

Welcome to Alflolol (Valerian) Study Guide

Welcome to Alflolol (Valerian) by Pierre Christin

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Plot Summary

Mezieres, J.C.; Christin, P.; Tranle, E. Valerian and Laureline: Welcome to Alflolol; Cinebook, Canterbury, Kent, 2012. Kindle AZW file.

Valerian and Laureline, two agents from the Spatio-Temporal Agency, are leaving the planet they know as Technorog when Laureline experiences a strange trance-like state. She believes it is a remote cry for help and, as agents, they begin to search for the source. Their efforts lead them to a group of travelers. Soon, Valerian and Laureline are caught up in the drama as the natives of Alflolol seek to reclaim their home and the current residents fight to keep the changes they have wrought.

The planet known as Technorog is an industrialized planet that is rich in resources. There are several distinct operations, including mining, hydroponics, petroleum operations, and factories. The people who live on Technorog have spent their lives focused on work. That focus has become ingrained into their natures and characters. By the time Laureline and Valerian are leaving the planet, they have seen this focus in a less-than-perfect light.

Valerian and Laureline are confused when the group announces that they are the original natives of the planet, though they know it as Alflolol. They discover that these people live thousands of years and that they have been traveling for the centuries the people of Earth have lived and worked on the planet.

Valerian takes the group to the planet surface and tells the mayor that their charter requires that they allow the natives to return to their planet. The mayor objects and tries to force the natives to live on a designated piece of land, which is little more than desert. They cannot find enough food to survive so the mayor decides to give them food. The rule on Technorog is that everyone has to eat if he wants to eat. The people object to giving food to the natives. The mayor decides to give them jobs. They have no concept of work and cause problems with every assignment.

Finally, the mayor agrees that the natives have the right to live wherever they choose. By then, they have decided Alflolol is no longer where they want to live. With the exception of one family, they all pack up and leave the planet. That family has no means of transportation, so Valerian agrees to take them to Earth. While they are traveling, the people of Earth are planning an elaborate welcome.



Pages 1-11

Summary

The opening panel is a large graphic that describes the world of Technorog. The planet has “inexhaustible resources” that are being “exploited” by humans, a process that has been ongoing for centuries (3). There are some animals on the planet, but there is no interaction between them and the people. The people live in domes that mimic the atmosphere of Earth where the day-night cycles are reproduced. The people are solely focused on their work. Everything that indicated the previous occupants of the planet has been moved to the museum at Galaxy, on another planet.

Laureline and Valerian, two agents of the Spacio-Temporal Agency of Galaxy, are in a spaceship approaching the planet's asteroid belt after conducting an inspection tour on Technorog. Laureline says she is glad to be leaving. She says the workers are all “glum” (4). Valerian points out that the best engineers are on Technorog, and that the industry on Technorog is responsible for their spaceship. Valerian turns his attention to navigating and calls for a shield opening to get them through, but realizes that Laureline is in some sort of trance. Conscious again, Laureline says she felt that someone was calling her for help. Valerian instructs Laureline to keep an eye on the sensors while he pilots the spaceship.

They watch as a strange structure hits the shield and “runs aground” (7). Valerian says it is too dangerous to take their ship any nearer, so they plan to leave their ship. Valerian and Laureline make their way to the place where the strange ship has crashed. They go aboard and discover that the ship is vacant and the food is all gone. They also see that everything on the ship is large, indicating that the inhabitants might have been larger than humans. Valerian is thinking aloud about the situation, considering that the people might have been looking for help. When he turns back to Laureline, he discovers that she is in a trance again. Valerian is annoyed as Laureline's body floats away from the spaceship.

Valerian tries to follow, but has trouble keeping up. He loses sight of her, then spots a light high on a cliff and decides to go there. At the top, he sees two very large human-like people, two smaller people, and an animal. One of them refers to Laureline as a “little being,” and says he can feel that her mind is captive (11). He has not said the words aloud but Valerian realizes he can hear the man's communication. The man plans to break Laureline's space helmet, but Valerian shouts at him to stop.

Analysis

The opening page of the novel uses an interesting graphic technique. There is a large image of the planet Technorog that takes up the top three-quarters of the page. However, the image is divided, with about two-thirds of the planet shown in the top



panel. The remaining one-third of the planet is shown in the second panel, which includes the image of Valerian's spaceship. The bottom strip of the page is another panel, this one showing a closer image of the spaceship but without the planet in the background. The narrative information about the planet, its purpose and its inhabitants is provided in an inset frame in the top panel. The narrative in the second and third panels explains the presence of Valerian and Laureline. The page serves as a comprehensive introduction meant to bring the reader into the current time and place.

There is an “unbreachable reef” around Technorog (4). The image shows man-made objects, but there is talk of asteroids. It seems possible that the people of Technorog have created the reef as a security measure, but it is not explained. As in the case of other situations like this, the reader does not need to understand the details of the situation.

