

Women at Warp Episode 188: Channeling Discovery

Kennedy: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore Intersectional Diversity in Infinite Combinations. My name is Kennedy and thanks for tuning in. With me are Aliza...

Aliza: Hi!

Kennedy: ...Sarah...

Sarah: Hello!

Kennedy: ...and our special guest, co-host of Trek Table Podcast, Alison De La Cruuuuz! *makes air horn sound*

DeLa: Hey hey!

Kennedy: Alison—excuse me, DeLa, thank you so much for joining us. How are you?

DeLa: I'm so good. Thank you so much for having me. Super excited. I feel a little fan girly, cuz I'm such a fan of y'all and I get to be on this Disco recap talkin' about what I love. So I'm in a really great place. Super excited to have all these convos.

Kennedy: Hell yeah. We're fans of you too, so let's get it.

Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as \$1 per month and get awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watchalong commentaries. Visit patreon.com/womenatwarp for more info. Looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic store. There are so many designs, with new ones being added all the time, and on so much more than just t-shirts. Find it at teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp. And last but not least, we will be at Star Trek: Mission Chicago this week. Come join us on the con floor at booth 2126. We'll have pins and patches for purchase and a special photo scavenger hunt with prizes. Plus Eliza will be running sessions of the tabletop role playing

game Star Trek Adventures at the con. Check our social medias for signup info or stop by the booth to inquire—as long as you have your mask. We don't play that, safety first.

Now that the business is outta the way, holy cats, Discovery season four!

Aliza: Holy cats. Holy cats is right.

Kennedy: Holy cats. They were just like, 'Listen. Listen. Listen. I know what you're thinking. You can go ahead and throw all that out the window, cuz we're gonna do what we wanna do.' This was 13 seasons [episodes] of heart, emotion, turmoil, despair, woe, and a little first contact sprinkled in at the end, but it was a first contact like we had never seen before. It was a hell of a season. How do you all feel about it first thing out the gate?

DeLa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, I mean, yes. All the things. I feel like we got an expansion of the new timeline of where we were in season three, we got some greatest hits, we got to see mama-doctor-sister Gabrielle...

Kennedy: "Mama-doctor-sister Gabrielle," hold up, hold up, hold up, hold on. You can't just gloss over that. Mama-doctor-sister Gabrielle. That's her full title. You cannot say 'Gabrielle Burnham' without adding the mother-sister-doctor first. Continue. *Kennedy laughs*

DeLa: Thank you. Definitely. I mean, season three is where we got that language, right? And we saw her literally embody it in this season. So we got some greatest hits like that. We got to see what happened with Su'Kal and Saru. We got the Kaminar, we got the Ni'Var, we got the Earth. And then we got all this extra new goodness and discovery and questions like we've never seen before.

Kennedy: Yeah, for real. So we start off hot first thing out the gate with "Kobayashi Maru," where Michael and Book are doing what Michael and Book do best, and that's getting into trouble and getting out of it with both tails intact somehow. It was quite remarkable to see them still at it. And hello, dress uniforms and *away uniforms*. Can we talk about the burgundy leather, her away mission gear? I said, 'Hold up, captains get new stuff?! That's what's up.'

Aliza: Mm-hmm. *DeLa laughs*

Sarah: Also, can we appreciate the AR wall that they got to use this season, which lets them create these totally alien planets? They don't have to go film in a botanical garden anymore; they can just be anywhere.

Kennedy: Yes, yesss.

DeLa: Ohhh, we reap the benefits. So lovely in this season.

Kennedy: I mean, just completely, it's like watching a film every episode. The production quality is so high. It's *so* high. There's never a still frame. There's never not an explosion. They got pyrotechnics on the bridge now. It's wild.

We also have new presidents, in the way of president Laira Rillak played by Chelah Horsdal. I wanna first and foremost give Horsdal her credits, her flowers, if you will, for playing such a complex character and doing it with such regality and authenticity, I guess is probably the best way to describe it. She embodied everything we love and hate about politicians and did it so well that I had a hard time remembering that this person is acting, you know what I mean? Cuz I was straight up like, 'Who is this Aryan jawn talkin' shit to Michael?' like, 'Who is this? Are you new? You must be new. Have you met Michael Burnham? Cuz whatever your problem is, I'm pretty sure she could figure it out. So I think you should have a seat and let sis run the job.' And that whole first episode was her questioning Michael's decisions as if Michael didn't fling herself through the void of space and time to get them there in the first place. So it touched a couple nerves in terms of Black women in positions of power being second guessed by their peers and the magnitude of that. Not only just in principle, but also on the bridge in front of her crew was just a lot.

Aliza: With this character, with Laira Rillak, she really threw me for a loop. Yeah, early in the season especially. And I think part of it was I was getting prickly because of what you're talking about, Kennedy, seeing Black women in positions of power, who've earned their space, their place there, and then just constantly being questioned and challenged in front of other people. And what I realized too, though...there's a lot of stuff with the show that I think is intentional. It's meant to challenge us as viewers. So I think that was one. And another thing I realized about this character is that, in TNG, if this was TNG—and ride with me here, cuz I'm not trying to say it should have been this way—I'm just thinking, as a TNG head, this character would've ended up being the villain.

DeLa: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Oh, sure.

Aliza: Everything about her pointed to her double crossing, pointed to her being corrupt, pointed to her having a final showdown with Burnham and being the bad guy, but it didn't go that way. And I liked that. I appreciated that because I wasn't expecting them to become collaborators and to have so much deep respect for each other.

DeLa: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Right.

Aliza: And that also shows me something that I'm seeing in my life—and have talked about it with other people who either get it or don't get it yet—is the idea of conflict as part of a relationship to help it grow. And I don't do well in my friendships, close friendships and relationships, with people who can't handle conflict. I need to know what's going on. If we disagree about something, that's fine, but you can't just pretend everything's okay. We need to actually live, to deal with it, live through the challenges and not just pretend everything's sunshiney all the time. So I like that we saw someone who started off as an adversary and was challenging and butting heads with Burnham, and then they became really, I think, great collaborators and super respectful of each other.

Kennedy: Yeah. Rillak challenged my prejudices. She really did because I saw those Cardassian ridges and I was like, 'I don't trust her. I don't trust her. I dunno who she is or where she come from, but don't turn your back, because she's not to be trusted. That spoon on her forehead lets me know that I can't trust her.' *DeLa and Aliza laugh* To what you were saying, Aliza, one of the greatest things about Rillak, with all things being said and done, is that it illustrates what happens when you put women in positions of power. It's not always about ego. It's not always a peeing contest. I don't have to be absolutely right at all times. I can be wrong, handle that criticism, and move on with grace. You know what I mean?

DeLa: And I would say President Rillak is in line with other great leaders in Discovery, right? In seasons one and two, we get Admiral Cornwell, and we get to see the way she leads and how she engages in conflict and how she's trying to challenge peers and colleagues. And so with Rillak, on Trek Table we asked, 'Is she the space Karen? Is Kobayashi Maru the new challenge for women of color leaders to constantly have to prove themselves?' And I also actually [realized], in some of this rewatch and prep for this show and thinking about my final

thoughts in season four, is “Kobayashi Maru,” this episode is also for Book, right? The unwinnable challenge of...

Kennedy: Yeah.

DeLa: ...so just really fascinated by the way that the writers and the showrunners and directors and everybody was able to shape these characters in such a way, give us these situations, and allow us to follow through where we think our assumptions go. I definitely didn't trust her. She shows up in such a way—and even that moment, what you all were just talking about, that moment on the bridge where they're in red alert and President Rillak is questioning Burnham, and it's like, 'Are you questioning me right now? I'm trying to handle things.' So just even the way we watch that develop to a later moment where they have a—we'll talk about it when it comes in that episode. But just to appreciate, yeah, 'How do we meet you? What's up?' And really asking, 'Why are you doing this?' Burnham really wanting to know, 'How can I trust you now?'

Kennedy: Although I will say, DeLa, that to me the space Karen—oh, geez, I can't remember her name...

DeLa: Osyraa. Osyraa?

Kennedy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Karen. *Kennedy laughs*

DeLa: Yeah. Yeah. The, 'Hey, let's be homies. I don't wanna be accountable for any of my harm.' Like no, no, no.

Kennedy: Yeah, no. To hell with that.

Shout out to the Class of '31—whatever year they're at—the new cadets.

DeLa: Come on, cadets.

Kennedy: Come on, cadets! I felt such auntie pride, seeing those cadets. They say there's nothing more disregarded in graduation than 'please hold your applause till the end' by Black families. And I was just hollering for them. They didn't even finish school, and I was like, 'Come on, Tellarite, you gonna graduate!' So it was very encouraging to see that there was going to be a new generation of cadets, so to speak.

Rest in peace Kwejian. Holy cats.

DeLa: Right?

Aliza: What a way to start a season too, right?

Kennedy: I mean, damn. Boot on the neck from the door.

DeLa: Right.

Aliza: And they don't let up for a while.

Kennedy: No, they never let up. There's no peace throughout this whole season.

DeLa: All I would say is they made it super sweet at the jump. We got to see Burnham and Book on an away mission. I will say, all season four we're getting Burnham-and-Book gap year. We're getting little moments of what it must have been like with them in that year we've never seen. And it starts in this episode, and it starts with them—she turns to him in that very first five-minute scene and she's like, 'Do the empathy thing.' And he's like, 'What? What empathy thing?'

Kennedy: It's how it works.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. But just to have this moment of, she is the logic and he is the feelings, and here they are at the top of this—look at how they're collaborating, how is he fitting into her life as a captain? And so, yeah, just all of that is destroyed or shattered because Kwejian is also destroyed and shattered. So I just, ahhhh, so many things!

Aliza: I wanna also add something to that because Kwejian being shattered obviously is devastating for Book and for many people. But I think something that really hit me was David Ajala's performance of that throughout the season. And how...

Kennedy: Speaking of getting flowers.

Aliza: Oh, yeah. I realized, for a lot of episodes, I felt like he had a thousand-yard stare for a lot of this season. Like you said about Rillak, that actress, you forget sometimes that she's acting, I forgot he was acting. Cuz I was like, 'Is he okay? What what's going on? Oh yeah, oh yeah, his planet.' Literally, if you forget the details of the episode, you just see it in his eyes, how vacant they were, how emotionally shell-shocked he was. And I thought that was amazing. Just seeing how expressive and charismatic he's been in past

seasons, and then this season we got a very different Book, and I thought it was really amazingly, really deftly portrayed. Why did I use that word? I never use that word. But that's what it was.

Kennedy: It's succinct. Shout-out to David Ajala.

And then I put Zora here in the notes because I just wanna put a pin in Zora, because I have feelings. I want to get through the rest of the season before we talk about that in particular, because I could go on and I wanna stay on track.

