

Women at Warp Episode 154: Book Club - Star Trek: The Motion Picture

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Jarrah, thanks for tuning in. Today with me I have Sarah.

Sarah: Hello.

Jarrah: And I also have Sue.

Sue: Hidee-ho neighborinos.

Jarrah: And we are returning to our Star Trek book club. And before we get into our main topic, which is the infamous novelization of Star Trek: The Motion Picture by the one only Gene Roddenberry, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. First of all, mega mega thanks to our patrons on Patreon who make this show possible. If you would like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month, and you get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, to silly watch-along commentaries and other things that are we're planning that are in the works and very exciting. So stay tuned. But no exaggeration to say that this really is what keeps our show going, pays for our hosting, for equipment, general, you know, we produce things to give out at conventions, spread the word, things like that. So thank you so much for everyone who supports our show. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. And we also have a Teepublic store with new designs based on our new banner art, plus logos, and some other non podcast specific Trek designs. And you can find that at [Teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp](https://teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp).

On we go to the main topic of the book club, which is the 1979 novelization of Star Trek: The Motion Picture, the only Star Trek novel to be written by Gene Roddenberry, and was also the first Star Trek novel published by Pocket Books. Though Bantam held the rights to publish original Trek fiction at the time, and Pocket wouldn't publish its first original novel until 1981. So remember that for your next Star Trek trivia night.

Sue: It caused a big stir.

Jarrah: Did it?

Sue: Yeah. I mean, as much as a book can in the publishing *laughs* world, I guess.

Jarrah: And was it just because of the publishing, or was it because this book is extremely horny?

Sue: No, I think it just- the fact that, I mean, Pocket is a division of Simon and Schuster. Which Trek fiction is still being published under right now, but it was sort of like- you're probably not surprised to hear, but from what I gather is that Roddenberry sort of went

around the contract with Bantam Books in order to get this work published the way he wanted it to be.

Jarrah: Yeah. Okay. *Sue laughs* Interesting.

Sue: Sounds on brand, right?

Jarrah: I think it's maybe worth mentioning before we get into it that, so if you're new to one of our book club episodes, we will obviously be spoiling the book. *Sue giggles* Whether or not this is a concern I think we can debate, because not all of us agree whether it's worth any taking of your time to read it. But I think it's definitely worth your time listening to us make fun of it. *Sue laughs* We do have a book club on goodreads. So if you go to goodreads.com and you search under community for Women at Warp under the book clubs, then you can find us and join in. And we post some like discussion questions, usually a couple of months before we get to the actual recording so that you can feed in with your thoughts.

So yeah. Had either of you heard of this book before you started reading it, or did you have any ideas of what to expect? I feel like Sue, you had heard of the infamous footnote.

Sue: Yeah. I mean, it is kind of- the whole thing is infamous. *Jarrah laughs* The discussion that I heard the most often is that this was gay panic Star Trek, *laughs* right? This was the creator, seeing that fans decided that Kirk and Spock were a couple, and sort of being bothered by that and trying to dispel those rumors, only to have that immensely backfire. *laughs*

Jarrah: Do you think we should read this infamous footnote?

Sue: Oh please!

Sarah: I think you should, Jarrah.

Jarrah: Okay. I'm finding it. I should mention that the book actually starts off with a preface by Admiral Kirk, basically saying like "I let Gene Roddenberry write this story for me." And literally. The second sentence is like, it's about how he got his name and it goes "I received James, because it was both the name of my father's beloved brother, as well as that of my mother's first love instructor." And I originally started trying to read this book in French and kept having to ask someone with an English copy to like compare it. Cause I just thought I was reading things wrong, like that sentence, which in French actually says like "my mother's first sexual instructor." And, uh, no, that is literally what it says. So, cool that in the future it's like, "Hey. We're having a son baby. I feel like we should pick the name, James, because that's the guy who first got me off." *Sue laughs*

Sarah: You know, it's funny because I actually have this book in Italian. I got it when they were selling off Gene's library at STLV a couple of years ago. And my plan was to have that and then get the English copy and then compare them and use it to study Italian, which I've taken a couple of times. But having read the English version now, I don't care to subject myself to that ever again. *all laugh*

Sue: I think my favorite part of the introduction is that it in Kirk's voice saying that the "journalist" writing the book has the correct version. And he says something like, "No matter what you may have seen or read elsewhere in any other depiction, this is how it really happened." *laughs* It's like Gene being mad at the movie and the lack of control he had over it.

