

****INTRO MUSIC****

Jarrah: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our bi weekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. With me today...

Andi: Stop it, stop it!

****laughter****

Andi: He keeps headbutting me and knocking my head into the bed frame.

Jarrah: With me, we have some very silly cats.

****laughter****

Jarrah: But seriously with me today we have Andi.

Andi: Hello!

Jarrah: And Sue.

Sue: Hi there.

Jarrah: And we are going to be starting our next book club episodes shortly, but just before we do have a quick reminder about our Women at Warp Patreon. This is basically how we keep the show going. We volunteer our time, but we use the Patreon funding, even just small pledge amounts from listeners like you, to do things like pay for our website and audio hosting, and travel to convention so we can cover them for you, and things like that, promoting the show. So, if you're able to help out we would love that you can hop over to <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> to pledge a small donation. You also get access to a lot of exclusive content, and like one of the tiers that we've just changed the rewards for slightly you get to do episode watch along with us. So, we're going to be doing one of those later today on "Sub Rosa" [TNG Season 7, Ep. 14].

Sue: *in silly Scottish accent* Don't go inna tha hoose!

Jarrah: I know, so you've missed out if you weren't already a Patreon.

Sue: *still with accent* Dinna go inta tha hoose!

Andi: Tha hooose!

Jarrah: Sorry about that, but for those of you who are fans, yay!!

Sue: Not fans, patrons.

Jarrah: Patreons, yes. Oh, and another thing we want to mention, so we have a goodreads book club and we are holding a giveaway for a book club members, existing and new. Which is we are giving away a copy

of the Star Trek *Prey* trilogy which is a series of three novels by John Jackson Miller and are about the Klingon Empire across the next generation. And they are pretty newly out, they were released in winter 2016. So, if you would like to enter the giveaway to receive those, a copy of the three books in that trilogy, send us an e-mail at crew@womenatwarp.com and just let us know that you want to enter the giveaway to win a copy of Star Trek "Prey" trilogy. So, the deadline is going to be two weeks from the release of this episode, so, February 26th. So, before February 26th join our goodreads book club or if you're already a member. Either way send us e-mail at crew@womenatwarp.com let us know you're a member of the group, we'll verify that and we'll put you in the draw to win the series of the *Prey* trilogy. All right. I'm going to stop messing up what I'm trying to say, and introduce our episode. So, we have a book club on goodreads, for those of you who weren't aware, and that's where we discuss the books that we're reading. Like the series *The Legacies Trilogy* which is a series of three books by different authors that loosely revolve around an adventure that Number One from "The Cage" [TOS Season 0, Ep. 1] had in sort of, in her time serving under Robert April and then how the ramifications of that came back into an adventure with Kirk and Spock. So, yeah, do we have, does anyone else want to maybe give like a little introduction of the book, should we start with Book 1?

Andi: I think we should start with three and work our way backwards.

Jarrah: Well, we could!

****laughter****

Andi: No, book one, book one.

Jarrah: *Captain to Captain* by Greg Cox.

Andi: Yeah, okay, that guy. So, we meet Una, also known as Number One, and she comes to the Enterprise and it seems like it's on a fairly straightforward like, "hey how you doing" kind of mission, but then she just totally goes rogue, and she steals this alien artifact, and like wanders away while Kirk and Spock pursue her. And it turns out that when she was on a mission under Captain April they went to this planet and got into some shenanigans with aliens from another dimension, and she lost her away team to another dimension, and she is going to go back and try and save them. So, she takes off with this alien artifact, and she tries to complete her rescue mission.

Jarrah: But of course you can't really elude Kirk and Spock, as awesome as she is and apparently she is awesome at pretty much everything, which is why she was nicknamed Number One.

Andi: Except for decision making.

Jarrah: Yes. Yeah agreed. But, of course Kirk and Spock catch up to her. But then at the end they decide to help her anyway because they're moved by her story of losing her away team. So, maybe honesty was just the best policy to begin with.

Andi: You would think.

Jarrah: Yeah. I really enjoyed this first volume. I thought it was a nice way of tying together the different time periods. I thought that there was an interesting, like I was intrigued, I thought there was suspense. I thought that it was fun to spend a lot of time with Number One, and to see her as a lieutenant. Like just you know

trying to lead her first away mission, and how you know her being a perfectionist who is almost perfect at everything and then having such an immense failure, which I would say I would say like felt very much like an example of hubris. I thought that that was interesting to see her go through that and to be so driven to correct it.

Andi: Yeah, I liked the book. It was good. I thought it was a good mixture of you know some thematic elements mostly for me it was about command, and what it takes to be a good leader. And then also enough plot to keep things moving, but not get weighed down and I thought the pacing was really good. One thing I liked was seeing Captain April, that was awesome. And I really thought that this especially, this first book, did a really good job of kind of tying in a lot of threads. So, like when I was reading this first one I was thinking to myself, "this makes me want to re-watch "Mirror, Mirror" [TOS Season 2, Ep. 10], it makes me wanna re-watch "The Conscience of the King" [TOS Season 1, Ep. 12], makes me want to re-watch "The Counter-Clock Incident" [TAS Season 2, Ep. 6] from the animated series, like there was a lot of really solid worldbuilding that didn't feel overwhelming. It just kind of fit in very naturally to the larger Trek universe and I appreciated that.

