



360 Degrees of Separation

Extremophiles

Josie Long:

Everyone loves an underdog and there's one strange type of organism that proves you don't have to be the biggest or the baddest to be nature's hardest.

Christened 'extremophiles' for their powers of survival in extreme places, these tiny heroes can put up with anything scientists and nature throw at them- acid, radiation, extreme temperatures, they just keep coming back for more.

And this has only made scientists more determined to defeat them. They've taken to sending these survivors into one of the most hostile environments imaginable.... outer space.

But extremophiles like this one plop back down to earth without even a mild case of travel sickness.

And this suggests a pretty sci-fi hypothesis: What if, a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, two life-bearing planets collided. Could an extremophile have piggybacked its way to earth on the debris? Could these sturdy survivors be the origins of life on our planet?