Jarrah: Even though like it's not super far off the movie, it just has a lot more buildup. Like, I mean, the movie is also kind of slow. But there's- and also a lot more like, basically it's like the movie, plus Kirk always thinking that everything is a metaphor for having sex with someone. *all laugh* Anyhow, the footnote on page 22 if you're looking at the English pocket book version. "Editors note: the human concept of friend is most nearly duplicated in Vulcan thought by the term Thy'la." I think we agreed that's sort of how you maybe pronounce it, "which can also mean brother and lover. Spock's recollection from which this chapter has drawn, is that it was a most difficult moment for him since he did indeed considered Kirk to have been his brother. However, because Thy'la can be used to mean lover, and since Kirk and Spock's friendship was unusually close, this has led to some speculation over whether they had actually indeed become lovers. At our request Admiral Kirk supplied the following comment on this subject, "I was never aware of this lovers rumor. Although I have been told that Spock encountered it several times. Apparently he had always dismissed it with his characteristic lifting of his right eyebrow. Which usually connoted some combination of surprise, disbelief, and/or annoyance. As for myself, although I have no moral or other objections to physical love in any of its many earthly, alien, and mixed forms, I have always found my best gratification in that creature woman. Also, I would dislike being thought of as so foolish that I would select a love partner who came into sexual heat only once every seven years."" Mu-har-har-har. So that's- that's the thing. Thoughts? Like, having read the whole book I actually think it kind of undermines it? Because it's so clear how like connected Kirk and Spock are for the whole rest of the book.

Sue: Oh yeah. That's what I'm saying, in that it totally totally backfires. *Jarrah laughs* Like, he's trying to dispel these rumors and is doing the opposite.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sarah: Yeah. A lot of this book is just trying so hard to be sexy that it's having the opposite effect.

Jarrah: *laughs* Yes. It's very, I would say like, if the positive framing would be, "it's very sex positive." Like, for the time this whole- like, it kind of speaks to like, you know, sexual liberation movement kind of idea? Like that, you know, we all just talk more openly about sex and that is an expression of like human enlightenment. Except for that like, He's obviously not very good at like, thinking about it from anyone's perspective other than a straight man.

Sarah: Yeah. It's all about men being sexually gratified and women being sexual objects.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I think in his brain he thinks like "they're enjoying themselves," but like, he doesn't actually confirm that. *laughs*

Sarah: Yeah. It's like, women don't have sex drives except for the sexy alien woman.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: But even then it's only to entice the men around her.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: I mean, everyone has spoken about how Kirk is an author surrogate character, right? And Roddenberry sees himself as Kirk. And as he got older, Roddenberry saw himself as Picard, right? These are established in Fanon, if you will. And it's just- it makes it, I don't know, extra creepy *all laugh* to see Roddenberry writing about Kirk's inner thoughts this way. And the constant like, obsession with what he's going to have sex with next. There's even towards the end when, you know, Decker is like going to merge with V'ger, he's like, "Well, maybe I'm better at sex than Decker too." Like, why? Stop! "I have more experience."

Jarrah: Yeah. It's almost like too much information about Gene Roddenberrys psyche. *Sue laughs* I feel like the most- maybe the most cringy one for me. And I think we had a listener who brought this up as well. We had a comment from Ruth about Kirk's partner in the very beginning, who's Laurie, who is this like vice Admiral or something. And she ends up getting killed in a transporter accident. And Ruth is like, "I found the bit about Kirk's partner in the very beginning to be troubling. It felt like "what's in it for her? What does she get out of the relationship as a woman? Is she fulfilled? Does she experience pleasure in the sexual relationship? Are her needs and companionship met?" It doesn't feel mutual to me."

Sue: And that whole thing, he thinks that Nogura used her as like a manipulation piece. Right?

Jarrah: And it's like never even questioned. It's basically just like, "Yes, a hundred percent. This vice Admiral was like set up by the Admiral to like seduce me into staying on earth."

Sue: "But that's okay. Because the sex was great."

Sarah: The whore comment was really charming.

Sue: Oh yeah.

Sarah: Page 36, about two thirds of the way down. "Your next words could brand to you a whore, Laurie. Noguras staff whore. I hope I'm wrong."

Jarrah: Yeah. Even like, the first time you have her described it's like "Her unusually large eyes and the slim youthful angularity in her arms and legs always reminded him of a fauns wild grace and innocence. And he marveled again at how much this contrasted with her real wildness, which was anything but faun-like, but much more exciting and satisfying." Yeah. It's like we're 32 pages in, and he's already feeling quote "the slight pressure of his genitals *all laugh* responding to those memories. She had been perfection: lover, friend, wife, mother, and in every other role and joy she supplied."

Sue: That's so gross.

Jarrah: Yeah, I know! I was like, "Okay, no woman is all those things." Also that's gross that that is kind of the idea of perfection. It's gross in many ways. So, valid Ruth. Although Ruth

did add, "I enjoyed the rest of the novel very much and found that it deepened by love and appreciation for the film."

