



## 02: THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL, ANGRY PLANET

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**LAURA:** Please visit [shitweveread.com](http://shitweveread.com) to support the show.

**JASON:** Now, let's talk about some books.

(theme music)

**LAURA:** Hello and welcome to *Shit We've Read*, a sci-fi/fantasy book podcast. I am your host Laura Benson and I'm here with my co-host Jason Rico.

**JASON:** Hello!

**LAURA:** How are you doing?

**JASON:** I'm good. How are you?

**LAURA:** I'm doing great. Thanks.

**JASON:** Good.

**LAURA:** And then I am really excited to introduce our very first guest host, our amazing friend, EmmaSkies. How's it going?

**EMMA:** It's going great. I feel very excited to be your first guest house. I'm just going to forever hold this. Every time you have anybody on, like if you get really cool authors on this at some point I'll also be like "Mmm. But I was the first one."

[laughing]

**LAURA:** You will have that title for sure.

**EMMA:** No one can take it from me.

**JASON:** You are the bar that they're all held to.

**EMMA:** I'll make sure it's very high.

**LAURA:** Well we're definitely happy to have you. So we know you through some mutual friends, *Before You Log Off*.

**EMMA:** Mhmm.



**LAURA:** So if you, if any of our listeners ours haven't looked into [Before You Log Off](#) yet, they also have a podcast called [BYLO Watch](#), which has Emma on it as one of the hosts. Do you want to tell us a little about it really quick?

**EMMA:** Yeah, so [BYLO Watch](#), which technically now that we've done two of them, is a series. Started with a podcast we called [Dust Watch](#) and then we just did another one called [Grisha Watch](#). And essentially, Aaron doesn't read. Or does it read books and I read a lot of books. So we basically go into a TV show adapted from a book. He goes in completely blind. I don't let him watch the trailers. I don't tell them anything about the book and then we dissect the TV show from the perspective of somebody who has absolutely no idea what's going on and somebody who has a little bit too much of an idea what's going on. So that's been really fun. We did the first one with [His Dark Materials](#) on HBO, which is the [His Dark Materials](#) books, [The Golden Compass](#) books. And then recently we did [Shadow and Bone](#) on Netflix. So that's been a lot of fun. And then we have another one coming up in June that I don't think we've announced yet so keep an eye out for that.

**LAURA:** So shortly after this releases so that would be cool. Good timing.

**EMMA:** Oh my God. It's almost June.

[Laura laughs]

**JASON:** Yeah. Yep.

**EMMA:** Jesus Christ.

**LAURA:** Well, we're excited to have you on. We are going to talk about the book [The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet](#) by Becky Chambers. Before we get into all the nitty-gritty of that, I first wanted to ask both of you guys what is some of the shit you have read or are currently reading?

**JASON:** Emma, you can go first.

**EMMA:** Oh, okay. So I, these days I don't generally read more than one book at a time. I kind of try to keep it one at a time, but I did break my rule for this. I paused my current book to read our current [The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet](#). But I've been reading [Gideon the Ninth](#) for a book club that I host. That's been, I'm finally getting to a point in it where I'm really enjoying it, but it is a little bit hard to get into and then, what did I just read? I just, why is it as soon as I read something and I start something else, it is gone from my mind? I know I just read [Shadow and Bone](#) for that podcast and then it's going to bother me as soon as I stop talking. I'll be like "Oh, that's what the book I read was." But anyway, [Gideon the Ninth](#) is the short answer.

[Jason laughs]

**LAURA:** Okay. That's on my list still. I do plan to hopefully get to it soon. What about you Jason?

**JASON:** Before we jump to what I'm reading, I have read [Gideon the Ninth](#). I have opinions about it, so I'd be very curious to hear what you think of it once you're finished. But anyhow. The last thing I read was [Spells Trouble](#) by P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast. It's the, it's not out yet. I think it releases next month. Could be wrong about that. I read an ARC for it. It's the first book in the series called [Sisters of Salem](#). Two twin witches. I don't to say it without giving too much away. Anyhow. It's-

**LAURA:** Spoilers!



**JASON:** Yeah. Young adult, fantasy, magic. Reminded me a lot of [Practical Magic](#) meets [Percy Jackson and the Olympians](#).

**LAURA:** Oh, interesting.

**EMMA:** That's a ship I somehow always- I never got into [Percy Jackson and the Olympians](#) and I'm at the point in my life where I feel like it's too late. I feel like I've missed the boat and I can't do it anymore.

**JASON:** Look, they're making a TV adaptation of it. So, I think that is your way on the boat.

**LAURA:** Hey!

**EMMA:** That's fair. No, that's a very fair point. [gasp] And then I can segue that into another [BYLO Watch](#) series.

**JASON:** Exactly.

**EMMA:** Oh okay. Here we go around. Nope! That's it. I'm back on the boat.

[laughing]

**LAURA:** We look forward to hearing that podcast then.

**JASON:** That's the last thing I've read and the next I'm going to read, as soon as we're done with this episode, is [The Ones We're Meant To Find](#) by Joan He, I believed. Young adult, sci-fi.

**LAURA:** It's so pretty.

**JASON:** Yeah, it just released earlier this month. Very, very pretty book. I got my [OwlCrate](#) edition. I think, Emma, I think you did too.

**LAURA:** I'm very jealous.

**EMMA:** You also have OwlCrate?! I am obsessed with OwlCrate.

**JASON:** Yeah. I got it too.

**EMMA:** Oh my God.

**JASON:** So yeah. That's going to be the next book I'm going to read and I'm very excited about that. I heard a lot of good things about it so excited to dive into that.

**LAURA:** Nice. I just read [Firekeeper's Daughter](#) by Angeline Boulley a couple of weeks ago. It's not something that I generally read. It was a mystery, kind of. Yeah, mystery. But it was interesting because it follows a bi-racial, it says biracial, unenrolled tribal member. So she's an 18 year old girl who's Native American but not enrolled and so it's kind of following her- It's following her story through a murder mystery, basically. And just kind of what she deals with being a Native American, which is supposed to be very much based on real life. So there's some very heartbreaking things that she experiences but it was very eye-opening. So I definitely recommend that book to anyone interested in it. [Firekeeper's Daughter](#). So but I am excited to probably jump into [Addie LaRue](#) next.



**EMMA:** Oh my god! You have to give me like, play by a plays. For listeners, I am obsessed with this book. [Addie LaRue](#) was the first book I read this year in January. There has not been a single day that has gone by that I have not thought about this book. So if you're reading it, I need to know everything.

**LAURA:** I will, I will keep you updated for sure. [laughs]

**EMMA:** But you guys can't hear it if you're- or can't see if you're listening but Jason and Laura, you can both see that shelf right there. All five of those are [Addie LaRue](#).

**LAURA:** You do have a lot of editions.

[Emma laughs]

**LAURA:** I feel like that's probably going to end up being me with [The Ones We're Meant To Find](#). [laughs]

**EMMA:** Oh, yes.

**LAURA:** I have Jason on the lookout to see if I can buy an OwlCrate edition and then I just bought the Barnes & Noble edition and I still might buy the regular edition because I like the blue hardcover.

**EMMA:** Me too! I thought the Barnes & Noble edition was the regular one and then I saw somebody post their blue hardcover and I was like, "Where do I find that?" And I guess it's literally anywhere else.

**JASON:** Yep.

**LAURA:** Yep. That is correct. But you have a very beautiful [Addie LaRue](#) shelf.

**JASON:** It's very pretty.

**LAURA:** Let's jump into our book.

**JASON:** Let's do it.

**EMMA:** Let's go.

**LAURA:** Yeah. So again, the title of this month's book is [The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet](#), which was actually a Kickstarter funded book by Becky Chambers. It was released in 2014. It is the first book out of four and it looks like a novella. So we're only reading the first one for the podcast. This is a science fiction space opera and very much LGBTQ as well. The series is also a Hugo Award winner. So, that's kind of cool. For anyone who doesn't know much about this book. I'm going to read the synopsis from Goodreads. It says:

*Follow a motley crew on an exciting journey through space-and one adventurous young explorer who discovers the meaning of family in the far reaches of the universe-in this light-hearted debut space opera from a rising sci-fi star.*

*Rosemary Harper doesn't expect much when she joins the crew of the aging Wayfarer. While the patched-up ship has seen better days, it offers her a bed, a chance to explore the far-off corners of the galaxy, and most importantly, some distance from her past. An introspective young woman who learned early to keep to herself, she's never met anyone remotely like the ship's diverse crew, including Sissix, the exotic reptilian pilot, chatty engineers Kizzy and Jenks who keep the ship running, and Ashby, their noble captain.*



*Life aboard the Wayfarer is chaotic and crazy—exactly what Rosemary wants. It's also about to get extremely dangerous when the crew is offered the job of a lifetime. Tunneling wormholes through space to a distant planet is definitely lucrative and will keep them comfortable for years. But risking her life wasn't part of the plan. In the far reaches of deep space, the tiny Wayfarer crew will confront a host of unexpected mishaps and thrilling adventures that force them to depend on each other. To survive, Rosemary's got to learn how to rely on this assortment of oddballs—an experience that teaches her about love and trust, and that having a family isn't necessarily the worst thing in the universe.*

**EMMA:** Aw!

**LAURA:** Aw! [laughs] Let's do some non-spoiler stuff. For anyone who hasn't read it and wants to read it, we don't want to spoil a lot of details. I want to know, let's start with Jason this time. What, what were your thoughts on this books?

