

Women at Warp Episode 65: Book Club: Worlds of DS9: Cardassia & Andor

(Audio clip of Denise Crosby)

Denise: Hi this is Denise Crosby and you're listening to Women at Warp.

(begin WAW theme)

Jarrah: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with us we have Sue!

Sue: Hi everybody.

Jarrah: And, unfortunately, the rest of our crew wasn't able to make it today. Andi sends her regrets. She began reading the book we're going to discuss before realizing it had post Deep Space Nine spoilers. So, you know what, we'll miss Andi and Grace today, but we're going to try and have a good discussion about our most recent book club selection: Worlds of DS9 Volume One, about Cardassia and Andor.

Sue: Yeah. Andi sent us a message that said, "Um, last time I checked, the O'Brien's only had one kid." We were like, "Stop now!"

(both laugh)

Jarrah: Yep. Our bad! But before we get into the discussion we have a little bit of housekeeping. As you may know, our show was entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to support our show, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards. From things on social media to watch along commentaries. Our most recent Patreon exclusive one was a commentary on "The Trouble with Tribbles." So, visit patreon.com/womenatwarp and sign up for that, if you're able to. You can also support us by leaving a rate and review on Apple Podcast, or wherever you get your podcast, to help people discover our show. And now onto our—oh wait! I think we have maybe one other item of housekeeping which would be: convention.

Sue: Yeah, well, I guess by the time this is released Star Trek Las Vegas is over and I will use my "future vision" to say that Jarrah and Grace had an awesome time.

(laughter)

Sue: Coming up, over Labor Day weekend, I will be at Dragon Con. Schedules are coming together. I will be all over the place and it looks like on at least 14 panels right now and growing, which is a little bit...intense.

Jarrah: Oh my gosh.

Sue: (laughing) But, we'll see what happens. As of right now, there is a panel that will be titled "Women at Warp," even though it will just be me. It's really like a women of Star Trek panel. And, as of right now, that appears to be on Saturday morning after the parade. But just to be sure, if you're going to be at Dragon Con and want to come hang-out with me: check the schedule app when the schedule is actually put into the app, which will be about seven to ten days before the con.

Jarrah: Cool. All right. Well, let us get into our main topic. So, this is the most recent selection in our Book Club. If you want to join our Book Club, you can do so by going to Good Reads and searching the groups for Women at Warp. And this book was suggested by one of our listeners because, in the past, we've talked about and we've had a blog post written about Keiko O'Brien and how she, maybe, isn't the most popular character ever. And so, it was suggested that we read this book that, the first part, is sort of Keiko focused. And we get to see her "sciencing" and things. So, this book is part of the DS9 relaunch series and it's set after "Unity." So, before "Typhon Pact" and, I think, before "Destiny." I would say that it's nice to have read the other books in the DS9 relaunch prior to that, but maybe not 100% crucial. But there may be some things that you're just like, "I don't really 100% get that," like peripheral characters that are referred to, that if you aren't familiar with the relaunch

series then that might not be significant to you. But, overall, I think you can digest it without having thoroughly read them. I'd only read like two of the other relaunch novels that are set prior to this and I still felt like I got a good sense of it.

Sue: Yeah, and for the most part, in the relaunch books, I tend to follow the TNG stories, so, I don't necessarily have the DS9 background, but I think the most important thing to know is that it is, of course, post Dominion War and Cardassia is sort of reeling from the Dominion/Jem'Hadar occupation and takeover.

Jarrah: So, the first part is called "The Lotus Flower" and it's by Una McCormack. So, one of the reasons we chose this book is it has women protagonists and two women writers. And did you actually know that Una McCormack started out by writing Cardassia-centric fanfiction?

