

Women At Warp - Episode 87 - The Mark of Gideon

[WAW intro plays]

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me this week are my co-hosts Andi—

Andi: What up?

Sue: —Grace—.

Grace: Ah the ant is back!

[Sue and Andi laughing]

Grace: I'm recording in bed, seeing ants is horrifying!

[laughter continues]

Sue: I'm sorry I just can't compose myself. Okay, whew!

Grace: Neither can this ant!

[laughter]

Sue: [laughing] Damn it, Grace.

Andi: I'm keeping it all. Keep going.

Sue: Okay. And our special guest Ari.

Ari: Hi.

[laughter]

Sue: Ari would you like to introduce yourself to our listeners?

Ari: Oh, sure. How's it going? I am Ari Silvera or @ab_silvera on Twitter. I am one of the four hosts of Angel Two, a feminist **Star Trek** podcast based in Scotland. It's always very hard to introduce myself because I have lived in a number of different countries. [laughs] But basically the idea of it is I'm from Argentina, grew up there and then I lived in Ireland for like a decade and then I've been living in Scotland for the last five or six years. Yeah I am a translator, subtitler, sociologist and admin assistant i.e. I'm a millennial. [laughs] Um, yeah! And I've been kind of involved with like **Trek** fandom since about '96 probably. And I was part of the official Argentinian fan club, which was called Starbase Tango—part of it I was not in any way involved in founding it or anything. I was too young. [laughter] And then I was in another fan club and yeah, I've just been a massive fan of **Trek** for that long.

And then a while ago, me and some friends of mine, we decided to do a podcast because we felt like, because there's you guys, but we felt there wasn't—there really definitely needed to be more women-led **Star Trek**

podcasts. It's very weird that there aren't, considering how crucial women have been to **Star Trek** fandom and the other shows. And yeah we just had a lot to say because the four of us come from very different experiences. Me and Fiona are very hardcore long term fans. Fiona has actually met a lot of the cast of all the different shows. MJ is very new to it and Sophie's kind of in the middle. So, yes it was kind of like—yeah I don't know I'm rambling now a bit. [laughter]

Sue: That's what we do here. [laughs]

Ari: But just to let everyone know, my accent always fluctuates and that's not something that I have full conscious control over. So, I might—some things that I say might sound American. Some things I say might sound very Scottish or very Irish or just whatever. Anything in the middle. A lot of people are like, "Oh, your accent sounds vague," but it's literally because I just speak—it comes out of the way the way it comes out, you know what I mean?

[all laughing]

Andi: I think it's a cute accent.

Ari: Oh, thanks!

Andi: That's cool. I like the idea of fan clubs all over the world. I love that about **Star Trek**.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Thinking about that fan club in Argentina. That's cool.

Ari: It was pretty alright.

[all laughing]

Grace: And you've got a pretty unique experience in getting to experience fandom in, not only multiple countries, but multiple continents.

Andi: And languages.

Sue: Yeah!

Andi: That's cool.

Sue: All right. So, our main topic today, we're going to be discussing **Original Series** episode from season three. Episode 16 *The Mark of Gideon*. You might be asking yourself, "What, why?" because this is not a great episode. However, it does give us a lot to discuss. But before we get there we have our typical housekeeping to do. Our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you would like to become a patron you can do so for as little as one dollar per month and get awesome rewards. From thanks on social media to silly watch along commentaries. Recently we watched *The Magicks of Megas-tu*.

Grace: Oh my god.

Sue: Grace had never seen it before.

Grace: Oh my god!

Sue: So you can imagine that. [Grace & Sue laughing] And if you'd like to join us on Patreon you can do so at patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts, Facebook, or wherever you get your podcasts. Additionally, conventions coming up. We have Star Trek Las Vegas, where Grace and I are planning to be. I'm planning to be at Dragon Con and then I'm also hoping to be at Northeast Trek Con in October. So if you're in the area of any of those conventions or planning to attend let us know. Stop by, say, "Hi!" Hopefully we'll get some meet up scheduled. And that's all I got.

Grace: Cool.

Sue: So, who would like to give us a quick summary of *The Mark of Gideon*?

Andi: I want to hear how Grace breaks this one down.

Grace: Let me set the scene for you. It's another one of those, you know, "We're going to beam down to the planet. We got to solve this planet's thing or whatever," and you know Kirk is like, "I'm going to personally beam down because these people are super anal retentive about who's allowed to visit their planet blah blah blah blah." Apparently they're super health freaky conscious and don't like people with outside germs coming in. So, Kirk gets beamed down, but he ends up back on the Enterprise. Except there's nobody there.