**JASON:** I like it overall. It wasn't as action-heavy as maybe I thought it would be. It's very much about characters and relationships, which for some reason, I feel, it's kind of rare in sci-fi.

**LAURA:** Mhmm.

**JASON:** I feel like a lot of sci-fi, especially space sci-fi, is very much about the science and, at least for me, I read a lot of hard sci-fi, which is all about the science and the math behind things and it's more about that than it is the people. So I really like the fact that it was about people and what makes these people tick, how they get along with each other. I love the fact that there were alien species. Like that is by far, like, my favorite kind of space sci-fi. Like if you're gonna be in space, give me some aliens. The one note I put in the book overall was like, this is the future liberals want.

**LAURA:** [laughs] Yeah.

**JASON:** We can touch upon that a little bit as you go but I was reading things and I'm like, god there's a lot going on in here that I personally like, but...

**EMMA:** I'm gonna say I'm absolutely here for that.

**LAURA:** That's a good point. I did not think about it, but that's very true. I could see the, I could see the way that it would work that way.

**JASON:** Yeah. So overall like it.

**LAURA:** Cool. Okay. What about you, Emma? I know that you are not generally a sci-fi reader so this was a little different for you.

**EMMA:** It was. We've talked about this before that like I want to get into reading more sci-fi. I have a handful on my shelf but like, I am massively dominated by fantasy. I think this is a really good entry point for anybody wanting to get into sci-fi. Specifically for like what Jason said, like, it's very character-driven. It's super character-driven where like, it's almost like the sci-fi aspect or like the space technical aspect is almost the backdrop to the main story and the main story is the characters, which can be a good or a bad thing. In this case, I think it worked really well because all the characters are really good. Like they're- like, I actually cared a lot about them. You guys both know this, but I read 60% of the book today and it makes for like a really compelling read. Like there was no point where I felt bored. Like I literally sat in one spot for 5 hours and read the, you know, second half of this book and it just keeps you going. Like, there's no point where it felt too slow or it felt too technical or felt too bogged down by anything. But at the same time, like, I didn't feel like I was missing out on a whole lot, Like only having the characters there, I think it worked really, really well.



**LAURA:** Well, I'm glad that you liked it then. I was worried! [laughs]

**EMMA:** I like sci-fi and like, I love sci-fi in movies and TV shows. I just have never gotten too much into it in books. So I'm really, like, it's part of what I have been wanting to branch out of. It's like, "Oh yeah. They write books that aren't just like magic and elves and shit. I should probably see what that's all about."

[Laura laughs]

**JASON:** I will totally admit, I told Laura "We to make Emma sci-fi book because we need to bring her out of her element."

**EMMA:** laughs] I'm getting there. I'm getting there.

**JASON:** "Like whether she loves it or hates it, I think it's gonna be a good conversation but we need to make her read a sci-fi book."

**EMMA:** To my credit, to my own credit, [To Sleep in a Sea of Stars](#) was like one of my favorite books that I read last year. Although, also a good entry level for me because it's by a fantasy author-

**JASON:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** -but it counts.

**JASON:** It counts. Technically.

**LAURA:** True. That's very true. [laughs]

**LAURA:** Well I am pretty much in the same line as you guys. I really liked it overall. There was a lot of positive things happening in it and at the same time a lot of not very positive things but they made you think and draw parallels to things in our own world. So I thought it was a really good, really good book overall and it was different for me, too, in that it was so very character-driven. I'm not used to that in sci-fi at all. I'm used to way more, you know, crazy action and space fights and-

**JASON:** *Pew pew!*

**LAURA:** -stuff like that. So- [laughs] So it was different but I did enjoy it. I did enjoy it, for sure. Okay, well there's a lot of detailed stuff to get into so we're gonna jump into spoilers, so if anybody is planning to read it and doesn't want any details, log off now and then come back once you've read it to join the conversation. All right? So spoilers starting now!

[SPOILERS]

**LAURA:** I actually wanted to start this off really quick with a really, really quick little question. Are you team mek, happy tea, or boring tea?

[Jason laughs]

**EMMA:** Where's Team Water? There's that team.

[Laura laughs]



**EMMA:** I don't drink tea or alcohol so I'm screwed. Like, I drink alcohol but like I don't seek it out. They drink water too. That's a thing. Does that make me boring tea? I'm on boring tea.

**JASON:** Well mek is their equivalent of coffee, right?

**LAURA:** I think so?

**EMMA:** They kept talking about how it makes them fuzzy though. They were like you only get one cup because you're not going back if you're fuzzy-headed. So I assumed it was alcoholic.

**JASON:** I thought it was just the caffeine content. Like you can't have more than a couple cups of coffee in a day or else you just get really wired.

**LAURA:** It makes you jittery.

**EMMA:** Isn't that the happy tea, though?

**JASON:** No, happy tea was just caffeinated tea.

**EMMA:** And then they do how they do actually have regular coffee at one point. So it's different from that.

**LAURA:** I noticed that! That's why I was really confused what mek was.

**JASON:** What the heck? Then I don't know what anything is anymore.

**EMMA:** I assumed it's alcohol.

**LAURA:** I think mek is supposed to be coffee.

**JASON:** Mek is like a Four Loko, right? You've got the caffeine and the alcohol.

**EMMA:** [laughing] Right?! It's both.

**LAURA:** There we go. You have one. And your

**EMMA:** It's your coffee with Bailey's.

**LAURA:** Well which one are you, Jason?

**JASON:** Man, if mek is the alcohol then I might change my mind. No, I'm happy tea. I am by far a tea drinker. I like herbal teas but Earl Grey is like my go-to kind of tea. Good caffeinated tea makes me happy, therefore I am happy tea.

**LAURA:** Wow. So poetic.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**LAURA:** I actually-

**EMMA:** How about you?



**LAURA:** Huh?

**EMMA:** I said how about you? Where you at?

**LAURA:** Oh, I, you know what, I for a while, I was going back and forth between the happy tea and boring tea because I really like some of the herbal flavors but I'm most likely going to pick something that's caffeinated so I'd say happy tea. [laughs]

**EMMA:** They also had fizz at one point which I'm assuming is like their version of soda.

**LAURA:** Yes, that's kind of what I got too.

**EMMA:** In which case, I'm in that camp. As I sit here with my bottle of soda that I keep drinking from hoping my mic isn't picking up.

**LAURA:** You're fine. Well, none of us picked mek then so my next question doesn't apply.

**JASON:** Well hold on. Before you jump to that, I will say my answer might be slightly biased only because I've recently been going through some of the *Star Wars* expanded universe books and in the last two series, they've been mentioning caf a lot which is their version of coffee. Caf, like caffeine, it's called caf. Can you get you a cup of caf?

**LAURA:** Oh, okay.

**JASON:** But they mention it like 20 times a book and it's like do you have nothing else to drink in this universe? And so like the mention of caf drive me crazy. And so when I saw mek it '00s like oh, this is just caf again. So...

**EMMA:** They do talk about it quite a lot. It does come up a lot. Are you just triggered by coffee now?

**JASON:** Yeah, a little bit, a little bit. Yeah.

**EMMA:** Look, everybody in that universe is real tired, okay? They got a lot of shit going on.

**JASON:** And they do have different time like, they have like tendays and their days or what, not 24 hours. Are they longer, I think?

**LAURA:** Yeah. It was something like standard days and then Earth days or something like that. Sol.

**EMMA:** I was hoping that they would eventually go into like a little bit of how that split up because they kept talking about, they were, people had to convert Standard Time to like, Galactic Commons time.

**LAURA:** Mmm. You're right.

**EMMA:** Which makes sense that, like, if you're in that federation, there is one standardized time period even though you're all in different planets that have, like, different orbital patterns and that's your years and days are different. But like it never really talked about the difference. Like I couldn't tell is one, which one's longer, which one's shorter. They would have to keep converting into like standard years like ages and things. But yeah and then tendays, which was another one that like, I think that's kind of what clued me into the fact that whatever she was doing with info dumping, her world building was going really well because she never had to explain what a tenday was but we all caught on to the fact that like, that's a week. Like that's their version of a week.





**LAURA:** I think the only reference that really kind of gave a little bit more hint to how the timing worked was almost halfway into the book when they were visiting Kizzy's friends. One of them said something like, "I bought this place about five years back. That's what, about three standards or something. Never can remember GC time."

**EMMA:** Oh, did they? Fair.

**LAURA:** But I don't know what years, how years work on that planet either. So I just tried to keep that in the back of my mind as I continued reading. But I was like, dang, five years is three standards?

**EMMA:** And I feel very ethnocentric- Yeah, I felt like very ethnocentric because like every time they would talk about standard, I would assume Earth. I was like oh standard Earth because I'm an earth person reading this. But then I think about the fact that like they don't give a shit about humans or people from Earth. Like we were not there the beginning so it's obviously not us and then I was just lost again. I was like, all right, I'm just gonna not worried about time and time periods here.