Sue: Well, I did not know that before. It's in her bio in this book. (laughs)

Jarrah: Yeah, it's pretty cool. I mean, we've talked before about how, you know, a lot of fan fiction writers have ended up writing the official novels. But in her bio on Memory Alpha she talks about saying, "I am a fanfiction writer by history and inclination, by which I mean my instinctive response to a text which affects me in some way is to move into the space of that text, inhabit it as entirely as possible, and start writing from within it. I had barely finished watching "What You Leave Behind" before hitting the keyboard. I had to write about this: about Garak's remorse, Ziyal's murder, Damar's sacrifice. I found—thank my lucky stars—a beta reader of great skill (a professor of English literature, no less), who coaxed from me my first novel-length piece of writing, an alternate universe story in which Enabran Tain successfully destroys the Founders and Garak returns triumphantly to Cardassia... for a while. I read deeply into the history of the rise of Nazism, particularly Gitta Sereny's outstanding biography of Albert Speer, and some of what I learnt fed into my stories of Cardassia, and the architects of her ruin." So, that's pretty cool and I would also like to read that first novel length fanfiction if it is out there anywhere. (Sue chuckles) Do you want to maybe give a quick synopsis of this part of the book?

Sue: Yes. So, Keiko and Miles and the two kids have gone to Cardassia because, like I said, the occupation really destroyed the planet and they're suffering. And she is running a project where they're basically trying to make the land able to produce food and plants again. And she's the director of this project where she has, you know, handpicked her staff and invited everyone to bring their families and is trying to really make a community out of this scientific project. But there is some discord between some different religions on Cardassia, which we really haven't experienced before. And the Vedic from Bajor is actually coming to visit. You know, it's a political statement/diplomatic joining of hands—yada, yada. Because the Bajorans and the Cardassians are trying to be friends and move past the prior occupation of Bajor and some of the Cardassians aren't happy about it and they're very concerned with, "preserving what they have left," is the phrasing that often gets used. They're concerned that they're going to lose, in Cardassia, what makes them Cardassian. And a young girl, one of the daughters of one of the scientists that works for Keiko, who feels she should have been the director, by the by, is brainwashed by one of these religious sects. And during a speech from the Vedic, stands up and has a bomb strapped to her chest. And they have to talk her down and figure out why this happened and figure out how they can just not heal the land of Cardassia, but the people as well so they can move forward and sort of rebuild.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, in this case she's actually brainwashed by sort of like an anti-religious sect because the religious sect is the Orialian Way, that we are first introduced to in the Garak's centered book, "A Stitch in Time." And Keiko is letting them, sort of, freely worship on the project where they're doing this terra forming and it's upsetting some of these people who think that this is, sort of, polluting Cardassian culture and that, "if we want to repair Cardassia, we have to go back to our old traditions." And this is, actually, a way older tradition, but it's basically a people clinging to their culture in desperation. And you know, something that they're able to empathize with a bit, because of what happened on Bajor. And you see the way that, similarly, the Bajorans clung to The Prophets and really resisted secular education, is kind of the reverse happening on Cardassia.

Sue: Yeah and this woman "Teela" or "Taylah" (Tela) is the one complaining to Keiko about the Orialian Way worshipping in the open. And she says things like, "Well, they can worship however they want. I just don't want it to be public," which feels very current in our political climate, even though this is not relatively recently published, I don't believe. But it's interesting how many of the themes—2004—themes make me think about what's going on right now.

Jarrah: Absolutely.

Sue: But it's her daughter, Nyra, who is taken in by a group called The True Way. And I don't think that her mother, Tela, is really subscribing to either. I think she sees herself as just, you know, common "standard" Cardassian.

Jarrah: Yep. And she's really appalled when this happens to her daughter and sort of blames herself because, you know, her views of just like, "Well, you know, I guess I can tolerate it as long as it isn't shoved in my face," were just a more restrained version of the views that influence her daughter. They basically take it to the next level that they shouldn't be here and we should, you know, commit violence to get rid of them. So, yeah, I would agree it definitely felt like there was a lot that was relevant going on. There's also a lot of stuff about the political struggles between Ghemor and his political opponents. Garak's all up in there, Miles is all up in there. I think part of the issue with this is that in order to really appreciate those political things you maybe had to read the other books. They refer to these shadowy men who are maybe engineering some of what's going on, but they don't really ever tell you who they are. So, I posted in our Good Reads group saying, "What is going on with this?" I was really confused. And we heard from Lydia, who has read all of the other relaunch books and says: "At the time I first read this I remember being reminded of The Smoking Man from the X-Files. I guess I thought that they were part of something, perhaps the Obsidian Order that Garak was ousted from, that was pulling the political strings on Cardassia, especially after they mention him specifically in their final appearance. So much of Cardassian politics are shrouded in secrecy, espionage, blackmail, etc. And I always got the impression that the Obsidian Order had no loyalty to any particular side, that they were always trying to be on the side that would allow them power or to achieve their goals. So, I think when I read it I thought they were responsible for pushing the xenophobic and exclusionist ideology that ended up causing the crisis that unfolds." So, that makes sense to me. It would be interesting to know if there was more significance that was just missed there. What did you think of the way that Keiko was portrayed, since that's one of the reasons we picked this book?