The artist and authors depend on an array of techniques to show action. On Page 10, Valerian is trying to catch up with Laureline, who is in a trance. Valerian has trouble keeping up. When he loses sight of Laureline, he seems to pause and the artist places a large question mark above Valerian's head. That question mark shows his confusion, and it seems to be the most effective way of showing that emotion.

The colors of this novel are brilliant and varied, ranging from blues and purples to pinks and whites. The various shades provide depth and interest. The use of colors is very much like any other literary tool used in novels.

Discussion Question 1

Who are Valerian and Laureline? Describe what has been revealed about them. Keep the list, making additions about the two characters as more details are revealed.

Discussion Question 2

Describe Technorog.

Discussion Question 3

What is Valerian's impression when he sees Laureline with the strange beings?

Vocabulary

inexhaustible, vital, strategic, merciless, gigantic, exploitation, apparatus, electromagnetic, knack



Pages 12-19

Summary

Valerian has a weapon, and he points that out to the man, who soon identifies himself as Argol. Argol communicates only telepathically. His first words to Valerian indicate they had felt Valerian's presence. He says he knows Laureline was trying to help them. He asks Valerian's identity. Valerian gives his name, and says he is from the planet Earth. Argol introduces Valerian to the Elder Garol, who has the ability to "take over minds" (12). He says Garol was injured when they crashed. Valerian says he can probably help her if they can reach Valerian's spaceship. Argol introduces his wife, Orgal. She had used her mind power to make their ship move and Argol says she can move them back to Valerian's ship. Argol also introduces his two children, later identified as Lagor and Logar, adding that they have not yet found their powers. The family also has a pet, an animal identified as a Gumun, who was the one who "felt your presence" (12).

Orgal moves the entire group, all inside a wrecked skiff. The trip is calm but Valerian notes that Orgal is "pulsing with power" (13). Valerian asks Argol if Orgal propelled their big ship in the same manner. Argol says their ancestors recovered the ships "in the dawn of time," and that there are no more like them (13). They used the ship to travel to hundreds of planets before returning to Alflolol. Valerian says the planet is named Technorog, and that the people of Earth live there. Argol laughs, saying he left Alflolol "some 50,000 moons ago," and that the name could not have changed in that time (14). Valerian does the math, realizing Argol and his family left the planet about 4,000 years ago. Argol agrees, saying it was "a little trip" (14). Valerian questions Argol about the typical lifespan of his people and discovers they live for thousands of years. Garol is about 14,000 years old, and Argol says that is too young to die. The two children are 2,500 and 3,500 years old. By the time Valerian has all this figured out, the group has reached his spaceship.

Laureline is still unconscious, and her body is literally floating. Valerian says they need to take Garol and Laureline to the laboratory. Argol says he does not understand, but his trust in Valerian prompts them to follow Valerian's instructions. A short time later, Valerian announces that he seems to have stopped Garol's deterioration. At the same moment, they hear a noise. Valerian turns to discover that Laureline regained consciousness and fell to the floor.

Valerian is relieved. He calls her his "sweet Laureline" (16). She is furious and accuses him of forgetting about her. The Gumun is affectionate toward Laureline. She says it does not matter what Valerian does, because "there are others who love me more than you" (16).

Argol says that other families are also returning to Alflolol after their travels. Argol says he does not understand what happened to their spaceship. Valerian explains that the



people who now live on Aflolol – which they known as Technorog – created a protective barrier around the planet, and that Argol's ship crashed into that barrier.

Laureline interrupts the conversation, saying the Governor of Technorog is asking why they are still in the area. Valerian instructs Laureline to send the Governor a priority message. Valerian asks Argol's family if they are certain they want to go home. They say they are and he goes to the ship's communication center where Laureline says he has to set the situation to rights. The Governor is apparently angry, saying Valerian is breaking rules. Valerian interrupts, saying he needs to return to the planet and needs a meeting with the Governor. The Governor agrees.

Once Valerian has piloted his ship through the barrier, he complies with Argol's request to fly low so they can get a look at the planet. They see the human facilities, including “floating stations on Magnetocean,” mines, factories, and the hydroponic gardens (18). Argol and his family are shocked. Argol is relieved to see the familiar signs of the forest, but upset again to see the domes and buildings on the site they once called home. Argol is confused by the domes. Valerian explains that humans cannot live on the planet without the atmosphere created within the domes. Argol asks why the humans have come here at all. Valerian says they work here, and Argol responds that he does not understand that concept either.

Analysis

The artist uses a different outline on the speech bubbles for the Aflolol man named Argol. He speaks to Valerian through a telepathic method, and he is the only one who communicates with Valerian. The speech bubbles for other characters have smooth edges, but the speech bubbles for Argol have irregular edges with peaks and valleys. This is used to indicate that Valerian hears the words through Argol's telepathic communication, and that they are not spoken aloud.