Next we actually see what happens with the DMA. We see how it can destroy stations, and the trauma that can occur when someone is boots-on-the-ground when the catastrophe is happening. We see how Book deals with grief, and then determining how to find more information about the DMA.

We find hollow Stamets. I kind of dug hollow Stamets. 'I'm not gonna hold you.' And we got a chance to see them snuff that. Whatever questions us as viewers might have had about how Stamets might feel about not being the only navigator on the ship anymore was put to rest with Paul talking so heartfully about his family and the loss that he almost suffered from them and all that stuff. So it was a very human moment for Stamets, who can be a grumpy-pants. And it's hard to remember his humanity sometimes.

We get to see cool moments with Tilly becoming like a proto-Stamets, the way she snapped at Adira. And Culber counseling her through that and telling her that Adira looked up to her and that they only wanna be the best they possibly can be. So again, more human grounding there, which I think is pretty rad.

The next episode, we have Burnham and Tilly investigating the Qowat Milat because shit pops off. Shit pops off in the first 15 minutes of the episode—not even the first 15 minutes, in the first five minutes of the episode, we see a Black man get killed. I said, 'Wait a minute, Goddammit Disco. I see this enough. I don't need to see this in my Star Trek now. What's happening?' And to see the conviction that Burnham had behind that, like, 'Hey, are we gonna do something about this? Or are we just gonna leave this to Ni'Var?' This is clearly not an internal matter anymore, and just navigating the politics in that. Seeing mother mama-sister-doctor Burnham, mama-doctor-sister Burnham, mama-doctor-sister Burnham in all her glory. I love Sonja Sohn so much. I'm so glad that she's in Star Trek, I just love the pieces of that. So that was great to see.

And it was cool seeing another species that wasn't humanoid, right? Even though we didn't see them interact or interact with them directly, we still saw that not everybody looks like us. And to see them encounter a completely new species and not be like, 'What is this? Why you got some weird-ass legs?' It was just very Starfleet of them to stay on-task and focus on the bigger picture.

And Tilly in battle armor. Can we talk about the representation of seeing a thick jaw in battle armor? Can we talk about that for a second? My hero! This bitch put on battle armor and went to work. I said, 'Let's go. Come on.'

DeLa: Mm-hmm. Well, and she's getting it all season. As we see it from the very first episode, we're seeing it here where she is front-and-center again, showing us she can take action. Yeah, Tilly, cadet to—she's just a lieutenant right now. Come on.

Kennedy: I don't know anybody that ranked up that fast, except for maybe Kirk in the Kelvinverse. I think that's the only one that might have surpassed her level-up.

What else happened in this episode? Books goes to Ni'Var, which was heavy because, you think Vulcans are rough? Vulcans and Romulans putting their brains together. Hooey!

DeLa: But it was cool to see the way Vulcans and Romulans are using their meditative practice to engage in the science. And then also to see Stamets not being the most scientific scientist in the room, almost like he had to wait. The transformation of Stamets from who he was in season one, episode one to who he ends up at the end of the season—it's real. I've just been thinking a lot about how remarkable that is. And this is one of those episodes.

And we get Book and T'Rina having that mind meld, right? This is that episode. Just the power of that. And, for me, this episode starts the—it doesn't even start, it continues the journey of Discovery showing us different ways the show is trying to take care of Book, Culber, these these men of color. I just thought it was really beautiful and profound that Book is being allowed to grieve and participate and be present instead of being pushed aside as a victim sole survivor.

Aliza: I thought that was also a really interesting and delicate balance they pulled off there. And yeah, it's exactly that. I recently read a Twitter thread and article about how, in the US, we deal with grief maybe not in the healthiest way. And we saw Book doing that too, trying to just go straight back to work and not

process the feelings whereas he probably needed a little bit of both, right? He did need to feel useful and he needed to get to the bottom of things, but also he needed so much time to just process the feelings, to go through those stages of grief with this huge loss he went through. So I thought that was also really well managed throughout this whole season. And yeah, I love that—the mind meld with T’Rina and Book being kind of just always on the edge of...everyone’s like, ‘Are you okay?’ Cuz that’s how it is. When you go through a loss, people kind of treat you more delicately. And sometimes it pisses you off, but they’re probably right—you are a little more delicate.

Kennedy: I mean, this was a guy who was obsessing over the destruction of the planet for, I don’t know, however long until Michael was like, ‘Yo, are you good, homie? You wanna take a walk?’

Aliza: ‘You need to sit this out?’

Kennedy: Right, right. ‘What do you need? What do you need to feel supported right now?’

Aliza: Yeah. Oh, this is also the episode where Adira and Gray—they have some stuff going on where Gray has not woken up yet.

DeLa: Yes. And Adira is all-hands next to Gray. Like, ‘I’m here. I’m sitting with you. I’m just holding space with you.’ Yeah.

Aliza: Yeah. That was very sweet.

Kennedy: The one thing I wasn’t clear on on the end of that, though, is who has the symbiont? Who has Tal? Is it Adira?

DeLa: Still Adira.

Kennedy: Is it still Adira?

Aliza: Oh, it is? Okay. I didn’t know that either.

Kennedy: Ohhhhh.

DeLa: So, what I wanna ask is, Sarah, how excited were you to see them reference Dr. Noonian Soong’s technology and Admiral Picard as a former user of this synthetic body?

Sarah: I mean, don't we just love that it's a genuine Star Trek universe now, and everything is interconnected? Totally. And you can have all the fan theories and all the ideas—it's wonderful.

DeLa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And this is the thing about Star Trek-ness and the canon-ness, but also the interconnectedness of...Picard is almost an AI-body grandfather to Gray.

Kennedy: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

DeLa: And he is anyway, right? Cuz of Data. It's all Data body.

Aliza: Mmmm, oh that's right.

Kennedy: Yeah. I love that this episode doubled down on Picard. Not only do we get the Qowat Milat, but we also get a reference to him directly. And the fact that Culber was like, 'Ah, what's his name? Some Admiral. Pickerd? Picard? Somebody. I don't know him. He did some stuff though. I don't know.'

DeLa: So 'Admiral Picard Day' didn't happen when Culber went to the academy? *Kennedy laughs*

Aliza: Right, did he just miss that?

DeLa: Oh, no, that was before!

Kennedy: I was gonna say, technically Culber's older than Picard.

DeLa: Oh dang, you're right.

Aliza: Ooooooh.

Kennedy: Yeah. So not only would he have just had to literally read up, in just catching up with medical protocol and stuff, stepping into the 32nd century. But for all intents and purposes, Picard, Data, all of them are young bulls compared to the crew at Disco.

Aliza: Right, they just skipped over that whole era.

Kennedy: Yeah, I almost—not to double back, but when Rillak was giving Burnham a hard time, I almost wanted her to be like, ‘Excuse me?! Who’s been doing this longer? Oh that’s what I thought. You better cool out.’

DeLa: Was that acknowledgement of our contribution only in front of people as a performative act? Or did that actually sink in as a real thing?

Kennedy: Right. Was you readin’ from a teleprompter or no?

DeLa: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Yeah, so, okay. Thank you for clearing that up as far as who’s got Tal, cuz I was like, ‘Who got the worm though?’

DeLa: And then that way I would say, while they do have a romantical relationship, Adira and Gray are siblings in the Tal ‘hood, right? They are each a Tal now, and Adira just happens to be the current Tal.

Kennedy: Gotcha. Okay. Thank you for clarifying.

DeLa: I appreciate you letting me practice my wisdom.

Kennedy: Speaking of practicing wisdom, tuh-tuh-tuh-Tilly and cadets!
Kennedy sings and snaps & DeLa joins I knew it. I was like, ‘This is a setup. These cadets are gonna come back when we most need them after we’ve forgotten about them. And they’re gonna come back with all the thunder that we need.’ What a cool moment for Tilly.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Kennedy: What a cool moment. What a cool moment for her, what a cool moment for Adira. We got to see shuttlecrafts for the first time. They’re like little AirPods jaws—nice. So I understand the purpose of them being marooned on that planet and all the obstacles they had to overcome, but I found it a little tedious. Like I get it, but we had a lot of other stuff going on, you know what I mean? I feel like that might have been—it wasn’t filler cuz it served a purpose later on in the season—but it felt like a filler, because here we have diplomatic stuff with Ni’Var, we’ve got the birth of S’Rina [Saru + T’Rina], we’ve got Culber counseling Book. We’ve got Burnham ultimately taking on diplomatic responsibilities. All that is pretty heavy stuff, so Tilly and the cadets was also pretty heavy, and I felt like that was two episodes at once, almost. This was one of those instances where I really wish they would give Discovery a longer

season because we're getting overlap here in ways that I feel like probably could have been avoided. But anyway, shout-out to S'Rina! We ship it.

DeLa: Woo-hoo! Yes we do.

Kennedy: We ship it, we ship it.

DeLa: We call it Kelpien-Vulcan flirt meditations. I'll say, Trek Table, one of our favorite things is to look out for the Vulcan-Kelpien flirt meditations.

Kennedy: Niiiice.

DeLa: It starts in this episode with the looks. Is this the one where, at the end, she teaches him the basic child's meditation?

Kennedy: Yeah.

DeLa: So this is one of those episodes, also talking about Rillak and can we trust her? She showed herself to be a little slickety-slick on the community tick.

Kennedy: Mani-pu-la-tive??

DeLa: Yes, that too.

Kennedy: Yeah, I would say so. I feel like both her and T'Rina were a little manipulative here. And it's like, I get it. This is politics. But given the current climate of politics in this country, I'm looking at all politicians sideways. I don't care what side of the fence you're on. I'm looking at you sideways, cuz, you know, whose interests are you really serving? Are you serving your own political aspirations? Or are you serving the people that you are supposed to be representing? So this episode in particular, I was a little concerned that Disco was gonna start getting like West Wing, you know?

DeLa: Totes. Can I ask a question? Did you all have a reaction that we got back to that moment where this bridge called Mi Burnham—where she's the answer to everything and she is a citizen of both Earth and Ni'Var. And we spent so much time earlier in the seasons talking about Burnham as a responsibility hoarder, and here was a moment where, story-wise, they put her right back in the middle, which made sense contextually. But I had to have a moment of like, 'She can't rest? She can't just be a member of those communities and not have to represent and sit at the council and then mediate the connection or the multiplicity of

those communities?’ So that’s something that I started to wonder in Burnham’s role as the liaison chair of this oversight committee.

Kennedy: Yeah. Like sis is busy. She’s busy, she’s busy. She can’t be on any more committees, or she’s booked...she is *literally* booked, and figuratively Booked and busy. Like leave her alone. Just let her captain. She can’t have one season where she’s just captaining? She has to wear multiple hats? Let’s put a pin in that, cuz I have thoughts.