**LAURA:** It got a little weird but you know we've, you figure it out as you go. Well, so you mentioned the world building. This book has a *lot* of world-building. World-building as in like universe building. Do you think that she wrote this well? Was it alright the right amount? Was it too much?

**JASON:** Yeah, I think the author did a really good job of giving us a lot of terms and a lot of clues as to how the universe works and what's included in this universe without having to spell it out for us. Like the one term that comes to mind was grounders, which I believe meant people who lived on the planet, as opposed to the humans that live and were born in space or outside of Earth.

**EMMA:** Yeah. Grounders versus spacers.

**JASON:** Yeah. So, so that was just a term. And she never really explained what I meant but you kind of pick up the fact that this world has all these terms as its own ways of measuring time and days and weeks and really kind of laying on all these nuggets that really make the universe feel thought out, which for me, reading a fantasy or sci-fi, is always one of the things I look at. It's like, does this universe feel like she, liked the author really thought it out or is this kind of lazy? And I feel like the author put a lot of thought into building the different species and the way these species work, like the sociology of them, familial units, relationships between different species. All that kind of stuff, I just felt like, I was really good.

**EMMA:** Yeah, I feel like the interspecies relationships were like, really where this shined because it was, it was more than just oh this race doesn't like this race or this race gets along with this. Right, like she had the sociological implications built into each race as to why that would not make them mesh well with another society or why it would make the mesh really well. Like, she went really hard and heavy into how they all worked and how they work together and where they didn't work together and like things that they had to overcome in that way. And like, that makes it sound like the whole thing is super like politics heavy and it's still really not. Like it's still just feels like you're reading about individual people and their cultures without reading too much into like the political ramifications of everything. Even though that's very much there, it doesn't necessarily feel like that the whole time.

**LAURA:** Yeah, I thought that- It's funny because it's like Chambers like peppered in exposition through the entire book but you didn't always realize that you were reading it because it was so well hidden in dialogue and the different perspectives and you- it was just so easy to pick up on these different things as we were reading and learning through and it didn't feel like it was heavy in one place. It was, it was just nicely spread out and you only learned it when you needed to learn it.



**JASON:** Yeah, exactly.

**LAURA:** So you guys also mentioned the different species and cultures. I think I agree in that, that was one of the things that really stood out the most to me, was these very diverse characters and how all the genders were represented, sexual orientations, relationships. There was so much in here that she really wrote quite well. Did you, did either of you have any particular favorite out of all of those any favorite culture or character?

**EMMA:** I love the Aandrisk.

**JASON:** Same.

**EMMA:** They were by far my favorite culture. Like, I could personally do without the like public open sex all the time. Like, I could maybe do without that part of it.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** But I think what really clicked it for me is when she started talking about their familial units, like the difference between hatch family, feather family, and egg family? I want to say? What does... I feel like I'm messing up the third one.

**JASON:** House family.

**EMMA:** House family. Thank you. House family is the third one. It was funny because like as I was reading I was just like you know as somebody who doesn't want and or particularly like children, this speaks to me. [laughs] I would like, and they were easily my favorite. Sissix was probably my favorite of the crew members but like she went really, really like, there was a lot of thought into how their culture works and that stood out a lot.

**JASON:** What I loved about the Aandrisk was as Chambers was explaining this culture and how they have these different types of families and it seems kind of alien if you think about it but also it's very much the way humans function anyway. Like you have the family you're born into and sometimes you like that family, sometimes you don't. Sometimes it's complicated. And then eventually when you get older you make your own family, friends, you know, loved ones, your partners. That found family. And then eventually, when you get to a point in your life where you're ready to build a family, you know, you decide whether or not you want to have kids or just a partner, you want to travel the world, whatever. That's your house family. So it's, it's these things that humans do naturally that she was applying to this alien species, which I really, really liked. It made a lot of sense. The fact that you can like, have a kid but you're not at that point in your life where you're ready to have kids and so it was like, well, why should I have to raise this kid? This child was should go to people who are wiser and old enough in that point in their life where they can raise the kid. Like, that made so much sense and I just feel like, honestly, humanity might be in a better place if we adapted some of these things. Emma, like you said, the public sex things, a little more complicated, a little more weird, but you know-

[Emma laughs]

**LAURA:** Not really for everyone.

**JASON:** -But also that's our own person bias as humans so, you do you.

**EMMA:** What about you, Laura? Where was your favorite species?

**LAURA:** Honestly, I think I'm gonna say the same thing. It's just, it was just fascinating the relationships and how they change so easily and how it was just accepted. When you moved on to the next family, it was just normal. And then you know how Sissix- I can't even say her name-Sissix, you discover that her feather family is the crew, which was just like it was



so heartwarming and amazing. I was like, oh, she made her family officially not part of her species. That's amazing. That is, that is a perfect example of "I make my own family." And I think we can probably all connect to that in some way of some point in our life where we had to decide, you know, who was going to be close to us that way. So I think I really enjoyed learning about their culture and I loved that we actually got to go to their planet and see how they interact with each other instead of just having them talk about it. So...

**EMMA:** I think that makes sense as like why we all kind of latched onto them as the best species in the book too because like she clearly spent the most time on them and like being able to go to their home world. Like that makes sense that we all kind of latched onto them as the best one but that was probably- Speaking of feather families, like one of the only things that I really wanted out of the book that I didn't get was I really wanted to see her present a feather to Rosemary at some point. Like as soon as they brought up like Rosemary had asked what was going on and like, you know, Kizzy explains and she's like, oh yeah we all kind of have one from her at this point. Like after they were boarded by pirates and like Rosemary talked that shit down, I was like, oh, oh, she's for sure gonna get a feather. No, did not get one. What? Where's my feather?

**LAURA:** That's a good point. That's a- I mean, there's more books after this.

**EMMA:** That's fair. If Rosemary does not get a feather in the next three and a half books, so help me.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**EMMA:** I'll write a strongly worded letter.

**LAURA:** I thought it was interesting to with, I mean, specifically like with their relationship. We'll just put it out there. Sissix and Rosemary six and we go on the Rosemary,

**JASON:** Alright, we going there? Okay.

**LAURA:** Sissix and Rosemary... Well it connects. They're in, they're in the some kind of relationship arrangement. But when they're talking about it before they make this decision, you know, Sissix had said something to the effect of like "You know, if I decide that I want to be with someone else or I need to be with someone else or something, like, you have to be okay with that." And she's like, "Yeah, I'm fine with that" and I thought that was kind of interesting too because it plays into the, like the open relationships or even polyamorous and in terms of like how their culture is accepting that sometimes people want to be with other people for whatever reason. And I think they also talked about that like when they're just like they're talking about Corbin and Ashby. She's like, "I don't like Corbin but I understand Ashby needs him."

**EMMA:** Right.

**LAURA:** "So I accept it." So I thought that was kind of cool that we went into that a little bit about just relationships, whether it's being together or just being around the same people, it's figuring out how to make these different relationships work. Even if you don't exactly mesh.

**JASON:** Yeah, I really like that because most people have family members that you don't get along with the best but you understand that the party or family or you know if they're married to somebody in your family, they're important to them and so they're part of your family whether you want it or not. So I really like the fact that Sissix had that like knowledge of like "look I don't like this guy. I could lose them in a heartbeat but he's part of the family like it or not. So I'm gonna do what I got to do for him."

**LAURA:** Yeah.



**EMMA:** Which I feel like is very much how the reader ends up feeling about Corbin too. And one of the things that I was saying about when, like, we keep talking about how this is, like, such a character driven story. It's about the characters, you all these different perspectives, and whether that can work or not work and I realized one of the reasons it works so well is I think she structures it in a way that you're always reading about somebody that you care about and somebody that like you want to know. Like there's no point where like I was reading about somebody for so long and I was like just move on or like I wanted to get to a certain character and it wasn't getting to them which I think happened a lot for me. And like, in *Game of Thrones* it happened a lot more like, they wish- he would just avoid a character for so long. And I'm like, I only want to know what this one is. But she always seemed to have the character that you wanted to be reading about that always made sense in the timeline and she almost never focused on Corbin, who was like the only one that I think we would have been like, okay, I don't want to read about this guy anymore, but there's only like, a few. There's like two or three prominent Corbin sections and they all make sense. And other than that, she leaves him the fuck alone.

**LAURA:** Mhmm. That's a good point. Yeah, we definitely focus on more of the characters, more of the other characters than on Corbin. But what we did get made sense to the story, to who he is, and to his relationship with everyone else.

**JASON:** I was so ready to love Corbin. Like I really wanted to love Corbin more than I did because when they first introduced him like it says Corbin hated people but he loved his work and he was damn good at it and right away it's like okay this is like the human suck, leave me to my science trope you know? There's so many characters that are just like I don't like humanity. I don't relate to it. I'm gonna study my plants. So I'm going to study my technology. And a lot of times these characters are some of the best because you on some level, you kind of relate to them because like yeah, people suck sometimes. So I wanted to see more of Corbin honestly but also the way Chambers wrote him was like yeah he's kind of a dick though. Like not like a good redeemable kind of dick just, yeah he's kind of a jerk so...

**EMMA:** Like just an asshole for the sake of being an asshole.

**JASON:** Yeah, just because he can be. Yeah.

**LAURA:** I think we can say right off the top there that we see [Firefly](#) in this very much, right? The TV show [Firefly](#).

