

Episode 196: Exploring *Strange New Worlds* Transcript

Sue: 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 Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me today are my co-hosts, Jarrah... and Kennedy.

Jarrah: Hello.

Sue: And Kennedy.

Kennedy: Greetings and salutations.

Sue: And, today I'm very excited because we are going to be talking about the first season of Star Trek: *Strange New Worlds*.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: But first we have a little bit of housekeeping to do. 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 to silly watch along commentaries. And Kennedy is choosing our July watch along, so if you want to know what that is, head on over to patreon.com/womenatwarp. If you're 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 or from a link on our website. You can also find our convention merchandise on our website at womenatwarp.com/store. You'll find our "Boldly Gathering" design in a pin and a patch and our LCARS 2021 patch as well while supplies last.

Jarrah: They are gorgeous. They're so, so nice.

Kennedy: I get so many compliments.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Oh, yay. They're a lot of fun to make, but they take a lot of work.

Kennedy: It's worth it. 'Cause they look amazing.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: All right, so let's get into it. Our latest of the new Star Trek shows: Strange New Worlds. There was a lot of talk about this show before it even started as sort of, you know, the original pilot finally getting picked up as a spinoff of Discovery. So I wanna know how everyone was feeling going into this show before we even saw a single episode.

Kennedy: I will say that I was optimistic and open-minded.

Jarrah: Yeah, I was definitely cautiously optimistic. I think that I was excited by the idea of having an episodic format and maybe something a little bit lighter in tone? Even though I absolutely love Disco, particularly. And I, I think that, just like there's different ways you can do Star Trek and I was excited to see that. But also we had talked a little bit about being a little apprehensive about if the show was going to really revolve around a triad of Pike, Una, and Spock, and what that would mean in terms of diversity? So I think we'll get into that, didn't turn out that way and I think that's a good thing.

Kennedy: How did you feel, Sue?

Sue: Yeah I, very similarly. I, it is no secret that I love Number One. So the excitement levels were very high. However, I mean, you can even – I even wrote an article for Sarah's zine "Star Trek Quarterly" about my fears that the complimentary adjectives people were throwing around for this show were going to turn into dog whistles...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: For, like, a place that bigots in the fandom would feel comfortable.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Like "episodic" and "traditional storytelling" and, you know, the old ways we did Star Trek.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: And it was, it was nerve wracking for a while.

Jarrah: How Star Trek is "supposed" to be.

Sue: Oh my gosh.

Kennedy: Ugh.

Sue: Yeah, and then even a few days before the premiere, when the early reviews started coming out, what I kept seeing were people praising the show, which is great for the show, but they were always doing it in comparison to one of the other shows and usually Discovery.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarraah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Which was frustrating.

Jarraah: Yeah.

Kennedy: To say the least. And it's, I mean, it's to be expected, right? Because it is a, a spinoff of Discovery specifically. So it's kind of hard not to compare the parent to the child. But you also – like all things Trek, 'cause everything's a spinoff of everything if you really wanna put it in that context – you have to treat it like it's its own entity as well. So I understand where you're coming from with that one. That apprehension, to say the least.

Sue: Yeah, I mean, I understand where people are coming from and that it feels more like the classic Trek that people are used to. However, that doesn't mean that it's quote “being done right” because there is no right way to present a Star Trek story. Discovery was the first one to really break from the mold that we had had for the previous 50 years.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarraah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And people weren't used to it and they reacted in a way to a thing that they weren't used to. And they're interpreting that as “bad” and that's not how that works. “I'm not used to it” and “bad” are different things.

Kennedy: Facts. Completely. And not necessarily to be contrary about it, but at the same time, like Disco reads like a movie.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: It feels like a large scale storytelling format in which you have hours to tell the story, and to feel all the feelings, and everything in between crammed into like an hour long. Which, if you've watched a film, if you've watched a Star Trek film, you experienced that. Like, we all had those moments of “what the flim flam?” and like emotional duress, and heightened stakes and, and all that stuff. Different compared like, you know, in terms of which film it's actually happening in. But we all felt that in the context of Trek before.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: So I don't understand where they were coming from with that. I uh... I agree with you in that, you know, treat, treat it as its own.

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: Which is going to be hard. Not only as a spinoff coming from Discovery, but also being wedged right before, you know, those “old scientists” chronologically speaking.

Jarrah: Mmm, mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Especially with Spock and Uhura being on the bridge.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Like you're going to want to draw those parallels. You're gonna want to fill in those blanks. So there is a lot of pressure on a show like this one to do it quote unquote “correctly”.

Jarrah: Yeah, and I think we'll, we'll get into a little of, like, some of the places where maybe we would like to see improvement in the second season? Some of the areas where maybe we feel like it didn't totally hit it out of the park? And I think that some of those areas are ways that Discovery particularly excels and some of that is partly due to just the inevitable difference between an episodic format and, like, a long story arc format, and the abilities you get to explore character. But some of that is also just choice.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Well, so now that we've seen these ten episodes, how's everybody feeling now?

Jarrah: Personally I, I mean, I really enjoyed the season overall. Um, I think it was a really strong first season and I, I think I was impressed by things I wasn't expecting to be impressed by. Particularly some of the characters that we'll get into that I was not expecting were going to wow me, wowed me.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: And I think that there were some areas where it was, I would say, maybe pulled back from some of the progressive representation of Discovery? And some areas where I think they could improve things next season. But overall, I think that they did a good job capturing, you know, developing characters while still being in an episodic format. That, like, people were having meaningful interactions with each other, especially if you compare it to something like TNG. The development that we saw in some of the characters compared to TNG in the first season, um, is really notable. And that they interwove some important themes into the stories in a way that felt very familiar for Trek. So I think it felt familiar, and looked nice, and kind of felt like an updated TNG for me more than like even an updated Original Series.

Sue: So, I think it is visually beautiful. I think it is very, for the most part, very well done, but I have some problems with it. I have a big problem with Starfleet treating the Gorn like they're not also sentient beings.

Kennedy: Oh, you mean, you mean that little hodgepodge of “Alien vs. Predator” that apparently Star Trek fans are not supposed to be familiar with? Go on.

Sue: It's an homage, right? I don't know.

Kennedy: Is it? *Is it?*

Sue: But the problem is like why – they're just killing ‘em willy-nilly. Like I, isn't Starfleet supposed to be better than that? I have a *big* problem with the thread of ableism throughout the entire series.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: And I have a big problem with the lack of overt queerness.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Hmm.

Sue: However, I'm also a big sucker for when canon Star Trek -- on-screen Star Trek -- pulls in beta canon. So like "Ghosts of Illyria"? They got me, hook, line, and sinker, on that one.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: You know?

Kennedy: Yeah. I knew they would, I was like, "Whoop there's Sue!"

Jarrah: Also. I mean uh, Sue named the big ones, but another little one I'll name is I think Kirk was miscast.

Kennedy: Ooh, fascinating! First of all, I, I third you all in saying that it is a spectacularly brilliant show to look at. If they don't win all the awards, throw the whole ceremony out because who on television is doing what anyone in, in Paramount is doing right now when it comes to Star Trek? Nobody.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Okay? So if they don't win awards for makeup, costuming, set design, lighting, um foley art, all that. Pyrotechnics, okay? 'Cause this bridge is on fire too somehow. If they don't win all the awards for this, then just like, what are, what are people even doing anymore in these academies that are handing these awards out, you know? That being said, I have been calling this show "Safe New World" since the first episode.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Because it is, it is safe. Jarrah said so herself. It's familiar, it's comfortable. It's like a little Starfleet-issue blanket.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: You wrap it around yourself and there might be some scary times. Ooh! But don't worry, we're not gonna throw science at it like we supposed to! No, no, no, no, we're gonna feel our way through it. I know we just said we don't want people to feel, don't worry about it, we're feeling *here* 'cause it's safe here on this ship that you're familiar with with these characters that you know, and with this cishet white male at the helm...

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Overseeing all of the Black people and women of color surrounding him. Visually, it don't look good. I mean, visually it looks great 'cause Anson Mount *c'est magnifique* like he is, I mean, I want to meet his parents and just like shake their hands. Be like, "Thank you for this strikingly symmetrical person that you made," you know what I mean?

Jarrah: The visuals are great. The optics are not great.

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: There it is.