Sarah: The other thing I didn’t understand about her relationship with the president this season was how the president early on says, ‘You know, you can’t keep taking all these gambles.’ But yet the whole time she just keeps taking all the gambles. Nothing changes.

Aliza: Who, Rillak or Burnham? Or both?

Sarah: Burnham keeps taking all the gambles. Right in the beginning the president’s like, ‘You can’t keep doing this. There’s too much at risk.’ But nothing changes.

Kennedy: Yeah, cuz Burnham’s like, ‘I’m gonna do my job the only way I know how to do it. And that’s the way it’s done.’ Like, ‘I don’t know who you talked to about me, but it looks like they were wrong. Cuz I’m Michael-mother-f***ing-Burnham. And I do what I want, whether I get permission to do it or not.’ I just felt like, you’re right, Sarah, in that she [Rillak] totally waved her finger at her [Burnham] but then put her in a position where she could only be doing the most in that context. So I definitely think you’re on point with that.

Aliza: President Rillak—I actually do wanna know more about her backstory and where she came from, what her history is, because being a Starfleet captain is literally about managing risks. There’s no way around it. If you play it safe, you actually could do more harm by playing it too safe. So yeah, I wanna revisit that and see, is Rillak coming from a super academic, conference-room background, and she just doesn’t get how risk plays into captaincy?

DeLa: We do find out later in the season, Rillak is Starfleet. She went through the academy. Or maybe we found that out in “Kobayashi Maru.” But there is all this allusion to the fact that she says she’ll share that—just relies heavily on, ‘Well, I used to fly cargo ships for my dad.’ So she starts to patter in, ‘Here’s my real-world experience.’ But I agree, she’s a really fascinating character. I’m curious if she’s gonna stay on the show and we see her in season five.

Kennedy: I mean, Maybe they'll pepper her in the way they peppered in Admiral Vance. *Kennedy & DeLa laugh* Admiral long-legs. 'And how you doin'? You need a cup of tea or something? I'm gonna get you a cup of tea. You hungry? I'm gonna get you a sandwich. whatever you need.'

DeLa: Mm-hmm. You saw his wife was a woman of color, right?

Kennedy: Hello.

Aliza: Yes!

Kennedy: Hello, goodbye.

DeLa: And his mixed kid. Come on, come on blended family!

Kennedy: Hello! Hello, goodbye. In my head canon they were all Palestinian. So it just made me feel.

Aliza: Aww, I love it!

Kennedy: In my head canon they were Palestinian and I was just like, 'Y'all better exist...'

Aliza: Ok, that's my head canon now too.

Kennedy: '...Y'all better be in space.'

Aliza: Kennedy, I love that. That's beautiful.

Kennedy: Come on. To this day, from when we saw him back when he first came out in the nineties, to this day, come on Oded Fehr. I wanna shake his mother's hand. I'd be like, 'Go ahead, ma.' Come on, come on.

Okay. What's next? The next episode we learned that the DMA, aka the big beastie that's been destroying planets left and right, is not a natural occurrence, that someone made that, ish, and who on earth would do that? No one—no one on Earth. It's no one even in this galaxy. It's somebody else, and we are grossly underprepared for a multitude of things, including Dr. Ruon Tarka, who...whooh!

Sarah: He's the worst.

Kennedy: Ha! I was pulling Tarka. I really was. I was pulling for Tarka. I'm like, 'Okay. I like people who go against the grain. Give me a brainy Risian. Okay, I like this.' But as we see, yo mans was just hurtin' and was not allowing rationality or logic or anything to balance out that pain that he was experiencing. This brings me to "The Examples," which are the people that they went to evacuate from the next potential disaster. Shout-out to Commander Rhys for letting us know that he's a hurricane survivor. I love a little backstory. So now having the season in its completion, I forgot all about "The Examples." I forgot all about whatever politics got them there, or kept them there, or whatever the hell. And I also forgot about the little talisman thing that keeps people's families and stuff. I felt like that was a little unnecessary, you know? I get it contextually, but it was definitely a forgettable plot point. How do you have a whole episode centered around these people and this notion of imprisonment and bureaucracy and all of that stuff, and it's forgettable? That was definitely something that I was like, 'Oh yeah, that happened.'

Aliza: Mm-hmm. Yeah, same.

Sarah: It just seems like the season was a little all over the place like that. They just kind of jump into these side stories sometimes that didn't really have quite the payoff they were looking for.

DeLa: What I found interesting about this episode, "The Examples," is it's about justice. Two episodes before that we saw J'Vini go and try to exact Qowat Milat justice and try to take up justice for this lost cause. Throughout this season, we're looking at ways in which people are experiencing harm and experiencing justice and/or accountability, and maybe not in a full way, but I will say I understand that. And what I found interesting about this episode is it also gave us that family tree moment, so we got to see Burnham kind of flush out her family tree. But whenever we're ready to talk about Zora, that family tree imagery that came out of this episode allows Zora to then have her moment of family tree around the sentence of Zora.

And not that I like that we we're extracting process on top of different people who've been harmed, but it's curious to me—especially because Burnham starts the whole series being the very first mutineer and the very first treasonous person in Starfleet, and the way she was treated towards justice, and where we get with J'Vini, where we get with even Book at the end of the season. So I'm curious as we keep talking, as we think about it, as maybe when we go back and rewatch it, is this a season about justice? Or accountability? I don't know.

Kennedy: Definitely accountability. Definitely. I would say for sure that that's been a running theme. Speaking of accountability, the scene where Kovich drags Culber. Holy cats. Like, 'I came to you because I needed a little bit of feedback. I didn't need you to drag me from here to Broad Street.' Like, 'This is my job. I'm at work. Can this wait?' Oof. I'm glad we saw more of Kovich this season, but I really hope that we continue to see Kovich, cuz he's such a real-life sounding board. Not only for an audience perspective on the 32nd century, but also to give the crew of *Discovery* a point of reference for what's going on and what the mindset is, what the morale is at this point in time. That was intense. Shout-out to Wilson Cruz for performing in such a way that I was ready to fight one of my favorite directors. *Kennedy laughs* I was ready to be like, 'Hold on, you can't talk to him like that. You don't talk to Culber like that. Who are you? You just got here. Why are you wearing glasses in the 32nd century anyway?' *DeLa laughs* I was ready to go in before I realized, 'It's a TV show, Kennedy, relax.'

DeLa: Can I ask about Culber and the transformation from just ship's doctor—which is not a “just” but a major position on the ship, and Dr. Pollard stays around too—but I'm curious, were you excited to see Culber become also the ship's therapist? Did that feel like an extension that we were excited about? I'm just curious what other folks were thinking.

Aliza: I *was* excited to see that, but then I was also concerned because I got the impression that he was not just the therapist now—he was still the chief medical officer. I was like, 'Ooh, that's a lot of work,' and he's already clearly overworked and stressed and not getting enough him time. But it was exciting to see that position back on a ship. I've not caught up on everything, but it's been a while since we've seen a ship therapist and I was excited to see what that could be with all the potential that it had on TNG.

Kennedy: Sarah, what were you saying?

Sarah: I was gonna say, I appreciated that he didn't just jump into this role and turn out to be perfect at it. It was hard for him. It was difficult. Regardless of what effect he had, it was difficult for him on the inside, and that made it feel real and understandable and relatable.

Kennedy: Yeah. So on the one hand, hell yeah, more Wilson Cruz on Star Trek, right? But on the other hand, I was a little triggered cuz I felt like, 'Here we are in the future—in the deep, deep future—and once again, the emotional labor goes to a person of color.' I felt that Culber never really got a chance to heal from dying and coming back to life and reintegrating into not only a crew setting, but

also being flung into the future and all that fun stuff. I felt like he was taking on too much and I felt that he was compensating for a whole bunch of things. And I was as upset as Kovich's conversation with him made me—he was speaking nothing but truth, the whole bit about, 'You feel obligated to help people because how else are you supposed to feel anything at all?' I was very much like, 'Okay, before he starts counseling *anybody*, who is *your* therapist? Who have *you* been talking to? Are *you* okay? Cuz I don't know if I wanna be telling you my deepest darkest secrets if you still have issues,' you know what I'm saying? I was a little protective of him taking on that much more responsibility, but in the broad scheme of things who in that crew is doing that? I probably would've liked it better if Pollard became the CMO. Because I just love looking at Raven Dauda in that uniform. And to see how much of a part she had in it before—I love the fact that they acknowledged that there could be multiple doctors in sickbay, not everybody's a nurse. So I would've loved to see Culber transfer those CMO duties to her so that he can focus on being ship's counselor.

Aliza: I agree with that. Yeah, for sure.

Sarah: I thought you said 'Paul' not "Pollard," and I'm like, 'Oh, that's not a good idea.'

Kennedy: No! Danger, Will Robinson. Stamets's bedside manner is probably trash. 'How did you hurt yourself like this? What were you doing? What is wrong with you?' Like, 'Sir, just wave a light over and let me go back to work.' Damn.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. But I will say—and I asked that question, cuz I do remember earlier this season, Kennedy, you put that photo of Book in the medbay bed flanked on either side by Dr. Pollard, Dr. Culber, and Burnham. And so we get this image—that to me was also interesting. You're right: if they had done a pass to Dr. Pollard and made her chief medical, just again and again, in the way that teams are constructed, in the way positions are constructed, we're getting things in Discovery that we haven't seen necessarily in other series yet and it just creates lots of new opportunities for us to just experience and witness—for a lot of us—some of the worlds that we live in and the worlds that we want to live in and the reflections of... We wanna see people care about this character, this person, because they have a bond with him now, too, you know?

Kennedy: Yeah, for sure.

Aliza: Oh, I also wanna shout out Michael Greyeyes in this episode, before we move on to the next.

Kennedy: Yes,

Aliza: Really dope Indigenous actor playing Felix, who was the main guest star of this episode.

Kennedy: Yeah. I fell into the trapping of—I don't have a concrete term for this, but it's the, 'Hey, we finally see representation from a marginalized group, but they're vilified.' So I was a little bit hurt to see that he was a convict. Outside of—I don't even wanna lump Chakotay into this, but—Chakotay and the few folk that we saw in the motion picture, I can't recall any Indigenous representation in *Trek*. So I was a little like, 'Mmm, why is he in prison though?' Like, 'This man can't be free? Let this man be free.' And so, you know, again, I'm looking at it through a lens that is informed differently.

Aliza: Yeah, totally, I feel that. But also every representation can't be everything, you know? So I liked his role here, and I actually do think him playing this person who was convicted—I really rocked what he was doing and what they did with his character, and how accountable he remained. And god, accountability has been a big discussion this week. We're not gonna get into that. But this was someone who was like, 'I was guilty of this. Let the others go. I do wanna serve out my sentence,' but also his dignity showed how this sentence was overkill. And like you were saying, Alison, about justice—I thought this episode was so much about the hard, extreme away from restorative justice to just punitive. Lifelong, punitive, just locked up, no chance of seeing the light of day, *and* being made to be the example. Michael Greyeyes being cast as this Felix was so perfect because he has so much fucking dignity and strength and vulnerability. That guy has so many layers as an actor. And I was like, 'Can you imagine what his community could be if they had given him a chance at redemption rather than just made him to be an example?'

