

Space Story

W. W. Marplot

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Space Story is a witty science fiction novel in which teenagers go up against an army of mutant robots who wish to obliterate humanity.

Earth is destroyed in W. W. Marplot's sprawling science fiction novel *Space Story*, and two teenagers are tasked with saving the universe from obliteration.

Bobby's father is a brilliant scientist who designs robots that can replicate and evolve. Those machines have been tasked with a mission to discover which planets might support human life. But when alien intruders threaten the inventor's estate, Bobby's bodyguards place him in a space-bound orb; his father escapes in a separate rocket, seeking out his non-responsive creations.

When Bobby wakes up, he learns that he's speeding through space among a cohort of cruel, uncouth aliens. Elsewhere, Kay, the meditative sister of a scientist who worked with Bobby's father, also wakes up in space, among aliens who want to destroy all human life—including hers.

Utilizing the vast, sophisticated robot's network, Kay, Bobby, and Bobby's father find each other in space. They call upon their individual strengths (Buddhist calm, innocence and wonder, and scientific genius), enlist the help of a friendly subset of robots, and go to battle against the evil robot cohort.

At its start, the story is smart, original, and exciting, with laughter-inducing moments. The book's descriptions of the vast emptiness and endless darkness of space is chilling, inducing feelings of loneliness and isolation that mirror that which is experienced by Bobby and Kay. But as the narration jumps between different points in the timeline, it becomes enervating.

The labyrinthine plot is further obscured by the unchecked use of scientific and pseudoscientific terminology, as well as by repeating phrases that belabor points. The robots' names blend together, too, rendering them an indistinct group. Still, they are high-tech and self-replicating, and their bizarre body parts make them endearing and quirky as a group: they exhibit faulty understanding of the laws of the universe, and have idiosyncratic foci (they have an obsession with garbage), resulting in humor. Even the explanations for their unusual shapes are clever: they created themselves in the images of toys strewn around Bobby's childhood bedroom.

The book's intricate plot lines are resolved in a happy ending in which past enmities are discarded and future love is promised. There's not much tension leading up to this conclusion, though, as the ultimate survival of the trio is not often in question. Still, *Space Story* is a witty science fiction novel in which teenagers go up against an army of mutant robots who wish to obliterate humanity.

RANDI HACKER (January 16, 2022)

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