Sue: I thought that quite often her dialogue I could hear in her voice. So, I thought that was really well done. But I actually really appreciated that Keiko and Miles weren't fighting, really. I mean, he was tearing apart—what was it, the food replicator—to fix it or the temperature. I think that's what it was. The thermostat, basically. And instead of, I feel like, how it would have been on the show, where she's annoyed and frustrated she was just sort of that playful like, "Oh, ha ha, this is what he does. What would he do if I wasn't here to keep his head on straight?" Which is stereotypical in its own right, but still something we don't see as often. So, it was nice to see that it was loving, I guess, rather than contentious.

Jarrah: Yeah, I would agree. There's also a moment that I appreciated where Miles gets frustrated and says something racist about Cardassians and she says, "That's an ugly thought," which, I think, is the exact line that she used in the episode where they have this, sort of, almost adopted Cardassian kid with them. And I appreciated that because it's totally in character for him, that his prejudices are so deeply ingrained, that even, you know, trying very consciously to override them and taking his family to Cardassia, that when things get strained he reverts back into prejudice and racism.

Sue: Although, when he did do that I thought it was interesting when she came back and said, "That's an ugly thing to say." He said, "No, I didn't mean it like that. I meant that this is the situation that this person has grown up in on Cardassia," which, I mean, it could be seen, sure, as trying to talk your way out of it. But it felt like he was at least being a little bit more thoughtful about things, even if he didn't initially express them in the most sensitive way.

Jarrah: Absolutely. I think it clearly shows that he is checking himself. So, it's not like he'll never have those thoughts again, but he knows that that's not, you know, who he wants to be.

Sue: Right. And that's something I think that's important. I think I read it on (laughs)—it's almost silly to say—I read it on Tumblr several years ago, that the first thought that you have, like if think something mean toward someone else, that thought is what society taught you. And then if you find yourself checking yourself, say, "Why did I think that? That's not how things should be," that's what you've learned. So, it's kind of nice to see that he's doing that because, I mean, I think we all do that at times.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. I think that one of the things I was a little bit disappointed in is that, in terms of the plot, Keiko doesn't actually do much to drive the plot. A lot of the stuff just, kind of, happens to her. There's one chapter, 18, where they're in the really tense situation and the Vedic is talking to the girl who has the bomb attached to her, and Keiko's flashing back to her childhood and there's kind of this metaphor of the lotus flower. And that first drew her to biology, or botany, rather, and I found that that was really nice. But overall, it's the politicians and Miles and Garak and Ghemor and, you know, it's mostly guys driving the actual plot with the exception of Nyra, the girl. So, it was pretty enjoyable. I feel like, in terms of world building, it didn't make me feel like I was particularly more insightful about Cardassia, but maybe that's probably just because we've seen Cardassia more on the show.