The image of Orgal as she is moving the skiff back toward Valerian's ship is almost frightening in its intensity. Her skin is deep red and her eyes are red with rings around them. There are streaks of light red and white, mixed with swirls, radiating from her face. The image is designed to make the reader realize the deep power she is using to move the skiff. With that intensity, the reader might expect speed and power, but the trip is gentle. That contrast is a literary device seen several times over the course of the novel.

Argol, Orgal, and their family have the basic shape of humans, but they are much larger than Valerian and Laureline. They also have horn-like protrusions from their foreheads. The adults have long horns, and the children have shorter ones. Their skin is not typical, but Argol has the equivalent of a beard.

Laureline's unconsciousness is never fully explained, though it is apparently a case of her being tied to Elder Garol. The minute Valerian stops the progress of her illness, Laureline regains consciousness.



Laureline is upset that she fell to the floor. She apparently believes that Valerian should have been paying attention to her, and should have kept her from falling. She makes an interesting comment, saying that “there are others here who love me more than you.” That indicates that she has a strong tie to the Gumun and perhaps to others of Argol's group. The reader may expect, based on that comment, that Laureline will have some heavy connection that drives her actions in the remainder of the novel. To a degree, that is true but the connection is rather tenuous and erratic.

Gumun leans in toward Laureline when she first regains consciousness, and that stance seems to indicate affection. However, the author does not depend solely on the stance. There is a stream of small hearts rising up from the Gumun, further indicating the affection. This kind of incidental graphic plays an important role in the novel, and helps the reader further understand emotions and tone.

Argol and his family do not understand the concept of work, and the people of Alflolol are entirely focused on work. This is yet another case of the author's use of contrast. The contrast is not quite as pronounced as some others in this novel, however, because Argol's family does hunt for food. How they get other items, such as clothing, is never addressed.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the family of natives.

Discussion Question 2

What is the first connection between the humans and the family of natives? Predict how that connection will change over the course of the novel.

Discussion Question 3

What has changed on Alflolol since Argol's family left?

Vocabulary

contrary, elder, brink, slumber, floundered, propelled, translate, desiccation, regained, proximity



Pages 20-32

Summary

There are lots of soldiers waiting for them. One soldier says Valerian can see the Governor, but “strangers” have to go for an inspection (20). Argol objects to the word “strangers.” Laureline goes with Gumun, promising to rejoin the others later. While Valerian heads to his meeting with the Governor, the soldiers rudely send the others on their way.

The Governor's office is in the top of the tallest building. The Governor's first words are to berate Valerian for taking so long to arrive. Valerian announces that Alflolol's natives have returned. The Governor asks how many and Valerian says he has transported a family of five. The Governor thinks that means it is a small problem, but Valerian says other families are following. Valerian says the Galactic Code requires that they give the natives their planet back. The Governor counters, saying the code has never been used in a situation in which the natives were gone and returned. Valerian suggests the Governor contact Galaxity for a ruling, but predicts they will echo Valerian's position. The Governor then asks if the natives are hostile. Valerian says they are not, but that they are “big, very strong, very smart, and they have some quite extraordinary powers” (22). The Governor repeats Valerian's words, thinking about them. He says he has to call on the council before he makes a decision. He decides the natives should go to quarantine until the council meets. Valerian says he has already run the typical tests, but the Governor refuses to reconsider.

There is a lot of noise as Laureline, Gumun, Argol and his family arrive in the office. Laureline says the guards were bothering them, so they came to Valerian. Just then, all the alarms in the office light up. The Governor watches his monitors, noting that workers are experiencing problems all over the planet. Valerian immediately turns to Laureline, who admits that they caused the problems. The Governor is furious and orders them out. Argol refuses. Laureline has explained their rights, as the native inhabitants of Alflolol, and Argol says their home was in the exact location of the Governor's office. The Governor wants proof, and Argol says they will find his ancestral graves under the buildings. The Governor wants Valerian to stop them, but Valerian says the Galactic Code clearly gives them the right to return to their home.

That evening, Argol and his family are seated around a campfire in the Governor's office. Valerian and Laureline are there as well. Five days pass. Argol's family runs around the office. The two children of the family are playing with a control panel. Argol says they should not break things because the Earth people “are not like us; they seem to value their material possessions” (26). Laureline is getting the Gumun to chase her. The animal wrecks some of the equipment. Laureline says Valerian is probably going to be angry about that.



Valerian is angry, saying Laureline is annoying him. The ongoing celebration with Argol's family has gone on for five days, and he is tired. He leaves the office to find a quiet place to rest. Outside the office, he encounters the Governor. Valerian confirms that Argol's family only sleeps a few minutes at a time and seem to need no more sleep than that. The Governor is most upset because he cannot work. Valerian says Argol's family does not understand the concept of work.

Laureline joins Valerian. She admits that she is also tired, but talks about how much she likes Argol's family. They fall asleep, and Argol's family is gone when they wake. They find a recorded message from Argol, who says they don't care for the human city, and have gone to their "ancestral hunting grounds" (27). Argol says they will not interfere with the human industrial work. Just then, the Governor arrives, saying the natives have created another problem. More than 1,000 people are "catatonic" (28). The situation mimics that of Laureline earlier, and she says it indicates that Garol is fully recovered.

