

## The First 7

**Laura Pohl**

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In Laura Pohl's absorbing *The First 7*, the last seven teenagers on Earth, having escaped an alien invasion, rove the universe. When a signal from Earth reaches them, they return to find a small community of survivors. But Clover senses that something is off, and her misgivings spiral into terrifying revelations.

The distinctive cast includes Andy, an alien girl with the ability to destroy whole galaxies. To survive, the seven learn to function as a team, protecting Andy even though they fear her power. They are united in their longing to resume their former lives, though fissures develop between those who embrace the village and those, like Clover, who are suspicious of it.

The story is focused most on the fierce loyalties and family-like dynamics of the seven and their friendships. A biological relationship surfaces; too: one of the teenagers encounters a close but long-lost relative, the twist illustrating that life can give, as well as take away.

The book's science fiction elements are matter-of-fact, with casual descriptions of alien species that convey a sense of a populous universe. The teenagers have visited tourist attractions in countless galaxies; they end up being jaded travelers, looking forward to the last leg of their long road trip.

At first swift, the story slows down toward its middle; its third act is absorbing. Suspense builds because of its unified but unfolding plot, whose revelations are timed in a way that keeps interest high. Tensions grow; fresh revelations about the village, and an unimaginable crisis, push the book toward a rewarding conclusion.

*The First 7* is an imaginative, sophisticated science fiction trip for young adults.

SUSAN WAGGONER (March / April 2020)

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