Sue: Yeah, I agree completely. I mean the first book was definitely my favorite of the three, and there were all those little references were delightful and they weren't overdone. You weren't being hit over the head with it. but if you knew the reference it was appreciated. But, there were also a lot of really great little things. I noticed when Una was speaking about her name the phrases used that this is the name that she chose to serve under, because her name was not pronounceable from any other species. And you know something as little as that, that officers are given that choice, is... We talked about it a lot when we covered *Uhura's Song* [Novel by Janet Kagan] about what your name is, and what you choose to be called and how important that is. But, also you know when we get to Usilde, to this planet, and there are genderless or at least believed to be genderless lifeforms, and they're using gender neutral pronouns. That's something that I don't think would have happened in earlier Trek books so I feel like there is bits of progress in that as well.

Andi: I really enjoyed the gender neutral pronouns too, it did kind of throw me that they kept switching between them and then she/he, that was weird.

Sue: Yeah. I couldn't figure out why they would use hir, and not use the the subject pronoun that matches it. Instead they use the s/he.

Andi: Yeah that was that was weird, and you know I was thinking maybe that they were doing that to clear up any confusion, but I mean if they really wanted to keep it as simple as possible they could have just used they.

Jarrah: Or or they could have picked like there are other gender neutral pronouns that have been created. They could have made a new one up for these aliens or they could have used a different one that has been created because it's not just like an example of this is a convention that's been set but it's because, s/he the way that like we use it today it means she or he. So, it doesn't mean someone that doesn't, that is a third gender. It means someone who is either a woman or a man. So, it doesn't really fit with the basically like slugs that don't have a gender. But, I did think it was a cool way into that for maybe some readers who have not had any introduction to third gender pronouns or terminology. And, I think that it was even cooler to see Una and the other you know Starfleet people be like, "oh ok cool. They're just aliens who don't have gender."

Sue: And the first time we're introduced to it, it is Una talking about that. And she is just like, "I can't tell what the gender of these aliens are so I'm going to use these neutral pronouns in my head." Like, it's definitely not a big deal.

Jarrah: So, I just want to go back quickly to the like little touches because I thought that was something that worked well throughout the three books where there's a lot of especially, okay so, the background is very diverse, the background characters and also the characters serving under April. I know some of them I think were established in previous novels, but certainly like every time you see a situation happening on the ship and they talk about people walking by in the background, there's all kinds of different people including like characters that we already know like Lt. Charlene Masters...

Andi: I was so excited about that.

Jarrah: Yeah it was awesome to see her show up and I think she's described as having something cool to do in the first book in engineering wise I think. And there's a significant part for Lieutenant Rahda in book 3. I think it was book three, or book two, I'm not sure, I apologize. So, yeah I mean I definitely noticed that, and it was nice to see there was just you know really good gender and also ethnic racial diversity in the background.

Andi: If only they could have just left Kyle out of it.

Jarrah: But, like back to the planet again. So, basically there's these two groups of people, and like slugs... Slugs and people. So, there's these slugs from another dimension called the Jatohr, and they basically came to our dimension because their universe is being destroyed, but they're really, really xenophobic and really fascist.

Andi: I think that is an accurate description of them, yes.

Jarrah: And they basically enslave this local indigenous population called the Usildar, and I thought that it could have easily felt like they were, the authors were treading a fine line with how the Federation involves themselves in this dispute, because you know do we go into you like, "oh we have to rescue the poor natives from these oppressors." The natives are as usual described as having brown skin although they also have green hair and they have like prehensile toes or something so they can climb trees. But, I thought, even though it was like a somewhat stereotypical description of a quote unquote primitive culture, that there was respect demonstrated on the part of the Federation officers and that even though it may have clashed with the prime directive, you know a willingness to take responsibility for the destruction that was happening to their planet as a result of the Jatohr incursion. Did you guys have any thoughts on the depiction of those two races?

Andi: I think that they did an okay job at portraying an indigenous culture and at least pointing out the pitfalls in having a civilization like the Federation kind of come upon this planet. And, I've always thought the Prime Directive has some unique moral quandaries there. I myself would probably really suck at enforcing it. I would totally like charge down there and be like, "get off this planet!" But, I did think that it was kind of interesting to see that you had these leaders for the Usildar that kept trying to make decisions and then their decisions would be undermined by the Federation. And it kind of made me uncomfortable a handful of the times there was a part I wanna say in the second book where Una is pressing forward, and the leader of the Usildar that's in the other dimension is like, "you're not listening to me, I'm trying to talk to you and you won't listen." And she wasn't, and maybe she was right to do what she did, but I don't think that what they wanted

was taken seriously by any of the cultures that came in. The Klingons, the Federation, or the Jatohr. They all kind of just...

Jarrah: Yeah, like they think that they took the destruction of the planet seriously, but I agree they didn't take their culture very seriously and that there are other times like at the end of book one where she has to get to the citadel set at all and they're telling her not to go and they actually go so far as to like physically try to stop her because of their taboos and like because of the situation that she set in motion and she was the one that originally blew their cover to the Usildar in the first place when they weren't supposed to let the people know they were on the planet that again and again she has to keep violating their taboos and she doesn't have time to talk to them about it.