The various department heads are furious, and the Governor says Valerian has to help bring them back to the city so officials can at least keep an eye on them. A short time later, all those who had been in a trance have recovered consciousness. Valerian and some soldiers head into the forest to find Argol's group. They encounter all sorts of problems. Eventually, Laureline and Valerian are traveling alone. They stop to rest. A creature abruptly wakes Laureline, grabbing her and dragging her to the water. Gumun arrives, attacking the creature and saving Laureline just as Argol shouts that his family is on their way.

Analysis

One of the soldiers uses the word "fleabags" to order Argol's group onward (20). The name is obviously a slur, and is the first hint that the soldiers will treat the group as substandard citizens. The group will be treated much like the native American Indians were treated during a specific time in history. That treatment is one of the novel's themes, especially when the current Alflolol government puts Argol's group on a reservation.

One of the book's themes, the need to work, is introduced during this section, and is further examined with the Governor's attitude toward work. He is upset that Argol's family is literally camped out in the Governor's office, but his main reason for being upset is that he cannot work. He seems to have a pride in ownership related to his office, but he – like all the people who live on Technorog – has an inner drive to work.

The author uses comparisons and contrasts throughout the novel, as one of the recurring literary tools. The two names used for the planet is one example of this. The Earth people call the planet Technorog, which is representative of their industrial work. The natives call it Alflolol, which sounds very different, indicating their contrasting focus. They have no concept of industrialization and do not understand the need to work. The focus of the two groups of people is another example of the contrasts. The Governor talks about his need to work and how upset he is when he Argol's family takes over the



Governor's office, meaning he is unable to work. He is upset that they are present, but his greater concern is that he is unable to work. Laureline remarked on that attitude at the opening of the novel when she talked about the single-minded focus of the people of Technorog.

By this point, the reader will likely see the situation as resembling the historic situation of Native American Indians and their relationship with the United States Government. The Governor's focus is vastly different from that of Argol's family. This idea is further explored when Garol puts about 1,000 of the planet's workers, including guards and technicians, to sleep. Laureline says the natives are not hurting anything, and that the people of Technorog should just leave them alone. Her attitude has merit, but the fact remains that there are people who are literally catatonic. In that situation, it is clear that the natives of Alflolol are interfering with the planet's operation. However, it seems that the humans are causing this problem by trying to control the natives, when they should have more rights than the humans.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship and attitudes between the natives and the humans. What are the main issues they face?

Discussion Question 2

What is the Galactic Code? What does Valerian say the Code requires of the humans?

Discussion Question 3

Compare the natives and the humans, including their focus.

Vocabulary

vexing, ancestral, hostile, negotiate, extraordinary, subversive, convening, mandatory, quarantine, forbid, sturdy, material, functional

Pages 33-38

Summary

Valerian looks toward Argol, who explains that Gumun felt that Laureline was in danger. The creature that grabbed her was a shalafut. Laureline passes out. Argol seems to believe the situation is fatal, but Logar heals her. Argol is thrilled, saying that Logar has “found her gift,” and will not be known as “she-who-heals-wounds-from-evil-beasts” (33). Valerian is relieved but Laureline is furious, saying that the bad things seem to always happen to her. Argol invites Laureline and Valerian to join him as his son, Lagor, tries to kill his first furutz. Valerian says they are supposed to return to the city, but Argol refuses. Argol worries that the floating industrial centers have negatively affected the furutz, but the soon see a pod.

Argol leaves Valerian to steer the ship. He struggles because the tiller is made for a larger man. In the midst of the chase, the Governor calls Valerian on the radio. He is in a spaceship above them. He orders Valerian to turn the ship back, threatening to shoot at them if they get near the floating plant. The spaceships fire, which makes the furutz run wild. They crash into the floating facility and destroy it. Argol and his family do not realize the spaceships are shooting. Lagor kills the largest of the group.

Ashore, Argol and his family are thrilled. The Governor lands and says there are about 100 families waiting for entrance to the planet's protective barrier. He has to let them in because of the Galactic Code, and has to give them some land, but he and the council have decided to relegate them to a reservation. Laureline is furious.

A short time later, a caravan of natives are forced onto a portion of the planet not being used. The land is the poorest of the planet, with little game. The Governor says they should talk to Valerian if they have problems. Laureline says the situation is unacceptable. Valerian says he does not really care, because he will not be here for long.

Analysis

The use of the word “reservation” will make the reader even more aware of the comparison of this situation to the historic situation of Native American Indians. The language, in this case, will be naturally inflammatory to some readers, which is obviously the author's intention.