Sarah: I mean, I appreciated that parts of it went by a lot faster than the film. *all laugh*

Jarrah: Also agreed. But yeah, I found like- I was post-it noting, like all of those references. And then by about halfway through, I'm just like, "Yeah. I feel like we have enough examples of- there's parts, where it talks about like Kirk talking about seeing the Enterprise and, you know, we all know that scene from the motion picture where you see the Enterprise in space dock and how beautiful that is. And Kirk is like, basically thinking about like it being like possessing-like having a woman underneath him who's ready for him to possess her.

Sue: *groans*

Sarah: Like, that's an environment I really don't want to work in.

Jarrah: Yeah, definitely. That - , you know, I feel like the idea was, in theory, this idea of everyone just being super open about their sexuality all the time is awesome. But like, in this book kind of shows it's really just dudes. And really just the dudes at the top.

Sue: I mean, those are also the only perspectives that we get. Right? We never get inside Uhura's head.

Jarrah: Yeah. We do get a little bit of Chapel. And a little bit of Uhura, actually. I see a part- there's like two paragraphs where they're talking about Kirk wanting the Enterprise back .And it's like- actually, this is pretty much what I was referring to. "Uhura nodded. This was exactly what she had just felt in Kirk, too. He had also had that look, which comes into some men's eyes when they've just won a woman and she lies there ready to be taken. Uhura was not unacquainted with that look, but she was troubled that the amount of hunger she had seen there too." Yeah. But yeah, it would not pass the Bechdel test. *all laugh*

Sarah: It really annoyed me how Chapel is the doctor when the book starts, and McCoy comes in and takes over as a chief medical officer, and then refers to her as Nurse for the rest of the book.

Jarrah: Yeah. And that's like, that part is in the movie too, at first, where he's basically like annoyed that he wanted a Nurse and Chapel a Doctor now, I feel like?

Sue: I thought it was going to like, to wrap up that weird dynamic a little bit quicker. Because at the beginning they give you McCoy's perspective. He's like, "Oh, I'm impressed that she has these files ready. And has this analysis done." But then throughout, he continues to call her Nurse and even says "You're beginning to sound like a Doctor, Nurse."

Jarrah: Yeah,

Sue: No, not here for it.

Jarrah: I mean, you kind of expect McCoy to be retrograde in his attitudes. But yeah, like, I think the best you can say is that he comes around to kind of a grudging respect near the

end. And even then like, I think it even says that she's kind of relieved that he's there? That like she doesn't- of course she would just like take a step back.

Sue: Right, right. Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. I feel like we could probably talk more about the sexy times in this book, and maybe we can talk about Decker and Ilia in a bit, but let's maybe take a break from that *Sue laughs* and talk about some of the other, just like weird concepts and *laughs* pieces that- one of the things that I think makes this book, I would argue, worth a read is that there's a lot of people who have this idea about like quote unquote Gene's vision and like what Gene's vision of Star Trek was. And that if Star Trek only stuck to Gene's vision, it would be better. And obviously we all owe a tremendous debt to what was in Gene's vision. Although like, obviously was shaped by many other people. And I think this book really shows the fact that like everyone benefits from collaborators and editors, because there is a lot in there that's super interesting. And then there's a lot that you're just like "That's bananas."

Sue: *laughs* Yeah. That is- if you want like Gene's vision with no influence and no editors, that's this book. And that's the only place you're going to get that, is this book. And I don't think, I mean, I don't know if I hate to say it, but I'm going to say it that I don't think we'd be talking about this franchise 50 plus years later if it were strictly Gene's vision all the time.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I think that also like anyone, ideas change over time. And so it's also just a moment in time, but I think that it doesn't really serve any of us well to say that. Like, to be kind of purists about this or this, or this is part of the vision and therefore nothing can ever change. So, one of the examples is there's a bunch of kind of weird technologies that Gene proposes in the book. Which I'm- actually I'd have to admit I don't remember to what extent these overlap with the movie, but one of the ideas is that everyone has- all the commanded officers have a communicator in their heads that signal them mentally in case of emergency. So like, Kirk at the beginning is just like hanging out in the Mediterranean. And basically is felled by a traumatic vision that's beamed into his head to tell him that there's been this attack on these Klingon ships by this energy cloud thing. How- does this seem like a good idea to you? *laughs*

Sarah: This seems like a terrible idea. Like what if you're in the middle of something like, I don't know, speed racing or something, *all laugh* they just start beaming random images into your head. Yeah, I think this is what happens when someone who doesn't have like a huge science background has suddenly trying to write hard scifi.

Jarrah: Yeah. And like, why wouldn't they just beam a thing into your head saying, "Hey, there's something super important and we need you to call us." Like, why would you beam in the thing that is literally gonna make someone pass out?

Sue: But can't you also send that to their communicator?

Jarrah: Yeah, *Sue laughs* I guess the idea is that someone might want to get off the grid and you need to be able to contact them at all times. But surely to gosh, there's like, you know the horrible, like emergency alert thing that people can send to your phones that makes your phone make noise even if it's on silent.