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: It does not look good to see all these women around him doing the heavy labor while he gets to crack jokes and flip pancakes. No, no. It's giving, it's giving a woke Foghorn Leghorn and I'm not about it.

Sue: Mmm.

Kennedy: I'm just not, I don't need to sit around the kitchen table and flip pancakes. We were out here to do science. We're out here with nobody else. Like, I appreciate the camaraderie. I appreciate creating a space of familiarity and familiality. That's a word now, I said it. But at the same time, like where's the science? How do you have somebody like Dr. Una McCormack on your show and you don't use her? Like what? What, really? I, I just have, I have a lot of problems with how this quote unquote "return to episodic Trek" has forgotten a lot of the progressive storytelling methods that have been developed through Trek specifically.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: And that's like, if anybody's gonna do Trek properly, it should be this studio, this collection of people who've had their hands in it in some capacity multiple times over. This is not brand new people to Star Trek stepping onto this set, into this writer's room, or any of that. These are veterans in some cases that are veterans in ways that can help shape the show while keeping it new, while keeping it fresh, while doing all these fool -- these fun cool things with it, but also keeping it rooted in the mythos that we all know and love. And I'm sorry, but throwing the Gorn in on an episode is not going to tie all that to -- all that together. Especially considering the fact that in Enterprise we just saw this man plotting and scheming and talking. And then now a couple, what, fifty-some years later? All of a sudden we've got back hopping Predator, you watch your children? What is this? Do, do they not know that Star Trek fans have watched both "Predator" and "Alien" before? During that gap between TOS and the films and Next Generation, that's all we had, was this stuff. So please don't sit here and, and hand me this and, and expect me to be okay with it. Especially given the context. If I didn't know who the Gorn were I'd be like, "Oh, snap, who is this?"

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: But we know who they are, so don't do this. I, I definitely agree with you all on that one. I guess Ortega was supposed to be our explicit queerness? I don't know.

Jarrah: I actually am not sure about that.

Sue: I don't, I'm not sure either.

Jarrah: I think people read Ortega as, as queer because of the haircut.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: But I mean like that is the only reason we're that we're given for that? And *maybe* -- but this is highly questionable -- the scene in "Elysian Kingdom" where she's a knight.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: And has a discussion. Yeah but like it's all in M'Benga's dream though.

Sue: There's also a very short -- it's, you know, blink and you'll miss it. The episode where they're on... "Spock Amok", that's what it is.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: When Ortegas and Chapel are talking about like Chapel's dating life, Ortegas says, "What about that gal from such and such a planet?"

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: But that's what I'm saying. Like...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: That's the most overt queerness we're ever going to get from this show, apparently.

Sue: Hopefully not ever.

Kennedy: Well agreed. But in this season? Mmm, this was to, to coddle the neckbeards, you know, this was somebody who is ambiguously queer? Maybe? We don't know, it's possible, but who knows these women and their haircuts nowadays, it's so hard to tell. Like? You know, that's, that's part of it. So I, I definitely agree with you on that one. I also am just like, there may have been heartfelt episodes in previous iterations of Trek, be it TNG, be it Deep Space Nine, Voyager, whatever. But in those heartfelt moments they still tackled the problem with science first! They ran it through three, four levels of diagnostics, a whole shift full of engineers, and then come to figure out, "Well, maybe this isn't science, maybe it's feeling!" But they had to do the science first to realize it was some emotional, you know, being that fed off of our neuro-pathways, if we were upset or whatever the case may be. There was none of that. It was just like, "Oh wow, these people are bleeding these children to death, that's crazy. We should go. We're not gonna sit here and try to help you figure out an alternative power source, that would be Starfleet's job. Oh, dag is that us? We still gonna go, I got these pancakes going. I don't want them to burn so... Later, by the way, I never saw you before." Like I just feel like this was a Starfleet-issue fleece security blanket that we were all just supposed to be like, "Mmm, finally." And it's just like, I didn't boldly go anywhere.

Sue: You're right though. This is, there's very little hard science.

Jarrah: There's a light virus! There's a light virus that you can stop.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: By turning off your, *some* of your lights. But I

Sue: But I think that's also very TOS.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: To not be very hard science. The hard science came in with Next Gen. Which like, I would like more science as well but like, if you're trying to emulate that feeling, I can understand why? That doesn't mean that I like that.

Kennedy: Yeah. I, I just feel like if I wanted to be coddled and my hand to be held while I was watching Star Trek, I would watch Prodigy.

Sue: Wow.

Kennedy: And they started off with child trafficking, okay? So I don't know what this, who, what this demogra -- actually, no, that's a lie. I know exactly who, which demographic this show is for. And I really hope that going forward as they produce more shows and films, hopefully? You know, whatever direction this franchise decides to go, that it does not continue to try and appeal to the, to an, a section of the audience that is not progressing the way we need to, because Star Trek has never done that. It has always taken you by the hand at the very least, but it has always pulled you forward. And I feel like we're just kinda... chilling here. We're chilling here in the safe part of the 2260s and everything's everything. And I don't, that's not... I, mmm.

Sue: One, one of my favorite things that always comes up on the internet is when people, you know, say that Star Trek used to be subtle.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And then we can pull them clips from TOS and show them, okay, no, you're wrong.

Kennedy: Shout out to @TrekkieBill on Twitter. Who's been posting like, conservative Trek circa 1996.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: I can't imagine what, what the, "Star Trek was never woke!" And it's the epis--- it's Lal. It's, it's the episode...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: It's part in the episode where Data is like, "No, I'm gonna let my child choose their gender."

Sue: Kirk gives a speech about birth control. I mean...

Kennedy: Right!

Sue: It's, you know...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: But I feel like these messages in these episodes are the most subtle Star Trek may have ever been.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. Like I think that you can be comforting and still advance, like, advance progressive values and causes and representation. And uh like, I mean, we certainly have examples of that in past Star Trek.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: But like, you know, I don't think that they necessarily need to excavate people's trauma every episode. They do excavate quite a fair amount of like La'an's trauma in particular.

Sue: For sure.

Jarrah: Yeah. But like, think about, for example, just the, like the comfort that it, that it has given viewers to see the gay chosen -- gay, queer chosen family on Discovery.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: after they came back from the hellish decision to kill Culber and like, that representation is super, super critical and like, that's the kind of stuff -- that's *some* of the stuff that we're missing here.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: It makes me wonder if we were still in the time of the 22-episode season, would they have gone further in the second half?

Kennedy: I hope so!

Jarrah: Maybe, but I, I think that they, they actually went fairly far on a few things. So, you know, just for example, if you took, if you look at the lack of uh explicit queer representation...

Sue: I would say among the main crew.

Jarrah: Yeah, among the main crew. We, we got a ton of straight romance and sex in the season.

Sue: Oh my gosh.

Jarrah: Comparatively. We got Pike sleeping with two ladies. We got at least two women uh, who are very much embroiled in Spock's romantic life.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: We got, uh yeah, and like discussions of flirting. We got Chapel flirting with that, that other random guy. Um, so like clearly there was time and that, like, I don't think that was the issue.

Kennedy: Yeah, it was, it was pretty straight. Which I, I gotta say at this point -- not that I'm a big Spirk person or anything, but like we all saw how Shatner looked at Nimoy in those old episodes, like? To, to, to try and play Spock completely straight I feel like is, is, is irresponsible at this point.

Jarrah: Yeah. So like, let's talk more about that 'cause that's um a really common critique I've seen in, among fans, is that yeah, like basically like "I just can't stomach watching them try to say that Spock is straight." For me I totally, I get that, but I read it more as Spock is not in touch with what he wants at all.

Sue: Yes.

Jarrah: And I, I see it as like we, we kind of know that he has to end up in this, this place with where he is with T'Pol and Chapel in TOS, and he's kind of messing it all up. And I don't think he fully, he understands how to separate his attraction from like what he's expected to perform.

Kennedy: Mmm, that's fair. It'll be good to see that arc then. I'm, I'm good with that 'cause we did just see how he handles stuff with his sister. So, uh...

Jarrah: But they could, they could build in more queer subtext though. And they didn't.

Kennedy: Yeah. I, I just whether, whether he's ace or bi or pan, I I'm okay with all of that, but seeing him just straight up heterosexual is weird to me.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: And I, and I, and I understand that... Jessie Gender was saying that in Chicago, during the Strange New Worlds panel...