Andi: Yeah, and it kind of goes to what I think the main theme of these three books is anyway, which is when is it right to follow orders, and when is it right to not follow them. And what makes a good leader. And where is the line between confidence and arrogance. And I mean we have time and time again all these mutinies, all of these orders that are getting ignored everywhere, the Romulans, the Klingons, the Jatohr, and even the Usildar have a young man that Una saved at one point, saving her life in defiance of his own culture's justice system. And I just think it's a really interesting thing to think about is like when does following the orders of your leaders become immoral, and where is the line between you know taking a stand and doing what you think is right in defiance of what your leaders are telling you to do.

Jarrah: Yes, totally agreed. I think that's an interesting thread that runs through, and also we see repeatedly with the Jatohr that there's people in the civilization that question their leaders, and those people are always portrayed as heroes as well as the people questioning at least like the absent, relatively absent Federation Starfleet leadership on, I guess, our heroes side of things.

Andi: Like we had more than one in the second book, we have a Romulan Tal Shiar taking over a ship and issuing orders that are resisted by the crew in various forms, and in the third book we have a Klingon woman taking over a ship and then having that crew also resist orders. It just, it was interesting kind of through line throughout all three books, by the time we got to the Klingon subplot in book three, I was like "okay, I get it," but I mean at least it's consistent, I guess. Which can I say that one of my favorite things about the first book is the end, because it is very, very rare that I get shocked by anything really when it comes to storytelling, like, it's pretty rare, and I was like, "Say what?? We have a Romulan spy!"

Jarrah: Yeah I agree. I also didn't really see that coming and it threw a huge twist into the plot, because you know, I mean I guess I didn't know what else Scotty and, or not Scotty, Spock and Kirk were going to be doing while Una was on this planet, but now they have like two big situations going on for book two, one is that the reason that Una had to go do this apparently at this particular time to go rescue her former crewmates, is that this planet is covered by the Organian Peace Treaty from "Errand of Mercy" [TOS Season 1, Ep. 27], and there's going to be Klingon/Federation peace talks, but you know an incursion into that planet that the Klingons are already trying to occupy and also subdue the indigenous Usildar would possibly jeopardize these peace talks, so she thinks she is more likely to succeed as an individual than taking the whole Enterprise along. So, now Kirk and Spock have to deal with the fact that like, oh crap the Klingons know they're on this planet, the Romulans have this super powerful alien device that at this point like a lot of people just think it just massively kills people and can, it's like a giant transporter beam of death that can go through shields and all sorts of stuff so Romulans have a serious the bad weapon, and then also there's these peace talks and the Klingons maybe don't so much really want them to work. So, yes it sets up a really good start for book two.

Andi: I just was like, "Whaaat?" And then I was super excited to see where that went.

Jarrah: But I was also like maybe you didn't need a woman to bring you like clipboards and fold your pants.

Andi: I love, too, that she was so offended by the job.

Jarrah: I know...

Andi: She's like, "it's so demeaning it's so beneath me. Stupid coffee."

Sue: They tell us throughout the early books that the universe that the Jatohr come from is in danger and they're not going to survive there anymore, but they don't tell us why. So, even if they know that they're being transported to this other dimension they don't know what it actually is like there, because there is zero information given about it.

Jarrah: Yeah and the Jatohr have been radically altering this planet to the point that it's becoming inhospitable for humanoid life, and so it's reasonable to think that maybe the environment in this other universe isn't particularly hospitable to humans either.

Andi: I also really loved the tie in here to "Mirror, Mirror" with the weapon, and the idea that in the mirror universe mirror Captain Kirk got his hands on it and I just thought that was such a cool tie in.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. So, I guess so move on to book two then which is *Best Defense* by David Mack.

Sue: Sure.

Jarrah: So, we basically... We've got some peace talks going on, and I have to say I really loved the early chapters of this book on the peace talks. There's a lot of different dynamics at play where Sarek is leading the Federation team, and he's obviously very dedicated to making this work. Gorkan actually also realizes that they have to bargain in good faith here with the Federation because any other option means the Organians are going to come in and intervene and take away both their military powers. But, the Klingons who are backing him up are not backing him up. They they want blood, and they want things to break down, so they're being unreasonable, including like the actual Klingon government. And I just really enjoyed how the description of those talks were going and the scene where like Gorkan's dancing with Amanda to Blue Danube and the Klingons are getting like all upset because it's so like, you know, human, or sentimental, or not very like manly and violent. So yeah I enjoyed that.

Andi: Yeah, I really liked that he asked Sarek for permission, and he was like, "it's not my choice."

Jarrah: Yeah exactly.

Andi: My wife makes her own decisions and I abide by them. I was like yeah, you're the best.

Jarrah: Yeah and the Romulans, like okay, yeah, there's so much going on in this book. The Romulans are of course trying to exploit the fact they now have this device, and maybe if they use it to disrupt the peace talks the Organians will like disable both of these key enemies of theirs, because like the Federation and the Klingons will blame each other and then the Romulans could take over the universe, and then the Orions also think the same thing, and so they're messing up things, and there's a little bit more for Uhura to do in

this book as a result because the Enterprise has to go to this planet and try and investigate stuff that's happening. So, it was nice to see Uhura get to play a bit more of a role in book two.

Sue: Apparently she's a hacker.

Jarrah: Yeah that was cool.

Andi: And a really competent one.