Andi: Dun dun dun!

Ari: [laughs] Credits!

Grace: [laughing] Which is not only odd for him, but also I imagine really rough for all of the extras.

[All laughing]

Grace: So, basically Kirk is all alone on this empty version of the Enterprise until he runs into this lady who's like super jazzed to be on this big empty ship. And I love that the first thing we see of her is pretty much a shot of her from the back. So, it's her alligator granny panties, [laughter] which haunt you for the entire episode, I tell ya. So anyway what he gets from her is that currently the planet that he was supposed to beam down to is super overpopulated to the point where you are constantly in rush hour traffic, but with people. So, Kirk's got to figure out: how did he get here and how does this relate to this planet Gideon? While the people on the actual Enterprise are just figuring out, "What's up with Kirk? Where did he go?"

Andi: Pretty much, pretty much.

Grace: Yeah and [laughing] that's what they pay me to do on this show, Ari.

Andi: [laughs] This is the kind of analysis your Patreon dollars support, guys. [laughter] So give us money.

Sue: I hate to say it but I think **These Are the Voyages** might have you beat [laughter] because their one sentence synopsis of this episode is: Alien beauty seeks to use Captain Kirk to bring death to millions of people.

[raucous laughter]

Grace: Misleading on multiple levels.

[laughter continues]

Andi: That's amazing!

Sue: It's not *in*accurate.

Andi: The thing that makes me laugh about that is it's kind of like, you know how when they're like, "Explain a TV show badly." That's exactly what that is. That should be #ExplainAStarTrekEpisodeBadly.

Grace: Should we issue a challenge to our listeners to explain this episode better?

Andi: Yeah, absolutely. But the thing is it's not technically inaccurate. [laughs] But that's what I love about those.

Grace: Yeah, the reveal that we get through the episode is that the woman, Odonia, is the daughter of the head of the planet and they're trying to get her infected with a disease that Kirk once had so that she can rejoin the population and infect other people and kind of, you know, thin the herd, as it were because their overpopulation is so bad.

Andi: It's a gangbusters plan. [sarcastically] It's really rational. It makes a lot of sense and it's not immoral at all, I think.

Ari: [laughs] Now, I just want to point out what you are saying that you know the experts were bummed out by the empty ship, my first thought there was like, "Yeah, they might not get paid but at the same time they don't have to be around William Shatner," and that had to be [laughter] a wonderful experience for them.

Grace: They don't have to be around William Shatner and they don't have to be pretending not to stare at the f—king alligator granny panties.

[laughter]

Andi: Also, we have to say that probably the set designers were pretty stoked to take a week off.

Grace: [snickers] Yeah.

Sue: Yeah. I mean third season, budgets, and I mean, as Keith Decandido put it on a Tor.com rewatch, "Only in the budget raised third season of Star Trek could you have an episode about the dangers of overpopulation in which the primary visual is a bunch of empty corridors."

[laughter]

Andi: That's true.

Grace: The thing is they built a spare model of the Enterprise to trick Kirk into thinking he'd been beamed back on. It's like, if you're at such a loss for space [laughter] how did you have room to build a freaking Enterprise?

Sue: Build a high rise!

Grace: Are people going to move in there afterwards?

Sue: I hope so.

Ari: Is it going to be social housing or, you know, hospital?

[laughter]

Andi: I really would love to see their planning board for this. [giggling] So, picture their big whiteboard and they're like, "Okay, overpopulation. Clearly we've got to kill some people." and then they're like, "Step 1: Make a fake Enterprise. Step 2: ? Step 3: profit." And it's like where is this coming from? What kind of steps did they come up with?

[laughter]

Sue: The plot makes zero sense in that way because where did you put all those displaced people? Why is this even necessary to trick him into thinking he is on his spaceship, but it's empty?

Grace: Yeah. My very favorite thing about this episode though is the only visual proof we get that the planet is in fact overpopulated, is this recurring just window out into a group of the same 10 people just bumping into each other.

[laughter]

Sue: Walking in a circle.

Grace: And I think that would make for a great group cosplay.

[laughter]

Sue: That would be amazing.

[all laughing]

Andi: I just love that—okay, so, one of the first things that Kirk does is make out with the mysterious woman. Because, I mean, who wouldn't just make out with a mysterious woman? And while he's making out with her it's like [makes a dreamy musical transition sound] and then there's just all these people staring at them. [laughs]

Ari: All the floating faces?