Sue: Yeah. The send-ciever seems like it would be a very dangerous idea. And then, you know, there's the issue that the book itself brings up, which is "What if Starfleet decided to use it for mind control?"

Jarrah: *laughs* Yeah.

Sue: Which I mean, is a consideration.

Jarrah: Yeah. A hundred percent like, as much as I would love to imagine being in Starfleet I cannot imagine any job that I would willingly let someone put a thing in my head that would beam urgent messages into my brain at any given time.

Sarah: Yeah, I think we can all say it's a pass on that one.

Jarrah: Yeah. So that's not in the movie to my recollection.

Sue: No, that whole opening business is not in the film at all.

Jarrah: Okay, good. Because part of the other part of that scene, this was just a line that I thought was interesting, is that Kirk has this like sort of meditation on the like geo-engineering that's been applied to the Mediterranean sea and is now just like a small Lake. And Kirk finds himself basically pondering whether humans have the right to meddle with a planet like this, and concludes an unequivocal "yes." basically that it was like for, I think for like electricity and that it may be recovered like the library of Alexandria? And so because those things were progress, like we a hundred percent had the right to do that. Which mostly just struck me as like maybe just something that would not hold up super well today. Was maybe an idea that was okay in 1979? But, interesting. I don't know. How do you think- did that land *laughs* with you at all?

Sue: Yeah, that was surprising to me to just see it put that way. *laughs* Like, I don't- I don't think I would feel that way. *laughs*

Sarah: I don't know. I think it would be interesting to recover more land, for one thing, and then have all those archeological sites they talked about. I think there'd be a lot of benefits to it.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think that there's like, room to have a discussion about those types of things. But I feel like it was a bit of a symptom of its time that if you were going to raise a proposition like that today there would be a lot more discussions about like, who benefits and who loses out and what the environmental consequences would be, that I just don't think the discussion was there in 1979?

Sue: Yeah. It feels very much like, "Of course we have the right to destroy the Mediterranean sea because it gave us these other things." And I feel like if we had that conversation for real, there would be a lot more nuance in it.

Jarrah: Yeah. It would be like, "Oh, there are these, people whose ancestral nomadic lifestyle would be disrupted" or "This fishery would be disrupted" or like those types of things. And maybe it would be totally justified and just awesome. But, yeah, I mean, it is an example of

like clearly Gene Roddenberry had this like very vivid scifi imagination. And I do kind of like where it goes sometimes, it just maybe would be a more complicated discussion today.

Sarah: I feel like that would be a really good thing for an episode of TNG for Picard to discuss.

Jarrah: Okay. So another thing that they talk about is that basically all of the pajama uniforms with their belts are constantly scanning everyone's vital signs and they report continuously to the CMO, but only the CMO can view that data.

Sue: Wasn't the implication also that they don't know it's happening?

Jarrah: *makes unsure noise* I wasn't a hundred percent clear on that.

Sarah: I didn't catch that, but I did catch that they were really worried about privacy.

Sue: Okay. I could just be making that part up because the sen-ciever was a secret. *all laugh*

Jarrah: Yeah. I don't know. That's a good question. But they basically, I mean, they're concerned about privacy in that the stuff can only go to the CMO. It still seems to me like they are using a lot of data that has like, it feels sort of like using a lie detector test? That like we know that people react different ways to things. But this idea that like, your doctor could at any point, like tune into your Fitbit and be like, "Hey, your resting heart rate's up. I don't know if you're fit for command." *laughs*

Sue: Well, I think what it reminded me of is actually the scene in Apollo 13, where the astronauts like rip off their sensors. Cuz mission control is tracking their heart rate and their whatever else. I don't even know. But you'd think if we're getting to the point that humans are working and living in space that we would deem that not necessary anymore? Maybe?

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, it's interesting. And that's an interesting comparison, cause maybe it's like, maybe that's kind of thing is where do Gene Roddenberry was getting ideas from the idea that, you know, you would want- these are your like prized people that you're sending on these missions and you'd want to keep track of their physical and mental state. I do think that, maybe- I mean, I feel like if this was happening in like The Next Generation that there would probably be something that you could like, have the internal scanners scan someone. Like as a one-off thing, if you were worried about them. Versus having like someone's vitals constantly transmitting. But then again, as I draw the connection to a fitness tracker, clearly a lot of us are giving away like vital sign data all the time. *laughs*

Sue: But we do actually see them do that in an episode of Next Gen. In Remember Me Crusher has the computer continually monitor Picard's vitals right before he disappears. So I guess the internal sensors can do that if you ask them to. Or are doing that.

Jarrah: I guess maybe that makes more sense. And I feel like maybe that, even though it's still debatable, I guess I would probably feel more comfortable with it than just wearing it on my belt all the time.