Sue: Yeah, right?

Jarrah: Yeah, I can see it.

Sue: Oh totally. But it's just not what you expect.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: One thing I almost always like about the Star Trek books is that you get to spend more time on characters like Uhura and Chekov and Sulu. In this particular one, book two, I really enjoyed Sulu flying. I really love it when they make Sulu into such a hero, he really saves their ass a couple times. I always really enjoy that, and then Uhura and Chekov working together to do their little mystery solving while they're tracking down the Orion spies. I enjoyed all of that. The biggest problem I have with Book two is that I feel like there was too much plot and not enough theme. So, like the first book I thought was well balanced between the two and the second one even though there's not a storyline that I thought particularly didn't work, I just felt like there were too many of them. Did you really need both the Orions and the Romulans doing basically the same sabotage? It just felt like a little bit too much, and it seemed like it was more like focused on okay, "this happened and that now this happened, and then okay now this happened." And it was super, it was an enjoyable read, I just don't feel like it had quite the depth of theme that the first one had.

Sue: There was definitely a lot going on, and I mean in addition to everything we've already talked about there was the Joanna McCoy storyline, which I have to say I do really kind of enjoy fatherly Bones, but it was just another thing and it made for a fast and enjoyable read, but I would agree with you there was a lot going on.

Jarrah: Yeah and I would say that you know partly because of that it felt like there was action for the sake of action happening. And there were moments in both this book and there was one moment in book three where it like verged on or definitely went into damsel in distress territory, and it didn't seem like it was really a particular reason for it. So, in book two there's like one moment where it doesn't get there but like the Klingons are kind of threatening Sarek and that you know, because Gorkon's disappeared he's been transferred into the other universe, and that the Klingon general basically is like I want an answer or else. And then Sarek goes or else what, he says we'll find out just how much your wife really means to you, like this whole idea over and over again that like we need to threaten women in order to emotionally motivate men. And while Joanna McCoy when she is kind of abducted by this like drug addicted Orion she saves herself from that situation in a pretty rad way, but it again is like let's make McCoy worry. And then at the end she gets transferred into the parallel universe and then you get to see McCoy worry more about her. So, I don't know, I just felt like it was a little bit tired and unnecessary.

Andi: Yeah at first I was like wow they really just brought Joanna McCoy in here to get taken hostage did they. But at least she basically saved herself and I did like seeing McCoy and McCoy. That was nice. So, like at first I was a little bit wary, but in the end I still think that she made for a nice addition and they did let her do some stuff, I just especially towards the beginning of her storyline I was like why.

Jarrah: Yeah exactly. I had the same thought. I think it got better and I was less leery of it. But certainly when it started where you know McCoy is telling her like you have to get somewhere safe and she's like I'm a nurse I'm not going to and then you know she gets abducted right after, and it's like she is getting like blindfolded and threatened, it's pretty gross. But you're right it does, she does get like actually more of a character and more to do later.

Andi: And I mean her arc is basically her and McCoy reconciling, and also her getting McCoy to understand that he doesn't get to make her decisions, so that was nice.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: There were a few other little things about Book 2 that you know made me give a side eye a little bit. One was that the constant descriptions of Una in the other universe with her "raven hair and her her glistening perspiration." I'm like come on now.

Jarrah: No, "Her delicate sheen of perspiration." You're talking about sweat.

Sue: Yeah, this is not that character.

Jarrah: Yeah it just felt like, it reminded me there was a McSweeney's spoof about like what if male characters were written like men write women characters, and this, it felt like a little bit like the women characters were not ever allowed to be unattractive because...

Sue: Yes.

Jarrah: At this point when they're talking about her like delicate sheen of perspiration, this is after the very end of book one where she is like as you know escaped gone down to this planet, she's run through a bramble forest, and across the muddy field, fallen into a swamp, and been like hauled up the side of the citadel...

Andi: And then fought Klingons...

Sue: And she has a delicate sheen of perspiration.

Jarrah: Yeah, and then like ends up in a desert in the other universe, and then it's like, let's be honest here also if you have a delicate sheen of perspiration on the back of your hand literally every other inch of your skin is sweating.

laughter

Jarrah: Like, it's okay to you know kind of stink and not look that great after all that it's okay. That's how people work. I know she's Number One but I still don't buy it.

Sue: But the other thing I noticed that I know that Jarrah picked up on too because we talked about it before, was the sort of background trans character. Which was neat that there was this background trans character, but I wasn't super sure about the way they describe that person. It was like because of her low voice her transition was obvious it was like wait a minute, no.

Jarrah: Yeah, so I have it right here it's like, "Chief Nomi Wreade, she was tall but slight of frame and her jet black hair was coiffed in a smart bob the faintest hint of a deeper register in her slightly nasal voice suggested the transitional nature of her gender. But there was no mistaking her authority as her deputies and their Klingon harassers all froze in place." And yeah. So, we definitely talked about it. It's problematic to say that you could like infer someone's gender from their voice, but we also talked about we weren't 100 percent sure how you would have done it differently to make it clear.

Andi: That's a tough one.

Sue: Yeah, because with you know other background characters, you can use other descriptors to signify race.

Jarrah: Or, like we know Charlene Masters is an African-American woman.

