POZ Reads

A visual feast, a frank book

May 12, 1995 By David Thomas

At first glance, Dr. Jeff Baggish's colorful new book looks like you've picked up a Fractured Fairy Tale. Open to any page and you're likely to find brigand beavers and warlord whales tussling with slimy shapeless invaders. But you're not holding a children's book; you're holding the first and only primer I've seen in my years of AIDS reporting that effortlessle explains the immune system—in surprising depth and breadth.

The most boring thing about this picture book is its title, How Your Immune System Works (Ziff-David/Emeryville, Calif.). In it, Baggish, a Baltimore physician and writer, and illustrator Scott MacNeill use simple text, animated drawings and consistent imagery to guide the reader through otherwise complicated immunological interactions.

The book almost invites you to start I the middle. I was so intrigued by some of the drawings that I dove right in. but two secrets to using Baggish's work are: 1) start at the beginning, and 2) don't think too hard. Baggish paints layers over layers as the book progresses and, like learning a foreign language, you'll find yourself understanding more easily as the lessons get harder.

Baggish's promscuously mixed metaphors will twist the minds of the more literary readers and some of the schematics get tangled. But the payoff is worth it—by the time you get to the short and well-written chapter on AIDS, you'll be whetted for more scholarly material. This book is without doubt a must-have for AIDS agency libraries and both fledgling and graduate treatment junkies. Call 800.688.0448 to order.

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