

Jillian vs. Parasite Planet

Nicole Kornher-Stace

Scott Brown, Illustrator

Tachyon Publications (Jul 20, 2021)

Hardcover \$17.95 (224pp)

978-1-61696-354-5

In Nicole Kornher-Stace's science fiction novel *Jillian vs. Parasite Planet*, an eleven-year-old jets into serious space trouble when she's stranded with snarky tech, poisonous parasites, and a long week of big decisions.

Eleven-year-old Jillian is a worrier and a prodigious planner. Her ultimate plan begins with going "with her parents to StellaTech [to] see where all that sweet, sweet space magic happened." It was supposed to be all about her best behavior, feeding into her hope to get a job there as an adult. But then her parents surprised her with a week-long exploration mission in space, headed to a planet that was thought to be innocuous.

When Jillian's parents are put out of commission, Sabrina the omnibot, who may or may not follow orders, becomes her only companion. Sabrina is a sidekick of epic proportions, who can take on any shape and perform almost any task. Sabrina delivers bad jokes, engages in food preparation, and is a source of comic relief—as well as a sarcastic foil for serious Jillian. But Sabrina is also a guardian, scout, and even a three-legged dog.

The parasite world features unexpected flora and fauna that test Jillian's intellectual and emotional mettle throughout her adventure. Her anxious disposition is written with respect: though she's fearful, she remains able to think through a problem. Indeed, her "overthinking" becomes an asset. Around every space boulder and puddle, Jillian uses her savvy, deduction skills, and intuition to navigate an unfamiliar, hostile environment.

Jillian vs. Parasite Planet is a smart science fiction adventure that celebrates its heroine's ingenuity and independence, even in circumstances that are out of this world.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (July / August 2021)

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