Sue: Right. Or we can, maybe this is not the best thing, I don't know, but like Raul Martinez you can assume that this is a Hispanic man.

Jarrah: Yeah. And Tim Shimizu.

Sue, But how do you have trans characters that are background characters and have a very one short scene without saying oh and by the way this person is trans.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: You know?

Jarrah: Yeah, because like not all trans people do use alternate pronouns. So, you know you can't, I would say like not even necessarily a majority do, so you can't just I mean sometimes you can I've seen it done where a character was just described with alternate pronouns and you infer from that, but I liked that he immediately like moved from that to saying though that her authority was really evident.

Sue: Yes.

Andi: Oh mis-gendering.

Jarrah: Yeah exactly, and like no one mis-genders her says she's a man or anything. So, that was good but then it was unfortunate because I was like oh ok cool there's like a trans cop in charge of this planet security and then you basically never see her again, like very little. So, that was kind of disappointing. I was like I guess maybe just do more with that character would have been nice, because otherwise all you have is these like giant evil genderless slugs, that are not binary gendered, so maybe you could have done a little bit, especially like I dunno, okay I guess it wouldn't have made any sense given her position to bring her back in book three, but there was a lot of room to do more with trans characters or really anything in book three.

Sue: I mean it's it's a difficult thing to talk about even because I want to say it was an excellent try, and you're definitely painting that character in a positive light. But just even the way she was described or that information was provided felt.

Andi: Foggy.

Sue: Yes, yes.

Jarrah: Yeah, I know but I would be interested in if any listeners had any ideas for a better way to present that.

Sue: Absolutely.

Jarrah: Like to present a background character, because I've done a lot of thinking about well you know maybe someone could have mentioned it or something, but then I'm not sure that would have been less problematic. Like maybe have someone who knew that character before she transitioned, or something. I don't know, but then that might have introduced its own problems so I don't know exactly how you do it without falling into some kind of stereotype. Just if you want to leave the rest of the book as is and just kind of throw in this background character and be like by the way there trans.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: I don't know. I mean okay, here's, okay, now that I'm thinking about this they could have just said Nomi Wreade, the trans woman although then it would be like why didn't you call all the other women cis-women so okay I'm just thinking because there was a lot I also noticed in book two of descriptions of skin colors that were kind of unnecessary, and like it happened to characters of all different kinds of races, so I don't think it was particularly a racist thing to do, I'm not saying that, it was like there were descriptions of Una being very pale, and descriptions of Uhura's, you know, whatever, dark skin, and I was like yeah we know we watched the show.

Sue: I've always wondered that about some of these Star Trek books, all of the time that is spent describing the physical characteristics of our main characters, like we know, we're aware.

Jarrah: Yup.

Andi: I think description can be hard, and I think the main thing that you want is, you want to get a sense of the character without the audience having to really notice that you're doing that, but it's tough it's tough to integrate that stuff.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure.

Andi: I did want to talk about Sadira a little more. Okay, so I was thinking, because as I said at the end of Book One was awesome and I was like yeah, and then I was like oh cool, we'll have another Romulan woman to be like yeah, badass! But I feel like she did not live up to the hype. She actually reminded me a little bit of Sela in that it was like she kind of just came out of nowhere is a shadowy figure and like "oooh shocking", and then when we actually get into her like doing her dastardly plotting, she kind of sucks at it.

And then also she was so one dimensional just like there was a handful of times where she was like “let's be evil” basically.

Sue: And then the Romulan plot went away entirely and it wound up being lots of Klingons.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean so yes Sadira is like woman who was the Tal Shiar agent who was being the yeoman in the first book, and she basically yeah I think she's saying like Sela is good, like she kind of comes across as just like she's actually a human woman, she has risen in the Tal Shiar, no one on the ship likes her, and she basically throws giant temper tantrums, and her... Yeah and you're right like at the end of the day she's just suggesting they do things that make zero sense out of, I don't know, a need to...

Andi: Control?

Jarrah: Keep control, yeah, I mean it was cool to see her, the effect that she had on the politics on the ship between the male officers who are military and not Tal Shiar, but I agree that she didn't 100 percent do it for me.

Andi: I just, I would have liked to see more of a motivation for her beyond like, “Muhahaha” because that's what it kind of felt like, there was all these times where she was like hey we'll win, and I'm like okay... A little over the top.

Jarrah: I wasn't 100 percent clear how she became a human Tal Shiar agent. Did you guys get that? Did I just miss that?

Andi: I feel like she grew up there, but I don't really remember.

Sue: There was definitely a back story about how she grew up and was raised, possibly that like her colony was taken over by the Romulans.

Andi: Yeah I feel like that sounds right, but the impression I got... Well, okay, so here's a good example of this could have been interesting motivation. Was she overdoing it because she was trying to prove herself? Well if that's what was happening it was not clear enough. It just kind of felt like, except for the very beginning where she was like I'm so glad I don't have to slog around coffee anymore, after that she just became very, “we're going to do the mission, even though we're doing it incompetently and I'm going to ignore everybody else's very sensible suggestions and we're always going to do it my way” and it just felt very strange like I didn't understand why she was doing the things that she was doing. Other than evil!

Jarrah: Yeah, other than she was so sick of delivering coffee that any future in which anyone ever had to do that again made her just...