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Somebody in the crowd asked Ethan Peck, something along the lines of, "Is there a plan to continue, you know, portraying Spock as this arguably, you know, ace, maybe demi, you know, possibly pan individual?" and Jesse was saying that Ethan genuinely looked taken aback, like "What?"

Sue: Yeah, that was actually Jessie's question.

Kennedy: Oh, it *was* hers, okay.

Sue: And he seemed, Ethan Peck -- I was also in the room.

Kennedy: Okay.

Sue: Seemed completely unaware that there was a queer reading of Spock among the fandom.

Jarrah: Ohhh.

Kennedy: Right. So I can't even be mad at him...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: For for not being aware of, or at the very least not taking that into consideration when he was making his choices, of as far as like creative choices. But at that point then now, now I'm looking at the writers. Now I'm looking at the directors like "Come on, like there's no way. There's no way there's no -- come on." In my opinion, Spock had, was like in a, in a completely happy poly relationship. It was his two boyfriends, Jim and Bones, and then his ex-wife T'Pol and the side piece Chapel who got sick of his stuff went on to bigger and better things. But I'm saying like, there's no way that this person isn't living in a multi-partnered situation. *If* he is, you know, dating people at all. I'm cool with him just being like, "Nah, I don't, mmm, this is, I'm gonna be here."

Sue: There's the thing. Just because somebody is in a straight-appearing relationship does not mean they are straight.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: So just because we're seeing Spock currently in a relationship with T'Pol doesn't mean that this is a straight Spock.

Kennedy: Mm that's a good point.

Jarrah: The other thing though that ties into it that I saw was um some people felt that the scene where Chapel urges Spock to express his anger after Hemmer's death -- which we also have to come back to.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Oh my gosh.

Jarrah: Was inconsistent with Spock and was like projecting more masculinity or like toxic masculinity onto him when in The Original Series we see the predominant -- when he does lose control of his emotions, he's expressing sadness?

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: I thought that was an interesting comment. I do see, like, I think it was a valid, emotional reaction to the situation and I don't know that anger in and of itself is, is toxic? But I get, I get the commentary and I thought it was interesting.

Kennedy: What I think is toxic is how human beings, like... I just wish, just forcing Vulcans to convey emotion or feel emotion...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Is super like humanist. You know what I mean?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Like it's literally not in this man's brain chemistry to do this.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm

Kennedy: And just because you are uncomfortable with dealing with somebody who doesn't express emotion doesn't mean they need to express emotion just so that you feel better!

Sue: Well, I think, I think there's an element of that in where the anger we see him display comes in. Because it's uh Sam Kirk earlier who like chastises him for showing no emotion.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: For calling the Gorn's tactics interesting.

Jarrah: Right.

Sue: And I think... This is just my reading, but *I* think that affects Spock more than we realize.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's all just pent up anger at Sam Kirk.

Sue: But I want to, I know we have a lot more to talk about in the plot and the themes and the stuff that came along, but I wanna jump to the characters.

Kennedy: Okay.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And I have sort of grouped our main characters into three subcategories: our legacy regular characters, our legacy smaller roles that we didn't get to know very well, and our new characters. So...

Kennedy: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Sue: Because we have the most reference points for them, let's begin with our legacy regular characters: Spock (Ethan Peck) Uhura (Celia Rose Gooding), and Chapel (Jess Bush). How do we think they did? How do we like these new interpretations of these legacy characters?

Kennedy: I like Ethan Peck's little half-Vulcan accent.

Sue: Mm!

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: I think it's really cute. I think it's a good touch 'cause why wouldn't Spock have a little accent if he grew up on Vulcan, you know?

Jarrah: Overall, I mean, I am a fan of, of all of these, the way these characters have been, I would say expanded on? And in the case of Chapel, perhaps significantly reimaged.

Sue: Oh my gosh.

Kennedy: Yeah, yeah.

Jarrah: I would say that, like I was expecting, I was excited for Number One. I was not necessarily... had, I didn't have any expectations about Nurse Chapel and I was like pretty blown away. I think that, you know, from the very first episode she's doing genetic modification disguises.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: And she's like funny and flirty and badass, like the, in the scene where she, I think it's in "Serene Squall" where she like attacks the guys with the hypospray. And she is like a little bit of a mess romantically, but I think that it, it, man--- it managed to like really humanize where she ends up in TOS instead

of just having her as even Majel Barrett said, just kind of like moping around, waiting for Spock.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: I think they all do very well. I especially like watching um Celia Gooding do Nichelle Nichols's like, mannerisms. Because they have some of them and they have clearly studied.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: I, I would say that... I would argue that, that Uhura's boots are bigger to fill than Chapel's or, or Number One's, which is...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Weird to admit because you know, those are Majel's characters? But, you know, just as far as like cultural significance and impact is concerned, definitely, you know, bigger shoes to fill. And I think Celia did an amazing job, especially considering that they didn't have much to work with, you know?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: This is the first time we're ever really seeing anything from Uhura and getting all that backstory and stuff was just really cool. And I think they did an excellent job of portraying ingenu-ity without being naive or unintellectual, you know what I mean? There's a way to be new to something or new to an environment and not be bad at your job, you know. Sometimes they have a, they have a tendency to like fantasize cadets.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: So it was cool to see that just because someone *is* a cadet doesn't necessarily mean that they're not ready for the job, they just started Starfleet after you, you know what I mean? Like, they're just new here.

Sue: They play her a very... honestly...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: For that stage in life being, you know, essentially fresh out of school, not sure what's next. She has

Jarrah: She has terrible roommates.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: For sure. Yeah. I enjoyed all three of them.

Sue: Shall we go to the next category?

Kennedy: Sure!

Sue: Our legacy smaller roles, one-offs a couple of appearances: Pike (Anson Mount), Number One or Una Chin-Riley (Rebecca Romijn), Dr. Joseph -- I have comments -- M'Benga (Babs Olusanmokin), and T'Pring (Gia Sandhu).

Kennedy: Also amazing. Like holy cats, Anson Mount.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Geez, I don't, I don't, I don't think -- and this is not to take away from anybody else's performances, right, to be perfectly clear -- but I think given those performances, with a different man in that chair? It wouldn't have flown.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: I really don't think it wouldn't have flown. 'Cause everybody's giving their A game and -- I don't know if it's because it's a Pike that I'm comfortable with and more, you know, used to than the original or, or what, but... I wasn't, I wouldn't sit there and watch every episode if the captain was uninteresting. He takes, he does such a great job of taking what could be such a white bread character and making him so cool.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: And approachable and accessible. So I definitely appreciate him.

Jarrah: I would love a boss that would just make me waffles?

Kennedy: Yeah! “Why what you need, you need that today? Hold on, it’ll be done in an hour.” I feel like they watered down Number One considerably. She was badass on Disco. Like don’t “You don’t need to know my name, all you need to know is my position. Okay? Okay.” To “You really should try the waffles.” What? they made her like Wendy to the Lost Boys, except that these lost boys have all grown up and have gotten jobs and just started contributing to their 401k. Like I, this is safe and I don’t... [sigh]

Sue: Yeah, knowing, you know, the genesis of the character that she was supposed to be the Spock-like character in the original conception, the purely logical scientific one, they definitely soften her up for Strange New Worlds. But still, I think they still try to give her that like badass exterior? Where they try and, you know, they say where she’s, where fun goes to die, but like, that’s not played that way.

Jarrah: Yeah. That’s yeah like, I didn’t buy it when she, when they said that’s her nickname. I’m like, I don’t know, she seems like she’s been very fun this entire time.

Sue: Yeah, for sure.

Jarrah: It’s not to say I didn’t like her, I just thought that there was a bit of like, maybe they didn’t know how they wanted this character to be?

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Mmm, that’s possible too. All I know is that the Una Chin-Riley I remember reading about would’ve given me more Xena...

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: than Gabrielle.

Jarrah: Mmm.

Sue: For sure.

Kennedy: I'm getting a whole lot of grown up Gabrielle, which is great!

Sue: I mean, but again, we got a lot of Xena in "Ghosts of Illyria".

Jarrah: Yep.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: And I was here for it.

Kennedy: True.

Jarrah: Yes.

Kennedy: That's true.

Sue: Dr. M'Benga. I'm so annoyed that his first name is Joseph.