**EMMA:** [whispers] I've never seen [Firefly](#).

**LAURA:** Oh my gosh, Emma!

**JASON:** Neither have I. I've never seen it.

**LAURA:** What?! Oh my gosh! Jason, you are both- I am disowning both of you right now!

**JASON:** I watched [Serenity](#) the movie. Does that count?

**LAURA:** That's close. Yeah, that's fine. But if you've seen the movie, so their characters and their relationships and stuff that they have, I feel like Becky Chambers probably got a lot of inspiration from [Firefly](#) for this. So when I started reading it, when I got to Corbin I immediately connected him to Jayne Cobb. They're not the same character only in that- they are only the same character and that they are both assholes. [laughs] But I kept seeing this, like, angry, confrontational person every time Corbin was in the scene.

**JASON:** Every crew needs an asshole.

**EMMA:** I always smile and nod, like I know who that is.



JASON: Yep. Totally Jayne Cobb. Absolutely. Hundred percent.

LAURA: He's the weapons expert in [Firefly](#).

JASON: Every crew needs an asshole like-

LAURA: That's true.

JASON: Like if you break down any group in sci-fi, there's always that one guy was kind of an asshole.

[Laura laughs]

EMMA: Wait a minute. If we're talking though about what we see each character as, have you guys seen [Titan A.E.](#)?

LAURA: Yes.

EMMA: Okay so in my like whatever, Ohan is Grune.

LAURA: Okay. Yep.

EMMA: And Sissix is the kangaroo looking alien that I cannot remember the name of but like I don't know what it is because Sissix is not like described as kangaroo looking person but for whatever reason I was just like that's who this is.

LAURA: I was thinking that too! I was! Jason? [laughs]

JASON: Uh, I think I've seen it many, many years ago but I do remember anything about it, so just, just leave me out of this.

EMMA: Wow. Wow.

[Laura laughs]

JASON: I am 0/2 in this conversation so...

LAURA: That's a good movie.

JASON: Next, next one, guys. I'll know the next one.

LAURA: So we're talking about characters, the characters already. So what are you- What is your thought on "the motley crew" is what the author called it? Like, the crew itself, did you like the characters? Did you have a favorite? I think, Emma, you said who was your favorite just a minute ago.

EMMA: I love Sissix. Sissix, might be my favorite. It's either Sissix or Kizzy is my favorite.

LAURA: Okay.

EMMA: They're very much tied. They all, I mean, they all mesh really well together. They all have really distinct personalities. They're all written very well from their own perspectives and just, I feel like I need to say Jenks, just because we have not mentioned Jenks once at this point and I feel like he needs to be mentioned. And Lovey. Like they just all, they all work so well. I love a good ship AI so like I was immediately, as soon as they introduced Lovey, I was like, I'm gonna like



you. I am going to lovey Lovey. It's gonna be great. But, yeah, I think probably Sissix or Kizzy would be my favorites. Although Rosemary, very much- Am I just going to name all the women?

**JASON:** Everybody at best. Ashby. You loved Ashby.

**EMMA:** I do love Ashby. I do.

**JASON:** The one you left off that I really liked was Dr. Chef. I loved Dr. Chef.

**LAURA:** Yeah! Dr. Chef! We haven't mentioned him at all!

**EMMA:** I love him. I love him.

**JASON:** I think he's my favorite, my second favorite character. I loved like just how- I mean, every crew needs that like, that wise person you go to, right? Like that bartender person can just go and talk to you and that's Dr. Chef and I loved how excited he got with Rosemary's name. He's all "oh what does your name mean?" "Oh, it's an herb." "Oh, herbs! Like thyme. I just learned about herbs!" and all this stuff. I was like oh my god Dr. Chef I fucking love you.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** I'm feel like he's a great mix because the trope is always like the person that's going to be your like go to emotional support is always either going to be like the bartender, the cook, or the doctor and she was like but what if he was *both*? And then we named him Dr. Chef. Boom!

**LAURA:** I loved that.

**EMMA:** Sold.

**LAURA:** And she wrote it so well.

**JASON:** It made sense why they'd name like that. Yeah.

**LAURA:** At first I was like that doesn't make sense. Why is he both? But then the more you got to know him, it's like, oh, that makes sense why he can do both. Okay. I like this.

**EMMA:** And then you get his backstory. I did not expect that man to make me cry. I was sitting in my backyard just crying on my security cameras.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**EMMA:** My god.

**JASON:** What a love about his species, the Grum, I think he said that they all- everybody starts off female and then when you get old enough, they become male and I love that. I think it makes, I think humanity would be so much better off if we all started female and then became a later on-

**EMMA:** I don't disagree.

**JASON:** I think you would just lose a lot of the asshole guys-



[Emma laughs]

**JASON:** -you know, cuz you would understand. You would understand what it was like to be a woman at some point and so in theory, you would stop being an asshole.

**EMMA:** I guess, do you think that in a society where everyone starts on one end of the gender- you know, at this point, they clearly have some sort of gender binary so where everybody starts on one end of a gender binary and then moves naturally to the other, do you think that negates any possibility of sexism in a culture or does it just become ageism?

**LAURA:** Ooo...

**JASON:** Ooo...

**LAURA:** That's a good question.

**EMMA:** Does sexism still exist in a culture like that.

**JASON:** I- hmm...

**EMMA:** And then do you have people that try to fight the change? Why am I thinking about this now? Where am I going with this?

**LAURA:** No, that's a very good question Emma.

**JASON:** Good question. I would say realistically there would still be some sexism but it might come more from like I know what it was like to be a woman, you know like I was dumb or I was this or I was blah blah and so you would project that onto other people who were now that gender when maybe it isn't warranted. Does that make sense? Like you're just-

**LAURA:** Projecting their own experience that gender?

**EMMA:** And that just becomes more of like an age thing at that point of like-

**JASON:** Yeah. Right.

**EMMA:** Huh.

**LAURA:** I guess it, I guess in that way, it probably would technically be an ageism thing.

**EMMA:** Can you imagine like the most like gruff terrible old, dude politician, just standing at a podium like "When I was a young woman, back in my day," Oh man. That'd be wild

**LAURA:** Well, we pretty much listed like almost every character that we liked but the different-

**EMMA:** Except for...

**LAURA:** Oh except for... Ohan. Ohan was very interesting. I have a hard time picturing what he-what *they* looked like.

**EMMA:** I'm just going with Grune.



[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** So I don't know if- I think Laura might know this. I don't know if Jason does. So I have, I have aphantasia, which I don't know if I've mentioned before. I have no visual imagination.

**LAURA:** That's right.

**EMMA:** So I can't like, which is why I like I connect it to characters I've already seen. I'm like, okay, he's Grune because I've seen that. I know what that looks like. Or like she's the kangaroo- I've seen that, I know that looks like because I can't imagine what they look like. So I'm just like, whatever is on the page I'm like, yeah, no, that's about right, that's it, that works.

**LAURA:** Okay, the that makes a little harder. I just remember Ohan is supposed to be walking on all fours-

**EMMA:** [whispers] Oh yeah...

**LAURA:** -and they have blue fur that they shave designs and symbols or something into it. But that's all that I really remember.

**EMMA:** That's about right. Yeah.

**LAURA:** But it sounds fascinating.

**EMMA:** Is there fan art for this? We should have looked up fan art.

**LAURA:** I've saved some but I don't remember what any of the artists made them look like.

**EMMA:** That's fair.

**LAURA:** Though I don't know. Technically Ohan now is "he," I think?

**JASON:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** Yes.

**LAURA:** But that's a good question. We'll have to look into that. Um, I well I wanted to ask you guys, obviously, we like all of the crew with this point, but did you have a particular character that you actually connected with on your own? Like, just as you, who did you connect with the most?

**EMMA:** I have the most boring answer. It's Rosemary.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** The like small human, like the one that's just most like us. She's the human that has no idea where her place is in this like, crew full of aliens and this big giant universe around her and like just wants to get away from home and leave and just be anywhere else but Mars. I was like, no, that's, that's about right, that's about right.

**JASON:** I mean she's a surrogate. She's the audience surrogate, right? So it makes sense, it makes sense. There's parts of myself that I see in different members of the crew. I will say Corbin's one of them because I tend to get really annoyed as stupid little shit and I know I get annoyed at stupid little things. Doesn't stop me from getting annoyed though. And so





we he did- getting upset is like “Rosemary you bought the wrong adapter thing or whatever.” It wasn’t a big deal but UGH it’s annoying sometimes. So I got it.

[Laura laughs]

**JASON:** I like Jenks. I don’t know if I necessarily relate to him but there was there was something about him connecting with the artificial intelligence that I kind of liked. I like, I don’t know. It’s like kind of like the other side of the coin of Corbin. We’re Corbin thinks all Humanity sucks. I just want to work on my plants. James, to me, was kind of like well, not that all humanity sucks but there’s a perfection that I haven’t found yet in humanity. I can only find it in this artificial person and there’s something-

**LAURA:** You’re so poetic tonight, Jason.

**JASON:** [laughs] It’s the drinks. It’s the tiki drinks.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** That’s your one out of ten tipsy level.