Andi: Yeah!

Grace: Yeah that's super creepy. I will give this episode that and it does totally remind me of **The Twilight Zone** episode where the astronaut realizes he's been put in an alien zoo and the curtains just part and there's all these aliens standing there just staring at him.

Sue: I want to point out that that moment, where they cut to the people watching them kiss, was specifically requested by Gene Roddenberry.

[laughter]

Andi: Why am I not surprised by that?

Grace: Oh my gosh this planet is full of pervs.

Sue: His note to the editor as printed, again, in **These Are the Voyages**, which is my favorite book, says, "On Kirk the girl's kiss," [scoffs] the girl, "on the Enterprise: don't let Kirk and the girl break and exit. Instead, cut to screen and people watching."

[laughter]

Andi: Later on we also see that the whole time her dad has been watching her seduce Kirk.

Grace: [sarcastically] Oh that's fun!

Andi: That's an extra layer of creep. [laughs]

Sue: Well, and it was Bob Justman whose idea was that like, "Well, maybe instead of disease, maybe Kirk should sleep with Odonia and they can breed in imperfections, defects, into the population that will cause an earlier death." Are you kidding me?

Grace: That's a really dumb idea. You're going to solve overpopulation with more babies?

Andi: Is it a worse idea than what the Gideons did, or?

Grace: Let's be real, any of the ideas are pretty terrible here.

Sue: Before we even go into that, can we just discuss that this isn't even what overpopulation is?

Andi: Yes.

Ari: [laughs] See that's the thing because the thing that surprised me about this episode—I literally had never seen it until I sat down to watch it today—

[Sue makes a surprised noise]

Grace: Same here, actually. [laughs]

Ari: Yeah, I don't always—I'm not always very [inaudible] with **The Original Series**, but what surprised me about the episode is that, it's overpopulation is just—I thought it was going to be an episode about overpopulation, but actually what it really felt like it was, was just the bad consequence of the other stuff that the episode is exploring, you know? And well, the other thing that surprised me about the episode, but it shouldn't surprise me, was that literally we spent the first half of the episode like [high pitched], "Ooh it's a mystery! What's happening. I don't know."

[laughter]

Grace: I like that Mario is describing this episode.

[all laughing]

Ari: I have this thing, it's like a running gag with MJ who is an Angel too and also my housemate. We watched **Discovery** together and I wasn't a big fan of it and we have this running gag where the writing room of **Discovery**, I don't know if anyone will get this reference, but the writing room of **Discovery** is basically one of the rubies from **Steven Universe** who is called Navy.

[laughter]

Grace: Oh my god.

Ari: [high pitched] You know the one that speaks sort of like this? [normal voice] And so it's like [high pitched], "Oh, I don't know. Maybe we'll make Kirk fall in love and kiss the pretty lady!"

[laughter]

Grace: Navy has been writing Star Trek all along? [laughs]

Ari: All along. Because she's evil.

Sue: Oh, that's great.

Grace: That would explain why they like toying with our emotions so much, wouldn't it?

Ari: I know! But that's kind of like the running joke. So that's why I'm like, [high pitched] "Oh I don't know maybe Kirk falls in love? This week? Again?"

[laughter]

Grace: It's a Tuesday so it's time for Kirk to meet the love of his life.

Andi: And then leave her 15 minutes later.

Grace: After giving her mono..

Sue: [laughing] Oh, no!

Grace: That would've been my favorite twist of the episode if they'd been like, "You're giving her vegan meningitis," or whatever the hell it's called. He's like, "I gave her mono. It's a thing that happens when you make out with too many people sometimes."

[laughter]

Ari: I was disappointed that the budget of the episode didn't stretch to having that thing that they in **The Original Series** sometimes when there's a romantic scene and then suddenly both characters are shot in soft focus.

[laughter]

Grace: We get some brief soft focus but I think that's just Vaseline on the lens.

[Ari laughs]

Grace: So they have a budget for their soft focus.

Sue: So, really in real life, coming back to things—

Andi: [sing-song] Sue's sociological corner!

[Grace makes musical noises]

Sue: Overpopulation is not overcrowding. It's not like living in Times Square, which is my nightmare. Overpopulation is when a population can't be maintained with the resources in an environment. So, running out of food or I mean I guess, technically, space, but you're going to run out of food way before you run out of space because you need the space to create the food.