Sue: It somehow feels less invasive, even if it's doing the same thing.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: *laughs* Well, what I found interesting, talking about the medical stuff, is that the emphasis that this book placed on mental health. And of course, it's not really called that, but McCoy and Chapel are constantly talking about how Kirk benefits mentally and even emotionally by being in the captain's chair, by being on the Starship, and how not having that job was actively harming him. I mean, the language they use to talk about it is a little bit extreme to me. But I do think it's interesting recognizing, you know, even in 1979, that not everybody is cut out for a desk job. Right?

Jarrah: Yeah. That makes sense. And you're right. They do have a focus on that. And yeah, I do feel like there's- the book is I would say attentive to feelings generally. Including male feelings, which is nice. Like, you definitely have- I mean, even though it's a lot of sexual metaphors, You know, Kirk is thinking a lot about how he's feeling and like introspecting on whether these feelings are like for everyone's good or not. And then you have other people thinking about how he's feeling, how Decker's feeling, how like they empathize with Decker and what it's like going through the situation with Ilia. So yeah, that's kind of interesting.

Sue: And Spock's whole through line is about learning how to handle his emotions, and what his relationship to them is.

Jarrah: Yeah, definitely. So should we talk about the Decker Ilia stuff? Which, to me feels very similar to the movie. So I didn't find it like the most interesting part of the book, although *laughs* I don't remember it explicitly talking about her breasts in the movie. *all laugh*

Sue: "She turned her breasts to point at him." *all laugh*

Jarrah: Like, I feel like they're like headlights.

Sarah: So I was confused for most of the book, because the book mentions early on that men don't survive sex with Deltans. Or humans don't survive sex with Deltans. But it doesn't say why until like 200 pages in, that you just go mad. So I, for most of the book, thought there was some kind of like praying mantis situation going on.

Jarrah: *all laugh* Yes.

Sarah: That's something they could have clarified right in the beginning and they wouldn't have lost any impact.

Sue: *laughs* Both options are so ridiculous.

Jarrah: I do feel like Ilia is very much like a disposable object, that- we see this- we've talked about this in episodes like in our episode on Wolf In The Fold too, that when women in the original series died it was very shrugged off. And like everyone's concern is much more with the men. And there's even like a part where it says "Kirk saw an appreciative gleam and Spock's eyes. Decker was a hell of a fine captain. He had deserved a ship of his own. It was a pity about him and the Deltan woman too." Like, she doesn't have a name because she was like not, you know, as ambitious as him. And she's like- I don't know. It was just, that was an

unfortunate like, "You all know her name. This is 230 pages in. It's almost the end of the book."

Sue: Well, it also implies that she's only in Starfleet and in space because she like bonded herself to Decker because he gave her a headband. *all laugh* And then left.

Jarrah: *sighs* This is what women want.

Sue: Headbands. Sparkly headbands. *all laugh* I mean, I would take a sparkly headband. *laughs*

Jarrah: Going back to the like emotions thing, I think one of the like biggest Kirk Spock scenes is when Kirk is like rescued after mind melding with V'ger. And he's- you know, he starts laughing. He's having this- he's basically tripping. He's going like, "Wow! This is so amazing." and like "V'ger was everything that Spock had ever dreamed of becoming, and yet V'ger was barren. It would never feel pain or joy or challenge." And then like he's laughing and he- but then he sorta wakes up and he sees Kirk and "He reached out weakly and found Kirk's arm. Then his hand. And took a startled Kirks hand in his own. "Jim" Spock said. McCoy looked, his astonishment at the visible and unashamed emotion on Spock's face as he clutched Kirk's hand." And it's like, "Yes, just forget that whole footnote earlier."*all laugh* They love each other.

Sue: *laughs* I don't- there's not more to say.

Jarrah: Well and that thing with Ilia's breasts pointing at them? *all laugh* It's like "He had just realized that the pointing of those two breasts toward himself had simply meant she was turning to look toward them." *all laugh* Like he's like, "Oh, her breasts are pointing at me. Oh shit! That means her eyes are pointing at me!" *all laugh* But then he says "The eyes, they seem devoid of living warmth. Was this somehow Ilia's dead body? A corpse, reanimated and controlled by the alien?" So it's very like, body horror kind of. Weird.

Sue: But still super hot.

Jarrah: Yeah. No. *Sue laughs* No. So gross.

Sarah: I mean, and also that he had to add an nude scene into the book that wasn't in the movie.

Jarrah: What was the end scene?

Sarah: No, a nude scene.

Jarrah: Oh yes. Yes, definitely. Well I mean, that is the- the fact that that wasn't in the movie is the part that the preface I think was telling us to ignore. And be like, "Ignore the fact that she wasn't fully naked in the movie. *all laugh* this is what really happened."