Page 36 is a full-page panel, with several circular frames inset to show specific action. The panel is chaotic, and depicts Argol's son, Lagor, preparing to throw a harpoon while the spaceships fire at the sailing ship Valerian is piloting. There is also an image of the floating facility, which is pulling the magnets from the electromagnetic ocean. By the bottom of the page, the facility is a wreck that includes flames and smoke. The author's choice not to use individual panels exemplifies the chaos that is taking place as Argol's



family focuses on the hunt while the Governor shoots at their ship. The use of color is another way the artist conveys the action. The colors are lighter toward the top, turning more to browns, reds, and dark oranges at the bottom of the page.

Those who are familiar with the series of novels will be surprised at Laureline's attitude and actions during this novel. She is usually very focused and not prone to nonsense. Her chase with Gumun that results in damage to the equipment is out of character. She has become very attached to the Gumun and sympathetic to the plight of the natives, which probably explains her actions. Laureline's role as Valerian's sidekick and their relationship is a continuing theme, seen throughout the series.

In several instances, the artist uses larger fonts to show when characters are yelling their words. That is seen twice on Page 37 as the Governor yells that there are "100 families" arriving on the planet. Only those words are yelled. Two frames later, Laureline responds by yelling her objections to the decision to force the natives onto a reservation.

Discussion Question 1

What is Laureline's reaction when she recovers from the shalafut attack? What does this say about her character?

Discussion Question 2

What is the Governor's plan for the natives? What problems might he face with this plan?

Discussion Question 3

How does Laureline react when the Governor announces that the natives will be relegated to a reservation? Compare her reaction to Valerian's reaction.

Vocabulary

alas, embrace, misogynous, delectable, quarrel, vulnerable, nomads, caravan, flanked, benefactor, administer, travesty, naysayer



Pages 39-40

Summary

As days pass, the natives complain to Valerian. There is little game, meaning they are unable to hunt for enough food to keep them fed. Laureline calls the natives “prisoners,” and demands that Valerian intercede with the Governor (39). The council agrees to provide food and a convoy arrives at the native camp each day. The natives find the food “unpalatable,” but accept it to keep from starving (39).

The Governor summons Valerian back to the city. He says the rule on Technorog is that everyone has to work in order to eat. The workers have objected to giving food to the natives, so the Governor declares the natives will have to join the workforce. Valerian argues, but to no avail. The natives are soon at work at the hydroponics plant. Valerian says they seem to settle into the routine, but Laureline is furious. She tells Valerian to leave, but announces plans to remain. Valerian sets up a camp nearby.

Days pass until the Governor wakes Valerian, saying there is a problem at the hydroponics plant. Lagor has discovered his gift. Argol announces that Lagor will now be known as “he-who-has-the-gift-to-make-ugly-things-beautiful” (42). They have changed all the plants into flowers, and Argol is pleased that the hydroponics facility is now pretty. He says the flowers are not edible, but argues that the food they were producing was also inedible.

The Governor summons Valerian. He says they are going to divide the natives into groups, sending them to various facilities so they will no longer be working together. Valerian refuses to get the groups started until the Governor threatens to report that Laureline has been living “alongside” the natives (43). Valerian does not want Laureline to get in trouble, so he agrees. Laureline refuses to let Valerian explain and is furious with him.

Later, Valerian goes on an inspection tour and learns that everything is falling apart. None of the factories is operating properly, all because of the natives. Valerian laughs when he sees what they are building at the spaceship factory. He finds similar situations elsewhere, and one facility is on fire.

Valerian returns to the city where the department heads are arguing about the chaos. He says the answer is to let the natives live as they please. The Governor and other officials agree, and send Valerian to deliver their message. Valerian learns that the natives have all returned to the reservation. When he arrives, the sky is filled with ships, all leaving. He sees someone left on the ground and lands. Laureline says the natives no longer felt this planet was their home, which is why they chose to leave. Argol's family remains because their ship crashed. Valerian offers to take Argol's family with him on his spaceship, and to guide the others through the barrier. Laureline says this is the kind of action she expects from Valerian, and they embrace.



Aboard their ship, Valerian requests an opening in the barrier. Via a telecommunications monitor, the Governor goes on a rant about never opening the barrier for Valerian again. Laureline turns off the monitor in mid-sentence. They begin to discuss where Argol and his family should go. Valerian says he has the perfect place in mind, where they will be welcome. The final panel of the novel shows officials on Earth, preparing for the arrival of Argol and his family.

Analysis

Argol and the other natives do not fit in on Alflolol because it is now an industrial center focused on work and production – a stark contrast to their way of life. However, Valerian begins figuring out where he can take them by listing the things they need. He says they need a place where there is good food, where they will be welcomed, and where “your parties will be a big success” (48). He chooses Earth as their destination, and the final frame of the novel shows Earth officials preparing to welcome Argol and his family. This is another of several comparisons. This time, the author is comparing Earth to Technorog. Valerian makes it clear that the people of Earth are not so focused on work, but are more willing to enjoy life. That attitude was seen in previous novels of the series.