Jarrah: Why?

Sue: Because they have novels...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Where his name is Jabilo.

Jarrah: Oh.

Kennedy: Ohhh.

Sue: And like...

Jarrah: Mmm.

Sue: It's a, a cultural name and it has meaning behind it. I think it means "healer"? I'm unsure about that so, you know, check Memory Alpha. But they just give him this like white Christian name, Joseph.

Jarrah: Mmm.

Kennedy: *Yup.* Accessible.

Jarrah: I, I mean, I loved his performance.

Kennedy: Oh, for sure. He's the most regal thing on that screen, yo. I don't care what anybody says, you can fight me tomorrow I don't care. With or without the crown, ugh!

Jarrah: The crown or the fly fishing hat, does not matter.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: I do feel like it was a quick transition from “I'm gonna go however long it takes to find a cure for my daughter” to “I guess you can just go live with these omnipotent space beings.”

Sue: So, okay. In the order of the episodes, we get the, he gets all this medical information from this highly advanced society.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm

Sue: And in the next episode, he's made no progress.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Having ended the previous episode by saying, “This will help me make so much progress.”

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: So I don't know if that is like a consistency problem or we're supposed to get like that, “Despite having all of this additional information I'm still failing.”

Jarrah: Yeah. I do think that they were implying there was a long period of time between those episodes, but for the viewer it didn't feel that long. And I don't know, it would've, I don't, it just felt kind of convenient. And like, I, I feel like honestly, he didn't have enough information to go on to know that this really would be a good experience for his daughter and so like it, they kind of had to bring back his adult daughter to be like, “Thank you, this was *so* great.”

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: ‘Cause it seemed just kind of sketch.

Kennedy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Some random -- this is a stranger. I don't care if it's corporal or not, I'm not just gonna let my child go off with some stranger into space!

Jarrah: Especially 'cause like they're both lonely and like, I don't know about you, but as a person who has occasionally been lonely I still think the worst thing ever would be to just be stranded on a desert island with one other lonely person.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: I just, it, it felt far too convenient to me to have to make this heart-wrenching decision and then immediately get a, "It was the right one!"

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Question that.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: I will say though, shout out to Benny Russell for writing the book.

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: I truly appreciate that.

Jarrah: Kind of a, a bit of a stereotypical fairytale though. I mean, I know like that's the point of the, the episode is to like, you know, "Let's put everyone in familiar stereotypes."

Kennedy: Yeah. Which I don't think...

Jarrah: Ehh...

Kennedy: Was sold as well as, as any of the other series that did those kind of...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: You know, weird offshoot episodes. And I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that the production value is so high on this show.

Sue: There was also a lot going on in that story.

Kennedy: Yeah. You know, there's a lot of characters, lots of moving parts. And it, those, those types of stories have done well in previous iterations of Trek when there was at least more than one or two people who knew what was going on, right? It was usually Data and Geordi.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Because their senses were different -- or nonexistent as far as Data is concerned -- or, or something to that extent. People like, or was Odo, or Garak because Cardassians can't feel this type of cold or whatever the case may be. So it had more people involved with the protagonist to help get to the root of the problem and there was a lot more science. There was no science here. It was like...

Sue: Hemmer used plenty of science.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: The magic of science!

Kennedy: I know, oh my gosh Hemmer. Sad face. I don't know. I just, that episode was all about the costuming. Like I...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: You can mute that episode and still be dazzled by everything.

Jarrah: Yeah, it was gorgeous.

Kennedy: From that red armor that Mitchell was wearing! To La'an's dress! I mean, come on, we talked to Bernadette Croft about it. I was like, "You had not one, but *two* gowns in this episode!" Like, that is no slouch whatsoever.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: It's one thing to do one huge big gown that's like, "Ooh, ah!" and then everybody else's fits getting where they fit in. No, you had two of 'em and some armors, several types of ar--- what! Like, it was incredible, but I don't need to listen to that episode. I want to, because at the root of the story, I, I worry about M'Benga and I, you know, am invested in hearing a Black father process his pain in a good way.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: But yeah, Jarrah just, "Okay, baby, you can go ahead and stay out here with these space people." No! no. Mmm-mm, I don't care how far removed we are from Earth, that's not, that's not happening.

Sue: I do wanna mention about T'Pring. One of the...

Kennedy: Stunning!

Sue: I think the best comments I saw was that -- was from somebody who, you know, watched TOS as a kid and said, "For 55 years this woman was a villain in my head."

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: "And now I love her." Perfect.

Jarrah: I know! Another character I was not expecting to be wowed by. I think like in, if anything, I was maybe with the people that were mildly annoyed T'Pring was going to have a role because it kind of reinforced, was seen to reinforce Spock's heterosexuality? Um but like, she has so much nuance.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: And complexity, even for not being part of the main cast, and is also hilarious.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: So good.

Jarrah: Yeah, there was a tweet about, you know, don't um, we all need to see T'Pring and Spock's sexy book club podcast, and I'm like, yes, this needs to happen. They're just, yeah, it's just, she's delightful.

Kennedy: So good. So, so good.

Sue: Alright. So I think we can go to our new characters.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: La'an Noonien-Singh (Christina Chong), Erica Ortegas (Melissa Navia), Hemmer (Bruce Horak), and I'll throw in Jenna Mitchell as well, played by Rong Fu.

Jarrah: Well, I'll, I'll, I'll say that, I think, that rewatching Disco recently I noticed that like Owosekun and Detmer like had no interaction in the first season, and similarly we see no interaction between Mitchell and Ortegas? And that is one thing I would like to see is like, what is their relationship? 'Cause Ortegas it, seems to be basically friends with everybody? It seems weird that they don't like joke and stuff like you see her joke with everyone else on the bridge. So what's going on there. Is there something there? Do they have a great relationship and we just didn't see?

Kennedy: There's beef. Ortegas took a prank too far and then she was like, "Nah, son, don't talk to me we on duty together, I don't care."

Jarrah: Exactly, give it to me. I just want them to have a relationship of some kind.

Sue: I love both Ortegas and Hemmer with my whole heart.

Jarrah: Oh yes.

Sue: My whole heart. La'an, to be honest, is not the type of character that I am typically drawn to. The um, the kind of like militant standoffish situation? Like, I understand her backstory, I understand why she's like that and I understand that she and Una are, are paired up to sort of give each other this backstory...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: But it it's still... I did not get drawn into that. And that's a, that's a me thing. And I'm just hoping that Jenna Mitchell gets more to do. But specifically as the Crimson Guard, the head of the Crimson Guard was...

Kennedy: Yes!

Sue: Absolutely phenomenal.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: So good. Some, sometimes the costume wears the actor and sometimes they, there it's like a symbiotic...

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: Type of situation and that was symbiotic for sure.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. I feel like Christina Chong really sells La'an and all of her, you know, her trauma and her journey and um, I like that you hear that she has to go to therapy and Una has this line about like, oh, it's like basically Star Trek Employee Assistance Program?

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: And I'm like, cool I like that this is canon.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: Yeah I think it's partly to do with like, the episodes that she's really prominent in are... They're, I mean the Gorn horror episodes basically.

Sue: Yeah, yeah.

Jarrah: So that's maybe a bit of a challenge, but overall I think that she was a successful new character in that, like, I have a strong impression of her. I feel like she had some development, she had some good lines, I like when she's like mentoring Uhura in security.

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: Okay. So first and foremost, rest in peace Hemmer, like what?

Jarrah: Oh my gosh.

Kennedy: I, that was a character that didn't really stand out to me despite how much visibility the actor and the character had, right?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Everybody wanted to see an Aenar. Everybody wanted to see, you know, a blind performer steal the show and he did several times over. But we didn't learn anything about Hemmer.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Except that he wanted to be subservient. He wanted to be of service, which is not a problem for someone to possess that desire. But when it's your, the only thing, like is that to your entire personality? I got questions. Are *you* going to therapy? Are *you* okay? Have *you* talked to somebody?

Jarrah: Mmm. It's basically carrying the idea of the person with the disability has to work to make other people's, other people comfortable.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: To its... illogical extreme.

Kennedy: Yeah. Yeah. Just, I didn't, I didn't appreciate that at all. From what I've read, like we're gonna see more from Bruce Horak in the next seasons.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: So maybe it'll give him like the Jeffrey Combs treatment and he'll come back as somebody else. I'm okay with that. But dang, you ain't have to, did you learn nothing from fridging Culber! What is wrong with you!

