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The Long Way To A Small, Angry Planet



Synopsis

Rosemary Harper doesn't expect much when she joins the crew of the aging Wayfarer. While the patched-up ship has seen better days, it offers her a bed, a chance to explore the far-off corners of the galaxy, and, most importantly, some distance from her past. An introspective young woman, she's never met anyone remotely like the ship's diverse crew, including Sissix, the exotic reptilian pilot; chatty engineers Kizzy and Jenks, who keep the ship running; and Ashby, their noble captain. Life aboard the Wayfarer is chaotic and crazy - exactly what Rosemary wants. It's also about to get extremely dangerous when the crew is offered the job of a lifetime. Tunneling wormholes through space to a distant planet is definitely lucrative and will keep them comfortable for years. But risking her life wasn't part of the plan. In the far reaches of deep space, the tiny Wayfarer crew will confront a host of unexpected mishaps and thrilling adventures that force them to depend on each other. To survive, Rosemary's got to learn how to rely on this assortment of oddballs - an experience that teaches her about love and trust and that having a family isn't necessarily the worst thing in the universe.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title "The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet" gives you fair warning: this is a road trip book. The road trip just happens to involve a small spaceship (the Wayfarer) that makes small hyperspace bypasses for a living. And while there aren't any Vogons among the ship's crew, there are several non-humanoid aliens, including an adorable multi-armed chef thing and a sexy female lizard person. The focal character is Rosemary, a young human woman who has chosen to travel far from home in

order to escape the stigma of a scandal back on Mars. Rosemary's first space journey just happens to coincide with the Wayfarer's Big Break--an opportunity to build the first bridge the multi-species Galactic Commons (GC) and an enigmatic (and possibly very angry) alien race that dwells near the galactic core. The main selling points of "The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet" are the imagination Becky Chambers puts into the development of her alien characters and the relationships she creates between her human and her non-human characters. The navigator, for example, is from an alien species that infects itself with a virus that allows it to see spatial structures invisible to all other species. The Doctor-Chef (the ship's medical officer and cook) has six limbs and multiple throats that make human speech a bit difficult. The pilot is from a reptilian species with a complex family structure that involves intense parent-foster child relationships but no parent-biological child relationships. All of the ship's humans that have romantic entanglements with non-humans, including one with an AI, one with her shoes (that's a joke, sort of), and one with a member of an irresistibly gorgeous humanoid species that communicates through skin color. The emphasis is less on how weird aliens are, but on what people (or sentients) growing up in very different circumstances can teach us, both about ourselves and about the nature of life. This description may make my 3-star rating seem a bit stingy, especially after I say that Chambers writes well and that there are moments of real warmth, humor, and excitement in the book. Still, I had a hard time reading "Angry Planet." So much goes into making the aliens interesting that not a lot is left over for plot, action, or individual character. There's not much of a story beyond what I've already told you, and the most vivid human characters are secondary: ditzy Kizzy, pint-sized Jenks, and angry, angry whatshisname the algae tech. Rosemary makes a couple of daring choices during the course of the novel, but daring is no substitute for depth. High expectations about how her scandal is going to play out mostly fizzle. There's just not a lot of juice here. So, while I might give the novel a 7 on a scale of 1-10, it gets a 3 on 's 1-5 scale. Bottom line: Worth at least a browse; weakly recommended.

Rosemary Harper is the newest member of the crew of the Wayfarer, a spaceship that drills holes in space-time to create new faster-than-light routes between planets. The Wayfarer is unusual in that it has a multispecies crew, and they're all one big family -- something Rosemary never expected to find. There's no overarching antagonist in this book, it's just about the crew of the Wayfarer (humans, aliens, and AI) going on a space roadtrip, learning about themselves and growing as people, and becoming even closer. It's cozy, and you end up liking everybody by the end. The worldbuilding is great,

it's pretty much everything that makes a science fictional universe fun (to me, at least) lots of alien species that are actually different from each other, faster than light travel, galactic politics, a run-down spaceship with a ragtag but loving crew (okay, that's more the characters than the world), and even a galactic Wikipedia-type thing. I really enjoyed this book, but it still had some obvious flaws. Every crew member in the book gets their own character growth arc, and even though that was satisfying in a lot of ways, it also made the book seem too neat. Not everyone got a happy ending tied up in a bow, but they all changed in important ways, and it all fit the timeline of the journey. It also made the characters seem flat, and too convenient at times, and it made me not invest in them as much. I didn't end up feeling close to any of them, like I do with the best character-driven books. Despite its problems, this book was good enough that I've pre-ordered the next book, A CLOSED AND COMMON ORBIT. It arrives in about ten days and I'm pretty excited to read it.

This book was recommended to me by a friend in the publishing business. She said that it was a story that was about the characters aboard a ship, and that it was one of those stories that you just fell in love with the writing. I couldn't agree more. It's so good to read this kind of book. It's got some of the quiriness of Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy, but with a less pretentious feel. It's a fascinating exploration into the characters set to the background of a really great adventure.

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