

Under the Heavens

Ruth Fox

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Ruth Fox's *Under the Heavens* updates the tale of Noah's ark, transforming it to feature whales in space and a mission gone awry.

Working under an assumed name, Kim is the only human aboard the *Seiiki*, a giant spaceship bringing Earth's last whales to the planet New Eden. The link installed in her and in the genetically modified whales allows them to communicate via thought. But the technology is so new that some of the whales are able to use it to break the barriers between their species, which not only keeps Kim busy troubleshooting, but also puts her in danger.

The whales, all named after biblical characters, have distinctive needs, personalities, and vendettas. They refuse to be passive passengers among the stars. And Kim begins to suspect that the organization she works for, the Crusaders, has more to its plans than she's been let in on. With an intruder on the ship, and with her own future and those of the last whales at stake, Kim decides where her allegiance lies.

The future Kim inhabits has seen humans ascend into space, but also descend to inhumane depths of poverty. Kim's past as a thief and criminal marks her as a survivor. She's resilient and resourceful, but slow to trust, and the dangers she faces aboard the *Seiiki* force her to reevaluate her independence and lack of vulnerability. The depth of Fox's worldbuilding, paired with the deep development of her characters, results in a sense of urgency. The story also asks important questions about technology, and about when automation hurts and helps humans.

In the space-set adventure novel *Under the Heavens*, a young woman contemplates the complications of communication and trust in a futuristic world.

JEANA JORGENSEN (March / April 2022)

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