There is an interesting graphic on Page 48 when everyone is aboard Valerian's spaceship. Valerian, Laureline, and Argol are shown in color and in detail. The other members of Argol's family are shown in purple with only outlines and vague details. It is easy to tell their individual identities, but the artist seems to be indicating that they are incidental to the action at that point.

For the second time, Argol says he trusts Valerian. The first was when they first met, and this time is when Valerian is trying to decide where to take Argol's family. Trust seems to be an inherent part of their nature, because he has given them little reason to trust him. Another aspect of this trust is seen in Laureline's attitude. During the early scenes of the novel, Laureline remains angry at Valerian because he is not able to make things work out for the natives. When he announces that he is willing to lead them through the barrier and to take Argol's family aboard his ship, Laureline shows her immediate approval. This shows Laureline's complete devotion to the natives, but it also shows that she expects that Valerian will take appropriate action.

Discussion Question 1

What steps does the Governor take to try to fit the natives into his plans?

Discussion Question 2

Why do the natives choose to leave the planet?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Valerian agree to oversee the new assignments the Governor gives the natives? What does this decision say about Valerian's relationship with Laureline?

Vocabulary

recriminations, convoys, unpalatable, queue, reduced, verge, famine, revolt, rational, efficiently, exodus, saboteurs, exploits



Characters

Valerian

Valerian is an agent for the Spacio-Temporal Agency and the hero of the novel. Laureline is his partner, and it is clear that Valerian has a level of affection for her that goes beyond their professional relationship.

Valerian is the typical hero in many ways, but he has faults and weaknesses. For example, he is unable to exert any real power when the natives of Alflolol return to find their home planet has been colonized. He urges the Technorog mayor to obey the charter's rules to give the natives back their home, but he is unable to force that action, even though it would be the right thing to do. He becomes frustrated with the situation and his inability to exact any change.

Valerian is pictured as tall and handsome. His image is meant to convey strength, and the artist chooses to alter that appearance by showing Valerian with a stubble of a beard after several days of inactivity. Overall, he is a likeable character and readers will expect him to be successful, at least on some level.

Laureline

Laureline is Valerian's partner. She is also an agent for the Spacio-Temporal Agency. She is a strong, sensitive character whom most readers will like, even if some of her actions are unbelievable or unexplained. For example, her connection with the natives of Alflolol is never explained, but it could be attributed to the mental cry for help that first brings the group to the attention of Laureline and Valerian.

Laureline is depicted as a beautiful young woman with red, shoulder-length hair. By this point in the series, she has exhibited a strong affection for Valerian, but that is not really evident in this novel. She is angry that he is unable to exact change to help the natives of Alflolol. However, when he agrees to help the native family leave the planet, Laureline makes it clear that she expected nothing less from him.

Laureline's role in the story is limited, and she seems to be rather ineffective, which is not typical of her role. Readers who have grown to expect more from her character may be disappointed in this novel.

Argol

Argol is the husband and father of the group of natives of Alflolol. He has the ability to talk to others through a type of telecommunication. He relates information and carries on conversations for the members of his group, making him an important character.



Argol longs for his life to be as it was before he left Alflolol, and he joins the others in choosing to leave rather than fighting the Governor and his rules.

The Governor

The Governor is the head of the Technorog government. He is depicted as a short man, focused entirely on the productivity of the planet. He becomes angry when he is unable to work. He is rude when faced with the problems caused by the natives' arrival.

Orgal

Orgal is the mother and wife of the group of natives of Alflolol. She has the ability to move things with her mind.

Garol

Garol is the elder of the group of natives from Alflolol. She has the power to control the minds of other people. She is the first to contact Laureline. She puts about 1,000 of the planet's current inhabitants into a trance, indicating the depth of her power.

Lagor and Logar

Lagor and Logar are the two children of Garol and Orgal. One of them has the ability to heal specific kinds of injuries, and the other has the ability to beautify ugly things.

Symbols and Symbolism

Alflolol and Technorog

Alflolol and Technorog are the names for the planet. They are symbolic of the different focuses of the two races of people who call the planet home.

The natives who call the planet Alflolol are focused on enjoying life. They have no concept of work. The name Alflolol contains "lol," which is used today in text messages and social media for "laughing out loud." Thus, it is appropriate that the fun loving natives call the planet Alflolol. Ironically, the book was written in the 1970s, long before technology.

Likewise, during the 1970s, a popular television series titled "Alf" shared the life of a happy-go-lucky, funny alien named Alf who lived with his human family. The title Welcome to Alflolol could be referring to that series.

The Earth people call the planet Technorog, which is symbolic of their focus on technology and industry.

Gumun

Gumun is the animal that belongs to Argol's family. It is the symbolic family pet with an affection for others. The animal becomes attached to Laureline.

The Galactic Code

The Galactic Code is symbolic of law in the galaxy as space travel becomes part of normal life. Valerian quotes the Code's requirement that the natives of Alflolol be allowed to return to their homes without interference from another race. The Code means that the people who have colonized Alflolol would have to abandon the planet. However, that is not what happens.