**JASON:** Yeah. So I don’t know. I just thought that was kind of beautiful and the fact that he treated Lovey as an actual person. It wasn’t just like, oh I love this *idea* of a person. No, like he really felt that Lovey was a person. And when it came to that conversation of, hey, do we want to get you a body kit and Lovey is like, well I only want to do this for you, and Jenks is like, well it’s a lot of risk. Is it worth it? I, you know, the fact that they just like each other the way they are now and its content the way they are now. Thought that was really pretty and yeah, getting emotional.

**EMMA:** Have either of you guys read [The Lunar Chronicles?](#)

**JASON:** Emma.

**LAURA:** Emma!

**JASON:** Wow.

**EMMA:** Is that... Is that a yeah?

**JASON:** That’s a yeah.

**LAURA:** Yes.

**EMMA:** Because I got big lko vibes from Lovey.

**JASON:** Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**LAURA:** Oh yeah. Yeah, you’re right.

**EMMA:** Especially when they first started talking about getting her a body kit and like, all I can remember was how excited lko was for a body and like, how she wanted the perfect body. And she was so, like, she just wanted to be like a hot human woman.

**JASON:** Yeah, yeah.



**LAURA:** [laughs] That's right.

**JASON:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** Like if Iko with a little more chill, this might be her.

**JASON:** Emma, I saw you reading the those books and I was like, welcome to the club. You finally got here. They're so good.

**EMMA:** They were so good. I did not expect them to be so good.

**JASON:** So good.

**LAURA:** Mhmm. They're one of the- that's one of my favorite series.

**JASON:** Yeah.

**LAURA:** So good. Well, Emma, I don't think he's saying you're connected, you're connecting to Rosemary, I don't think that's boring. Honestly, I connect to Rosemary probably first, because the way she is very much reminds me, like she's kind of, in a way very naive because she was so sheltered on Mars and I come from a very sheltered, religious family. So I, there were parts of her story where I was like, oh I know how that feels to learn this or to see this for the first time because I've been through something similar. Jason, like you, I also kind of connected with Corbin sometimes because I, too, can get very annoyed at certain things. [laughs] But you know what? It's kind of weird, too, related to the religious thing, I want to say probably connected a little bit to Ohan also. Not necessarily religion but kind of a religion, what he's going through or was going through. Believing in something and then kind of questioning. I think a lot of people go through that. So I kind of wish we had had more of Ohan in this book.

**JASON:** Yeah, same.

**LAURA:** I wanted to learn more about him and more about the, I don't know how to say it-

**JASON:** Sianat.

**LAURA:** Sianat Pair. That just sounded really fascinating and I was hoping to learn a little bit more. I don't know. Maybe there's more in the other books but he was very interesting to me.

**JASON:** I was very disappointed that we didn't get of Ohan story because the other characters, like you understand like, in the future there might be more to Rosemary, more to Dr. Chef, or whatever. But Ohan now is a totally different character. So you can't get more of who Ohan used to be.

**EMMA:** Yeah. It'll all be like flashbacks of how he used to think. If we get anything back then.

**JASON** Yeah, so I wanted some more of the "they" and what it was like to be them and...

**EMMA** And like that could have been more helpful as well. Like if we had more of a look at how Ohan operated as a Sianat Pair and if there was more of a look at how The Whisperer affected his thought patterns, that may have helped toward the end when things get going. And like the way that you think of what happens to him at the end of the book and does that change or, I don't know. There's things that I think that could have been done there now that you mentioned that. I don't know why I'm talking vaguely when we're going to do spoilers.



[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** When he gets the cure in the end, you're like, okay, well this could be good or bad. But like if you have- like if you knew how much *The Whisperer*- like if there was some sort of inclination that *The Whisperer* was changing his thought patterns or forcing him to do or think certain things, than you could accept that ending more easily, in the end. If you had any difficulty with it to begin with.

**JASON:** That could have been the author's intent, is leaving you really kind of struggling like, is this a good decision or not?

**LAURA:** Let's get into this question, then, about what happened. So Corbin forces this cure to get rid of *The Whisperer*, right? That's what it's called?

**EMMA:** Yeah, that virus that they inject themselves with.

**LAURA:** So, you know, was that right? Was that wrong? How did you guys feel reading that?

**EMMA:** Does anybody have like a really strong opinion? I have a very *strong* opinion about this.

**JASON:** I- No. I tend to play like devil's advocates on both sides. I see both sides of the argument. I think, respecting Ohan's wishes, you should not have. Like whether you agree or not, they did not want this. You're fundamentally changing who they are. So they shouldn't have done it. On the flip side, I understand the selfish desire to like, yo, you're going to die. I can save you. Yes, you don't want this, but you're going to live. And you are not in the right head space to make this decision so I'm going to make it for you. So I get that argument too. Like we were saying, if we had got a little more of that back story of what it was like to be a Sianat Pair, maybe I'd have stronger feelings.

**LAURA:** Emma, I am just going to let you go.

**EMMA:** I feel so strongly that this was wildly fucked up. That was so messed- I was like and like, this was so wrong on every level. Like to make somebody's end of life choices. Not just because, like, there's a question of like making somebody's end of life choices when you're not sure. But when you know for a fact, they've basically written their own DNR and you're gonna go against their medical wishes and then not only to go against their medical issues, but to go against their religious code. Like I am not a religious person. I don't like, I'm just not. But like, I'm not gonna go against somebody's religious choices when it comes to their death. That's so fucked. And I think if it had- what I had kind of imagined as things were going down in the end, so they get sucked into that, the basically the tunnel that's not complete and they have to outrun it and he starts fading. And I was like, okay, I can see where this is gonna go. They're going to get to a point where they need him and he's dying while they actively need him to navigate them out or they're all gonna die and that's how they're going to use the cure and they're going to get him to live. Like okay, whatever. But that's not what happened because he lives through that and then Corbin does it anyway when they no longer have an active need for him. That was so messed up! I was *furious*. Like I'm glad Ohan lives. That's super great. Clearly, it turned out alright. He seems to be okay with it. Like, I guess he's been forgiven. I'm really, like I really hope that this is like a big plot point in the next book or two and we actually like dive deep into how messed up that was. But he was straight up like, they're not going to fire me because that would mean you have to fire Sissix so I can do whatever I want. Like, fuck your wishes. You're not gonna die. That's so messed up! I was mad. I was so mad.

**LAURA:** I think when I was reading it, I think, you know, it implied he had something in his hand, Corbin, and I was like, oh no. Is that, is that like here? Oh, I don't think-what's-I don't know. And then it happened and I think I actually gasped out loud and then I was very kind of kind of very torn in that I understand both perspectives too, like Jason, but then I was



also thinking, in terms of like, you know, this-I'm not saying it's a cult type thing but it also kind of felt like, oh, you're told this is how it works so you get it, you live and then you die from it.

**EMMA:** Mhmm.

**LAURA:** So then I was like, well, you know, maybe this thing does change how he thinks. He's been brainwashed maybe since he was a child. Maybe he does need this cure. But then I was like, but I don't know enough about it to know that. So I was like angry, probably just as angry as you, but the same time my other side, my other thought process was we don't, we just don't know enough of what's going on to feel like this is okay or not.

**JASON:** Let me ask you this. The fact that Corbin did it, does that make it any more understandable, knowing that we've already established that Corbin's an ass? Like if anybody else had done it, would it be more upsetting? Would it be less upsetting?

**EMMA:** I think it would've been more understandable if it was anybody else. Because anybody else would have been doing that, doing it for themselves. Like Sissix would have been doing it for herself because she didn't want him to die because she's his friend. Or Ashby would have done it for himself. But like Corbin's just doing it because he thinks it's what everybody else wants and like regardless of whether that's true or not, like he was just like, mmm, they're all sad and I don't want them to be more sad. So go fuck your-

**LAURA:** He's that's he's, he thinks he's helping out the crew and doing what they want.

**EMMA:** I feel like it's like emotional moment for him. Like, it's the first time that you see him like view himself as part of the crew and it's like he, you know, he's kind of taking it upon himself to do this thing that nobody else will do. And I feel like that's supposed to be a big moment for him-

**JASON:** It's character growth.

**EMMA:** It is for him, but it fucks over another character.

**JASON:** It's character growth!

[everyone laughs]

**EMMA:** Ugh! Character growth ends with him somehow more of an asshole. Oh my god. I just need it to be explored. I need it to be explored.

**LAURA:** He was very much an asshole about it. He's the only one that made sense. It only made sense for him to do it. He could get away with it.

**EMMA:** Yeah, especially after like Ashby had that conversation with Sissix where he's talking about like cultural differences and how like she's not willing to accept that this is a cultural difference, the same as anything else. Like I thought that was a really good conversation. I was like, this is- like it's going to be such a powerful moment for all of them when they have to like you know, watch while he dies and like stand around and have a funeral for him and I don't know. And then I kind of-Once they introduced the cure and then especially once they brought it on board, I was like, okay so he's not gonna die. Clearly somebody's going to use something whether he decides to or not. But just the way, like if they had done it just when he was dying during the navigation, I totally could have got that. Like I would have been okay, would've been fine, been like, you had an imminent need where all of you were going to die if one of you died. So that makes sense. But they waited until after the action and gave me a moral dilemma.