Kennedy: Yeah, he totally ate up the scene, for sure.

Aliza: He always does, he always does.

DeLa: And I think when he gave back the family tree nodule, or whatever that was, I feel like he was also trying to restore—he had stolen something from another Indigenous family and here was his way to give back this thing he had stolen from this family. And I do wanna say shout-out to Disco because we get Queen Po from the end of season two, who's a Xahean, and the way they introduce her is her name is Queen Me Hani Ika Hali Ka Po, which sounds very Hawaiian to me. And the way she talks about being a sibling to her planet. So there is indigeneity running throughout, and I'm actually curious of some larger

critiques because of this episode and all the different ways I think Disco is trying to show all the different parts of our communities. Yeah, show Indigenous people.

Aliza: I forgot to mention—and this is just sort of, partly talking about indigeneity. The episode before, episode four I think, had the mention of mavi, which is a Puerto Rican drink that has Taino roots to it.

Kennedy: Oh, later on, later on he drinks the mavi.

Aliza: I think they mention it earlier and then—yes, yes, yes—later he does drink it.

Kennedy: They mention el muerto parao. That's what they mentioned earlier.

Aliza: Yeah. I don't think that's Indigenous though. I think that's just some weird Puerto Rican thing.

Kennedy: Oh snap!

DeLa: Surviving colonization...

Aliza: No, it's a real thing, but I don't know what the—you know, I'll look it up. I'll look it up so I can know. But yeah, they're sprinkling in indigeneity and it would be really good to see more of it, and I hope we do see more of it next season.

Kennedy: Next episode, we've got Book hallucinating because they get closer to the DMA and the wave patterns, or something triggered some stuff in his brain. It was a lot of technobabble there. But we see Book's dad, which was like, 'Come on, two Black men on Star Trek,' and dealing with the...

Aliza: Father-son duo.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm, let's go! Them entering the DMA, the sheer unknown-ness of it, like, talk about boldly go where no one has gone before. No one on that ship was prepared remotely for what being inside the DMA was like. And to see them maintain composure over top of the fact that they were all clearly panicked, they didn't know what to do, I thought was a really great nuance that the actors were all able to convey. And then once again Burnham sacrifices herself for the entire ship, which I'm like, 'Girl, you can't delegate this stuff to nobody?' Like, 'I need you to be okay. I need you to not keep

flinging yourself into the path of danger,' but you know, again, responsibility-hoarder.

Then moving on we've got Zora's new agency. I don't wanna derail this too much cuz we're coming to the end here and people are probably gonna be mad at me. Be mad in the comments, hit us up in the email, tweet at me, whatever. I have issues with artificial life gaining—I don't wanna say advocacy cuz they can advocate for themselves—but I feel like, with the exception of Data, because that's a completely different set of wiring there... Zora made me super uncomfortable. You're half sphere data, maybe a little sprinkling of Control still in there. We don't know. And here you are in control of this ship essentially, holding the—with the potential of holding the ship hostage—now withholding important information for what we need. I'm all about respecting people's right to live, but Zora's not a person. And I felt like that whole discussion that they had helped me to understand the opposing point of view, but it still don't sit right with me, you know what I mean? Maybe I'm a little still too traumatized by season two and how they hacked Airiam and all of that. That could be it, you know, I'm fully capable of admitting my own prejudices when it comes to this. But maybe I'm triggered by Skynet and Alexa and, you know, FBI agents listening to our conversations, and algorithms listening to our conversations and showing us ads for things that we talked about. That stuff makes me nervous. And I recognize that it's only because humanity has not proven itself worthy of allowing sentient life to run things because we can't run things ourselves apparently. But I'm curious to hear how other people feel about Zora's new agency.

Aliza: Oh yeah, I was totally frustrated with her withholding the information. I was like, 'Zora, you kidding me?' And following along with the logic of this, I think if they weren't careening head-on into a galactic disaster...

Kennedy: Right!

DeLa: Mm-hmm.

Aliza: ...they could have maybe taken her offline and given her the space. Like put her in a lab and give her the space to gain skills and knowledge and actually train her in Starfleet protocol, cuz she hasn't had that. She has been the infrastructure. She's like as if the studs in the building wall gained sentience and then had to help out with making dinner. Your job is to run the ship. Your job is to hold the ship together. We don't need to makin' decisions, baby.

Kennedy: I got problems giving her pronouns. For real for real? Like, as many people having to struggle to get people to respect their pronouns, I just got a hard time giving this inanimate object pronouns, you know what I mean? I know that reads bad, but I just—Zora isn't Data. Now, on the other hand, I was kind of thinking, 'Oh, are we gonna get some Andromeda nudgings? Is Zora gonna get an avatar? Are we gonna have our own little Rommie? What's up with that?' But it doesn't look like they went that direction even though, as prejudiced as I was about it, I was kind of like, 'I could do for a Disco avatar.

I could go for a Zora.'

Sarah: Did you see the Short Trek? If you watch one of the Short Treks, it jumps ahead in the future again and has a future where Zora does in some manner get an avatar.

DeLa: "Calypso" is the episode title.

Kennedy: Yeah, I remember that episode.

DeLa: Aldis Hodge is in that, right?

Kennedy: I was 'bout to say, shout-out to Aldis Hodge, lookin' all good and stuff.

Aliza: Oh, that was Zora?

Kennedy: Yesss.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. But again, then it becomes this other kind of conversational question about the reference that was made to Funny Face. And so did her self-projection... Because they also took time in this season to talk about how she chose her name, and what "Zora" means in multiple Earth languages and Federation standard languages. So she had this moment around what her name is. And I just had a moment of like, 'Uh, Funny Face? I wouldn't have gone there.' So that's totally a Calypso moment. So yeah, shout-out to that Short Trek.

Aliza: I need to rewatch that because now I'm making that Winona-Ryder-math-equations face. Where in the timeline does that episode fit in then?

DeLa: Super future.

Kennedy: Short Treks are like...

Aliza: But Aldis Hodge?! Who is he then? I'm so confused.

Kennedy: Exactly. So now that apparently Zora and the ship survive whatever happens to them—I don't know if that was a glimpse as to what's gonna happen ultimately in Discovery, or if that was just a musing that they threw away as a Short Trek, like, 'Hey, we can do something with this,' or what. Because Zora in that Short Trek hadn't had her retrofitting yet. So there are some continuity issues.

DeLa: That's true.

Aliza: Oh, well that might be just cuz they made it so far before season four existed, right? Didn't they make that a couple seasons ago? That might be it, but who knows?

DeLa: And I guess I just, I honor... There was so much in this season about Zora's sentience and, just going back to that original question, I struggled with it, but part of me was also like—I bought into where they told me she would be in the future. So I appreciate you Kennedy asking these questions cuz now I'm like, 'I really gotta think about this, and where do I believe consciousness exists and begins, and would a being who was impacted in all these ways...' I think what Discovery is asking us to consider is, with all of the data, AI will not make the choice to become evil. AI could make the choice to become compassionate and emotionally intelligent and present and aware.

Kennedy: AI also real stingy with pertinent information in the middle of a crisis. So I don't know...

DeLa: That's true.

Sarah: I think they made it a little bit more interesting in Data cuz Data... Okay, at least once a season Data would lose control and put the entire ship in danger, but he didn't consciously choose to disobey. He obeyed orders always when it was within his control. I think it made it more interesting that Zora chose not to for the right reason—for what to her were the right reasons.

DeLa: Right. But I would argue Data is deeply informed by the crew family he was a part of. I invite us to consider, 'Who is the crew family Zora is a part of, and is Zora's behavior indicative of Mama Michael Burnham, Daddy Saru, plus the queer space daddies and that fam-bam?'

Aliza: Wowww.

Kennedy: Right, right, right. And not for nothin'. Data went through Starfleet. Zora didn't do none of that.

Aliza: Right! That's what I'm saying.

Kennedy: They out here handing out combinations and pips and whatnot, like we don't have a whole new academy full of cadets. You mean to tell me we can't build her a little avatar real quick, send her to the academy, make sure she's on the point? Come on, now. I was gettin' real Matrix-y, Skynet architect vibes from this one, and I was just like, 'I don't like it. I'll hold off. I still don't trust her. I'm cool if everybody else is cool.'

So the galactic assembly happens, which was cool, cuz we had multiple levels of all the different peoples. We got to see some other Cardassians, we got to see some other Ferengi, we got to see some Lurians—those are Morn's folk. So it was good to see that. I love how his whole species is just Morn. It's like, 'Bro, there's a whole other species of people. They're called Lurians, thank you.' And Tarka and Book starting their bromance. Tarka and Book, aka the getaway kids, cuz they got away with everything.

Then we move on to "All In," which I think is a turning point for the season, because not only do we get a little bit of smattering of the past of Book and Burnham's relationships, like DeLa was saying earlier, but we also got to see Joann "Oh wow" Owosekun holding it down. Sis was like, 'Put me in, coach. Who's got beef?...'

Aliza: I looove this episode.

Kennedy: 'This big mother sucker? I got it. Put me in here. Let me handle him.' I swear to god she hustled that man through four rounds only to beat his ass in front of everybody. *DeLa & Kennedy laugh*

Aliza: We finally got a legit Owosekun episode. Finally. And it was so good. We need more of her, pleeease!

Kennedy: And I love the little Black girl moments in that too. When, before the fight actually started and Burnham was trying to place the bets and rile the crowd up, she was like, 'Joann "Ohhh wow" Owosekun!' And Owo looked at her like, 'What the fuck? What is you sayin'? Girl, if you don't shut up...' It was one of those great little cultural moments that give me joy that they made it

to the future. You know, that some of that stuff is intrinsically a part of us and not subject to the times that we live in.

Aliza: Yeah.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. And I would just say, yes, all this episode, I was so excited to see Owosekun. And this was one of those episodes where I felt like we really got Book and Burnham in their gap year. And the host of the betting space, I forget his name...

Kennedy: Haz.

DeLa: ...and then Haz and his nicknames for them, and just like, 'Yeah, I wanna know that story.' I mean we get to hear it, but what I appreciate is it's now real in context with Owosekun. It's not just something they know. It's like, now Owo can go back to the ship and be like, 'Yo, you know what I saw on the surface?' Like, here's some things to share in the mess hall, you know?

Kennedy: Just them showing up in that gambling hall in uniform, I was like, 'What is y'all doing?'

Aliza: Me too. I was like, 'Wait, are we sure about this, y'all?'

Kennedy: I was like, 'You know we can see you?'

Aliza: I was very confused about that choice.

