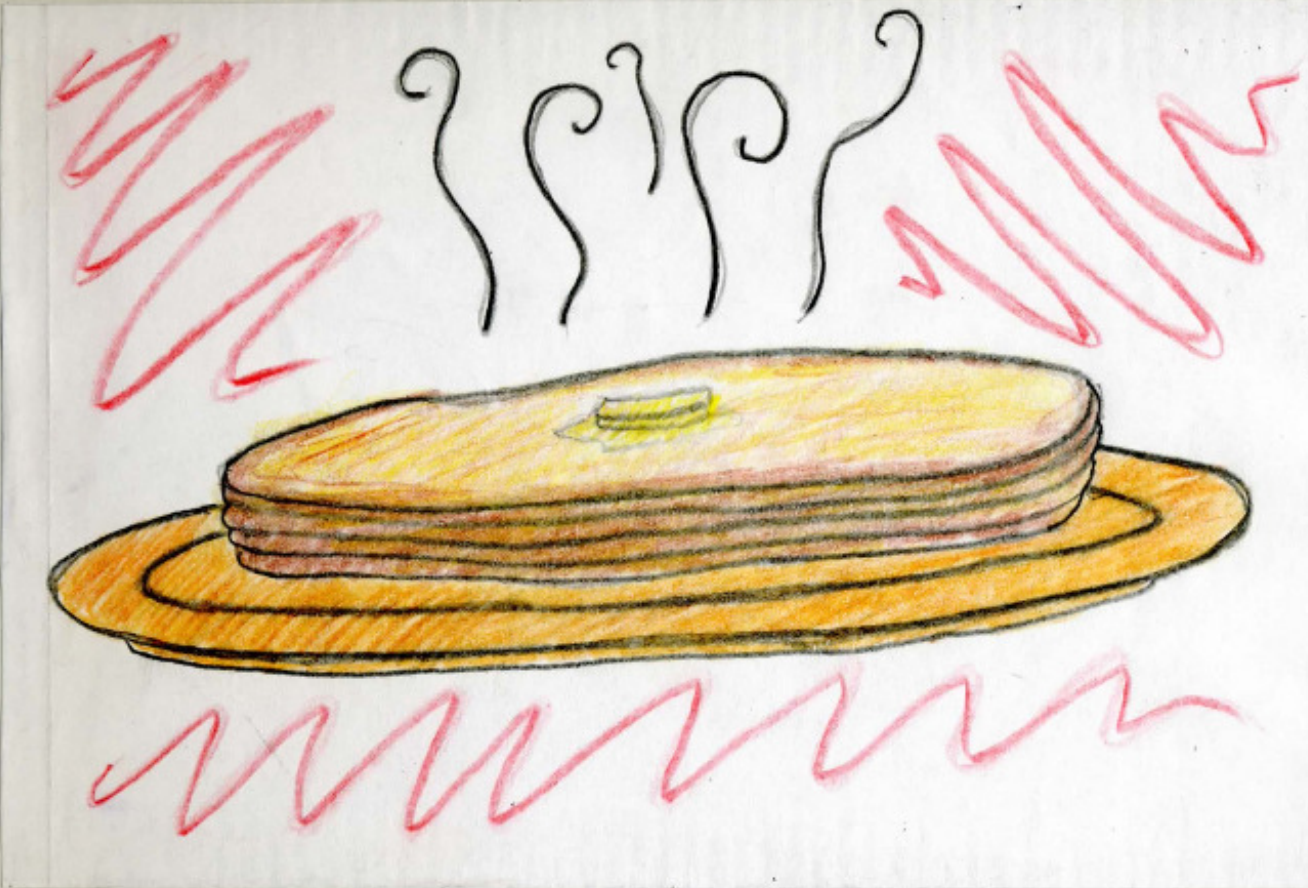


Reginald was so angry he couldn't sleep, so that he was awake when it was very late and his parents had gone to sleep themselves. When he could hear them snoring in the other room, he turned on his lamp and crept out of bed to sit in his spaceship. He didn't have his book or his helmet, but that was alright. He had memorized the book already, and the helmet was mostly for show anyways. So, after Reginald had strapped himself in securely, he took off as quietly as possible. 'At least in space there aren't any grown-ups to yell at me. I'll fly somewhere in my spaceship and live there forever,' he thought to himself.

He headed for Venus first. He circled it a few times, but didn't land because he didn't feel like it. Mercury was too hot to live on, so he turned around, zoomed past Earth again with the Sun at his back. He arrived at Mars and parked his spaceship on its flat, red surface. He kicked around a few rocks to relieve his anger, but it didn't work, so he hopped back in his ship and took off again.



He visited each planet in order, but none of them calmed him down any more than Mars did. So he landed on Pluto and sat down on a rock. "This will be my new home. This is where I can live for the rest of my life," Reginald said aloud. But even as he said it, he knew he didn't mean it. Being on Pluto reminded him of normal nights, when his dad would call him back home and then tuck him into bed. Now, Reginald wasn't angry anymore, but instead he missed his parents. He couldn't live anywhere unless mom and dad were there to take care of him, and they would hate living on Pluto. So he got up off of his rock and climbed back into his ship yet again, and took off for home. Once he was back in his bedroom, Reginald got into bed and fell asleep immediately.



The next morning Reginald awoke to a delicious smell. He got dressed and walked to the kitchen, where there was a big plate of pancakes with maple syrup waiting for him.

“I felt bad for getting so angry at you yesterday,” his mom told him, “so I made you your favorite breakfast. But you have to agree to one thing: You can only explore outer space at home, before bedtime. Otherwise, you have to keep your feet on the ground, especially at school. There will be plenty of time to be an astronaut when you’re older.”

Reginald thought that this sounded fair, so he agreed.

“Now hurry up with your breakfast or else it will get cold,” his mom said, and bent down to hug him.

As he sat down to eat, Reginald thought to himself, ‘Maybe staying on Earth won’t be so bad. After all, out of all the planets out there, it’s the only one where mom will make you pancakes.’