Sue: As an ace person reading this book, I have like no personal context for how much Kirk, as an allosexual person, thinks about sex. Please assure me that this is an abnormal amount.

Jarrah: *laughs* I mean, I'm not a straight guy and I have gone like fully several months without thinking much about sex, in my history. I feel like I've been told that high school, like, straight allosexual boys think about sex with women a lot. But this does seem like an unusual amount, especially given that the galaxy is at stake.

Sarah: There are times where this book feels like it was written by a 13 year old boy who has read a lot of books. *Sue laughs*

Jarrah: Yeah. Yeah. That seems about right.

Sue: Every now and then I read stuff like this and like, It makes me understand but also wonder, like how much time are people wasting thinking about sex? *all laugh*

Jarrah: I mean, probably a lot.

Sue: Probably a lot.

Jarrah: And like, everyone has different, you know, people who like sex and like thinking about sex, have lots of different degrees of how often and how much you think about it.

Sue: And it's not always wasting time, I understand that. It's just sometimes shocking to me that like, "Oh right, this is a part of life that preoccupies a lot of people." *laughs*

Jarrah: Well, it's like every five pages in this book. And it's a short book, but there's a lot of it. And, like I said, the galaxy is at stake. So I do feel like most people are not in their most intense work moments also thinking about sex.

Sue: That is an excellent point.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, there are Deltan pheromones at play here. Which is super gross, the fact that they actually are like, very clear that the sort of reproduced body also identically reproduces her pheromones. Bleh. One of the things I found interesting was in the introduction where Gene Roddenberry talks about how- or Admiral Kirk talks about how Starfleet types are actually more conservative and individualistic than what he calls a "New Humans." And you sort of get- you sort of lose it as it moves into more of the plot of the movie, but in the introduction you have this idea that there's these quote unquote New Humans that are maybe kind of more like hippie communal types *laughs* and that the Starfleet types are more conservative and like believe more in tradition. And they're more individualistic, which is why they actually fare better in space, even though they're not as enlightened.

Sue: Yeah. I wanted to know more about this actually. Cause it's, I feel like, it's not clearly described, believe it or not. *laughs* yeah. Kirk gives the example that like, he has a last name because his family followed the patriarchal tradition of handing down the father's last name. Right? Which is unlike what the new humans do. So I guess the implication is that they are like a commune almost, that they don't have last names. That they- almost that they don't have any sort of individual drive.

Jarrah: Yeah. Like, and he talks about, "I am prepared to accept the possibility that these so-called new humans represent a more highly evolved breed, capable of finding rewards in

group consciousness that we more primitive individuals will never know." So is he talking about like ESP? Like that like more evolved humans are developing like a literal group consciousness? Or that they're just more communal? I was not sure.

Sue: I feel like it could be either.

Jarrah: But then he says that "These intelligent and flexible minds were sent out by Starfleet and couldn't help but be seduced by higher philosophies and aspirations of aliens that they were encountering." Which, I don't know why that would be a bad thing? But apparently it was. So...

Sue: Maybe seduced away from Starfleet, so that they left.

Jarrah: Yeah, I guess. And then he says his Academy class was the first group selected by Starfleet on the basis of "Somewhat more limited intellectual agility." But then the editor is like, "He's just being modest."

Sarah: I feel like a lot of these ideas he's throwing out in the book, one after another, are ideas he had for episodes after the show was canceled, so he couldn't make them. Cause these would make a good one hour TV episode, just exploring this idea.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, he also kind of has this meta commentary at the end of the introduction, that feels very much just like "Here's a thing I wanted to say about Star Trek" that he talks about "looking upon the Enterprise and its crew as my own private view of earth and humanity in microcosm." And "There may still be long and awkward years for humanity between now and maturity, but we have at least come within some reach of understanding that our future can hold any new dimensions of challenge and happiness that we may desire and deserve." And keeps going about how "we need to have love in order to have truth." And "this is about hope for the future for humanity." So yeah, it does feel like kind of a bit of a cross between an introduction on the book and just like an essay on Star Trek. Which I'm not totally opposed to. *laughs* It's just, some of the stuff is interesting. And like, yeah, I did kind of want to know more, especially this idea that humanity is kind of split into different camps, and that there are like people that are too smart for Starfleet. Because I feel like that does not jive with what we see later in like TNG especially. Where it's like, when you look at the stuff Wesley has to do to get into the academy.

Sue: Hmm. I feel like it's sort of related to The Space Seed storyline. Right? But also in a way related to the Wesley story. You know, how he's the next step of human evolution when he becomes a traveler?

Jarrah: Oh yeah, that makes sense.