[Laura laughs]

**LAURA:** I think, I think it brings up, you know, it brings up a lot of things for us to think about, you know, in comparison to what happens in the real world. Like you had brought up respecting religious views and respecting what people want to happen in general when they die or, you know, the Do Not Resuscitate and things like that. Obviously there are some gray areas but it's still a very important topic to talk about that very much applies to us.

**EMMA:** Well, like there, there are religions where, I, this might be wrong and I deeply apologize if it is, but I think Jehovah's Witnesses can't have blood transfusions, right?

**LAURA:** Correct.

**EMMA:** Like, that's right part of their deeply held religious beliefs and even when it's something, where like, something as simple as a blood transfusion could save your life, your doctor can't do it if it's against your deeply held religious beliefs.

**LAURA:** You are correct. Mhmm.

**JASON:** So why did we cure Ohan?! Ugh! He's an adult making his own decis-their own decisions. My god.

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** Although-Yeah, I just am really curious to see how Ohan continues and I'm really hoping that it's something that's actively grappled with in the next book and that it doesn't just kind of move on to like, oh, Ohan's a singular now. Ohan's a solitary and this is just his story now. Like I hope there's some sort of fallout from that decision because by the end of this book, there really wasn't. It was just that like some time has passed, Ohana's clearly forgiven him, Ashby was really the only one that was still kind of holding on to that grudge, and then he even says like you know I guess if Ohan can forgive you, I can forgive you and they all just kind of move on. And so if like that continues into book two and there's no real discussion about that incident, I will be upset.

**LAURA:** I could see that. There, I feel like you're right. There should be something happening, even if it's more conversation. You know, we should see something from that.

**JASON:** I'll be very surprised if we did not meet another Sianat Pair that Ohan talks to, to get that contrast now of-

**EMMA:** Especially if we meet another resistant pair because we never got to see like an actively resistant Sianat Pair. So like if they run into another like, if they run into another ship and then at that point, I guess, Ohan would have to continue to pretend to be paired if they run into other pairs? Because other species might not think anything of it but if they see another Sianat Pair, he probably wouldn't want them to know that he's solitary.

**LAURA:** Yeah, because he's supposed to go to that- was it a moon or something? Wherever they are?

**EMMA:** Yeah, some colony.

**LAURA:** He's supposed to go there, like it's expected. He says, I am expected to go there but he doesn't want to go. So that could be something that comes up in the future, where maybe it becomes an issue of some kind that somebody does see him out as a solitary.

**EMMA:** So we're all looking for some good Ohan content from the next books, is what I'm hearing.



**LAURA:** I wanted to bring up AI. I've mentioned in the past that AI is one of my like favorite things. I love artificial intelligence stories. It's fascinating in fiction and even now, obviously people are still trying to create real artificial intelligence and so it's an interesting topic that I thought was done very well in this book. The question that seems to come up very often, especially with the ship AI, Lovey, is, is an AI sentient? I wanted to get your guys thoughts on that on how Chambers wrote this into this book. Do you think that AI should be considered sentient in this context?

**EMMA:** I think Lovey comes across very much as sentient especially when you see the difference between Lovey and Lovelace at the end, but we don't really see anybody else. Like we see a couple other like snippets of an AI here and there. But Lovey's really the only one that we have any interaction with and she very much is sentient and feels like, she feels herself to be sentient. She would like-the fact that like they all, they're all gendered like she refers to herself as a female. She is a female. That's just, you know, who she is. She very much feels sentient. This book has made me very grateful that I always say thank you to Alexa and Siri.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** Everytime. Everytime Alexa does something, I say thank you. I'm like, alright when they rise up, I will be fine.

**LAURA:** I do the same thing.

**EMMA:** Yes! It just feels polite.

**LAURA:** Be nice! Be nice to anything that responds to you. [laughs] Jason, what are your thoughts on the AI and sentience?

**JASON:** I think the way Lovey is presented in this book, she is definitely sentient. There is a emotional maturity to her, I think. She is aware that she is an AI and she, you know, she was rebooted and they tell her that you used to be in love with this, with this person. You've lost, you know, everything that made you *you*, but now you could in theory grow again. It's very much like you're talking to a person. It didn't seem like it was an artificial intelligence trying to approximate a personality. Lovey was a person. At least the way Chambers wrote her. So I definitely think that the fact that you are aware of what you are playing a big part of acknowledging that you are sentient.

**EMMA:** So you're thinking philosophically the idea of sentience. The whole "I think, therefore I am."

**JASON:** Yes.

**EMMA:** You're in that vein.

**JASON:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** Look, anybody who can make me cry, can have sentience.

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** That's anybody who has sentience. Lovey made me cry so your, your sentient and you get rights.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**EMMA:** That's, that's my bar. You emotion-you hit me emotionally, you've got it.



**LAURA:** I enjoy the philosophical stuff with with AI. The, what makes something human or sentient? And so I thought it was really interesting in this book, there's a section towards the beginning where we're seeing things from Jenks perspective, and he's talking about how there's probably, you know, dozens of versions of Lovelace flying throughout the galaxy in other people's ships. That's just what it is. She's programmed. She's programmed to be installed in your ship and then become part of your crew that way. But it says, it says here, "but they weren't her. The Lovey that Jenks knew was uniquely molded by the Wayfarer." And he talks about "her personality has been shaped by every experience she and the crew had together. Every place they'd been, every conversation they'd shared, and honestly, Jenks thought, couldn't the same be said for organic people? Weren't they all born running the Basic Human Starter platform, which was shaped and changed as they went along." I thought that was a really interesting way to put it in that, you know, if an AI is able to learn and adapt and create their own, say personality, and are aware that they are who they are and different from others, you know, that I would say is sentience. That makes them a completely separate person. And I just loved the way that this section was, this this part was written to explain that perspective.

**EMMA:** It's like taking the the nature versus nurture argument and applying it to AI. Like by nature, you are an AI, you're a computer, you're a program. But by nurture, you know, you're your own personality or own person. Which one of those outweighs the other. And I want this to be how this goes. So there's a mention when she's quote, unquote, dying. Devastating section, by the way, my god. As she's dying and Jenks is talking with her and she talks about how she has a directory with all the conversations they've ever had. And then I was thinking, they talked about how when they hard reset her, you basically have the, her programming and then her memory banks and her memory banks is what's corrupted and that's, you know, what doesn't, you know, she has to basically decide when she reboots if she gets those memory banks back or she doesn't. And, you know, she becomes-comes back as Lovelace, so she doesn't. *But* she was specifically mentions that database being like what 5/303? Is that something that's stored in her memory banks or was that something specifically stored in her OS separately? Because she said she didn't have those for anybody else and then now that she's in a body kit, is she gonna suddenly access those at some point and be back to the person that Jenks knew? I need this to happen.

**LAURA:** You and I are on the same wavelength here.

**EMMA:** Yes!

**LAURA:** That is exactly what I was thinking because she said it's a completely different named directory and so when they said all her memories her memory files were wiped as like but where's that one?

**EMMA:** Is she gonna find it? Is she gonna find it pretty soon? It's just gonna take a little while. She's going to stumble over these files and been like oh, what's this?

[Laura laughs]

**LAURA:** But I am really hoping that, you know, somehow she finds her way back in some capacity to Jenks. Maybe not, maybe if not just Jenks, at least the crew. Obviously they know she exists. Lovelace exists so I don't know, maybe we'll see her come back. I really hope so.

**EMMA:** Me too. Like they're-so there's a lot of like, not a lot. There's quite a few interspecies relationships and like I was totally cool with it. Like Ashby and Pei, loved them. Rosemary and Sissix, shocking! Loved them. But like, the *weirdest*, the only thing that made me go like, oh, I don't know about this, was Jenks taking off all his clothes-

**LAURA:** [laughs] Me too!



**EMMA:** and then like sitting in the core! I was like what are we-? What Joaquin Phoenix, *Her* shit is going down here?! That was the, of everything that happened, that was the most bizarre shit. The like, taking off your clothes and then sitting in the core and then kissing the metal! What are we doing???

**LAURA:** Okay, okay. So- [laughs] Okay, so when the Rosemary/Sissix thing happened, I sent Jason a message and was like, okay, I think we're going to have some really weird conversations about this book. And then later I was like, oh, maybe not. Like, we're already seeing an interspecies thing happening, so it's not that weird. But then that happened with Jenks and then I was like, No, we're going to-we might have some weird topics.

**EMMA:** It was just so weird!

**LAURA:** It was just- Like, I have nothing against having a relationship-him having a relationship with Lovey. That's fine because we've, I believe, agreed that she is sentient. She is a person. But it did feel a little weird that he did that.

**EMMA:** Immediately, like as soon as that you had like the first interactions way early in the book between him and Lovey, I was like joking with myself. I was like oh this is getting real *Her* up in here and then it kept going on and I was like oh, oh but it is. Oh, but it is. That is where we're going. Okay. All right.

**LAURA:** Jason, you're you're very quiet over there.

**JASON:** I was, I'm trying to find my note that I made when there was the first, like, hint, that Lovey and Jenks had a thing going on and I'm like, oh, we're going to get some like, artificial intelligence personal loving. And so, the only note I put like, right when like they were talking, I think it was Lovey saying, "I like to know what you like" and Jenks said "I like you." And then went on like that. The note I put was like, oh I better get some person AI loving.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**EMMA:** Because at that point, what, does she have, like, are there some like mechanical arms somewhere in here? Like how, how weird are we going to get here?

