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What the universe is made of (probably), narrated by a boa-wearing physicist



CAPTION

By Nancy Szokan, Published: June 2

If the cocktail shaker on the cover doesn't convince you that "[The Cosmic Cocktail](#)" might be an unusually entertaining physics book, maybe the lavender feather boa that author Katherine Freese wears for her dust-jacket photo will. If so, you'd be both right and wrong.

Freese, a professor of physics at the University of Michigan, has plenty of acronym-packed, extensively footnoted, serious explanations about what the universe is probably made of and how scientists are figuring it out.

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She discusses [Fritz Zwicky](#), the astronomer who coined the term "dark matter" in 1933, and moves through the decades to the discovery of WIMPs — the weakly interacting massive particles that scientists

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now believe make up most dark matter, and therefore most of everything.

But the book is not entirely wonky. Freese also tells a lively personal tale of her trajectory through the world of science. Her career began with a decision to become a physicist because of a book she read while hospitalized in Tokyo, where she'd been working as a bar waitress.

She describes playing tennis with herself ("dark matter Katie" vs. "regular matter Katie") for an episode of the TV show "Through the Wormhole" and reports on how she "danced up a storm" with a low-background-noise experimentalist at her favorite conference, the UCLA Dark Matter meeting. You end up thinking that being a physicist is certainly important and definitely difficult – but it could also be a lot of fun.

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Wildthing1 wrote:
6/2/2014 5:13 PM MDT

I suppose it is not possible to make light of dark matter! Now that we are on the dark side everything is a dark matter.

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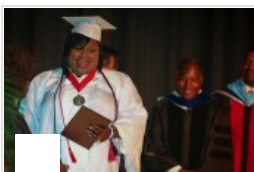
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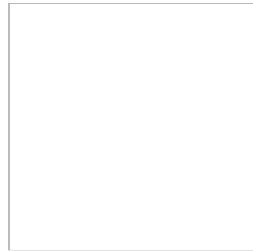
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