



Cosmic Creatures: The Friendly Firecat

Tom Huddleston

Sophy Williams, Illustrator

Nosy Crow (Aug 6, 2024)

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A gentle conservation message comes through in Tom Huddleston's adventure-filled novel *Cosmic Creatures: The Friendly Firecat*, wherein a girl visits her aunt on a remote planet—and has to stop intergalactic rustlers from stealing rare native species.

Charlie travels the galaxy in the *Star Eagle* with her younger brother, Maki, and their troubleshooting robot friend, Random. The team works together to help various planets' unusual creatures. In the course of their adventures, Charlie befriends a firekitten, Sunlight, and boards an enemy ship on which she tries to help rescue Sunlight's parents and other captured animals. (The logistics of getting herself and the firecats back to her aunt's planet are another matter.) Elsewhere, Charlie deals with a new acquaintance among the smugglers whom she hopes to convince to help her; and Random loses power as his battery runs out.

As the book's heroine, Charlie needs to be clever in order to succeed, but she also maintains her empathy and compassion toward others. The stakes of her kinetic adventures are moderate: the villains are a real threat, but they are money-motivated smugglers rather than violent hunters. And the worlds around her are exciting, vivified by charming pencil-style illustrations that depict the more fantastical elements well. For example, the firecats are bright blue and move in huge herds, which makes them a greater target when the rustlers' ship arrives on planet, with its crew bringing out cages to capture them. Both Random and Sunlight are memorable, and the latter is especially cute.

In the sweet novel *The Friendly Firecat*, a girl and her companions travel to faraway lands, learning about the importance of protecting rare animals.

JEFF FLEISCHER (July / August 2024)

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