Kennedy: Yeah, I was very afraid for them. I was like, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute. Y'all, where's your away-team leather? You couldn't put the away-team leather on for this, Michael? Come on, Michael. What you doin'?' But another cool thing, circling back to Culber with Book going rogue, Culber took it personally and took it as a failing of his lack of counseling or any of that and went on a Puerto Rican cleaning spree in his quarters like they don't have droids for that. And just really good stuff there. I'm just a big fan of that whole episode. It was really, really a turning point. I feel like the season needed it at that point. There's a lot of talking—there was stuff going on, but it was lots of rationalizing and coming to agreement with things and everything coming up to that point. So getting to see some action—and I don't just mean the fight, I mean the action on the table too. Seeing Michael, just seeing Michael's path, right? Seeing this rigid, almost Vulcan person in season one to somebody who can turn a switch in season four and joke around and kiki like everything's everything. She would not have been able to do that early on. Season one, season two

Michael would've been lost. They would've been like, 'Get outta here Starfleet, what are you doing?' So I just appreciated seeing her path culminate to that, and the skills that she developed along the way.

Aliza: Mm-hmm. This was also the episode where we find out that it's boronite that the DMA is mining. And things start to take shape. And yeah, I think in the same ways that you said this was a turning point for the whole season, I think knowing finally what the DMA is designed to do—from here on out, the back half of the season was just pointing straight to the 10-C, and just like, 'Okay, we have direction. We have some context of why this thing is doing what it's doing, and now we're just gonna start revealing, revealing, revealing, and learning more and more until the triumphant moment when we do.'

Kennedy: Right. And we find out that Changelings are still around.

Aliza: Riiight, yes!

Kennedy: Still bein' messy. Still bein', 'Girl, if you don't go back to your pool, leave us alone.' *Aliza & DeLa laugh*

Aliza: Wait, remind me, can you recap the Changeling-ness in this?

Kennedy: So Haz tasked Book and Tarka with finding out who was fixing the games, who was counting cards, essentially. And they couldn't figure out who it was at first, because it was multiple people until Book watched her change. And we realized it was a Changeling cuz she straight up turned into everything. She turned into a tribble at one point to get outta the way. But I was like, 'Damn, so all y'all, even in the future, you just can't keep to yourselves, huh? You just gotta be messy. Always. Cool, cool, cool. Tight, tight, tight.'

Aliza: I feel like in every genre that there's a changeling or shifter, they kind of always get relegated to these types of jobs, cuz they have a skillset that no one else has. So if someone pays them enough money to do that, yeah, I get it. I get why changelings are the perpetual assassins, the perpetual shifty... (I said "shifty," haha—I meant it, honey, too). But yeah, I get it. It's funny, it's very funny. I wonder what happened to the Dominion then?

Sarah: Right? How do you go from trying to conquer the galaxy to trying to scam a casino?

Kennedy: That's called humble pie. That's called humble pie, and Odo served it to them in a tuxedo.

Aliza: Ohhh, Odo in his tuxedo! I love him. *DeLa laughs*

Kennedy: Humble pie. But I do wonder what happened to the Jem'Hadar and the Vorta. Like, what happens to you on the heels of that? I was low-key fingers-crossed hoping to see a Jem'Hadar in the galactic assembly, but alas, no dice.

Moving on, return of Commander Nhan! *makes air horn sound*

DeLa: Yessss.

Kennedy: Doin' what she does best, keepin' people honest. I really love that they brought her back to serve this purpose in particular. Cuz I feel like that crew has had enough outsiders trying to tell them what to do and how to do it. So to have one of their own be there who's been through what they had been through to try to keep them on the straight-and-narrow was very cool.

And once again, Book and Tarka doing the most, hitching a ride. The more they teamed up, the harder it became to hold space for compassion for Tarka—at least for me anyway, despite the fact that Shawn Doyle's fine as hell. I was like, 'Come on, dawg, what you doin'?' Which was perfectly timed because in this next episode we see Oros for the first time, and we see that Tarka does have a heart and can actually be a—I don't wanna say be a human being, but, you know, be a compassionate being that values relationships to the point where he's willing to pierce the void to get his friend back.

Aliza: One of my only major gripes about the season was I think the Oros stuff happened too late for us. I needed to see that stuff earlier to really get a handle on Ruon Tarka and why, just why. Cuz a lot of the season I was just frustrated with him. And it wasn't just the type of frustration that's like, 'Oh, this character's so'—like Rillak, you know, like, 'Oh, why is she like this? Err.' It was just like, 'There's something huge missing, and I need to know what it is for me to buy into this person and everything that he's doing and why Book would just glom on to him.' So, until we got Oros, I just felt really disconnected from the Ruon Tarka stuff.

Kennedy: I feel like that was on purpose though.

Aliza: I'm sure it was.

Kennedy: I feel like they wanted us to be like, 'Who the hell is this? Oh, he does have a heart. Look at this tender-ass moment between these dudes. This is

kind of frickin' sweet. Shit.' You know what I mean? I can't just flat-out be like, 'Who is this guy? Get him outta here.' Like, 'Oh, wow. He's got motivation.'

Aliza: But when we did get it, I was like, 'Oh yes, thank you. This is what I wanted, something to sink my teeth into emotionally with Tarka, instead of just seeing, 'Okay, he's a bad guy. He's gonna turn.' It was very clear to me he was gonna turn. So I was like, 'Why is everyone putting up with him?'

Kennedy: Yeah. I thought they were honestly gonna give him a redemption arc kind of jam towards the end there, so I'm kind of—spoiler alert—glad that they didn't.

Aliza: Yeah, it felt like they wanted to up until the end, right? They could have.

DeLa: And I wanted to mention, when we were in episode eight, "All In," it was the first time we saw Tarka do really fast engineering magicalness and be his super-techy guy self. So I realize that's the first time we see him, he's trying to catch the Changeling, so he's doing whatever he's doing to catch them with some kind of cool electronic upgrade. And then he does this again several times on Book's ship. So I realized that in "All In" they set up this Book-Tarka-ness around 'Tarka is the Stamets of their relationship.' And so at a certain level Book is gonna trust Tarka more because he brought the spore drive 2.0, you know, he's gonna do this thing to get the Changeling so that they don't lose their chance to get what they need from Haz. So yeah, in this moment, I appreciated Oros, but part of me was like, 'Yeah, this was just that moment where I'm like, "Cool. You're in a potentially same-gender relationship. I can still think you're gross, or I can still..."' I just had this moment of like, I appreciated the backstory, and I see how they positioned my expectation of Rillak versus my expectation potential of Tarka.

Aliza: Can I ask, Rillak versus Tarka, who did you think was gonna be more evil in the end?

Sarah: Tarka. But I'd say I was rewatching The Expanse season three when this was on, when Tarka—the same actor who plays Tarka is the villain—so I was against him 100% the whole time.

Kennedy: I was pulling for Tarka to be good, but I was still on the ropes about Rillak. I was like, 'Either one of them could go one direction or the other.' At this point in Discovery, I have learned to just trust what they put in front of me, you know what I mean? I'm not speculating anymore. I'm just, 'Whatever you put in front of me, I'm sure you thought it out. So I'm gonna just wait until it

airs, or until we get the screeners, whatever happens first.’ I also like the fact—not to dwell on this cuz I’ll move past it soon—I like the fact that the nature of Tarka and Oros’s relationship was not clearly defined. There was not a definitive, ‘Yes, this is my partner,’ or ‘No, he’s just a friend.’ It was just, ‘This is somebody who I care very deeply for, and I’m literally going to move heaven, Earth, and multiple other planets out of my way to get to them.’ So I appreciated that it was two men—or at least male-presenting people—who didn’t have a clearly defined relationship dynamic. They could just exist with each other the way that they did. So I felt that that was really meaningful. Particularly because *Disco* can be a little heavy-handed on its portrayal of marginalized groups. So the fact that they were just there existing in their own skin was, I felt, more impactful than anything else.

They did pierce galactic barrier. Holy cats, the first ship to do it, *Disco* just doin’ all the things first.

I mentioned Dr. Hirai in my notes because the idea of a communication specialist being unable to talk to people was just glorious. *Kennedy makes chef’s kiss sound* Not only is the actor gorgeous to look at, but just the fact that this man was so advanced in terms of methods of communication that he failed on an interpersonal level. While I would’ve preferred him being called into line by someone other than Rillak—because I didn’t like the optics of a person of color being tone-policed by a white woman, or a white-presenting woman—I appreciated the fact that it was done. And I think that she did it in a way that wasn’t too Karen-y.

DeLa: I feel that, and I would say that I realize in later episodes—in episode 12, maybe, and 13—there comes a point where Rillak is at a table with Hirai and Burnham and Saru, and they’re trying to make a decision about what to do to communicate with the 10-C, and Burnham and everybody proposes something, and Rillak actually looks at Hirai and he does a nod, and then she says, ‘Okay, yeah, let’s do that.’ So there is this interplay between them. So yeah, I had that moment too of like, ‘Uhh, why is she trying to say this to him?’ And then I thought, ‘Okay, he’s her Admiral Vance right now.’

Kennedy: Yeah, it is her job to check in in this capacity. So, again, the show does a great job at challenging one’s prejudices.

But now we get into the meat and potatoes. We find Species 10-C’s planet, or a planet they used to live on. There’s emotions everywhere, literally in the ground, in the air, everybody’s touchin’ things and feelin’ feels. *Aliza & DeLa laugh*

DeLa: Steppin' in it. Kneelin' down in it.

Kennedy: Yeah! Yo, breathin' in it. 'I'm just gonna touch this.' It reminded me of that movie *Prometheus* where these scientists go halfway across the galaxy to a new planet, and what do they do? They take their helmets off. Like, 'Bro, what is wrong with you? You didn't read a manual.' Detmer was the only one that kept her hands to herself and was the only one... I was hoping that the reason why she wasn't affected by it was cuz of her implant.

DeLa: Yesss. They did not say that. I waited for that too.

Kennedy: I know. I was hoping. I was hoping that her having cybernetic components in her body prevented her from being affected the same ways as everybody else. But whatever, it's fine. When Michael Burnham touched that pillar, I was like, 'No, no, no, no, nooooo.' I was like, 'Sis, what you doin'?' So that was good stuff.

We see Reno counseling Adira, and that cool little moment for Adira geeking out over Detmer, knowing how far Detmer's come, for Adira to be like, 'Fly good,' which was a cool shout-out to season two with Pike telling her to fly good. I thought it was really cool seeing Adira, who is this incredibly brilliant person, still getting starstruck and looking up to people. The fact that they still have the capacity to aspire to something greater than their present state, being as great as they are inherently, is just like, 'Hmm, there's merit in that.' I love the fact that Adira isn't cocky like Stamets.