Sue: So maybe that's where that wound up. I mean, there's no doubt that Roddenberry had a ton of ideas. And it seems like most of them were just thrown at the wall in this book. *all laugh*

Jarrah: Yeah. I think it also has to do with a little bit of some of the influences, not just with like, you know, the "Wagon train to the stars", kind of like pioneering spirit, but also the swashbuckler characters. How those other characters influenced GR? That he's talking about

individualism and maybe, you know, given where things were at in like 1979 and how they evolved from when he was working on the original series feeling like he somehow had to speak to the value of those individualistic traits at a time when society, or like the people in his sphere and with similar philosophies, were embracing kind of more collective views. We will never know. *sighs* So, I feel like a couple of other maybe like little scenes to draw attention to is we have Transporter Chief Janice Rand, who kills Kirk's ex-girlfriend. *laughs*

Sue: Oh my gosh. Give her a promotion and the first thing she does is majorly- well, she doesn't mess it up, but she feels like she messed it up.

Jarrah: Yeah. I felt so bad.

Sue: It's not her fault, but the first thing that happens is two people die on her transporter platform.

Sarah: Die horribly. I would never touch a transporter ever again.

Sue: Right? It's like, literally Galaxy Quest.

Jarrah: And it's just- yeah, exactly. *Sarah laughs* It's like when they beam the thing and it's like, "It is inside out and also exploded."

Sue: *laughs* Yeah, exactly. Terrible. Oh, why is it necessary? Sorry.

Jarrah: And can you imagine getting the, the message "Enterprise, what we got back didn't live long, fortunately." Like, you just don't want to be the relatives that hear what people said there. And then basically it's like, "There was nothing you could have done, Rand. It wasn't your fault." Then he turned to left the transporter room.

Sue: Terrible.

Jarrah: Uh, he's always been like, so so empathetic to his subordinates. Yeah. So I feel like that kind of covers most of the like, our normal women members of the crew. Uhura shows up in a few scenes. Interesting interesting scene on page 79 where Uhura is reacting to Ilia being a Deltan, and Kirk is sort of suggesting that Uhura might be biased. And then he goes like, "Kirk realized there was a suggestion of reproof in his voice, and he immediately regretted it. Uhura was the last person who needed instruction in diversity from him." and I'm like, "That is the most self-aware thing Kirk has ever thought." *laughs* Can you imagine if like everyone was like, "Yeah, actually I don't need to mansplain diversity to a Black woman."

Sue: But in that same introduction scene, I don't know if I'm I'm reading into this, but they have Sulu not react to learning that their new navigator is Deltan.

Jarrah: Right.

Sue: And then like, make jokes about like, "Oh, he'll find out soon enough." And like, is that like a dig at George Takei for being gay? Or am I reading too much into that?

Jarrah: *sighs* I'm just like looking at that again. I don't know. That might be- it's hard to say because we're not in his head. I feel like it also- you could also potentially read it as like- yeah, I don't know. I think they just wanted like, there to be someone who was going to be caught by surprise.

Sue: Which is fine.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: It just, it struck me as like, it's interesting to pick that character. For- to be that one. And then he does react to Ilia after she comes on board. But then when she's replaced by DiFalco, I think it is? *laughs* Kirk's internal monologue is, "Oh yeah. There might be something about her worth remembering." *laughs*

Jarrah: Oh, right. Yeah. There's definitely a lot competent women on the ship. And I feel like this was as far as he could go to recognize them. Like, we talked a bit about the Chapel thing before. But you know, she- I did like that there's things about basically like, "If McCoy's gonna test me, he'll find out I'm really well-prepared." But it still feels like the recognition in a lot of these cases at the end of the day is kind of grudging. Like, "Oh, it's very cool that Janice Rand is a transporter chief now. Oh shit. She probably killed someone. Moving on." And then like, "Chapel's a doctor. She's totally prepared." And then you have these kind of like backhanded compliments.

Sarah: "Now you're thinking like a Doctor."

Sue: Even Uhura doesn't recognize that V'ger is trying to contact them, Spock has to tell her.

Sarah: This is why I don't read a lot of older science fiction, because a lot of older science fiction is like this.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well, anyway. So that's pretty much the Motion Picture novelization. Any other scenes that you had noted that we didn't cover? Or, you know, hilarious quotes?

Sue: I have so many post-it notes.

Jarrah: I know, me too. I will say that like, overall I found the book- like, I would say while there were definitely some cringe moments, I didn't find it like hard to read. Like it's a pretty light book and he's good at describing visuals. So, you know, some of the descriptions of like some of the things that were visually impressive in the movie, I think still kind of carried over into the book, and is not- like he's not bad at writing action. Like he's clearly- can put together a novel. And like, can put together a story. There's just a lot of cringey sex stuff.

Sue: "It had pleased her immensely to both heal and to pleasure him so."

Jarrah: *laughs* Is that Ilia? Or-

Sue: That is Laurie.

Jarrah: Oh. *laughs* Oh my gosh. It was like, "That could be any woman in this book." That's certainly what pleases me. *Sue laughs* Show me a man I can heal and pleasure.

