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Phoenix

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Grades 6 and Up – When Lucky wakes to the smell of smoke and a scorched bedsheet, his mother begins frantically packing his things. She rushes him out of their apartment and to a nearby space station, hoping to catch a flight off Phoenix, the moon they call home. Although desperately asking questions, Lucky can't get his mother to tell him what's wrong and he is appalled when, after all flights off Phoenix are cancelled, she accepts the help of a group of Aliens known as Axxa, with who Humans are at war. But learning to trust the four Axxa offering him travel on their ship is only the beginning of Lucky's trek across the war-torn galaxy. Lucky is the key to the war between Humans and Aliens; he just doesn't know it yet. Built around Axxa legends of the Twelve Astraeus, *Phoenix* follows Lucky from one solar system to the next; Said creates not just a new religion and a new planet, but multiple galaxies with a star at the heart of each, all connected to Axxa pantheon. As the characters travel, secrets old and new slowly unravel and the secrets of Lucky's own past slowly unknot as well. However, despite a fleshed out narrative, captivating black and white illustrations, and themes of equality, connection, healing, and creation, Lucky's severe lack of self-confidence and general slow-wittedness may leave the reader frustrated and make it difficult to form a bond with his character. VERDICT For patient readers searching for new characters in a unique world.