Jarrah: Or Airiam. I saw it compared to Airiam a lot.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: And I think, I mean, I think it could be extremely helpful and possibly even more meaningful disability representation to have him there as a human with a disability, especially in contrast to Pike's story.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: But I don't wanna see him be like Nilsson who has basically next to nothing to do but is just occasionally referred to like she's important.

Kennedy: Yeah. Agreed. I don't understand how La'an Noonien-Singh is supposed to fit into this point in time...

Jarrah: Mmm.

Kennedy: In the Star Trek universe if we don't hear from a Noonien-Singh for the first time in a long time until TOS. How? I don't... I feel like if you wanted to put a, a traumatized militarized, tiny little butch fem in Star Trek, you could have found a way to do that without making her a Noonien-Singh, 'cause how does this fit?

Jarrah: Yeah. Agree. I don't think that was necessary.

Sue: I think my issue is that they, they give her so much.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Not only does she have this traumatic Gorn backstory, she's also related to Khan and has...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And has been made fun of by the other kids? So like, I guess before the Gorn planet? Because of her relation.

Kennedy: Yeah. Like what, what? I thought that we didn't hear about augmented humans until like we see, until we find the Botany Bay. So how do we know about her? Why do -- I'm just so confused.

Sue: That bit of backstory only seems to exist to this point to give her that conflict with Una.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Which I don't think was fully necessary for that episode to still be dramatic at the end.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Like you can still be shaken by learning that about somebody without having been related to uh, Khan Noonien-Singh.

Kennedy: Yeah, it's just, mmm... and another missed opportunity to cast a South Asian actress.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: Yeah. Yeah.

Kennedy: As a Noonien-Singh! How...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Many times are we gonna have a Noonien-Singh on screen and they not be South Asian? How many, how many frickin' times? I'm pissed and I'm not South Asian. So what does it take? What, there's literally billions of people, they got their own film industry. You can't find nobody? Nobody?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Nobody? Stop it. Stop it not -- and that's not a dis at Christina Chong. At all 'cause I think she does a good job. If anything, I brought her up first to, to illustrate that that was a character that was instantly like, "I don't care at all about what happens to her." And now I feel attached. Like I'm mad...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: She's leaving. Like, hold up, sis has grown. Like, there's been some development here, maybe she can get in where she fits in. No, she's leaving? That's weird. So I'm, I'm particularly like, there's all different things about that character that I wish could have been held differently um, in a multitude of different ways. However, like I said, she won me over by the end of the season. Who never warmed me over is Ortegas.

Sue: Really?

Jarrah: Hmm.

Kennedy: I understand her significance. I understand how important it, important it is to see somebody who's Latinx at that helm living their best lives. I truly do. However, I never bought a second of it. And, and everybody loves the actor and that's great. I don't have any problem with this person. All I'm saying is that I, every time they were on screen, I was like, "Oh, this is a TV show," because I was getting Emma Watson from the first Harry Potter movie. "This is my *acting* face. I'm *acting*." That's what I felt this whole time. And I know people gonna be mad and I know like, I'm gonna lose followers on this and that's okay, I guess. I'll have to be okay with that. But I just, nothing about Ortegas dropped off of me, nothing, nothing whatsoever. And! I'mma, I'mma drive the coffin nail in: I hate her haircut. There, I said it! And it's not to say that high and tight thing can't be sharp because it *can* be. And I still say what Columbian woman's gonna let you not fade her stuff out? Like I just, I have, I have all the problems with Ortegas and I feel like she's been like... spoon fed to us as like, "Hey, look, we've got a Latinx person on screen too. See, we are covering all the bases!" And I'm like, don't do that unless you gonna give her something to do, something to say, something to be about. A point of view that we didn't even get until the bootleg Romulan episode. That's the end of the season, I gotta wait for you to give her a personality? Like...

Jarrah: Yeah. And that's like alternate universe her too, so...

Kennedy: Right! So I just...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: I, I kept wanting to like Ortegas and it never happened. I never wanted to like La'an and that happened almost instantly.

Sue: Hmm.

Kennedy: So I found it interesting that what I was expecting... did not... 'Cause I liked the way Ortegas was presented to us in the, like before everything was released and all the promo shots. And I'm like, "Okay, this, this gonna be a thing let's, let's do it." And it just never, I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop and it just didn't happen for me. Whereas I could not give a -- Oh, I'm trying to curb my language. I couldn't give a flim flam! About La'an Noonien-Singh and here I was upset that she's leaving. So I, I just, this show kept me on my toes in that regard, right? I, I resolved myself early on to let people enjoy things, because I knew what it was like to enjoy a thing and someone be like, "This is trash for X, Y, and Z reason, I don't have anything else to do." And it's just like, if people like this character for all of the reasons that they resonate with them, cool. Like

it. Don't let me, you know, be the one to dissuade you. I'm just saying it never caught me all. And I kept, I was there in the outfield with my glove and nothing, nothing came at my way. Nothing.

Sue: Look at us not agreeing on everything.

Jarrah: Yeah, I love Ortegas but I think that it was a bit of a letdown to not have an Ortegas-centered episode? And maybe that would've been the opportunity? I do think we're gonna get more in season two um in terms of backstory and other things?

Kennedy: That's what I hear, yeah.

Jarrah: But everyone else kind of got that. Like, I mean, there wasn't a, just a Chapel episode, but Chapel had like major scenes in several episodes.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: And Ortegas' biggest episode was in the one that was in M'Benga's imagination.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: Let's get back to some of these big themes.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Right. And I think we have to, to start with the ableism.

Jarrah: Yeah. Oh my God.

Sue: So here's, here's the thing. 'Cause I have, I have seen so much quote unquote "discourse" on the interwebs. The issue is not that Pike had an experience that changes the way he thinks about his future.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Right. That's a, a thing. That is legitimate. The issue is the way he speaks about it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: The way he says, “My life is over, I saw the day I died.” That's the problem.

Kennedy: Yeah. Agreed.

Jarrah: And then there's also in the finale, like related the -- you know, Spock loses his leg and stuff and Chapel says like, “I don't if he'll recover and if he does, he will never be the same.” And again, it's not to say that like that type of life-altering traumatic event would not change you, but it just reinforces this narrative that disability is worse than death, which is a trope that has a lot of history. And it, when it like is taken alongside Hemmer jumping out into a chasm, it is messed up. It's messed up. I'm not saying that they should have, you know, turned it around and had Pike be like, turn into the like opposite side of that trope, which is like the inspirational person with a disability? Where like, “I survived this challenge and it made me a better person.”

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: But like have real people with nuance who have disability.

Sue: Right. And well, we know from Pike's story in TOS, that the way he eventually quote unquote “copes” with this is to basically transcend humanity.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And he lives in a fantasy world.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Right? And then essentially that's what happens for Rukiya as well.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: M'Benga's daughter.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: She has to transcend humanity...

Jarraah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: In order to be cured, I guess, rather than...

Jarraah: Yeah.

Sue: Live with a chronic illness. And like...

Jarraah: Yeah.

Sue: What, what message are you sending to people today...

Kennedy: Mmm.

Jarraah: Exactly.

Sue: Who live with disabilities, who live with chronic illness? That the only way that, that we have to make our lives better, I guess? To, and, and transcend humanity to do so? Or that our lives aren't worth living or what, like?

Jarraah: Yeah that like you have to uh, your body is a prison.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarraah: And you have to like free yourself from the body in order to like, live your truest life, I guess. And I, like you know, and I'll see some comments from folks, that'll be like, "Oh, okay, well I have a disability and don't get me wrong. Like I would cure it if I could." And that's again, like that's totally valid? The problem is the narrative that it creates about folks that for whom like, "This is part of my identity and if society worked a little harder to accommodate me, I would be contributing as much or more than the next person."

Kennedy: Right.

Jarraah: "I would be fully engaged in this community."

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarraah: "But it's that like, society doesn't try." And when you like put into this box that like people with disabilities are pathological and are problems to be fixed, it lets society off the hook and it says, this is an individual problem.