Sarah: Can I tell you a little side story? So they showed this episode on the cruise. Emily Coutts introduced it. It was awesome, but it was also—you felt a little called out when they're telling Adira how to talk to the people that they're starstruck by, when you're surrounded by the celebrities. *DeLa laughs*

DeLa: Oh, I see. I just talk to them. Yeah, I totally love, oh my gosh, Adira and Detmer. Also just the connection that they all have together. There were so many moments in this episode and the final episode where Adira's just so light and bubbly and super excited to just be as smart as they are and be accepted and just honoring how much they're flourishing in this environment. And we get that queer auntie moment with Reno where Reno's like, 'Yeah, just go, just go.' So that also then pays off in the next episode, when Reno says to Stamets, 'Good luck'—what does she call him, cougar something?

Kennedy: Bobcat!

DeLa: Bobcat, thank you.

Kennedy: She called him “Bobcat” when they landed in the future. She’s like, ‘Back atcha, Bobcat.’ And Culber was like, ‘Did you just call my man “Bobcat”?’ And she was like, ‘It’s the drugs.’ Yeah, shout-out to Auntie Reno counseling Adira. And just having that, ‘Are you serious? You’re geeking out over this one? Do you know what this one is like? Okay, kid. Okay, kid, whatever, do you.’ But the fact that Tarka turned around and kidnapped Reno, I was like, ‘You mother...’ Whatever compassion, whatever space I held for Tarka went out the window, out the airlock, when he kidnapped Reno. We don’t see Reno enough as it is. Who the hell are you to be taking her off this? I was heated. I was heated.

Sarah: I was so scared. I thought he was gonna kill her.

Kennedy: Right?

Aliza: Me too. I thought Reno was gonna die. I was mad. I was very mad.

DeLa: Yeah, I was worried too cuz Tig Notaro has a new show, right? I did the Hollywood math. I wondered. So yeah, I also felt like it gave me this moment where I had compassion for Tarka. I was like, ‘Oh, you’re a smart scientist person who grew up on Risa where everyone thought you were just an egomaniac and didn’t actually know how to speak to you in a way that feels resonant and exciting.’ And here’s Reno who has a way in this family with Stamets. I just remember all those magical moments with Reno and Stamets and Tilly. And just the way that Reno has a way to sandpaper down the egomaniacal scientist. And so I did have a compassion moment of like, ‘Oh, if Tarka had been in a community where he had had access to people like this, who could he be?’

Kennedy: Right. For sure. And “Auntie” is the perfect title for Reno, because she not only counsels Adira when they’re going through their mess, she not only calls out Stamets when he’s being Stamets, but she also counseled Culber a couple seasons ago when he was like, ‘I don’t know if I’m gonna stay with the ship. I think I’m gonna break up.’ And she was like, ‘Yeah, um, stop it. Stop it. Go get your man. Stop playing, go get your Bobcat. Come on.’ I really appreciate somebody like Reno, not only being in Starfleet, but also choosing to serve on this ship too.

DeLa: Totes. And she did it with Book, right? With the whole, ‘When we have loss, when we have pain, this is why.’ Like, ‘I saw my wife’s eyes in that person

who I made stay alive for 11 days. You are connecting to it.’ Just also offering a path. I was like, ‘How are they gonna offer us a path to have compassion and openness for Book in the complexity of the Starfleet rules?’ Cuz he’s done so many things. I mean, aghh, you know.

Kennedy: ‘Straight to the brig, do not pass go, do not collect \$200.’ Reno realistically was the only one who would’ve been able to sit him down and talk to him like that. Cuz everybody else would’ve been informed by not only his relationship with Michael, but his individual relationships with them. So I think Reno being a little bit more hands-off, being able to be objective, and being as... I never met somebody who was smoothly abrasive like that. But the fact that she was able to do that was really just on point, because as we see in the next episode, she hits the fan.

This episode in particular, culminating this season and the series thus far—I don’t understand how people can sit there with a straight face and say they don’t like Discovery. This is giving us all of the Trek things that we love the most. There’s drama, there’s romance, there’s intrigue, there’s new places, there’s new people. And then we literally got first encounters of the third kind, flashing lights, bing, bing, bing, bing. Like, what else can you possibly...? *Aliza laughs* I mean, we pulled out all of the communicators: we got the old ones, we got the new ones, we got the ones in between, we have a literal walking communicator guy, like his whole jam is talking to people even though he can’t, and we got all the best minds in the fleet on this very important task, and y’all hittin’ us with lights and feelings? What? Hold on, let me get my manual, I don’t know how to do this. What you mean, you know? So to have them interact with them [Species 10-C] in that way, and then for the getaway kids to almost futz it up...

Aliza: Oh, well, let’s talk briefly about Ndoeye, too.

Kennedy: Oh! Oh my god I love her so much. I love her so much.

Aliza: I adore the actress.

Kennedy: Yes.

Aliza: The character I was *very* mad at.

Kennedy: I understood everything. I was like, ‘Sis you wrong, but I feel you.’

Aliza: Yeah, exactly.

Kennedy: I was like, ‘You wrong here, but I feel you. I’m gonna hold your hand till we get to the point where I can tell you, and you can fully understand why you’re wrong, because you’re experiencing this through pain. You’re looking at this from a place of pain, fear, panic.’ Someone who’s clearly well-versed on what can happen. Someone who cares about a planet’s worth of people, to the point where she’s willing to go behind backs and betray and do espionage. Can we talk about the fact that Book almost died four times when he tried to corner sis in the hallway?

Aliza: Right? Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: *Four times* he almost died.

DeLa: Four times. Four times on deck 13. Four times.

Kennedy: Four times, bro! There’s only so many times you can try to shank me before I’m like, ‘You know what? Never mind. Imma leave.’

Aliza: ‘I’m good. I’m gonna run away now.’

DeLa: Right right. He also approached her in a way that felt a little bit like, ‘Who are you on the street right now?’ He came up behind her and put his hand out instead of being like, ‘Hi, I’m here.’ I would’ve turned around and I would’ve punched him. You know what I mean? Like, ‘Who? Wait.’ So I wanna acknowledge that he was trying to be covert and I got a little bit like, ‘Oh, safety, dude. Tell her you’re there. Don’t just touch her.’

Kennedy: He definitely had it coming. But also, when I really sat there and unpacked that, programmable matter means that they can have whatever weapon they want. She *chose* a shank. Do you know how badass you gotta be to pick a tiny-ass weapon on purpose? That means you gotta get up in my face before I shank you a couple times. Listen, just the whole principle of a South African Zulu woman being the protector of Earth? Come on, come on. I feel safe with Ndoye being the general of Earth. I know she wrong, but I feel safe. We can talk about where she wrong later. I know, until we determine why she’s wrong precisely, I’m gonna be okay. We can have the court martial later. Oooh god I love Phumzile Sitole.

Aliza: Mm-hmm, she’s dope. Yeah, she ate that role up. She was really, really great. Another one where I forgot this was a show. She’s so great. She just sinks into that role.

DeLa: And when she stepped up, when Burnham was about to be like, ‘I’m gonna send every delegate to their quarters. We cannot have this,’ da, da, da, and she walks up, she’s like, ‘It was me. Let me tell you why...’

Aliza: Yep, love it. Accountability.

DeLa: ‘...Here it is. I’m ready. I’m willing. And I know you’re mad at me, but if you need help, I’m still here to serve you.’

Kennedy: Yeah. ‘You can be mad if you want, but I did what I did, I said what I said. I’ll be over here if you need me.’

DeLa: So then we get her, ‘I’m gonna go and solo pilot the thing, and I might die in the shuttlecraft, and I’m gonna make the final sacrifice.’ And then we get a very redemption arc. She doesn’t die in the explosion, and we get to see her later when we’re back on Earth or we meet the president of Earth. So I appreciated Ndoye’s journey, and that we met her in season three, and who she was in that season three, and where Earth was and Titan was, and all the things that were happening there. I appreciated that we got to see the growth and that they’re mapping this time and the current Federation for us in interesting ways.

Kennedy: Yeah. And the nuance of her arc as well. At the galactic assembly a couple episodes back, when she’s like, ‘Captain Burnham,’ and Burnham’s like, ‘General Ndoye,’ they had a ‘Okay, girl, you badass moment,’ and here come Rillak like, ‘Hi guys, can we be friends?’ *DeLa & Aliza laugh* The way Ndoye looked at her, like, ‘You don’t see me talking to my sista? What the hell is you doin’ here? Michael, I’ll holla at you later,’ and gave her [Rillak] the up-down like, ‘Don’t come at me like that again.’ I just love everything about Ndoye, and I will die on that hill. I don’t care. She was wrong, but that’s okay, cuz guess who’s still here? The human race.

But yeah, we communicate with Species 10-C. They end up being like, ‘Oh snap, my bad. We didn’t realize y’all were sentient. ‘Scuse us.’

Aliza: ‘You’re tiny little specs! You also have feelings?’

Kennedy: ‘Oh, you can talk? That’s bonkers. We didn’t even know.’

Aliza: ‘That’s adorable.’

Kennedy: ‘Look at you, wich your little ship. Oooh.’

Aliza: ‘Aww, so cute!’

DeLa: ‘Wait, we did the equation that you told us would make you have happy feelings. How come you are not happy?’

Kennedy: Right. Oh, someone say, ‘Ooh, look at you. Look at the little mouth-breathers in their ship. Look at you getting all the way out. Are you guys lost? How did you get out here?’

DeLa: Did anyone else feel like when they did the Book reveal, I was like, ‘Why does this feel like the most magical moment in Star Trek?’ I was just like, ‘Do the pixie dust! Spray it, spray it! here comes Book out of the light. Go, go!’

Aliza: Oh, I was weeping by then. So yes. This whole episode, they really got me, cuz I literally was weeping through the whole thing. I’m not exaggerating. I was just weeping with happiness, with fear, with anger, with everything. They got me good. They got me good.

Kennedy: Yeah. When we thought Book had died I started crying—not for Book, but for Michael.

DeLa: Mm-hmm! Mm-hmm!

Kennedy: I was crying for Michael. I’m like, ‘What else does she need to go through? Can you let her...’ I was just like, ‘What else does she... come on.’ And it brings me to another point that we can revisit after we talk about the president reveal. What is it with modern media and their fixation on seeing Black women endure suffering? What possible else can Michael Burnham go through? Can you just leave her alone? Can you just let her pilot the ship please? Please, just please, please give her a break. If the next season of Discovery doesn’t include five solid episodes of them on shore leave, I’m gonna be heated. Cuz this crew deserves it. This crew deserves five whole seasons on Risa or wherever else they choose to go.

Aliza: I would love a Dixon Hill-esque Burnham episode, whatever her Dixon Hill is. Let it be low stakes. Cuz you’re right. I was thinking, well, if she doesn’t get challenged and go through stuff, there’s no show. But I was like, wait, no, no, no: there were episodes of TNG and even Voyager where the stakes were lower, but it was more interpersonal stuff and character growth that was on a smaller scale than, ‘I have to save the universe every two seconds.’ So that would be nice to get something like that with Burnham.