Sue: I get that. I think that's a different part of Cardassia. I think we're so used to seeing the political goings on, on Cardassia, and not so much the farming towns. And that might be why it felt a little strange. But I did also want to say, I think it was nice, fitting, reciprocal. I mean, we saw Keiko on Deep Space Nine basically moving there for Miles, for the job that he got and not really having much to do, as a botanist, as she even points out in the book. So, she wound up teaching school and she wound up doing these other things. But then in this story they have relocated to Cardassia for her job and for her opportunities. And he's doing what he can there. So, I think that was nice for their relationship as well, to see that sort of decision being made.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. So, should we move on to the second part of this book, which is "Paradigm" by Heather Jarman? And it is about Andor. I would say, in contrast, this story has A TON of worldbuilding, but it's also a really, really action-packed plot. So, I really appreciated that it felt like everything in the plot also added to the worldbuilding element, and by the end I was like, "I want to vacation on Andor." Except for, maybe, the food. But, (laughs) I think, probably the most fascinating aspect of this for me, and probably for us as a podcast, is that the author, and the rest of the creators in the Star Trek novel universe, decided to take a cue from the episode "Data's Day" where Data says the Andorians marry in fours. And extrapolated to say Andorians have four sexes and you reproduce in groups of four, and built really a whole culture off that, that then was not really carried through to Enterprise. So, debatably non-canon, but still it was really, I thought, it was really interesting to explore. So, in this story Shar, who is one of the ensigns on Deep Space Nine, his mom calls him back to Andor. His mom's the representative of the Federation Council and she wants him to basically come back and show he can be traditional because her position is being questioned. But there's also a funeral for his old bondmate, another person in the four-person bond that he had been bonded to, who committed suicide. And he was deeply in love with her. And so, in order to support him, his friend/romantic interest, a human, Ensign Prynn Tenmei, goes with him. And also with them is a counsellor, Philippa "Mathyus" or "Matteas" (Matthias), not actually sure how you would say it. And they have lots of political and drug related (Sue begins laughing) and culinary adventures! And dangerous adventures on Andor! So, this would be one where, you know, there's almost no characters you would recognize from the show. But, like I said, having only read a couple of books before this, I didn't find it a huge barrier. I was still pretty into what was going on with Shar and Prynn and the other characters. Initial impressions?

Sue: Well, the thing that I think is most obvious about this story, is how based on sex and or gender it is, including those stereotypes. Because the whole story is about these relationships, these bonding and reproducing relationships. And how it takes, you know, one of, they keep saying "gender" in the book. But really, I guess, sex. It takes one of each to reproduce and there's a fertility crisis happening on Andor. So, it's a huge issue, that they've restructured and now put people into a system that helps find bondmates most likely to result in procreation. Because it's a huge issue for the culture as a whole. But there are descriptions of the different sexes that are just very stereotypical. So, it's all about gender and sex stereotypes. And there's even a scene when Prynn and the Shar are basically at a club almost, where Shar is pointing to different Andorians and trying to coach Prynn on guessing their sex, which felt... not great, to me. (Sue laughs nervously) You know, that's something that we don't want to do in our human culture, clearly. But it is eliminating the idea, at least from Andorian culture, of gender fluidity in any way.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, there's an end note in the book that says, "None of the Andorian sexes are truly male or female, as humans may define them. Andorians do, however, accept male or female pronouns in order to simplify their interactions with the various two-sex species that dominate the Star Trek universe and to avoid unwelcome questions about their biology." So, two of the sexes are referred to as "she" and two of them are referred to as "he." It certainly seems like one of the ones that's coded "she" is the one that actually births the

child, but I'm not 100% clear on that.

Sue: I think that's the zhavey or Zhen, is, I guess, the name of the sex.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's Zhen. And then "zhavey" is the name for that person as a parent. And so, there's the Zhen, the Shan, the Chan, and the Than. And so, each of those has a different term for a familiar term of address, a formal term of address, a beloved term of address, a parent, and a child. So, it's a little confusing and also a lot of the names sound really familiar or similar to each other, like Thantiss and Triss and Thirishar. I maybe would have appreciated the end note stuff at the beginning, so I could keep referring to it. Because I did have a bit of a hard time with the names at first.

Sue: Oh, see, I thought it was well placed in the book. Because I could just quickly flip to the last page.

Jarrah: I didn't find it until I was done!

Sue: Oh, that makes sense then. (laughs)

Jarrah: Yeah, I totally agree with you. I wouldn't say it's like super, you know, "This is how we would want our gender relationships on Earth!" not at all. And everything is, you're right, very prescriptive. But it's clear that it's very tied to this fertility crisis that, basically, the society has engineered these groups of four into arranged bonds from the time they're children and coaches them, in school, that nothing is more important than "The Whole," which is always capitalized and has a lot of different meanings in this book. But you basically can't be fulfilled as one person and to claim you can is arrogant and almost heretical, that you would go off on your own and have a fulfilling life by yourself and without a bond of four. And so that's part of what Shar is struggling with because he left for Starfleet and then had issues with not wanting to return to his bond.