The Furutz

These are aquatic animals and are symbolic of the coming-of-age moment experienced by Argol's son.

Settings

Alflolol/Technorog

The native people refer to this planet as Alflolol, and the humans call it Technorog. The planet is rich in resources, and the humans have multiple works in progress, including mining and hydroponics. The planet has wonderful forests and oceans, but it also has areas that resemble a desert with few resources available.

The Governor's Office

The Governor's office is at the top of the tallest building of the city, and it is where the Governor works. This is where the Argol and his family set up camp upon their return. The office is the center of the government's action. It is filled with monitors and equipment.

The Reservation

The land designated as a reservation is poor land with no value to the humans or to the natives. The very word will likely make people think of desolate areas where the natives cannot support themselves or have happy lives. This reservation is no different.

Themes and Motifs

Humans versus Natives

This is a form of the traditional man-versus-man theme, but with a historical slant that resembles the historical conflict between the American government and the Native American Indians. The humans have lived on the planet they know as Alflolol for centuries without any major issues. They have colonized to the point that they feel a sense of ownership. When Argol and his family arrive, the humans learn that there is a problem. There are hundreds of families. All of the families will be expecting to pick up their lives where they left off thousands of years earlier. While the natives are peaceful and would not necessarily interfere with the humans' industries on purpose, the two groups clash with regard to focus. Each wants the same prime spots for their own. That sets the novel up for a classic clash of wills.

In the same manner, the Native American Indians and the American government clashed. The American Indians were living in peace; however, the American government brought disruption to their peaceful lives without regard for the Indians' reverence for the land and wildlife.

The humans immediately begin to treat the natives as interlopers. The soldiers make rude comments when they greet them for the first time. The Governor sets out to find a way to keep them from interrupting the normal flow of work with no regard for the natives' rights or desires. He never makes an effort to accept them with their own culture. Instead, he looks for ways to make them fit into the Technorog culture which focuses on work and industry. When the Governor cannot control them, he forces them onto a poor piece of ground, allotting them a large area of worthless property. Laureline immediately sees this for what it is – a reservation.

Again, this is similar to how the American government treated Native American Indians. The government viewed the Indians as the interlopers, though they were the original owners of the land. The Indians were sent to live on reservations, without regard for the Indians' rights or wishes.

In the story, the Governor then insists that the natives work in the human-made industry. The governor only gives in with a promise to let them live as they please when it becomes clear the natives can destroy everything the humans have built. The treaties that the American government made with the Native American Indians were an effort to provide an end to the Indian wars by allowing the Indians to live as they pleased--as long as they lived on reservations

From the natives' perspective, the humans are the interlopers who have literally destroyed their planet. They do not understand the drive to work or the industry that is present on every prime piece of land on the planet. Ultimately, they hate the progress so much that they are all willing to leave their home rather than live beside the humans.



Similarly, the American Indians saw the American government as the interloper who was destroying the Indians' land and way of life. They agreed to live on the reservations to keep from living alongside those who were bringing changes that threatened the Native American Indian culture and ignored their beliefs about the sacredness of nature.

The Relationship between Laureline and Valerian

The relationship between two people changes over time, and the relationship between Valerian and Laureline is no different. They have a romantic connection, expectations, and their own goals, all affecting the current status and future of their relationship.

Valerian and Laureline are agents for the Spacio-Temporal Agency, and their relationship should theoretically be professional, but that is not entirely the case. Valerian makes that clear when he refers to Laureline in affectionate terms. He also gives in to the Governor's demands in an effort to keep the Governor from submitting a negative report about Laureline's behavior.

Laureline's role as Valerian's assistant is somewhat different in this episode of the series, but she plays an important part by showing total commitment to the natives and their plight. Those who have read previous novels of the series know Laureline as a serious agent of the Spacio-Temporal Agency, always determined to do what is right and often picking up the slack when Valerian shows poor judgment or is unable to handle a situation. However, she is also the character most often landed in serious situations, often leaving Valerian to rescue her. This aspect of their relationship is seen as Garol puts her into a trance-like state early in the novel. Valerian is left to follow her. She interrupts just in time to keep Argol from breaking Laureline's helmet.

Laureline is accustomed to Valerian's inept efforts on her behalf, as seen by her anger when she falls after Valerian saves Garol's life. She is also angry when the sea creature grabs her, saying that those things always happen to her and never happen to Valerian.

Except for her anger, Laureline seems almost indifferent to Valerian until near the end of the novel. Valerian agrees to lead the natives through the barrier and to take Argol's family aboard his spaceship. At that point, Laureline tells him that she would have expected nothing less from him. She makes it clear that she trusts him and knows that he will do the right thing, though she has been angry with him for his apparent support of the government up to that point.