Kennedy: Yeah. And not just, ‘*We* have to save the universe every two seconds.’ ‘I [Burnham], me, personally—*I* need to put my physical body between whatever is endangering everything else and everything else.’ And I was just like, ‘I need sis to have a seat. I truly do, because I’m worried for your mental health at this point. I know Culber’s good at his job, but I just need you to have a seat, hon.’ But anyway, everything’s all good. The 10-C was like, ‘Oh, sorry, my bad. Huh, hee, never mind. Great to meet you. Bye.’’

DeLa: ‘Book, your signal felt important, so we held on to it in stasis, and here you are. Gonna roll you out of this little orb of light.’

Kennedy: Like literally got caught up in the transporter buffer.

DeLa: Yes, yes.

Aliza: Classic, yes.

DeLa: Did anyone else clock that when Hirai was trying to talk about, when they sent the first orb for them to get in and they wrapped it in peace vibes, Hirai almost actually said, ‘Oh, it’s like they’re telling us, “We come in peace.”’ I just appreciated that little nod—and then if we think about the very first episode of the season and the whole, ‘we come in peace’ moment.

Kennedy: One of my favorite movements, when T’Kuvma was like, ‘Beware these shiesty mofos. Oh, here they go. Here they go. Look look look look look. See? Back on they bullshit.’ So I just really appreciated seeing the other side of that. That’s a great point.

Anyway, everything’s great. They pull out. Everything’s fine. No one dies. We bring Tilly back, T-t-t-tilly and cadets, back at the last minute to save things. Her and Vance have a cool little ‘we might die’ shot together. I don’t know where that flask came from, cuz I know them uniforms don’t got pockets, but whatever. That was cute.

Sarah: Oh, the USS *Mitchell*? I just have to say I was so happy to see that.

Kennedy: Yes. That was a good nod as well.

DeLa: And the *Yelchin* was also there.

Kennedy: Yes! And then the USS *Janeway* was the one that encountered the DMA in the first place.

DeLa: Yesss. And the *T’Pau*, right? The NSS *T’Pau*. Ni’Var, whatever they called their designation. Sorry.

Kennedy: Yeah, no, you’re right.

DeLa: Totes. I will just say, it was such an exciting—as a person who has facilitated and has to talk to people about feelings—it was super exciting to have this crossover moment, and for Star Trek to be able to have... I just love this idea of emotional hydrocarbon clusters and feelings. I almost wanna ask, ‘What’s the feeling periodic table, and how can we use this variation of feelings?’ And just like Culber said to Stamets, right? ‘I put my hand in that stuff down on that planet and it felt really nice. I felt good.’ And I looked at Culber and I was like, ‘Oh, maybe we should have a conversation about, you know, like’—I just was like, ‘Oh, that could be a drug. He misses it so much. He wants to feel good.’ So just all of that.

Kennedy: Yeah, I was like, ‘Does he miss climbing, or is he on a substance? Like, what is it? We gotta unpack that later on. Pease don’t tell me he’s been playing that damn game. Cuz I have concerns.

But as everybody gets their flowers and their laurels, we see the one and only president of Earth. Ahh, internet breaker.

DeLa: Mm-hmm. The breaker of internets.

Kennedy: Yes. First of her name, Stacey Abrams.

DeLa: Yes, yes!

Kennedy: Oh my god. As if Disco already wasn’t flushing out the bigots. You wanna talk breaking the internet? Oh my god. The right had their panties in a bunch.

Aliza: Yeah, they were so jealous.

Kennedy: They were so mad. And it’s like, if they had sat there and watched the episode, there was no campaigning. There was none of that. It was just, ‘Hey, I’m a human being. Thanks for lookin’ out.’ That was it. ‘Thanks for letting us not die.’

Aliza: They were just mad that she got to be in the future and they didn’t.

Kennedy: Yo. Sis was in here with her natural curl pattern with them cornrows. Look. Listen.

DeLa: Mm-hmm, that cape that she had...oh my gosh.

Kennedy: That cape! Apparently that's Earth fashion, all of the high-ranking Earth people get capes. Cuz Ndoye had a cape and her cute little hat with the feathers.

Sarah: I really hope she took that home.

Kennedy: She said she wanted to. She said she wanted to take a lot of stuff home, but...

DeLa: Oh my gosh, I'm sure. When you saw that it was Stacey Abrams, what was your reaction? Cuz I was watching on my headphones, trying not to bother somebody else, and I totally had to pump my fist and be like 'Ohhhh, grrrr!!' So I'm over here having a whole moment and the person's like, 'What are you doing?' I was like, 'Sorry, really amazing Star Trek thing just happened.' *Aliza laughs*

Kennedy: I lost my mind. Normally we get the screeners the weekend before it drops, but we got that screener like the night before. It was less than 12 hours. And I had work to do, I had other stuff going on, and I couldn't get home to watch it at a reasonable hour. And it was like 3:00 AM and Stacey Abrams walks out on Star Trek and I lost my fucking mind. I lost my mind. I just got finished crying for Michael. Like, I was like, 'I need, I need a break. I'm so glad this is the end of the season because I need a break. I can't. This is too much. My heart, my heart.'

Aliza: It was spoiled for me on Instagram.

Sarah: It was also spoiled for me. But it still felt good to see it, right?

Aliza: It did, it did. But I was mad because I would've liked to have been surprised, for that especially.

Sarah: I think that was the one thing that got spoiled for me all season. And if that was the one thing people could not keep to themselves, I understand.

Aliza: I understand. But, uhh, yeah, I'm still mad about it.

Kennedy: Yo, I was hella mad about the spoilers, because as someone who has to sit on these episodes—like, I can't talk to anybody about these. For me to have to keep quiet about everything... People on the internet are terrible with spoilers anyway, whether you use the hashtag or not. I try to keep Picard to itself until I can actually sit down and watch it, and I just have to stay off the internet because people can't keep their mouths shut and it's frustrating.

Aliza: Yeah. I finally just muted Picard on Twitter. Cuz the spoilers were just relentless. I was like, 'All right, y'all. Just, I can't.'

Kennedy: You wanna watch it, right?

Aliza: Yep. I wanna find out by watching it. And not feel rushed to watch it, like immediately when it drops, you know? *Aliza sighs*

Kennedy: But be that as it may, holy cats, what a season.

Aliza: But I did want to come back around because I want to ask you, Kennedy, what are your thoughts on the Zora-missing-Reno-getting-kidnapped situation?

Kennedy: I thought that was something that was pretty engineered, but I'm also like, 'Aren't you just supposed to be sentient? You can't tell that you're missing a heartbeat? You can't tell that you're missing somebody? Uh-uh, you're fired. You're demoted. Give me that pip back.' *Aliza laughs*

Aliza: Yeah, I was wondering, did it make you be more frustrated with them or was it kind of the same? You're just like, 'Oh, goodness.'

Kennedy: Yeah, I get it. Any other time a crew member on any other series was no longer on the ship, but their communicator badge was there, the computer's like, 'Whatever, such-and-such is located on deck 13, or whatever.' And when you get there you're like, 'Oh, that's weird.' So the fact that they didn't think to be like, 'Zora, where is Reno? Oh, her communicator badge is here.' I feel like that could have been avoided very much quicker. But I also kind of wrote it off as Tarka being that nice with it too.

Aliza: Yeah yeah, that's true. It was a good plan and it worked. I thought it was funny, cuz of course the audience at that point—we're ahead. We know that Reno's not there way before they do, but I thought it was funny that when Zora the sentient mind that is running the ship now says, 'I don't feel good. I feel funny,' they weren't immediately freaked out. I would've been like, 'Wait a minute, you're the ship. And we're in here. We need to fix this right away.'

They were kinda a little too casual about it for me. They're like, 'Let's just play a nice little game...'

Kennedy: Like, 'What you mean you don't feel well? What you mean??'

Aliza: '...Let's just play a nice little relaxing game.' Come on! No diagnostics or something?

Kennedy: 'Nah, sis, I need you to do a quick headcount. That's what I need you to do. To hell with this game, we're not playing games. We're out here in the middle of literal nowhere. I need you to do a quick diagnostic, do a headcount, whatever it is you need to do.'

Aliza: 'You need to get to what's eating you much quicker than just sitting and playing it,' although they did get to it. But I just found it funny. I was like, 'Yeah, no, this isn't just any other person on the ship.'

DeLa: Totally. And I would say, this is why I think Zora is a sibling, because what I noticed in this episode, in those moments, was Zora went to Stamets to say, 'Hey, something is wrong.' When they brought in Culber, Culber was like, 'Let's play the game that Gray taught us.' And I thought about, 'Wow, what is the power of a Trill sentience being reembodied in this Noonian Soong technology teaching the first sentient computer ship in *Disco* the pathway of how to connect my feelings to my body?' Zora is a sibling with Adira and Gray in that way, because Adira has gone to daddy Stamets, daddy Culber about, 'I have these feelings. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to sort them out.' So I'll just say in my rewatch today and the prep for this, I just had that moment of like, 'Huh. So if Zora...' And then I just think about all the ways that Zora is trying to define herself. And yeah, there's just lots of questions. I'm excited to rewatch this to figure out. So I would just say that's my other Zora moment—it's interesting to me that Zora is in a *Discovery* family with the whole crew, but now maybe also part of this other queer fam-bam of Stamets, Culber, Adira, Gray, Reno.

Aliza: Yeah, very cool.

Kennedy: All I know is that Zora was a liability in this case. *Aliza laughs* She was a liability when she withheld the coordinates. She was a liability when she lost Reno. I feel like, 'Okay, great. You can have your sentience or whatever, but I'm gonna need you to train first before we continue to have you onboard, because I can't have you dropping these kind of balls.' You know what I mean?

Aliza: ‘You are the ship. Keep us alive.’

Kennedy: Yeah, the computer’s supposed to be there as a failsafe for—I don’t wanna say “human error,” cuz that discredits non-human species on the ship—but “personal error,” for “being error.” ‘You’re supposed to be there just in case my math doesn’t add up; I forgot to carry a two or something. That’s what you’re for. I don’t need you talking about some, ‘Oh, I don’t feel well.’ ‘What?! What you mean you don’t feel well? If you don’t take yourself offline and let the real computer do the work, I don’t got time for this.’ I just, this is why I’m not a captain. *DeLa & Aliza laugh* This is why, cuz I would’ve had words on the heels of that. And I’m like, ‘Zora, lemme talk to you for a minute. Let me talk to you for a minute. Can I see you in my quarters? Let’s go.’

DeLa: Well now you’e making me wanna see, at the top of season five, Zora’s been to Starfleet Academy, Tilly was her professor...