So, I thought that was interesting and I thought that it helped to have Shar as a character that you could see stuff from their perspective, a bit as an insider, or inside outsider, I guess. But then like Prynn and Phillipa help you sort of digest things as a total outsider. So, I really appreciated the part where Prynn is hanging out in the keep, where they end up, which is where the other-sex mother of the bond mate (Thriss) who committed suicide is, and they're grudgingly welcomed. And Prynn is wandering around and she comes across a sex-ed class. And one of the teachers is berating this kid for studying for a different class during the part where they're talking about The Bond. And the book is like, "Class," the instructor said. In a total unison the class recited, "With The Bond we are whole. Without The Whole there is nothing." And then the chan, the kid who is berated, has to say that out loud and then the teacher says, "You have acted to satisfy your needs, not theirs, and not those of The Whole. One alone cannot be whole, nor two, nor three. What one chooses is chosen for all. What befalls one, befalls all. Their lives are yours." And then he has to say, "My life is theirs. That is the first truth. Never forget it." It's basically the first commandment. And the kid starts crying, and Prynn starts crying watching it, and clearly you can see that even though Shar ends up deciding to return to a bond, a lot of that is connected to this feeling of duty towards Andor. There is an acknowledgement, though, that forcing people into The Bond, just like trying to force people to be straight, in our society, can destroy them and that you can't make people be something they're not. So, I thought that there was an interesting, sort of, line into that discussion.

Sue: Yeah, and there is an acknowledgement towards the end too, from, I guess, the birth parent of the bondmate who took her own life, who was blaming Shar for that, and actually says, "I realized that this was my fault for forcing her into this bond and that The Whole possibly smothered her."

Jarrah: Yeah, that's not the exact quote, but that's sort of the sense, that maybe The Whole was too much for her.

Sue: And we see Shar rejecting it as well, so.

Jarrah: Yeah. We see Thriss in a scene during The Battle of Betazed where, in her parent's memory, she has to amputate her parent's arm and she's basically cool under pressure and thriving in that environment. And so, her mother figure says, "That was when she was really strong, but I pushed her back into The Bond and into how I wanted her to be as an Andorian and that actually contributed to her suicide." So, yeah. So, I thought it

was really powerful.

Sue: I mean it feels kind of "Handmaid's Tale."

Jarrah: Yeah!

Sue: In a way in that there's this birth crisis, this fertility crisis, and it's resulting in, sort of, a return to fundamentalism.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. There's people painting blood symbols on their doors to invoke certain guardians and, you know, having massive, violent protests against the more secular government. Basically, again, this idea that when you're under threat that you go back to the way that things were and are to traditions to protect you.

Sue: And in the surrounding books this fertility crisis leads to Andor, a founding member of The Federation, questioning their relationship with The Federation. And we see the beginnings of that here, with Shar's zhavey, who is the Federation Ambassador and there is a lot of call for her to step down, or to be replaced, or for their entire government to be replaced. And so, that's the beginning of that tension with The Federation as a whole.

Jarrah: And she's also a really interesting character. Actually, there's a lot of interesting women with different roles, although, you know, we're not supposed to view the Andorians as male or female, as we would consider them. But it's hard not to when they're called "she" and they're basically framed as that character's mom. So, I'll say that she's a woman for the sake of this discussion. But yeah, Vretha, she's a really ambitious politician. She plays politics. She uses her son, a bit, as a pawn, but she still really loves him. And similar to Thriss's mom, sort of, is able to come to a bit better understanding of, you know, what's best for their kids, near to the end of the book. But yeah, it was interesting. There's also Thea. She's a traveler they meet on this transport, and she is more religious and challenges Shar for not fulfilling his duties on Andor and for his mother being part of the more progressive secular government. And her bondmates kidnap Shar's mom. There's so much that happens in this book. It's half a novel and there's so much packed in there! So, her bondmates kidnap Shar's mom, she helps them find them. At the very end of the book, Shar actually decides to recreate a bond with his two old surviving bondmates and Thea, because she has been left by hers. It's really interesting. And Thea's a really interesting character who goes from being a really true believer and then, because of the depth of her beliefs, when her bondmates leave her, she attempts suicide and just has this tremendous, tremendous grief. But she's able to find healing in The Bond with the others, which still feels kind of creepy, because of how brainwashed, or integrated it is into them as children. But it was really fascinating.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: I think we should talk a little bit about the whole scandal that's happening behind the scenes, which is what's, sort of, driving the action. There's these rumors that the government is allowing the National Science Academy or Institute to run experiments that would re-engineer Andorians to only be two sexes, so that it would be easier to reproduce.