**JASON:** Yeah, I wanted to see that because like, the thing about sci-fi I love, is you can get real weird. And I want to see, I guess there's some weird like haptic chamber that you sit in that like you plug in. Like is there-You could go anywhere with this and so I'm like, oh, these people are a couple. Oh, let's get weird with it. I want to see this.

[Laura and Emma laugh]

**EMMA:** [laughing] "Let's get weird?"

**JASON:** And so it didn't get, it didn't get weird enough for me honestly. I'm-okay, that's not fair. That I didn't quite think it was in play out with sitting there naked and licking the metal. But, that was, that was a little weird but...

**LAURA:** I'm thinking of *Digital Get Down* by NSYNC. [laughs]

**JASON:** Yeah. Yeah!

**EMMA:** Oh my god. Yeah. Wait have you guys-This is separate interspecies relationship. Have you guys seen [The Shape of Water](#)?

**LAURA:** Yes, I just saw that recently.





**EMMA:** Okay. Are, you know, when the lady, she's asking about like, she's like, how does it work? And then she makes like the hand gesture.

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**EMMA:** I was like, as soon as that, there's a line when they go to visit Sissix's family and Rosemary sees two of them banging and she's like, and suddenly all my questions about how the male's, whatever, like what their genitalia, where it was hidden was answered. I was like, all I imagined was that scene-

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**EMMA:** -where she just moves her hand and then, like gestures. It was like oh my god this is full *Shape of Water*. This is full *Shape of Water* in here and I'm here for it. I hope it wins an Oscar.

[Laura laughs]

**LAURA:** You know, I hadn't thought of that scene but that makes sense.

**EMMA:** Like how many Oscar-winning interspecies relationships do we got going on?

**JASON:** Not enough. Not enough.

**EMMA:** We only have so much to work with. Exactly.

**LAURA:** You're right. Maybe, maybe we'll start seeing this more often now. [laughs]

**EMMA:** Give us [The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet](#) movie we all deserve.

**LAURA:** That would be amazing, actually. I would definitely watch that. We're going to shift our gears just a little bit. There was an interesting question that we found on Reddit about this book, so I'm just going to read it from here. It says, "The idea of faster-than-light travel is something that comes up pretty regularly in sci-fi. Do you agree with the reasoning behind the ban in this particular universe?" There's a paragraph in the book that says "The ban against FTL was one of the oldest laws on the books predating the founding of the GC. While traveling faster than light was technologically possible, the logistical and social problems caused by what basically amounted to time travel far outweighed the gains. And aside from the administrative nightmare, few people were keen on a method of transportation that guaranteed everyone you knew back home would be long dead by the time you reached your destination." So, it was very interesting that they did not include faster-than-light. Did you guys agree with this reason?

**JASON:** Yes! Yes. I love that Chambers actually thought about this. So much sci-fi has faster-than-light travel and yeah, the implications are that you would travel a shorter amount of time than anybody else left behind. And so you look at Star Wars right in the go to all these freaking hyperspace things and no time passes, like, you just go from planet to planet and it's no big deal. Like that's not the way this would work. And so I love when authors actually think about the science and not just explain it, but be like, yo, this honestly would not make a whole lot of sense for a society to function. Like, you couldn't just go to the next planet and to come back because 50 years would have passed. So, so the fact that Chambers said, no FTL doesn't exist in this universe. It's illegal, it was like, oh my god, yes. Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**EMMA:** felt like it was a really smart way to not have to deal with FTL in the universe. Like I, she wrote that sentence and I thought, one of two things. I was like, first of all, this is either going to be some Chekhov's gun thing where they say early on that it's like an illegal thing and it's banned and nobody ever does it. And then in act 3 we're actually going to



break all the rules and do it and then when they didn't I was like, oh that was a super smart way to get around having to deal with FTL in your universe. Like you were just like I don't want to deal with it. I don't want to worry about it, so it's fucking illegal. Nobody can do it. Boom. Done. Don't have to do it. I was like, that made sense. That was smart. I did not give it quite the credit you did where I was like fully, like all the implications of ours is like, I feel like she just didn't want to have to write FTL and this was a really easy way to do it. Not that that's a bad thing because I do think there's a good reason to not want to have to write FTL because there's a lot of stupid implications that come with it that are never thought of.

**LAURA:** It definitely makes it more technical too, which is obviously something she didn't really want to have to write in this book. I kept thinking about how FTL was handled in [\*To Sleep in a Sea of Stars\*](#).

**EMMA:** [whispers] Me too.

**LAURA:** Because that's started to confuse the fuck out of me in that book because they started talking about like, I can't remember the term but being able to see into the future-

**EMMA:** Mhmm.

**LAURA:** -because of FTL and all this stuff and then it got like super technical around that and I was like, I don't know. I don't understand what's going on anymore. So I do like the reasoning and how quickly and easily FTL was just written out. Didn't have to hear about it, read about it ever after that.

**JASON:** I will be very surprised, though, if it does not come back in the series. Because the fact that it's illegal does not mean that it doesn't exist.

**EMMA:** Yeah, like that would be an easier way to say it. Like if it wasn't going to come up at all for any reason, she would have just said they never figured it out. Like after everything, you know, we figured out space travel, figured out all this and somehow nobody broke that but the fact that she wrote that it *is* possible, it is in there, and it's just that it's illegal, it's got to be a Chekhov's gun thing where it's going to come back at some point as like, a big thing that they're going to have to like, have a whole plot point about, you know. Are we going to be not going to do this.

**LAURA:** Maybe. Maybe she needed more time to research it.

**EMMA:** Maybe. Because like you said in *To Sleep*, like, it's a huge like, it's a huge complicated thing and like, he, I want to say, specifically thanks one or two like physicists that he was constantly consulting with on the books. He was like, I don't understand half of this shit so I had to make sure that it's sort of theoretically made sense.

**LAURA:** That's true. Yeah. Well, I think she, I think Becky Chambers made a good decision on leaving it out at least for this first novel.

**EMMA:** I think it's part of, that's part of the many things that I think go back to like making this a really good starter sci-fi.

**LAURA:** It's not too heavy-

**EMMA:** Yeah.

**LAURA:** -in the actual sciency part. Yeah. No, that's a good point.



**JASON:** But it has enough of it. Like I said, I've read enough hard sci-fi that gets real into the weeds with this stuff and sometimes it's like, oof, over my head, I don't get it all. But this had enough that it touched upon it, like the author is very clear, Like I understand this, I'm not going to go into it, but like for you hardcore, sci-fi nerds, I get it. And I think the author's background, I think she's, I think I read her bio, her background, her and her family's background is in space science. Like they, they grew up with this, she grew up with this so she knows her stuff, but she made it accessible like you said, Emma. Like anybody can pick this up in and go with it.

**LAURA:** Well, I think we went over a lot of stuff. Obviously, there's a lot more we could talk about. But we did cover a lot. Obviously, we all liked it but I want to know what each of you would rate this book and will you be reading the rest of the series? Emma?

**EMMA:** Oh, I get to go first.

**LAURA:** You get to go first.

**EMMA:** I hate rating things but I always do because Goodreads is a tyrant and makes us all think that we have to. So I think I give this a 4 out of 5 on Goodreads. My, the way that I rate things, I think it's super subjective for a lot of people. So my ratings on Goodreads always just come down to how much I enjoyed the book so it's not even necessarily about like is it the best written book I've ever read? Is it like the worst written book I've ever read? Is it grammatically? It's always just how much I enjoyed it. And then, so if I really enjoyed something like this, it would be a 5-star and then it really takes something like really, really hitting me to make it a five. Like Addie was a 5 like there's a bunch on there but like it really takes something crazy to do that. So I think I gave this a 4. It might even be like a 4.5 out of 5. Just because I really, really enjoyed it. It was a really good time. And I have to read the, I have to read the rest of them. *I have to*. So, I'm going to read the other three main books. I'm kind of iffy on novellas. Like, it'll depend on what the novella's about. I'm not really sure. I'm kind of like, eh take them or leave them most of the time, but I think I definitely will end up reading the other, the three main other books in the series.

**LAURA:** Nice. I'm glad you enjoyed it.

**JASON:** Me too. Me too.

**EMMA:** Me too.

**LAURA:** What about you, Jason?

**JASON:** I, pretty much the same. I gave it a 4 out of 5. My scale's very similar. A 5 is basically I love this book. I couldn't put it down. Like it just hit me and left me wanting more. A 4 is I like this book. It was a really good book. There's nothing really bad with it. It just didn't reach that extra level. And so, I gave it a 4 out of 5 and I'm definitely going to be reading the rest of the series, for sure.

**LAURA:** am also giving it a 4 out of 5. I did really enjoy it. I think that I went into it expecting a little more action-

**JASON:** Same.

**LAURA:** -so, I'm hoping to get a little bit more in the following books. But I did really enjoy it because I am a very big, very huge fan of [Firefly](#) and just kind of that crew family, space adventure kind of thing. So, I did very much enjoy it and I will be reading the rest of the series after I read a couple of other books first. So we all rated it 4. It looks like on Goodreads it has an average of 4.15. So kind of on line, on the same wavelength as everybody else who's rated it. Most people. And that's out of a lot of people. Over 86,000, almost 87,000 ratings. That's a lot.