Styles

Point of View

The novel is presented from the limited perspectives of Laureline and Valerian. This is not overly limiting because Valerian is at the heart of all the action that occurs during the novel. The novel opens with information about Technorog, the planet later identified as Alflolol. Valerian would know all that information, but it is presented to the reader as a historical narrative in order to bring the reader up to the current point of the action.

The perspective is limited by what Valerian and Laureline know at any given moment. That is seen clearly when Laureline seems to pass out as she and Valerian are leaving the planet. At that point, Valerian and Laureline have no idea what is happening, so the reader also does not know. The action follows Valerian and Laureline as they make discoveries.

While Laureline is at the heart of the story, the perspective tends to follow Valerian instead of Laureline. When Laureline remains with the Alflolol natives and Valerian goes back to the Technorog headquarters, the perspective remains with Valerian. The reader never knows what Laureline does during that time.

Language and Meaning

The novel was originally written in the 1970s and was translated in 2012. The majority of the language is modern-day American English, but there are some minor exceptions. The author uses some alternative spellings, such as the word multicoloured, instead of the tradition spelling of multicolored. Also, the word colonisation instead of colonization is used. In addition, the author sometimes uses incorrect grammar, such as the word towards and learnt. These do not occur often and are acceptable for the genre and the informal tone.

The novel depends heavily on dialogue to drive the action. Because it takes place in a futuristic, space setting, the dialogue is sometimes manipulated to mimic what people in that time and place could sound like. For example, Valerian occasionally uses the words “by space” as an expletive. Some words and phrases are imaginary and meant only to describe and identify things in this imaginary world. One example is that Valerian and Laureline are agents of the Spacio-Temporal Agency. Naturally, that agency does not exist and the imaginary name is meant to convey the idea of an organization that travels throughout space and time.

The novel is divided between dialogue, narrative, and art. Because the novel depends heavily on graphics, the reader must be willing to examine the images for additional meanings. The use of imagery as part of the language is to be expected, and readers have to evaluate what they see as well as what they read.

Structure

The storyline appears in the form of a graphic novel. While this book is one of a series, the casual reader who reads only this episode of the series will have no trouble following the action.

The story is divided between dialogue, narrative, and graphics. The majority of graphics appear in multiple panels on each page. The number of panels vary from one page to the next. Most pages do not include the traditional six- or eight-panels seen in some graphic novels. The artist depends on irregular panel shapes and varying numbers of panels per page. For example, page six has seven panels total. The first panel to the left of the page is tall and narrow. The next panel is short and wide with three squared panels directly under the second. The final two panels are as wide as the page, but one is very short and the other takes up roughly a quarter of the page.

The dialogue appears in dialogue bubbles designated toward the character who is speaking. Most of the narrative appears outside the panels, either to the side or above the graphics. The narrative is used to drive the action in conjunction with the graphics. In most cases, the narratives are used as historical background or information that is not readily evident from the dialogue and graphics.



Quotes

From its mountains are mined the rare metals needed to build the empire's spaceships. From its oceans are gathered the magnetic salts that fuel their faster-than-light engines. From its factories come endless lines of heavy equipment bound for the other planets controlled by Earth.”

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph Frame One)

Importance: This is part of the opening narration, explaining the purpose of Earth's use of the planet Technorog. These are the main operations, but there are a few others.

When we left it to go for a little trek among the stars, some 50,000 moons ago, its name was Alflolol! Therefore, that is still its name, is it not?”

-- Argol (chapter 1 paragraph Frame two)

Importance: Argol and Valerian are beginning to learn about each other. This results in Valerian's discovery that Argol's people are native to the planet, though they have been gone for thousands of years.

What happened to our world? I do not even recognise it anymore...”

-- Argol (chapter 1 paragraph Frame four)

Importance: This is Argol's first look at the planet from Valerian's spaceship. He and his family are shocked at the changes the colonization has brought.

And, in the artificial evening, while hard-working Technorog sleeps under its protective dome, unexpected sounds drift down from the top of the Administrative Palace, where, in sharp contrast to the functional coldness of the place, the Alflololians have set up their camp.”

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph Frames five and six)

Importance: There are descriptions of the Governor's office, where the natives have literally built a campfire. This is one of many contrasts in the novel, showing a comparison between the relaxed attitudes of the natives and the work-focus of the Technorog people.

Force them onto a reservation! That's what you're going to do.”

-- Laureline (chapter 1 paragraph Frame eight)

Importance: The Governor has just announced his plans to put the natives on a specific piece of land. Laureline is furious that he is not willing to give the native people their rights. The treatment of the natives is one of the novel's themes.

You know that, in accordance with the Galactic Code, all representatives of a new species must be welcomed to Earth with a band of ambassadors and offered hospitality for as long as they wish.”



-- Unnamed Official (chapter 1 paragraph Frame five)

Importance: This is the final panel of the novel. It depicts the Earth officials preparing for Argol's arrival. Their welcoming attitude is a stark contrast to the attitude of the officials on Technorog.