

Hot Air: An Arnold Falls Novel

Charlie Suisman

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Arnold Falls lives and breathes and grows in Hot Air, a comedic novel about a picturesque small town and its equally picturesque inhabitants.

Charlie Suisman's *Hot Air* is a charming novel centered on the townspeople of Arnold Falls.

A follow-up to *Arnold Falls*, *Hot Air* maintains the charm and lightheartedness of the original. Jeebie Walker is now fully a part of the fabric of the town, as is evident not only in the townspeople's interactions with him, but also in his repeated involvement with social initiatives. His love of animals continues to shine through, leading to life changes. But he's far from the only character who gets significant attention: indeed, the book is more about the town of Arnold Falls as a whole than it is about any one person in particular. Because of this, the plot revolves around a series of events involving several different characters that lead to a shocking realization about one of Arnold Falls' very own.

Striking the perfect balance between being emotional and funny, the book alternates perspectives as the chapters progress: half are told from Jeebie's point of view, and the other half focus on a cast of different characters. The tone of the story, nonetheless, remains steady: it is light and airy throughout, enhancing the overall feel-good mood. Its dialogue is effervescent—quick of wit and given to banter—while its prose has a laid-back quality that suits the personalities of the townspeople.

Indeed, there is a delightful mix of absurdity into the novel's realism: one character decides to switch to a vegetarian diet; another finds out that she does not, in fact, belong to the *Homo Sapiens* species, but to the (in reality extinct) Denisovans. Most emotionally resonant, though, are the story lines dealing with a woman, Jenny's, relationship with her adopted son, and Jeebie's involvement in a pediatric ward. Jeebie's relationship with another Arnold Falls citizen, Will, strengthens as well: they have come a long way since the first installment of the series, but they're still in the early stages of their relationship. Ex-boyfriends and plans for the future continue to be sensitive topics, but they navigate such situations in a way that makes their subsequent happiness wholly satisfying. And by the end of this charming novel, all of what seemed to be loose ends prove to be interconnected. The book's final revelation is handled with great dexterity, too.

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CAROLINA CIUCCI (November 15, 2021)

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