Grace: They've got replicators but they don't have multistory buildings on this planet I guess.

Sue: Right? I guess, but they never address resources on Gideon. Apparently they did in earlier drafts of the script. There were scenes that were written in about Gideons who were stealing food and how what a crime it was and how punished they were going to be because of the limited resources and that could have actually, in my opinion, added to this danger of overpopulation, but they don't mention it at all. It's just people crowded around. But while I'm talking about the episode I do want to mention that this was written by Stanley Adams or co-written by Stanley Adams, who played Cyrano Jones in *The Trouble with Tribbles*, and came about because he was chatting with Gene Roddenberry about his pet topic of overpopulation. So, just kind of interesting how that came about, I think.

Andi: Yeah. Another thing I want to point out about the popular idea of overpopulation is that it's super racialized.

Grace: Oh, yeah!

Ari: Yep.

Andi: So, when we hear people talking about overpopulation in today's society it's almost always directed towards non-white people. So, right now there's all these articles that I keep seeing on my timeline that are like, "Oh no, the American millennials are not having enough children because our birth rate is plummeting and everyone is sad about that!" But if you start talking to a lot of super racist people you'll notice that overpopulation is a well that they keep going back to about when we're talking especially about, say, Africa.

And so I—there are a lot of issues with the concept of overpopulation to begin with because it's not that we have we don't have enough resources on planet Earth for everybody, it's that those resources are all concentrated in the hands of a handful of people, really. And so really the problem is not our resources, it's our resource management. So, I just want to throw that out there as we're talking about overpopulation as a concept is that, notice who is worried about overpopulation and what population they're worried about, I guess, getting too large and you'll always notice some extremely gross racial aspects to it.

Grace: Oh, yeah. It's weird how often that conversation will go too in that really cynical people will turn to the, "You know what we need? We need a plague to wipe out all the poor or dumb people or something."

Andi: Or even like when Katrina happened. In Chicago, one of the members of the Chicago Tribune board wrote a piece about how Katrina was actually good for New Orleans because it helped them rebuild the city and blah blah blah.

Ari: Wow. Oh my god that's so grim!

[all agreeing]

Andi: Yes, absolutely. And she got roasted for it, obviously, because what?

Ari: Hopefully literally!

Andi: Yeah, well, she basically was saying that Chicago needs a Katrina is essentially what she was saying.

Grace: [outraged] What is wrong with her?

Andi: Yeah, absolutely. And the undertone of that is that we need to wipe away the poor and mostly people of color, let's be honest here, people. And then we can gentrify what's left, is essentially the argument there. She made it very poorly.

Sue: I mean it's super Ebenezer Scrooge, right? "Why don't you just go ahead and die and decrease the surplus population?"

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah, but they also want the labor so, [sarcastically] oh no! What do they do?

Grace: [sarcastically] They can't run sweatshops without people to sweat!

[laughter]

Andi: Yeah. So, anyway, this is why whenever overpopulation as even a concept comes up I start to cringe even before the conversation happens because overpopulation is not a problem that we face.

Grace: And it is such a loaded term in that sense.

Andi: Yeah, absolutely.

Ari: Yeah. You know that's the thing with that, you know, these very racialized ideas of overpopulation—see, I used to be much more, shall we say, delicate about talking about the fact that I'm Jewish and my family survived the Holocaust. But with the rise of the Alt Right and Neo Nazis and stuff I feel like I don't really have to be quiet anymore. So, when somebody comes up with something like that IRL, I'm like, "That is literally the Nazis. You've literally supported a Nazi policy. Well done." Because gloves are off now, you know what I mean? It's like, why would I not say it, you know? (They're) like, "Oh, yeah I wish all the stupid people died." (I'm) like, "Cool, Adolf!"

Grace: That's eugenics!

[Andi laughs]

Ari: "Thank you, Eichmann!"

Andi: Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's one of those things that when concepts like this come up we have to push back on it, not just as a logistical problem, but as a moral problem. People often try and bring it up as like, "Oh, I'm just trying to solve problems rationally," but no you're not.

Ari: [laughs] So rational!

Andi: So, I don't know. We could go on a tangent about what is considered logical and what isn't and how often morality gets stripped from that conversation, but we're trying to talk about *Mark of Gideon* so let's try and—

Sue: I mean, we can talk about morality and ethics and those being stripped from the conversation in our next topic to talk about in this episode, which is birth control.

Grace: Yeah!