Kennedy: Yeah, for sure. And, and it's not as though... Trek hasn't had examples of -- both good examples and bad examples -- to pull from, to tell, to include folks who have disabilities in the narrative. Right? I mean, we overlook Geordi all the time.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: But ya man was blind, okay.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Then, and then there was an extra in the first couple seasons of Disco in a wheelchair! So how do you make sure that folks are accommodated and they can continue to contribute to the overall mission in *some* cases, but here you have a show that's supposed to be, you know, a fresh look at this point in time and still hold onto such antiquated portray--- It's just really, mmm.

Sue: Our goal back, you know, when Gene Roddenberry dreamed up this space western, right? The, the prevailing thought was that like, "The future will be so great we'll be able to cure everything."

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: But like, things have changed. We think differently now.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And the, the goal should not be to cure disability, it should be to accommodate.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: For everyone, for whatever is needed.

Jarrah: And to improve everyone's quality of life.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, pain management, like uh things that you need to have just as good quality of life as anyone else.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: But like, look at the way that Star Trek, for example, has shifted on mental health from basically having an episode in The Original Series where it's like, "We just cure everyone with a machine!"

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: To Discovery where we have to actually process trauma. And I think that's one area that like we, other than the reference to Starfleet EAP, we haven't really like seen that plumbed fully in, in Strange New Worlds. But that's an area where like, we need to shift these attitudes with disability too, in more of a consistent way, and, and like, not just rest on, "Okay well, we had Geordi, so we checked the box."

Sue: Mmm.

Kennedy: Yeah, for sure.

Jarrah: And Hemmer could have been significant -- like the scene where Uhura is getting a sense of what senses he has is delightful.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: And like, I mean, I think it is more meaningful if it's not an alien, because then it's not like as magical.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: But still like that could have been great and instead, like we said, he's just... He is great and, but like largely his function is to inspire and fix other people.

Kennedy: Yeah. Who's fixing Hemmer? Who's, who's inspiring him?

Jarrah: I'll fix you. Hemmer.

Sue: Aww.

Kennedy: Aww. But like, you know what I mean?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Like, I feel like he -- and I, I get the whole cranky engineer thing, being left to his own devices.

Jarrah: We also didn't need to get to Scotty this quickly. Like, you could have had also had Scotty come in as like a lower level person under him?

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Like there are other ways you could have done it.

Sue: I'm just hoping -- my real hope, right -- is that season one we have now dealt with this vision from Boreth.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Right, and, and...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Pike has accepted what is in his future and we're moving forward. So I don't wanna deal with it again.

Jarrah: Agree.

Kennedy: Oh, it'll keep coming back.

Sue: No!

Kennedy: It'll keep coming back.

Sue: No!!

Kennedy: We're gonna hear about Pike and his inability to accept his fate over...

Sue: I don't want it!

Kennedy: And over and over and over again, because now that Una's been whisked away he's gonna somehow blame himself.

Sue: No, now we're gonna get a season of how she's a model minority.

Kennedy: Oh god.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm, I mean, I feel like we, like, they acknowledge though in the text that that's problematic.

Sue: Yes they do.

Jarrah: So I hope that they can do that with some nuance.

Sue: My, I mean, it was, that was mostly a joke, but it's also a joke that's probably true.

Jarrah: Yeah. But like, I hope, I hope that what we see isn't a season of them arguing, "Well, just let Una out because she's exceptional," but I'm sure we will see some of that?

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: But I hope that that's not the narrative that they land with.

Sue: I'm gonna be really sad if anybody says the phrase, "One of the good ones."

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Yeeeah.

Sue: But let's talk about "The Serene Squall". The only episode in the season where we get our explicit queerness.

Kennedy: Yeah. I, I did not like Captain Angel at all. And at first I was mad about the evil queer trope. It was giving me, the whole performance was giving me Double Trouble from She-Ra and the Princesses of Power. And I was just like, Mmm I, this does not feel good.

Sue: I mean, there's also the like "trans people as tricksters" trope.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: This doesn't feel good. I feel like this is probably setting things back a little bit.

Sue: I mean, I'm, I'm conflicted though, 'cause right, the goal is that we get to the point where anybody can play any type of character.

Kennedy: Sure.

Sue: And those old tropes don't play into it. And like, I, I wanna believe that's what these writers were going for, but I'm just not sure that we are there yet?

Kennedy: Yeah. But I, I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that the actor's more sensitive and you know, quote unquote "sincere," 'cause it turns out they weren't sincere at all. Um but like, you know what I mean, the more softer kind of person in distress, deer in headlights performance.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Like portrayal, right? 'Cause we see that as duplicitous. I felt like that was genuine.

Sue: The Dr. Aspen part.

Kennedy: Yes, Dr. Aspen was totally believable. I would murder somebody for Dr. Aspen! But this Captain Angel fool, I don't like them. I don't like them at all and it's not because they're evil it's because I don't *believe* that they're evil.

Jarrah: Mmm.

Kennedy: I feel like they're playing it being evil, which is worse.

Sue: Mmm! Interesting.

Kennedy: If you gonna be evil, be evil, right? 'Cause that's what we're saying. If we're gonna, if we're going to aspire to equal representation, then we should be able to see all different people in different roles, period. Regardless of how that makes us feel. But I had to check myself. I was like, am I upset with this

because this is a marginalized person being portrayed in an evil way? Would I still feel this way if there was an uh Black woman who was perceived as evil, like if the villain of the episode was a Black woman...

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Would I still be mad? And I was like, probably. So I guess that's, I guess that lends to the whole, you know, equal representation thing. But I just didn't believe it, I didn't believe it. It was like, there's camp and then there's Hercules and Legendary Journeys, you know what I mean?

Sue: Right.

Kennedy: And I feel like we were somewhere between that and, and uh Cleopatra 2525. Like we weren't even in the same ballpark. And I was just like, how do you give such a nuanced and full and robust performance on one hand and then when it comes time to portray the opposite, it's like, oh, you don't have a twin? You don't have a sibling, a somebody we could have cast in that instead you?

Sue: I see that.

Kennedy: Because I feel like you're not making this mark.

Sue: I, I see what you're saying. Veered a little into mustache twirling.

Kennedy: No, it was all about, I don't know where I saw a mustache get twirled, okay. I saw it. I don't know what y'all saw. I saw, it was a big thick ol' Boris and Natasha mustache too, complete with wax at the end. I seen it.

Jarrah: I just didn't like that their motivation was purely about Sybok and kind of about like, trying to understand Spock better. Like, it just was very much... I, I just wanted more, I needed more motivation and backstory for Captain Angel. I felt like we got all this fake backstory for Dr. Aspen.

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: And then I was like, oh, and then now I know nothing about you except for you wanna spring Sybok from prison.

Sue: Yeah that's, that's very true.

Jarrah: But overall, I thought it was like, a fun episode. It just, yeah, there were some issues. I think, you know, Jesse James Keitel, who, who played Dr. Aspen, did make that point about like, “Yeah, we need trans actors in like, as heroes and villains,” but like when that's your only representation all season for trans and non-binary characters, then like that's a problem.

Kennedy: Yeah, for sure.

Sue: The, the only other place I, that we, I think read queerness is again between Ortega and Number One in *character* in episode eight, in the fantasy episode.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: And I mean, I will take those hints and run to Archive of their Own and look for those fanfictions, one hundred percent.

Kennedy: You've already written the fic!

Sue: I don't write them anymore, Kennedy.

Kennedy: Oh, excuse me. Sorry. Beg pardon, beg pardon. I'll back up.

Sue: But it, it's... not enough for me.

Jarrah: No.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: However, I will say I got vibes that Ortega was into Chapel in...

Jarrah: Oh maybe.

Sue: In “Spock Amok”.

Jarrah: I just thought they were besties, but...

Kennedy: I feel like Ortega is into everybody.

Sue: I mean, that's could also be true.

Kennedy: I feel like, I feel like Ortega is into everybody. I feel like she'd be like, "Hey, what's good though." You know what I mean, like?

Sue: Yes.

Kennedy: Like I don't, I don't put that past that character at all.

Sue: And I'm down with that as well. I just want it to be onscreen.

Jarrah: Maybe Ortega and Mitchell are together and they're secretly together and that's why they don't talk on the bridge.

Sue: No, that's Detmer and Owo!

Kennedy: Put it on screen, you coward.

Sue: What is their ship name? Is it "Detwo"?