Andi: I really did love it though and she is like on the other bridge and she's like, “Hey Kirk what up? You can take your coffee and shove it.” That was so endearing, okay, that was so endearing. And then she just ruined it. It was such a solid introduction to like this bad ass Romulan spy who was going to outmaneuver Kirk and be this formidable steely foe, and then she just kind of came across as like, petty.

Sue: I love your choice of the word endearing.

Andi: It was! I mean how many yeoman wanted to do that? Let's be real. How many of them wanted to take that coffee and like blow it up with a phaser instead of heat it with a phaser.

Sue: You knew that she was going to be important in some way because of how much time was spent on describing her.

Jarrah: I thought maybe she was in like another book or something I just hadn't read or maybe they had mentioned her in some other episode and that's why she was being featured.

Sue: But she was like, the new yeoman who was over eager.

Andi: They described Lorna a lot too.

Jarrah: Oh yeah Lorna was awesome. And Lorna is in other books but like in book one there's in the description of Robert April's crew Lorna the first officer is awesome and I loved her just want to say that.

Andi: Kind of made me laugh though that Kirk was so like frustrated about his yeoman betraying him, he was so mad. It's like no one can replace Rand.

Jarrah: Yeah. Yeah. No, no entitlement at all.

Andi: Who's going to get him his coffee? What will he sign?

Jarrah: Oh I know. It's like so hilarious that they have this alien device that they've hidden from Starfleet and the only people who know about it are the captains and the first officers of the Enterprise and the yeoman.

Andi: Well to be fair she put listening devices in there so it's not like he told her about it. It's just that she's been spying on them. But you would also think there would be like a standard operating procedure for like sweeping for bugs.

Jarrah: And also just for like security screening like that maybe you'd know that this human grew up on Romulus if that's the case and maybe, like I'm not saying that you should discriminate based on the planet they grew up but...

Sue: If your yeoman has access to the captain's quarters at all times...

Jarrah: I feel like if someone gives you a resume and there's like that many years missing out of their thing where they were doing, I don't know, and it just says like hey I was working at a coffee shop and then maybe they check your references and the like I don't know who that person was. And then you find out who she was a Tal Shiar agent, okay. I don't know, check your references Federation, that's what I'm saying.

Andi: I do think it's kind of great that they they did make a yeoman a spy, because people dismiss them so much, and I thought that that was a neat twist, as I said. I was completely on board for the very beginning of that storyline and I wish that I had gone further that would have been cool.

Jarrah: All right. So, it's time to talk about book three. *Purgatory's Key* by Dayton Ward and Kevin Dilmore.

Sue: Nearly 400 pages, nearly 100 of them are summaries.

Andi: Summaries or Chekov building a probe.

Sue: Right? That's another 100 pages. So you've got a hundred pages of summaries of the first two books, and then another hundred pages of Chekov building a probe.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean I think it's safe to say we were all slightly disappointed by this installment, although I'm like really curious to know how they assign who gets what parts of the plot in trilogies like this because by the time it got to this point there just really wasn't that much left to cover. Like, we basically know they are going to rescue people, or at least some of the people from the alternate universe, because we know Sarek and Gorkon don't die and they're both in there now, and so really like the only question is how.

Sue: And so much happens in book two, that not much is left for book three.

Jarrah: Yeah exactly. And it's all wrapped up like you said like the Romulans are just done like, there would be no point in bringing the Romulans back because there was like the one ship they lost the transfer key, the ship's totally disabled, Sadira is dead, so there's no point bringing back the Romulans. A lot of book one was flashbacks, that's covered so you can't do that.

Sue: I'm joking about it somewhat, but I did think that the summaries of the previous books that were in this book were excessive. I understand that when you've got a series, because I read series all the time, that you sometimes want to give a reminder of what happened. But, there were literally like pages worth of summaries of what happened.

Jarrah: Yeah I think it was it was the first 40 pages.

Sue: In the prior book and then they summarize it again when talking about the Klingon crew. It's the same summary twice.

Jarrah: And it was, it was a little I don't know I felt like it was a little I don't know how you'd make it less clunky, I think that amount of summary just like has to be clunky, but you would have like Spock would go talk to someone else on the Enterprise and be like oh and here's the whole story.

Sue: Just don't get the whole story assume that someone reading book three has read books one and two.

Jarrah: Well and then I wondered whether there was also a requirement that the book meet a certain length because all the books are roughly the same number of pages. And, maybe if they wrote the rest of it and were like seriously I can't write anything else about this story, which would be fair but I don't know. But, yeah I mean so the book three in addition to, yeah there's the part about Chekov building a probe, which felt to me like technobabble generally not the part most people appreciate about Star Trek, but there were like many chapters of technobabble in this about like how Chekov is building this probe that will work in the other universe and send signals back and I mean I guess it was cool that we got to see how much Spock appreciates Chekov, and Uhura appreciates Chekov, and everyone appreciates Spock and Uhura, and there was a lot of sort of using these scenes to try to add character moments, but I felt like they weren't particularly new or exciting character moments. Like, oh Spock's sad that his dad is missing, and McCoy is mad that his daughter's missing, and everyone's empathizing with each other because their family members are missing.