Sarah: I appreciate that this book is printed in large font, so it's not as long as it appears from the outside. *Sue laughs*

Jarrah: Exactly. I found it a fast read. It took me like three baths to read it. *all laugh* I only read books in the bath that I'm not overly concerned about dropping in the bath. *all laugh*

Sue: So, I don't know if it's just this year, but I definitely had a hard time focusing on this when I was reading it.

Sarah: Same.

Sue: And I think it's a little bit how my brain is right now, but I think it's also the writing style. And it occurred to me that I think Roddenberry writes prose like he speaks.

Jarrah: Ah!

Sue: Not necessarily the dialogue of the other characters. But like it's a little bit flowery, and like the sentences are just a smidge too long, and they kind of double back on themselves a bit. And I think that's where my brain wasn't always following. If that makes any sense at all. *laughs*

Jarrah: Yep. That totally does. And actually, even like that footnote where they have the thoughts from Admiral Kirk on whether or not he's Spock's lover, it struck me reading that out loud that that doesn't sound at all like captain Kirk talks. So, it's very flowery and the sentences are very long. And as we all know, from all the impressions of William Shatner, that he *Shatner pause* doesn't *Shatner pause* talk like *Shatner pause* that. So it does strike me that there's maybe a bit of a, you know, writing this as it's kind of almost more of like a Star Trek fantasy than it is a, you know, imagining the characters actually saying those lines and doing those things.

Sue: Yeah. Just flipping through my copy here, I think we hit just about everything I post-it noted. Except for the one bit that, I feel anyway, directly contradicts that infamous footnote. Which is Kirk musing on his relationship with Spock, his friendship and affection for Spock. "Theirs had been the touching of two minds, which the old poets of Spock's home planet had proclaimed as superior even to the wild physical love which affected Vulcans every seventh year during Pon Farr."

Jarrah: Yeah. So it's interesting for sure. I feel like it's a snapshot into a period of time in Gene Roddenberry's ideation of Star Trek. And you can see which parts like, you know, stuck around and which parts didn't and which parts were probably, you know, finessed and edited and brought in by other people that were key in the original series and the movies, and probably, you know, helped to shape more of where things ended up. So are we going to rate this book? *Sarah laughs*

Sue: Yeah, let's do it. Let's talk about *laughter continues* where this falls. My rating is "Question Mark." Right? *laughs* because here's the thing: it's not a great book. It's- point blank, it's not good. But it is amusing.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: At least to me. And I think- do I think it's worthwhile to read it? I think for amusement purposes, maybe, maybe skim it. I think also for the purposes of like what you were just saying, Jarrah, the snapshot of the idea of Star Trek at a particular point in time. So it's more- I think there's almost more value in it as a reference book than there is as a novel.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sarah: I feel like reading this book as a woman, or someone who likes women as people, you really risk getting turned off to the original series entirely. So I'm going to give it a 2 out of 10 inappropriate references to women.

Jarrah: *laughs* Yes. Yeah. I think I would definitely not suggest someone read this book before watching the movie. Or before watching any original series. Yeah. I don't think it's a good introduction to Star Trek. Yeah. I'm going to give it- I mean, again, it is hard to rate it because I kind of -I think I'm on a similar page as Sue, where I think it has like kind of a good reference educational value. And also I found it amusing, that I was just like, "Wow, this has bananas." So I will give it 4 out of 10 bonding headbands. *Sue laughs*

Sarah: And, you know, I should have said something about this earlier. There are times when in a novelization adding stuff enriches the original story, but then in this book he just throws in whatever he randomly thought of that morning and it doesn't do anything.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: I agree. I don't think it adds to the story. I think it more just kind of illuminates the differences between like his vision and what ended up on screen. So, very fair. Don't know that the movie really, truly suffered for not having like sen-cievers *Sarah laughs* and Kirk wandering around this big hydro project. Anyway. So, if you want to join in for our next book club discussion or to suggest a book that we should read we do usually a couple of these a year, so you can hop on over to goodreads or you can always just send us suggestions to email at crew@womenatwarp.com. And yeah, we'll wrap up there for today. Sue, where can people find do you on the internet?

Sue: Sure. You can find me on Twitter @Spaltor. That's S P A L T O R.

Jarrah: And Sarah?

Sarah: You can find me on Twitter @SarahMiyoko, S A R A H M as in Mary I Y O K O. And you can find my fanzine Star Trek Quarterly on Facebook.

Jarrah: Cool. And I'm Jarrah. And you can find me on Twitter @J A R R A H penguin, that's Jarrahpenguin. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit women@warp.com or

find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. I mentioned, you can also email us crew@womenatwarp.com. And for more Roddenberry podcasts, visit podcasts.rodtenberry.com. Thanks so much for listening. .