Andi: Absolutely!

Grace: Before seeing this episode I genuinely knew it as, "Oh yeah, the one where Kirk offers condoms to some aliens."

[laughter]

Sue: So, there's a gif of that scene that I tweet every now and then with just the second half of Kirk's little speech where he's saying, "You know, you could teach people about ways to safely prevent conception." And literally every time I send that out people come back at me and they're like, "I honestly thought this was a @SwearTrek gif. This is real?" It is kind of astounding that Kirk would have that kind of line, you know, in 1968.

Andi: I mean, it's pre Roe v Wade.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: So it really was very, I mean, I feel not birth control so much, although reproductive rights in general kind of go hand in hand here, but I feel like this would be something that would be surprising to have on TV now, in some ways.

Sue: Absolutely.

Grace: Oh, absolutely!

Ari: Yep!

Andi: Because we're having such a backlash against reproductive rights at this exact moment in time. It's just, it's really interesting to me that he's like, "Guys there is a solution to your problem."

Grace: It doesn't involve, you know culling the herd.

Sue: Right.

Andi: [laughs] Culling the herd.

Sue: He does, unfortunately, also use the—Kirk, being he—also used the word ‘sterilization.’

Grace: Yeah. Again, a loaded term.

Sue: But I also—I read, I guess, an argument or an explanation from somebody that, you know, 50 years ago didn't mean the same thing. And implied that really Kirk was talking about the pill, right? Because it's a chemical means to contraception. And when he's talking about devices to prevent conception he was talking about condoms.

Andi: Yeah, see, when the sterilization line, as loaded as it is, I was thinking he meant vasectomies.

Grace: That's what I thought too.

Sue: I would like to believe that. [laughs] That's how I choose to interpret it.

Grace: That's the more comfortable thing to believe.

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: I mean, I very much doubt he was like, “Sterilize your population!” But, I mean, who can tell now really what he meant?

Grace: Or offer free vasectomies.

[laughter]

Sue: The Federation will provide whatever you need.

Ari: Okay. So, now that you mention The Federation, this reminds me, the biggest, in my opinion, issue with the episode in terms of its internal logic; I mean we know that they are xenophobic, which already raises a very big question about why do you want to be in The Federation?

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Why did they want to *join* The Federation?

Ari: Yeah! And the thing is that—the whole thing is they're isolationists because they know that any diseases will break their... that balance that they have where they're really long lived and stuff. But even—there are ways of achieving—the thing is, right, there is a solution to their problem without even changing their philosophy, if you want. Which is Starfleet goes with a fleet of ships and moves them to unpopulated planets.

Andi: Yeah, there are a lot of solutions that they just zoom right past to making their cool ship.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: They're like, “Okay, but have you considered making a giant replica of the Enterprise?”

[laughter]

Grace: "I know it's probably gonna take up a lot of valuable, valuable space, but have you considered it?"

Ari: [laughs] It's like they were locked in a room for three days sweating, eating snacks, and trying to figure out how the hell to solve this problem that has destroyed their society for generations. And just one of them offered the fake Enterprise and, "Let's get Kirk. He has that vegan virus," or whatever. And then they were like, "No, John, that is ridiculous."

Sue: But how did they know that? Why did they have access to Kirk's medical records?

Grace: They just read his Twitter feed.

[laughter]

Ari: "Got the vegan conjunctivitis today!"

Grace: [laughs] Did you say vegan conjunctivitis?

Ari: [laughing] I can't remember what it's called.

Grace: It's when you've got tofu breath.

[laughter]

Sue: They just assume with his reputation that he has some kind of STD, right?

[hearty laughter]

Grace: It's a fair assumption.

Ari: But I just feel like the guy that proposed the fake Enterprise idea—they were like, "No, that is pie in the sky. That's ridiculous." And then after the fifth day of not finding a solution they were like, "Fine, John! We'll do your Enterprise idea! We're going to evacuate a neighborhood and build a fake Constitution class—top of the line of Starfleet, John! Just because you gave me the idea. I am so tired, John! I haven't seen my family in weeks and I see them all the time!"

[laughter]

Andi: Ah, that's funny. I do want to say, though, the first time I saw this episode I thought it was mind numbingly silly, and it is. This solution they've come up with is so irrational, it's so hilarious. But the thing that I do like about some of the themes in this episode is, kind of, the idea of how policy is made. And you can see this too with Spock when he is complaining about honesty in the bureaucracy of Starfleet and The Federation and his frustration with, "Have this problem, we have the tools to solve this problem, but you won't let me solve this problem because of these arbitrary rules that you've imposed on me."