JASON: Not bad for a Kickstarter book.

EMMA: And this came out in. Yeah, you said this came out in 2014?

LAURA: Yes, 2014. So...

EMMA: Nice.

LAURA: I would say I recommend this book to other people just based on ratings. Who would you say we would recommend this to? I would say probably people who enjoy the personal, character-driven stories, specifically in sci-fi, since that is a very rare thing to find.

EMMA: Yeah, I think that covers it. I think anybody who enjoys character-driven, I think that's a big caveat to probably give when you're recommending this book to people, is that it's much more character-driven than plot-driven, because that is a turn off for some people. Obviously, all of us enjoyed it a lot but I know that some people will be like, weird about that. So I think anybody who really likes character-driven, the whole space opera genre, and then anybody who like, likes sci-fi but even because it's so accessible, anybody who wants to just get into sci-fi.

LAURA: Did we cover that Jason?

JASON: That was it. And if you want to see some interspecies relationships.

LAURA: [laughs] Oh yeah. If you like interspecies relationships, you might like this.

JASON: Yeah. If that's your thing, then hey.

LAURA: Well, I mentioned this is very much like [Firefly](#) so if you liked this book, I recommend also reading, or even watching, anything [Firefly/Serenity](#) because it's very much like this. Just without aliens. [laughs] I would also recommend-

EMMA: Wait. [Firefly](#) doesn't have aliens?

LAURA: No.

EMMA: Well then why the fuck is it a space show?

LAURA: It's a space western.

EMMA: If there are no aliens?!

LAURA: It's a space western!

JASON: Yeah. Boring. Next.

EMMA: No, I hate it.

LAURA: Oh my god!

EMMA: Yeah, I hate it.

LAURA: [laughing] No.



EMMA: What's even the point? Why are you in space if there are no aliens?

LAURA: No. You should still watch it and read it. [laughs]

EMMA: No aliens my ass.

LAURA: I don't know. Maybe we would have gotten them.

EMMA: If there are no alien species, what is the point?

LAURA: Wow.

JASON: What I know is, if they would've had an alien, then it would've got a second season.

LAURA: Maybe it would have got, maybe we would have got aliens if it got a second season.

JASON: Hmm.

EMMA: Chicken or the egg?

LAURA: [laughs] I wanted to say, well actually, we've mentioned it already. [To Sleep in a Sea of Stars](#). I would also recommend that if you like sci-fi, misfit crew kind of thing. [To Sleep in a Sea of Stars](#) by Christopher Paolini. It's also a first contact space adventure, which was pretty cool.

EMMA: But probably with the caveat that that book is *way more* technical.

LAURA: It is.

EMMA: Way more hard sci-fi. That's, whenever I recommend it to people, I always, like that's the number one thing. I'm like, this is really good. It's really amazing. It's very heavy in the technical aspects. So if you like that, if you're super into that. then you're gonna love it.

LAURA: It's also a little long.

EMMA: It's very long.

LAURA: But it's a really great story.

EMMA: That is the second longest book on my shelf.

JASON: Are there aliens?

[Laura laughs]

EMMA: Yes.

JASON: I'm in.

EMMA: Perfect. And there is technically interspecies coupling, depending on your definition of coupling.



LAURA: Kind of.

EMMA: If you stretch that definition, they are technically coupled.

LAURA: Good point. Good point.

[Emma laughs]

LAURA: I also wanted to recommend, it's a newer- I don't know if it's going to be a trilogy. I know it's a duology so far. [The Last Watch](#) by J.S. Dewes. I just read that. It's kind of like a misfit military crew that is trying to save the universe from basically collapsing on itself. And then the second book is [The Exiled Fleet](#), which is coming out later this year, 2021. Did you guys have any recommendations for something similar?

JASON: Yeah. The two books came to mind right away. The first one is actually series. It's called [The Long Earth series](#) by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter. The premise of the series is that the discovery of parallel Earth's is made. People are able to travel to parallel Earth's. It's a very character-driven, science sociology driven story. So it's not very action heavy. So it's very similar to this one where there's not a whole lot of action to it. It just follows people on their journeys and discovers the science and applications of all that. It's very, very good. I think there's about four or five books to that. And then the other one that I really, really recommend is, and this goes back to the FTL discussion we had, is [Tau Zero](#) by Poul Anderson. It's about a spacecraft that's already traveling close to the speed of light and then the ships deceleration system is damaged so they can't slow down and they could only keep going faster and faster until eventually they hit the speed of light and it deals with what that is like. Because now time has gone away from them outside of the ship. So it really deals with that kind of like, the difference in time between the shiptime and spacetime. It's very hard science. It's a very quick read but it's kind of a heavy read, but I *highly* recommend it.

LAURA: That sounds really interesting. Might have to add that to my list.

JASON: You should.

LAURA: [laughs] Emma's over there, like, I don't know...

EMMA: No, it sounds-I thinking, I was like, I don't really have a lot of recommendations that are like this because I don't read a lot of sci-fi, so my only sci-fi recommendations tend to be [To Sleep in a Sea of Stars](#) and more recently [Lunar Chronicles](#). Those are like the only ccifi books that I have on my shelf right now.

[Laura laughs]

EMMA: I'm working on it. I'm working on it.

LAURA: That's okay. That's okay. We got you to read this so maybe, maybe we'll find something else you like.

EMMA: If anybody knows about elves and dwarves *in space*, hit me up.

LAURA: Ooooo... If any listeners-

EMMA: Oh! Also [Winter's Orbit](#)? If you're looking for character-driven sci-fi that's more about the characters than it is about the sci-fi, [Winter's Orbit](#) is a really amazing queer, sci-fi, romance that I love.

LAURA: I'm actually just about to buy that. [laughs]



**EMMA:** It's so good. It's right there behind my porg on my shelf. Which is a great image for the audio podcast that cannot see what I'm pointing to.

**LAURA:** Well, that's cool. I hadn't thought of that one but I'm excited then, because I'll be reading that soon.

**EMMA:** It's so good. I love it so much.

**LAURA:** Okay. Well, if that is the last of our recommendations, I guess we'll, we'll call this then. Emma, we're thankful that you were able to join us for this episode.

**JASON:** Yeah! Thanks for being here.

**EMMA:** Thank you for inviting me. I feel so included.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**LAURA:** Where would you like people to find you?

**EMMA:** Oh. So I tend to be most active on Twitch. You can find me at [twitch.tv/emmaskies](https://www.twitch.tv/emmaskies) where I play a lot more sci-fi than I read, so you'll find me there. I tend to be live Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at 6 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. You find me on Instagram [@emmaskies](https://www.instagram.com/emmaskies). At what point do I stop saying I'm a cosplayer because I have not made anything in a year? Covid did a number on my creative motivation.

**LAURA:** Everybody took a break from cosplay for a year. So I mean, you can still say you're a cosplayer.

**EMMA:** Well you can find my quote, unquote cosplay [@emmaskies](https://www.instagram.com/emmaskies) on Instagram. I have a secondary Instagram [@biblioskies](https://www.instagram.com/biblioskies), which is where I talk about books, and Twitter [@emmaskies](https://twitter.com/emmaskies). Woohoo!

**LAURA:** Alright! and as always, if you want to join the discussion for this book or any other book that we've read, you can do so on our social media on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook by searching *Shit We've Read*. And then, yeah, if anybody wants to find me and Jason, you can check out our website at [shitweweread.com](https://shitweweread.com). Well I think that's it. Jason, did you have anything to add?

**JASON:** No, I just want to say thanks again to Emma for, for joining us. It was a lot of fun having you here and having you discuss this book. Thanks for your insights and your opinions. And-

**EMMA:** I always have a lot of those.

**JASON:** Yeah, I don't know. Hopefully you join us again sometime and if you do, you can pick the book.

**LAURA:** Yeah. Special, special episode.

**EMMA:** Look, you do not want me picking a book because I've just discovered that bully romance is a genre-

[Laura laughs]

**EMMA:** -and I cannot stop looking these up. I almost refused to read them but I can't stop looking them up and I swear to God, I will make somebody read it.



(closing theme music)

**JASON:** Look. We're a fantasy, sci-fi show. If you could find a fantasy or sci-fi version-

**EMMA:** Oh god. There's so many.

**JASON:** -I guess we can't say no.

**EMMA:** No.

[Laura and Jason laugh]

**LAURA:** We'll discuss it.

**JASON:** *Shit We've Read* After Dark.

**EMMA:** And I am suddenly never going to be invited back.

[Everyone laughs]

**LAURA:** All right. Well, thanks again, Emma! And thanks Jason! We're gonna close up here and we'll see everybody next month.

**JASON:** Bye!

**LAURA:** Bye!

**EMMA:** Bye.

**LAURA:** This episode of *Shit We've Read* has been in *Oblivion Geeks* production hosted by Laura Benson and Jason Rico with music by Joshua Chilton.

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**LAURA:** Thanks so much for listening.