Kennedy: "Detwo".

Sue: "Omer"?

Jarrah: Oh man. I'm such, I, I ship them.

Sue: I ship them a hundred percent. Anyway...

Jarrah: Yeah, 'cause there's not like a ton of, of room to work with where we, what we have from the other characters. Although, I mean, we don't know anything about La'an's orientation.

Sue: That's true. And like, I set it up at the top, but like I, I am a firm believer that unless a character says their orientation to another character, we don't know what it is.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: However, that doesn't mean they shouldn't do that.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: Right? I'm not gonna count somebody who -- I'm not gonna count that as explicit queer representation.

Jarrah: No.

Sue: And what we're looking for is explicit queer representation.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly.

Kennedy: Yeah. Wasn't there.

Sue: Nope. All right. We talked about how the show keeps getting compared to...

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: To Discovery in particular. I don't think we have more on that. Do we have more on, on how the Gorn are treated?

Jarrah: I mean, I just wanted to say that, like, I did see a fair amount of commentary saying that, like, "I wouldn't have minded if they didn't say, if they just called them a different species."

Kennedy: Yeah!

Jarrah: I, so I think there's some, there's definitely something to that. Like I thought it was great use of horror tropes, especially in the second Gorn episode, like they're... and Star Trek Trek hasn't had a, like really terrifying villain since...

Kennedy: The Borg.

Jarrah: Well, I mean, Disco has had a couple, but like they're, they're terrifying in a different kind of faceless way. But yeah, I was gonna say since like the Borg in TNG or like the Dominion.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: But you don't necessarily have to have a villain that you don't treat -- that you think is like purely evil and you don't need to try to understand for

them to be terrifying. Like you can have someone that you think is terrifying and still someone that's worth trying to understand.

Sue: The thing at, the Gorn are intelligent enough to be space-faring.

Kennedy: Right?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Kennedy: It's called the Gorn Hegemony for God's sakes. They are organized!

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: You, you wanna step on them like they're cockroaches.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Right!

Sue: That's. it's not okay. If they, if these had been like a native animal of this planet?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: I think I would have a very different feeling about it?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: But like, it just, it, it rubbed me the wrong way.

Kennedy: And it also felt forced in the same way that the Gorn episode felt forced in Enterprise.

Jarrah: Mmm, yeah.

Kennedy: Like, we, we can fill in all the gaps. If this is, if, if what this episode establishes is that the Gorn start off as you know, back-popping Predators, Right? That then that, that to me raises a lot of questions about their developmental process, right? What does their, what does their puberty look like? When do they start walking around upright? When, when do their, you know, like when does it get to the point where they're sentient? Does it happen

or have you completely, you know, ignored a good chunk of one of this galaxy's species?

Sue: When did they turn into stunt performers in rubber suits?

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, like they can't just go around killing the child of say a Klingon, because they're not like an independent...

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: Like, 'cause they are still under, have under a guardianship. Like, they're still sentient...

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: And have the capacity of growing into a, even more sentient adult. But, yeah like I don't think they fully address that. They're just like, "Oh, they're evil and they're gonna kill us unless we kill them first."

Kennedy: Yeah. I just mmm, unacceptable.

Jarrah: That said if they had been like, "This is some other being, we don't think they're sentient, but they're horribly dangerous."

Kennedy: Right.

Jarrah: I would've been totally down with that.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Or maybe they are horribly dangerous and then they find out later that they're sentient and they have to wrestle with that.

Jarrah: Yeah!

Sue: How'd that?

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: How about that for some Star Trek?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Mmm.

Sue: Like, like a “Devil in the Dark” episode.

Jarrah: Yeah! Exactly.

Sue: Huh? Huh?

Jarrah: Yeah. Mm-hmm?

Sue: I'm available, call my agent.

Jarrah: They weren't, they weren't yeah, they weren't evil they were just misunderstood.

Kennedy: Right. “We didn't, we didn't have the capacity to communicate. Get Uhura down here, something!” Nothing. None of that. Just squish, squish, little lizard squish.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: All right. So are there any, any themes I missed that anybody wants to bring up? Any even like favorite scenes, favorite moments, things that surprised you, things that made you cast your eyes to the side.

Jarrah: I did want to mention the lovely moment where T’Pring is studying human sex and says, “Well, I assumed that the onus was on me to learn more about humanity.” Basically, hey, like if you're dealing with wanting to learn more about someone who's marginalized, it's on you to learn that and not like, make them do the labor of educating you. And I thought that was delightful.

Kennedy: Yeah. It was really sweet. I was also, I, I guess the whole casting as Jim Kirk thing was a little...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Interesting in “Quality of Mercy”? I was like, I...

Jarrah: He had no swagger.

Sue: See, I didn't mind it at all, but I also wasn't watching Kirk, so.

Jarrah: I watched it twice, partly because I hadn't paid attention to that the first time and then I saw a bunch of people being like, "How did they cast this guy?" And then I rewatched it being like, hmm, let me see what I think. And yeah, I did not get strong Kirk vibes. Like it felt not like, you know, you can tell that Celia Rose Gooding has studied Nichelle Nichols.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Jarrah: You can tell that Ethan Peck has studied Leonard Nimoy. It did not feel like he had studied William Shatner.

Kennedy: Or, or Chris Pine!

Jarrah: Yeah. Or Pine. Not that I wanted him to bust out into [Shatner impression] The... *Way of... Talking*. But you know what I mean.

Kennedy: But even Pine did a good job of slipping into that cadence...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Kennedy: Without sounding like Shatner.

Sue: Right.

Kennedy: Like, he did his homework. At the very least if you didn't wanna watch Shatner you could've watched Pine, you could've watched Pine. Stop it, you know?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Oh my gosh. "Quality of Mercy". I do wanna talk about "Quality of Mercy". I, I have seen some, some internet comments about like it's nostalgia for nostalgia's sake...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Sue: In a disparaging way. And like, I, maybe I got caught up in it 'cause I really, really liked it. As a finale for the first season.

Kennedy: It felt like nostalgia for a nostalgia's sake. For sure. Especially with the lighting. I say, come on. Next is the Vaseline on the lens! Like it was, I, I just, it was like, "Hey guys, and just to make sure you feel nice and snug in, in a bug and your Starfleet-issued rug, here's a little uh... A little familiarity for you guys to sip on here's your mug of hot cocoa. Here's your Romulan Cocoa."

Sue: I was into -- if, I mean, if I love beta canon, I love time loops almost as much, like.

Jarrah: I, I felt there was not nearly enough houndstooth um...

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: In the Romulan uniforms, but overall, I liked it. And I did talk to a few friends who had never seen The Original Series about what they thought 'cause I was curious like, would that just have totally flown over your head? They were like, "That was a great episode!" So...

Sue: Wow.

Jarrah: So I don't know. Very anecdotal evidence, not a full, like, random sample but...

Kennedy: Right.

Sue: I mean the instant he was performing a wedding, I was like, "Holy shit. It's 'Balance of Terror'."

Kennedy: Yeah, yeah, yeah! I was like...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Did they really just carbon copy "Balance of Terror" and give us... Is this oh, they're this is, they are unironically carbon copying "Balance of Terror" and giving... Cool, cool cool cool cool cool cool.

Sue: I wish that they had been able to get James Frain to play...

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Sue: The Romulan commander.

Jarrah: That would've been so great.

Kennedy: That would've confused so many people. They woulda been like, "Wait a minute, what is Sarek doing here?"

Jarrah: Yeah and well, and then especially when like Spock sees them and they're all like, "You must know who these guys are," and he's like, "Yeah, it's my dad apparently?"

Sue: What's he doing there?

Kennedy: That's funny. "Who, Dad what are you doing? Who gave you that uniform?"

Sue: In, in seriousness, Jarrah, just earlier today as we're recording, published the Bechdel-Wallace results for the season, and the only one that's like a hard fail...

Jarrah: Is the finale.

Sue: is the finale, which is, again, the only episode where they truly fully go into an old TOS episode.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: Where there just...

Kennedy: For sure.

Sue: Aren't as many women around.

Jarrah: Yep.

Kennedy: I will say that I had my first illicit response to Anson Mount in the finale. Before it was like, yes, he's an attractive, objectively, attractive person.