Sue: I didn't read it that way. I read it as they could reproduce with only two of the sexes, instead of needing all four. Which made me wonder: any two, as long as they're different or what? Because, I mean, we don't know much about their anatomy. Who knows if it's even played out anywhere, if anybody wrote it out in order to write these books? But, if only one of them has a womb, or say, the equivalent of a womb, wouldn't that one always be necessary? So, I had a lot of in-universe science-y questions (laughs) about that, which we don't get answers to. But, obviously, if you have, you know, four sexes, and I guess, suddenly two of them would be "obsolete," that would not be great.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think that that is how I read it, and that's how it's, sort of, implied at the end of the book, that it would become a dual sex species. So, I feel like this is one of the things I wish had been explored more thoroughly, but there's already so much in this book. But, yeah, because how exactly would that work? Are you saying that the two of the sexes would just die off and the other two would keep reproducing? That's sort of how I read it, but it's not clear which two sexes, how that would happen. And it's very firmly, from the very beginning, compared to Mengele and the Romulan dude that was the bad experimenter on people, that B'elanna hates. That guy. He is referenced. It's interesting because we don't actually hear too much about what

these experiments are. You're told that they're really awful because of the outcome, instead of with the Romulan guy, what was the problem was the methods. And so, it's a bit of a, maybe, not a straight-ahead comparison that works, because there's no evidence that they're using bad methods. It's just the fact that you would even consider making this four-sex society a two-sex society.

Sue: And there's one really quick thing. It's almost a throwaway in this book. I think it's Shar explaining that the scientists are considering the idea that Andorians actually evolved on a different planet.

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Sue: Because nothing else on their planet has this four-sex system. It's all two.

Jarrah: Although, they find a plant that does later.

Sue: Okay. I must have missed that.

Jarrah: That's okay. Yeah, they find a plant that does later and then Thea's really happy because she's like, "I always knew my beliefs were justified."

Sue: Yeah, it's just very weird and I don't know if we'd heard that anywhere else before, or if that was just a device for this story.

Jarrah: I really appreciated how well the worldbuilding flowed in and out of the plot. For example: Okay, so, we don't really know what Andorians wear, but there's many mentions of the Andorians you saw in the original series and how things have changed since then. And there's, you know, a part where Prynn gets an outfit and she describes how the outfit looks on her and how it feels on her. And so, as a human, you can sort of imagine yourself wearing an Andorian outfit. And same deal with the rooms that they sleep in that are basically these big communal rooms. And they go to a festival and have dancing. And there's different groups of people and Heather Jarman does a lot of work describing the scenery. They, you know, go on this rescue mission to rescue Vretha, and they're in caves, and they're in this desert. But then they're also in two different cities so, you feel like you kind of got a travel guide to Andor at the same time as the story. So, I thought that was well done.

Sue: Yeah, and I also appreciated that, at some point, Prynn is wearing these traditional garments. And then they're going to a different location and they get rained on, or something, and she changes them in a way. She takes off one of the pieces and wears the top in a different way. And, you know, it's supposed to make us see her as more attractive, I guess, to Shar because there's that love story going on. But the character takes the time to say, "Is it okay that I'm wearing this, this way? Is anyone going to be upset with me?" And the question's never really answered. (laughs)

