



Rough Trails

L.A. Graf

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Captain Kirk's latest voyage has brought him far into the final frontier. His new mission: to help a determined band of pioneers colonize a harsh and unforgiving world, defend the vulnerable settlers from the constant threat of alien invasion, and protect the planet's unique and precious resources for the sake of the entire Federation! Rough Trails

Months after their departure from Earth, the struggling colonists have barely established a precarious toehold on Belle Terre, a ravaged world still recovering from a catastrophic planetary disaster. Fierce cyclones, storms, landslides, and flash floods make the survival itself a never-ending challenge. While Captain Kirk and the "Starship Enterprise(TM) " patrol the sector, on guard against predatory aliens and greedy space pirates, officers Chekov, Uhura, and Sulu stay behind to assist the hapless settlers in their desperate battle to put down roots in the turbulent soil of and angry planet.

But the imperiled colonist are fractious and intensely individualistic group, not inclined to take orders or direction from their Starfleet guardians. Chekov and the others find their ingenuity and diplomatic skills tested to their limits -- to save a people who don't want their help!

Rough Trails Details

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Kreg says

If this book was an independent story it would be decent, but as a 3rd book in the New Earth series, it was mediocre at best. The plot contradicts many elements established by book 2 (Belle Terre), which indicates the author was given only a rough outline of the previous book to use when writing.

Chris McCown says

Good lord this was a hard book to read. However, I rated it four stars because of the job it does painting a picture of the world the characters are in. The details seem boring, but it's not until you read the next book that you realize how real this one felt. And if you stick with it, the climax is pretty good.

Tommy Verhaegen says

Exciting story placed in a very frightening world. As usual, not the decorum but the presence of other living beings (humans this time) present the biggest danger for survival. The story of a harsh struggle for survival (in three separate but still intertwined pots) against the background of an unforgiving nature and the force of natural catastrophe.

Mark Helliard says

Rough Trails was a rough book to read. The story follows Sulu, Chekov and Uhura on the planet. Sulu was basically a pilot 'about to die' throughout the book. Uhura, in her communications officer hat, was working on a way to communicate with the homesteads throughout the book (which of course never worked when it was needed) and was "about to die" a number of times. Chekov was simply 'about to die' all the time either by shuttle wreck, or drowning, or gun shot, or radiation sickness, or exposure, or gun shot again, or of course radiation again, then he really does get shot right before he wants to suicide dive bomb the shuttle, but gets out of it only to end up in a box inches away from drowning again. Chekov quite frankly should have died somewhere in there. Between the overkill on the communications problem and everybody (including the colonist) always being 'about to die' the main story was told. It got really old, really fast.

Samuel Tyler says

'New Earth' is a series of Star Trek books based on the original series that I have felt had a flawed premise at its heart and this continues in book 3 'Rough Trails'. By now the pioneers who set out to populate Belle Terre are established, but this is not the lush land that they had hoped for. The planet is volatile after being nearly destroyed in the last book and rather than heading back to the relative safety of Federation Space, the settlers pull up their socks and get on with the harsh reality of living in the back of beyond. As with the first two books, 'Rough' sees more than its fair share of death as a flood looks like it is going to engulf many of the new settlements as well as a rogue settlement going Wild West on the others.

Why anyone would willingly put up with this is a fundamental issue with the book. An adventurous spirit is one thing, but to try and make it on a near dead planet that is a magnet for pirates due to its rich resources, is another. At least this stubborn us-against-them attitude make the actions in 'Rough' make sense as the settlers will do anything to stop the Enterprise helping them, even if this means the untimely death of so many. The clash between the individual and the state is the most interesting element of the book, but as a reader you can't help feeling as frustrated as the crew of the Enterprise and thinking you should probably just leave them.

With a sense of frustration permeating every page of the book it is sometimes hard to ignore it and look at the story. Here you have your typical Star Trek fair – action without consequences. We know that the main crew have to live for at least several hundred movies, therefore they won't die. This means that the amount of trepidation is dulled. Local characters are introduced and their fates are not assured, but it would have been nice with the luxury of a six book arc to really have the crew invest in the planet. Only Chekov seems to have any sense of growth.

If 'Rough' had been a standalone Trek book that saw the crew descend on a planet and help the locals it would have been a reasonable space thriller, but the locals here are established and frankly don't deserve being saved in many cases. By having the plot based around saving a bunch of people who only want to be saved when they realise they are useless, undermines the story as you find it hard to care for them.

Benjamin Plume says

I honestly expected more from this installment. Once the intrigue really got going at the end, it turned out to be pretty good, but I was really hoping more would happen. Kind of a departure from any of the outside influences and all about the colony itself. Perhaps an important step in the whole picture, but I'd rather have had the internal problems as a B story in all the books than separated out into a single volume.

Michael Schulz says

Not as good as the first two but ok

Jess says

In this book, some of the main crew of the Enterprise's bridge are sent to help the locals on Belle Terre, after the planet was ravaged by fallout from an unstable moon ("The Burn").

There is quite a big gap, idea-wise, between the second book and this one. Suddenly Belle Terre has become a living hell - colonists are living in fear and violence, the planet isn't being much kinder, and we still don't have any particularly good explanation for it other than "the Burn did it".

Personally I thought that the misadventures of the crew vs. the colonists should have been worked as a subplot into the other books, instead of suddenly thrown at us in full force in one novel. The transition is abrupt and does not fit with the pacing of the other books.

dragonkeeper22 says

I don't know how I feel about it, it wasn't good but wasn't bad either. It was nice to have a change in the way that most Star Trek novels are approached and seeing through the perspectives of Sulu, Chekov, and Uhura. But I couldn't help but feel that it would have been best as a subplot, and my focus kept drifting to other things which is very rare with books related to the Original Series. I hope the next installment in the series will be more engaging.

Octavia Cade says

The third in the *New Earth* series, and it's one of those books where I say "There's nothing *wrong* with it, exactly..." And in all fairness, there were likable things here. I enjoyed that the focus was entirely on Uhura, Sulu, and Chekov. I really liked the idea of the Carsons, and wished that organisation had held a more central position in the narrative. But mostly this was like a sci-fi version of a western. There's illegal mining and dust storms, a fight between greed and survival, and it's just all so stretched out. There were a lot of scenes of flying shuttles in storms, or the three main characters just missing each other, or, interminably, Uhura's efforts to get a working communicator. I wonder if Graf was going for the effect of recreating Uhura's frustration in the reader, building empathy for her that way, but to me it only felt rather crushingly repetitive. And, crucially, all just a little bit dull.