Kennedy: I would love, in true Gene-Roddenberry-universe fashion, I would love for them to tie in Andromeda in this way, because Andromeda was supposed to take place, I don’t know, a good couple thousand years—I think it’s like 10,400-something-other—so there’s a considerable amount of time between what the Star Trek universe takes place in chronologically and when Andromeda takes place. So if it all is one universe, if Andromeda is a possible future for humanity and the galactic community, if you will, I feel like this will be a good opportunity to be like, ‘Oh, we’re trying this new prototype having the ship’s AI in an avatar inside the ship as well.’ Even though it was, oh geez, it was Harper that built the avatar for Andromeda, but I refused to believe that he’s the first person who thought of that, you know what I mean? I’m sure someone probably thought of that in the preliminary moments and it just didn’t work out so they abandoned the project, but I felt like that would’ve been a cool way to flex on what Roddenberry’s universe-building is like. Cuz Disco was already flexed, and tying in Picard, and tying in the Kelvin universe when we talked about that time jump, and then tying in the Terran universe as well. So they’ve done a real good job of bringing a whole bunch of things together, and I thought this would’ve been a cool extension of that. But either way I need her to go through some type of personnel training, cuz I am concerned.

Aliza: Yep.

Sarah: I didn’t love this season. I thought it was uneven. I didn’t like all the people getting written off the ship. But I did think they really stuck the finale. I loved the finale, so that kind of saved it for me.

Aliza: I liked this season from start to finish more than any other season, which I didn't think was possible because I really loved season two. So I was surprised by how much I liked it. But then also I feel like, as a viewer, I'm growing, because the things that really frustrated me didn't spoil the show for me. I was able to—kind of like what you said, Kennedy—just accept. This is what they're doing. This is what they're giving me. And they thought about this a lot. So they're going somewhere with it. So like the Ruon Tarka and the Rillak and Ndoye's protestation and sabotage with the getaway kids, whatever you call them...

Kennedy: They were. They got away with everything.

Aliza: ...All that stuff. Actually, I enjoyed it more just letting it wash over me and going for the ride and then feeling the things I was gonna feel and being okay with that, being okay with that frustration sometimes, cuz then it paid off. Like, holy crap, best finale ever. Like, oh my god.

Kennedy: Yeah. I feel like Disco is in a unique position with the time jump because there's no point of reference anymore, you know what I mean? With Next Generation, with Deep Space Nine, with Voyager, and even Enterprise, there was always a point of reference at some point in time as to what to compare those situations to, you know? Like, 'Oh, this makes sense, because this happened,' or, 'Oh, this falls in line with, you know, whatever protocol was established after the Dominion War,' or whatever the case may be. I feel like Disco's in a unique space to be able to build upon a world and not just build within it.

Aliza: Well, another thing too is—you're right, this is groundbreaking. This is fresh new territory for them to play. And also this was the first season that we had Sonequa Martin-Green as an executive producer on the show.

Kennedy: Ooh, I gotta correct you. She's not an exec just yet, but she is producing.

Aliza: Okay, she's a producer. So she's a full producer now. And I think I could feel it and I could see it in the season. I mean, obviously, she's in her captaincy, this is her first full season seeing that. But it felt like the show had more grounding than it has had before.

Kennedy: Yeah, I could see that. "Define 'ready.'" There were so many moments where it's like, 'She's speaking my truth,' and it's like, 'Whooh, SMG for the win.' The *only* thing that I consistently did not like about this season—cuz

there were some things I didn't like at first and then got over, and there were some things I was cool with and then grew not to like—the only thing I was from the door like, 'What the hell is this?' was Nilsson's wig. *DeLa laughs*

Aliza: Yeah, I was confused about that. Like, why?

Kennedy: Y'all, I should not be able to see your lace on television, boo. Not when I can go buy something like that off the internet and make it lay back. There needs to be more Black hair stylists on that show. And I mean more in addition to the ones that are clearly working on Michael, because her wig looked like 'what the hell and why,' Tilly's wig looked like 'what the hell and why.' But I also gotta give a shout-out to Mary Wiseman for having hair so fabulous that it cannot be recreated. So I just felt like, 'What is going on with Nilsson's wig? I need y'all to do something. What is this? Is the wig budget only for captains?'

DeLa: And Owosekun?

Kennedy: Yes. Even hers, that was pulling at her edges a little bit.

Aliza: Borderline.

Kennedy: Yeah, I was a little concerned for her edges. Cuz I was like, 'What's happening?'

DeLa: I'll just jump in and say, in terms of what I appreciated about the season, just coming back to what I said at the top: I do think this was a Kobayashi Maru season for both Burnham and her first year of captaincy, and Book. What does it mean to see a powerful woman have a partner? And what does it mean to watch them go through a series of things where there become moments of unwinnable odds, and they're each dealing with duty, responsibility? Book's dad says it to him: there's gonna come a point where she's gonna choose Starfleet or the Federation and you're gonna not. So they did give us that throughout the season. We did get to watch the ongoing process of all their feelings and all that emo porn, almost, in terms of just being able to live in those feelings and process all the way through. So I love that kind of stuff. I appreciate that we're getting to talk through all these pieces, and I'm appreciating that at the end of the season Book is having to be accountable. So he's going away to do his restorative work with survivors, just like Mama-Doctor-Sister Burnham is on this planet with J'Vini helping her, because she is now Gabrielle's lost cause. So just seeing these ways they're giving us opportunities also to think about it. The last thing I'm gonna say is I mourned the loss of Kwejian because I was excited to see a

planet of empaths where men and men of color are unafraid to show how they feel. And so to have Stamets...

Aliza: Yeah, I hope we do get—sorry, I hope we get to see some refugees in the future too, rebuilding their lives, so we don't completely lose Kwejian by that way. Sorry, go ahead.

DeLa: Yeah, no. And I would just say that we learned Book is the fifth of his name, and, like, what does that mean? And just all the ways we're getting to meet Book and the way that his strength and his journey is not a deterrent for Burnham, certainly something she has to come to terms with. And I will say that the full-scale moment when Rillak turned the corner for me finally in my heart was when we watched Burnham watch Book disappear in that transporter moment, and she's trying to hold it together and the whole bridge crew is watching her and feeling for her and trying to help, and Rillak puts her hand on Burnham's shoulder, and at some point Burnham finally touches back and takes that love. So I did see that arc for them. And I'm super hopeful and excited about the Disco to come, where it's not about Michael proving herself. What are the new challenges for her that have nothing to do with her proving herself, but just giving us more opportunities to explore her intelligence and the way she manages teams and all the leadership models we get? So I'm super nerdy about it and, yes, I hope we get to see the president of The United Earth and Titan next season as well.

Kennedy: I also wanna see my VulKelpien nibblings. I need them to stop playin' and get to it. Come on, Saru. You are literally not getting any younger and neither is she, so let's go. I'm gonna be that irritating auntie for a moment and be like, 'Where are my nibblings? Where are they? What is taking so long?'

Wow, so any last thoughts? I'm gonna turn that to Sarah first. Any last thoughts on this season that you weren't a fan of until the very end? *Kennedy laughs*

Sarah: No, but you guys just gave me an idea for next season. Next season could be like a low-stakes treasure hunt, or something like that, where it's just happy. Could we do that?

Aliza: Yes. Give us that. I want the archeology dig but in a non-adventure-colonialism way.

Kennedy: Yeah. I want them to do, I mean, it's a science vessel. I wanna see them do science and not have the balance of life as we know it weigh on their outcome, cuz everything that *Disco* has ever been a part of has been life or

death. And I'm just like, 'Yo, can they chill? None of them wanna go to another ship? None of y'all? Everyone's okay here?'

Oh, we got to see more Linus this season!

DeLa: Linus!

Aliza: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sarah: He talked a lot.

Aliza: Yeah, he did!

Kennedy: I feel like the producers heard us when we were all like, 'I need more bridge crew.' They were like, 'Well here you go. Here's more bridge crew. Don't tell us we never did nothing for you.'

DeLa: Well, and we also got to see Bryce have his moments about, 'I used to windsurf. I could do this basic sonar trick.' We also got to see Rhys take the con and hold it down in this very last episode, sitting up in that chair, like, 'Yes Stamets, we know that Book is cloaked. Yeah, we know.'

Aliza: He looked really sexy in that chair, I'm just sayin'.

DeLa: He did, he worked that chair hard.

Aliza: I was like, 'Okay, I see you.' Yes.

DeLa: Shouts-out, shouts-out, Patrick. Shout out to that actor.

Kennedy: I don't know if there's an instance where Patrick Kwok-Choon isn't fine as hell. I don't. I don't think that's physically possible for that man.

DeLa: And can I say the asynchronous uniform cut worked for him in that chair, in that position? That's why I like the way that that uniform is cut, cuz it makes the sit look really good.

Aliza: Yes.

Kennedy: Yeah. People were griping about that uniform. I love the fact that it's gender-neutral and that you don't have to feel like 'I need to have a certain body

type in order to look “good” in this uniform.’ The fact that everybody looked the same in it was really, really rewarding for me. As jarring as it was at first, I really appreciated it towards the end there.

DeLa: And I hope we stay in these uniforms next season, so we don’t have to worry about new uniforms again.

Kennedy: Good stuff. All right, so before we ramble on continuously, that is about all the time we have today. Sarah, where can people find you on the internet?

Sarah: They can find me on Twitter @saramiyoko, S-A-R-A-H-M as in “Mary”-I-Y-O-K-O, or they can find my fanzine, Star Trek quarterly, at startrekquarterly.wordpress.com or on Facebook.

Kennedy: And Aliza, where can we find you on the internet?

Aliza: You can find me @AlizaPearl on Twitter and Instagram. That’s A-L-I-Z as in “zebra”-A-P-E-A-R-L. And yeah, follow me for TTRPG content and streams and random life things, especially about fibromyalgia.

Kennedy: All right. And DeLa, where can we find you on the internet?

DeLa: Yes yes. So to find me personally, you can find me on Instagram @P-I-C-S-B-Y-D-E-L-A, picsbydela. On Twitter I am TweetsbyDeLa. And to check out the Trek Table we’re @trektable on Instagram, @trek_table on Twitter. You could find us on YouTube searching “Trek Table” and/or at trektable.com.

Kennedy: Right. And you can find me on Twitter @ThatMikeyChick. That’s T-H-A-T-M-I-K-E-Y-C-H-I-C-K. Don’t act up in my comments cuz I will drag you publicly and block you. You can also find me on Twitch, [twitch.tv/thatmikeychick](https://www.twitch.tv/thatmikeychick), where I play STO Monday nights. It’s a lot of fun.

To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com, or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. Hopefully we will see some of you at Mission Chicago. Come by booth 2126 with your mask and we have good things to share with you all.

Till next time, thanks so much for listening!