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: But, I mean, at least it was asked.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, the very end of the book was—I didn't love it. I actually found the relationship between Prynn and Shar fairly compelling. There is a point where it could have gone wrong, where they're at the festival and they're both drugged, and Prynn is flirting with him and, sort of, begging him to kiss her. And he kisses her and then realizes, "She is seriously drugged and she's actually in danger and I can't take advantage of this and I have to get her help." So, thank God. But, yeah, I found it really compelling. But at the very end he decides to go off with his bond group and Thea, because of this, sort of, sense of just feeling right, and feeling at home, and feeling like you need to serve Andor a bit better. And he sends Prynn this Andorian betrothal token with a locket of his hair inside. And a note that says, "someday," and I'm like, "Dude! You can't do that!" (both laughing) That's really sweet but you can't just be like, "Hey, wait for me and when I'm done bonding and having a kid and raising a kid with these three people I'll be back. And we should get married." (Sue laughing) I mean I'm assuming he didn't actually expect that to happen. But I still felt it was a little unfair.

Sue: It's a little presumptuous maybe. (laughs)

Jarrah: Lydia in our Good Reads group said, "This story was full of the feels for me because I had been shipping Prynn and Shar for some time. I was upset by the end, but it felt like the right call." Well, yeah, I guess I kind of—I don't know. I would've like to see Prynn and Shar together more. Yeah, I mean, I could understand. Certainly, I was sold on his conflicted feelings and why he would make the choice to stay. Yeah. I don't know. Overall, I really enjoyed it. We did have a comment from Lee in our Good Reads group who said, "I felt a little lost with this one: the central characters seem to be from a story I do not know and Andor is suffering from a "crisis" I could not quite divine. I was able to fill in some blanks through context, but the severity of the crisis is still missing for me." So, we kind of talked about that. That's, I think, a valuable perspective from someone who hadn't read any of the novels before: that may be not the best place to start.

Sue: I think the difference is that the Cardassian story you basically get set up for during the series. And this one, you definitely don't. All of the set-up is coming from the books and there's no recognizable character on DS9. There's mention of Kira.

Jarrah: Yeah, and Bashir. But that's it.

Sue: Oh yes, that's right.

Jarrah: And Nog, I guess. They're all just offhand mentions like, "Oh, you're doing the thing Nog did. Oh, I'm getting this medicine for Dr. Bashir."

Sue: Right. Yeah.

Jarrah: Agreed. I really enjoyed it, but I can see that, like I said, it just might not be the best place to start if you haven't read the other relaunch novels.

Sue: I really enjoy the relaunch novels. But I do think that that is one of the downsides to them: is that because it's the sheer continuity and because it's these ongoing stories, it creates more in-depth storytelling for people who are following it. But it's really hard to jump in and just pick one up if you're not following it.

Jarrah: (sighs contentedly) Well, yeah, overall, I don't know. Do we rate books? How do we do this? How do we wrap up?

Sue: I don't think we have before.

Jarrah: Alright, well, I will. Just in the interest of being, you know, out of character. I will rate this book: four point six out of five cool garments that are comfortable and slightly androgynous, but able to be dressed up if the occasion requires.

Sue: (laughs) That is incredibly specific.

Jarrah: (laughs) Yes.

Sue: Quite a high rating.

Jarrah: Well, yeah, I would say I really enjoyed it. I would say the second part did more for me than the first part, but I would say that it's pretty solidly written throughout.

Sue: I think it's really nice that they did this series. I'm saying nice a lot in this episode and I don't know why. (laughs) We can take a look at the world and the cultures of the different aliens that we see on Deep Space Nine. And I think it helps build out the universe even more, even though Star Trek is a really built out universe to begin with. But I would give this—you know, I'd say I really enjoyed it too. How about: four out of five grilled giant beetles.

Jarrah: Yes! (Sue laughs) Cool. All right. So, thanks for joining us, for our episode, listeners. Sue, where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter @spaltor, that's S-P-A-L-T-O-R.

Jarrah: And you can find me on Tumblr at trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com. So, thanks so much for joining us! If you want to get in touch with the show you can e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.com. Or, you can comment on our Facebook, or our Twitter, @womenatwarp. Or, on our website: womenatwarp.com. We always love to hear from you. And if you join our Good Reads group you can join in the next discussion and suggest our next Book Club pick.

Sue: Yep! And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, including Mission Log and Priority One, you can visit podcasts.rodtenberry.com.

Jarrah: Thanks for listening!

(WAW theme outro)