His hair won't quit. You wearin' the hell outta that uniform. Yes, I get it. I understand why people are tripping over him. I'm not tripping over him, but I get it. Um, it wasn't until Ortigas kept like talking back and he had to be like *stare down* and I was like, "Oh! That apron came off, huh! What you need? You want a sandwich? Why don't you have a seat? I'm gonna get you a sandwich. You want something to drink too? I'll be right back." Like it instantly, like, it's been a long pandemic, so I'm very easily scintillated nowadays. But when he yelled at her, I was like, "Ortigas stop talking back! What you doing? Mind your business. I'm so sorry, sir. I don't know what's wrong." I would be the worst on the bridge. I would be a walking HR violation if Pike was that kind of dude, I would just be like... Hot mess.

Jarrah: I didn't love the like um, oh Spock's gonna totally save the galaxy, like preview stuff? I just feel like Spock doesn't need to be endowed with that mythology in other people's minds yet. And it's more interesting if he's not like the child with a destiny.

Sue: Yeah. I didn't, I didn't think about that. That's a really good point because I think as... Viewers like us, he already has that.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Like we know Spock's full storyline.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. What are the monks on Boreth playing at, also? Like, they're just giving out time crystals willy-nilly.

Kennedy: No, what! You're not supposed to touch those man, let alone move them!

Jarrah: And then they're mad that they're, that people are changing the timeline? I don't get it.

Kennedy: Right? This must be the B shift. That's not A squad on Boreth handing out crystals. That's the night shift right there; they're the ones who don't wanna do paperwork.

Sue: L'Rell gets to, needs to get her son in order.

Jarrah: Well, and the old Pike is like, "Oh, like Klingons would just rather solve the problem with a bat'leth." What were they gonna do, come and kill him? 'Cause that would also not fix the problem!

Sue: Well, I mean, if the turning point was that incident in “Balance of Terror”..

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Sue: They could have gone back in time and killed Pike...

Jarrah: Still...

Sue: So Chris could take over the Enterprise.

Jarrah: I feel like the, yeah, the the... time monks... I'm, I'm annoyed.

Sue: Fair.

Kennedy: Maybe, maybe...

Sue: That's fair.

Kennedy: Maybe him touching that crystal in the first place wrote a different timeline that they, was revealed to them later on.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: Time's tricky.

Sue: Look, I'm just happy he wore that monster maroon because...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Wow. That's a gorgeous uniform.

Kennedy: I'm glad they updated it.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: We were talking to Bernadette about that.

Sue: The green wrap too, oof.

Kennedy: Yeah.

Sue: And the field jacket? Basically I want all the costumes please.

Kennedy: Yeah, it's uh, I'm glad that people like this show. I'll say that because the more people that like it means the more seasons it'll get, which means we'll have a larger chance of getting additional series. So if... the more Trek the better, as far as I'm concerned. Even if it's stuff that I don't particularly care for, this is something that I'll put on and watch. I'll say this. I was more anxious in the week between episodes of The Boys than I was with Strange New Worlds.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: And I, I'm a little upset about that. Like, I was hoping, even though I was cautiously optimistic and open-minded about it, I was hoping that it would grab me, right? I was hoping that whatever cynicism I might have brought into this starting, beginning of the series, I was hoping that it would've just grabbed me right away and pulled me along and I just would've gotten over my, over my stuff. Much like the way Disco had for me. But you know, this did not grab me. It did not. I appreciate my Starfleet standard issue blanket. It's very soft and warm and comfortable. It's got nice weight to it. So, you know, it wasn't cheap. The, the logo was embroidered, so, you know, no expense spared. But I, you know, I didn't know that I liked my Star Trek a little bit more edgy until we got that in Disco.

Sue: I knew that.

Kennedy: I did not know.

Jarrah: Mmm.

Sue: I knew that from you. I mean...

Kennedy: What ah, what, hold on!

Sue: 'Cause DS9 exists!

Kennedy: I mean, is DS9 edgy? It was at the time, I guess, okay.

Sue: It's edgier than Next Gen.

Kennedy: Yeah, that's true. That's a good point.

Jarrah: Yeah. Um I do just want to mention the episode “Lift us Where Suffering Cannot Reach” because we had a message from a listener -- Lila -- about um, really some, some challenges with this episode, which um as I think is common knowledge is basically a, I would say competent, but fairly exact retelling of the Ursula K. LeGuin story “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”. And uh, one of the points she raised was about just like, “How could we possibly get like a, a message that would propel us towards positive change out of this episode where this society is built on the suffering of a child.” Yeah, it's interesting. I mean, I also would not see that. Then I was having a conversation with my friend after seeing that episode and was like, “Oh, so it's like how in our world, we let children make our clothes for us.”

Kennedy: Ooof!

Jarrah: And stuff like that. And I was like, “Oh shit.”

Kennedy: Ooof!

Sue: I think the positive message, if we can call it positive -- hopeful, maybe?’

Jarrah: Yeah?

Sue: Is that we have this, this paradise planet, right? And all it takes is the suffering of one child. 3

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: And yet there are still people who leave and say, once they know the truth, they say, “This isn't right.”

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: And they're more willing to live a more difficult life because they're not then exploiting that child.

Jarrah: Yeah. And maybe if people can draw like those comparisons to ways that we allow our comfort and privilege to be built on the suffering of others, not just children, but others in our society on a daily basis, then maybe there are lessons to be taken from that that we can use to move towards positive change.

Kennedy: But none of that was said, right?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Kennedy: They didn't throw science at it. They didn't throw morality at it. They were just like, "Whoa, this is effed up. We gotta go."

Jarrah: They weren't like, "In our human history, we had these problems. But here's how, what, we chose to overcome them." Like the only one they did that in is the first episode where there's that message about war.

Sue: I think the subtext is there in this episode where you've got the people talking about why they're leaving or that...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: In leaving they feel like they're actually protecting the first servant.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: But again, it's, it's not explicit. It's more subtle than we're used to in Star Trek. And I, I, I might be making these excuses for it, 'cause I have also in recapping them, watched all of these episodes like six times.

Kennedy: Mmm.

Sue: So I have scrutinized every second of everything that was on screen.

Kennedy: As one does when one recaps.

Sue: Yeah.

Kennedy: I don't think people realize what those recaps do to a person.

Sue: Woah...

Jarrah: I mean, and clearly there's a ton more to say about pretty much every single episode but uh, highly recommend Sue's recaps which say a lot about them.

Kennedy: Yes.

Sue: And often a lot about beta cannon.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I'm sure we'll be coming back to several of these examples in future thematic episodes.

Sue: Yes. So I'll throw it out one more time. Last thoughts, final things?

Kennedy: I, I just, I hope next season isn't as safe. I hope every season thereafter gets more and more dangerous to the point where we end on that, in that scene where, where Pike has to save those children or, or become disabled and he comes to terms with the fact that he can live a fully realized life, even though he's in a tube. That's all. Is that too much to ask?

Sue: Yeah, that's, that's my feeling as well. I want them to play it, to not play it safe anymore.

Jarrah: Yeah. I, I don't necessarily want a show that is going to be hard to watch?

Kennedy: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Because it's so intense every week? But I would, I think that they can push the envelope on the issues and the messages they're exploring and how those relate to our society today, um as well as on their representation. And I hope we see more of that.

Kennedy: I uh, agreed.

Sue: All right. So I think that's where we have to leave it today. It's always difficult to cover an entire season in one episode and this is our attempt. If we left out your favorite thing, it was not intentional. Head over to the show notes for this episode and tell us about it. Leave it in the comments, just don't yell at us for missing it. There's a lot to cover. Alright. So Kennedy, where can people find you on the internet?

Kennedy: You can find me on both, uh if you still want to, you can find me on both Twitter and Instagram at “That Mikey Chick”. That's “That M I K E Y C H I C K”. Don't end up in my comments because I will drag you publicly before blocking you.

Sue: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: You can find me on social media at “Jarrah Penguin”. That's “J A R R A H Penguin”, and also at my blog trekkiefeminist.com where I just posted the

Bechdel-Wallace test results for not just Strange New Worlds, but also the up-to-date results for Picard and Discovery. Woohoo.

Sue: Woohoo.

Kennedy: Woohoo!

Sue: And I'm Sue, you can find me on Twitter at “Spaltor”. That's “S P A L T O R”. 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 at “Women at Warp”. Thanks so much for listening.