

Cosmic by Frank Cottrell-Boyce

Who was going to look after her? I'd just got used to being her dad and now she was going away.

I said, 'Are you sure you're going to be all right, Florida?'

She said, 'All right? I'm going to be famous. Like Buzz Lightyear . . .'

'Buzz Aldrin.'

' . . . or Laika the dog. She was just some mongrel, but after she became the first animal in orbit she was the most famous dog ever. They made Laika chocolate bars, Laika soft toys. She was on postage stamps. They wrote songs about her. And she was just a stray. They don't even know what breed she was really. There she was, wandering the streets of Moscow with two other dogs. The next thing Laika was really famous. And she was only a dog,' she said. 'Imagine what it's going to be like for us – the first kids in space. What's up with you?'

She must have seen me flinch. I was thinking, Laika *died* in space. What if . . . ?

'Oh, I know,' said Florida. 'You're jealous because you're not going.'

'Who says so?'

'I say so.'

'Me? Jealous of you!?'

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'As if you're not.'

'As if I am.' I was acting like a kid. I know that. It seemed easier than doing the dadly thing and telling her I was worried about her. I kept thinking of her sitting on top of a two-hundred-foot firework blasting into orbit. What kind of dad lets his child do that?

Then I had to take her to the crew quarters. That was the worst bit – watching her walk away. She didn't even look back and wave. She was chatting happily to Samson Two. They looked so tiny as they passed the Possibility Building.

I thought of all the times in my life that I had wanted Florida Digby to go away, and here I was wishing she'd turn around and come running back.

It was a strange, unhappy thing being on my own in the bungalow that night. I sat up on the couch watching telly all night. Sometimes I'd nod off in the middle of *Celebrity Seance* and wake up in the middle of *Celebrity Dental Check*, then nod off again and wake up in a different episode of *Celebrity Seance*. When the first bit of daylight crept into the room I thought, Right, now I'm allowed to have a bacon butty. I couldn't find actual bacon but I

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Retrieval

- 1) Name three things that were done to celebrate Laika going into space.
- 2) Why did Liam flinch when Florida compared herself to Laika ?

Words in context

- 3) Find and copy a word which means 'without an owner'.
- 4) How does the way Liam describes the rocket make it sound dangerous ?

Inference

- 4) How have Liam's feelings towards Florida changed ? Use the text to explain your answer.