Andi: Yup. I thought it would have been better if we spent more time in the other dimension for this one, because we spent so much of book two in our dimension with the Klingons, and the Romulans, and the Orions, and all of that shenanigans going on. It would have been kind of cool to have the third book be way more focused on the other dimension and maybe beefed up their interactions with the Jatohr, because I found that to be mostly the most interesting part of this book is specifically... So we've got this Jatohr leader who is basically a xenophobic slug that is so afraid of different people and cultures that he is dismissing his own scientists and cracking down on dissent and free will among his own people, I thought that was a pretty interesting topic.

Jarrah: Yeah. No, no relation to anything in our current world.

Andi: Yeah I mean I couldn't relate at all *sarcasm*. But anyways, I just I thought that that section, like all those sections where we had yet another scientist going rogue, I feel like that could have been beefed up, and that theme that we're talking about that goes through all three books, really could have been honed well here. Like, when is it right to fight back against the evil that your people are doing, or that your government is doing, and that could have been really cool, and I feel like we didn't get enough of it at all.

Jarrah: Yeah I agree. Because basically this book introduces this whole new thing that I at first was not super into, which was this idea that the parallel universe that they land in which is like this weird timeless like, desert where time has no meaning and they don't need to drink water and stuff like that, and then they get some trees and they meet the Usildar and the people that have survived there from the Enterprise and the Klingons and Serak, and Joanna, and everyone, and then Una, Martinez, and Shimizu go off to find the Jatohr city and they get imprisoned. But, like from the... So that happens like right at the beginning of the book, or they were already imprisoned by the end of book two I can't quite remember, but, then very, very quickly in book three we all learn that basically all of that is a shared illusion, like we aren't sure exactly that it's a shared illusion, but it's clear that there is something that's not, like that's uncanny about this universe that Una can manipulate the environment with her mind and Sarek is psychically communicating with Amanda in the other universe, and also thinking maybe something is going on and falling into these weird trances. So, then like they basically get out of prison really pretty quickly like they sleep one night in prison, they get out, they get chased a little bit, and then they're pretty much back with their group.

Andi: To be fair, Starfleet does spend a lot of time getting imprisoned, and a lot of time escaping those prisons. So, at this point you figure that they'd be experts at it.

Jarrah: Yes, yes, exactly. So, yeah I agree with you I'm basically backing up what you're saying, I'm picking up what you're putting down.

Andi: Well, one of the things that I found really, really interesting, is the idea of the Jatohr's xenophobia being like antithetical to their actual nature. Like so, they lived in a universe where there was no other sentient life. So, they had literally never dealt with even the idea of other sentient life, and it does make sense to me that you would react poorly to that, to finding out that there's a whole nother universe filled with all of these different kinds of sentient beings, when you have been the only one in your universe forever. So, I actually think that's very interesting. It's like how much of xenophobia is about lack of proximity, rather than proximity. So like how much of it is not knowing anything about other cultures, you know. So...

Jarrah: Yeah, like total ignorance breeding fear.

Andi: Yeah, exactly. And this idea where you have all these Jatohr's especially the scientists insisting that they love life and they care about life, but the first thing that they do when they meet another sentient species is they enslave them. And I think that's a very interesting concept that should have been explored more, it was very interesting to me. And, the shared consciousness thing, didn't make sense to me. I was reading this and thinking I'm going to need some Sue's Science Corner, because this doesn't make any sense. And then I kind of got into it when Sarek was kind of like bringing them back together, and like finding each other, I thought that was kind of interesting but the concept itself doesn't make any sense to me.

Jarrah: I really disliked it when they were on the planet and it was about like manipulating things with your mind, because none of this is real. Because, at that point you're still not really sure, like are people actually dying when we see them dying. There's this weird part where all the Starfleet people start attacking each other, you see people who have died grotesquely, and then like Una's pulling a lantern out of the ground with her mind, and I was just going like seriously?

Andi: She's like here, here's some phasers shoot them with your mind and it's like okay...

Sue: Well, we spent so much of book two there with, in the other universe with them saying wait a minute we don't have to drink? When's the last time you slept? So, I felt like in book 3 we could have gotten to the whole, "this is a dreamscape" sort of thing revelation a lot faster, and then spent more time with Sarek in the I guess actual other dimension, there's so many levels. Yeah. So, the planet, the desert planet got pretty dull to me pretty quickly, but once we got you know Sarek linking people together, pulling them out of stasis or whatever you want to call it, like I was interested, I'm not sure exactly how it was supposed to work, I don't know if I can science this out for you Andi.

Jarrah: There's um, filaments, and people's minds are in them? And you can travel through the void and link them with your mind.

Andi: What we really need is Sarek's Science Corner, we need him to explain it.

Jarrah: Except we have to spell science, psience.

****laughter****

Jarrah: Yeah I mean so like Sarek leaves the shared illusion and then Una does, and then they're able to bring the other people into the not illusion space, which is apparently everyone floating in the light or something, and I'm not really sure how that's not an illusion, but I mean that also lends an interesting thing that they didn't explore about the Jatohr, about Woryan who's like the dictator guy, because apparently he and his followers, the xenophobes, are like refusing, like they have a fully adopted this illusion as real, even though they like at some level know that it's an illusion, that it's like a space that was set up to help them transition between universes. But, they're like so dedicated to this idea of power and their own superiority that they have to like, they want to continue playing in this like violent fear, and fear laden I guess existence. So, we also get a significant Klingon subplot that just kind of comes...

Andi: Comes out of nowhere, and goes nowhere.

Jarrah: All in all, yeah kind of.

Sue: I was so uninterested in the Klingons.

Jarrah: Yeah I wanted to be because I was interested in Visla who was like the dishonored woman commander, I thought like that is a character I could be interested in, and so she's basically leading this ship full of other people who have tainted honor, but you know enough honor that they've got to be in the military, but no one really wants to work with them so they stuck them on this ship together, and I kind of liked some of the hints that were given, like her security officer maybe is her friend with benefits slash deuling teacher and it was like oh okay, cool. And, she basically decides that Kirk has made this really big mistake saving all of these Klingons in the last book because they should have just died with honor, including her son, and so now there's like people trapped in the other dimension and Klingons who were not allowed to fight to the death, and so she just kind of has a vendetta against Kirk, and she takes her rust bucket dump of a ship to the planet where there's another Klingon ship that's there to come and make, like oversee their science experiments on the planet. There's also a cool Klingon woman scientist on the planet who doesn't really end up going anywhere.

Andi: Which is sad, she was cool! I dug her!

Jarrah: Yeah and I also wanted her to like I was like oh cool a woman scientist on the planet, she seemed like she could have mirrored the Jatohr scientists, like she was kind of standing up to her commanders and the pressure they were putting her under. But then she dies.

Andi: Frustrating.

Jarrah: Yeah. And Visla like tries to attack the Enterprise and ends up having the like male commander of the other ship destroy their ship, and ultimately she...

Andi: Fails a lot?

Jarrah: Takes over their ship but then dies and gets killed for failing. So yeah. And I don't know, I was kind of, because there is a lot of her talking about her son, and his honor, and I kind of wanted to see them reunited and have I don't know some payoff to that storyline, but they felt like it was an attempt to fill space and introduce some more suspense, but I don't know if it really succeeded.

Andi: Yeah. So, at the end everybody is saved. Kind of. Martinez has some mental health issues, but for the most part everybody gets saved from the other universe and they're going to help the Usildar get their planet back, and they've got the Jatohr and they're going to help resettle them, and Una's not going to face any consequences for stealing the key and running off. Nobody is going to face consequences for anything apparently.

Sue: No, she goes to turn herself into Kirk, and Kirk says I'm not going to arrest you, I'm going to stand with you. And there's this whole thing about like we don't know what kind of charges they'll bring, but probably nothing because we helped these people.

Andi: Yup.

Jarrah: Yeah. And we got the thing back for the Romulans even though we lost it to the Romulans to being with.

Sue: Because there are no consequences in Star Trek.

****laughter****

Sue: Wait, that's not right, is it?

Andi: So, overall, I liked this trilogy. I thought it was a fun couple of books. I just think that they were way better at setting things up than they were paying them off.

Jarrah: Yeah. I just want to just super quickly talk about Martinez's outcome, because it was not really dwelt on, but there were a couple of parts that I found a bit problematic when you go back to some, you know, discussions we've had on like ableism and mental health on the show previously. One of them is this whole thing where Una's basically like I was prepared that any one of them might be dead but I wasn't prepared for this. So, like this idea that it's better to be dead than be disabled like in his case, he has a severe disabling trauma that he, they say like very well may recover from in time. Yeah, so, you know maybe not so cool, but like I mean I get the thought there that she had, that it wasn't something she had anticipated, but it was just kind of an unfortunate response when that was like really the only response we had to his situation. And then there's this whole thing that like you know we're going to send him to Vulcan because maybe on Vulcan there's someone who can help him, because I'm like seems to me like he had a trauma that would be like similar to traumas that you know we currently treat in mental health today, that like 300 years from now you seriously like have to go to Vulcan to get treatment for trauma that you had during Starfleet. There's only like one place in the whole galaxy to go, or universe. Anyway, that was just my two cents on that.

Sue: Yeah, it was, it was unfortunate.

Jarrah: But. I mean, I guess at least there it was shown like it wasn't super perfectly easy for everyone at the end. I also like you, thought it was a little bit too neatly wrapped up after, especially all that Una had done, and Kirk and Spock in helping her. All right. Any final thoughts?

Andi: Are we going to rate it?

Jarrah: Sure...

Andi: I was going to do three out of four fascist slugs that you should resist.

Jarrah: Yes! I will rate this four out of five opportunities to tell Kirk that you're not pouring his coffee anymore.

****laughter****

Sue: Oh man... I would say four out of five stolen alien artifacts that transfer you to another dimension.

Andi: There you go.

Jarrah: All right. Well thanks for this discussion of *Legacy's* book club. Andi, where can people find to you elsewhere on the Internet or in another universe.

Andi: The easiest place to find me is on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/FirstTimeTrek>

Jarrah: Sue, what about you?

Sue: Well, I do plan to be spending a lot of time in an alternate universe but otherwise you can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/spaltor>

Jarrah: Yeah the easiest way to get in touch with me is to go into a hypnotic trance and say "my wife" over and over again, but if you lack telepathic abilities then you can find me on <http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com/> or at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin> And, you can contact our show at crew@womenatwarp.com or on our Facebook page or Twitter <https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp/> or <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> or our website, <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> and check out our new blog, cause it's been awesome. Great. So, thanks for joining us again and thanks for listening.

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