And that kind of goes throughout the whole episode here, where you see this is how public policy gets completely crapped on because you have—okay, so, we have a problem. How will we solve the problem? Okay, here we found the best solution. Well, it's not politically popular so we're not going to solve it and then we're just going to run in circles over and over and over again. And I mean, this is especially annoying as an American, because there are a lot of huge problems that Americans face that are easily solvable.

Grace: Yep!

Andi: Gun control, is a great example. Mass shootings is a great example where we actually know the best policies that would reduce mass shootings and we will not put them in place because of politics. Or poverty. We know the solutions to these problems. They have been studied. It is known. It is known, you know?

Grace: These are all fixable things that we have the means to fix but for one reason or another we just aren't.

Andi: Yeah. Or healthcare. Healthcare is a great example. There are numerous countries that have great healthcare and we can't model it on their system because why?

Sue: Because it makes the people in power have less power, or at least they see it that way. That it evens the playing field, in some way.

Andi: Yeah, it's just as someone who has a degree in political science and a background in learning how policy gets made, this is something that, you know, you want to tear your hair out over these conversations.

Grace: It's ass chapping, yes.

Sue: Something else that was in earlier drafts of the script was that Hodin was supposed to also get ill and then get scared and beg Kirk for the cure and then it was to be revealed that it was never intended for the council to get sick and die. But only the general population.

Grace: That sounds about right.

Sue: So that the ruling class would maintain their immortality and their power.

Andi: Yeah, they absolutely should have done that because that kind of goes back to you the thing I noticed right away which is that it's men that are making this decision and it's the woman that they have decided is going to be the sacrifice. I mean the whole vibe of him and his daughter and like, "Here's this problem," and blah blah blah blah blah.

Sue: And they come out and directly say that her death is meant to be a symbol.

Andi: Yep.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Because she's going to die so young.

Ari: I mean, it's hard, right, to not interpret this kind of stuff through the lens of where you're coming from because I honestly don't know what... I mean, obviously reproductive rights were in the conversation in progressive circles at that point, and I'm sure that the writers and producers of this episode were part of those conversations, but it really felt—and again this might be me interpreting it—but it really felt like this was the episode's way of, kind of, talking about how all of these situations that impact people. And they couldn't really focus it that much on women, I think, and I think that's a major flaw of the episode; that the woman is the main victim of this situation, but it's a situation created by and sold by men because it couldn't be too feminist, obviously, at that point in time.

And it's kind of—the situation where it feels like the bureaucracy, on the part of The Federation, and the ideology, on the part of the Gideon, has the effect of just this woman is going to be a sacrificial lamb because everyone is too obsessed with their own worldviews to actually work on the problem in a way that would benefit the most people. But, again, I'm not 100% sure that's where the episode was going, in a way, because overpopulation is a big topic in it and also literally the first 25 minutes of the episode are spent with, “Will they, won't they? Will Kirk and Odonia get it on or not?” And also [high pitched] “What is happening? Oh!” You know?

Andi: See, this is why I feel like this episode could have been mixed into a really amazing episode because so much of it is focused on the mystery part of it and the solution of that mystery is so silly that it undercuts any of the creepy feelings that you might have felt from Kirk earlier. If they had just approached it in a much more straightforward fashion and articulated their themes a little bit more, I feel like this could have been a really strong episode because, as I said, the main theme, well, overpopulation, obviously. The other theme that I saw running throughout this is the obstacles that you find when you're trying to solve problems. I think that's super interesting and I thought Spock was great in this episode.

Sue: Mhmm.

Grace: Oh, yeah!

Andi: He's just sitting there like, “[sigh] Why?”

Sue: Spock was super out of character, though. I mean, when do you ever expect to hear Spock say a line like, “The purpose of diplomacy is to prolong a crisis.”

[Ari chuckles]

Sue: I mean, he might be right, but it's really out of character.

Andi: I don't know that it is because I was thinking about it when he said that. I was like, “How much of this is resentment towards Sarek?”

Sue: I mean, yeah.

Andi: That's what I was thinking the whole time, is like, he's sitting there and his father is this famous diplomat and he's so frustrated with diplomacy and he makes a point of reiterating that he is a scientist first and foremost. And I just find that really interesting and it just made me think about some of the father/son dynamics and how fraught they are between the two of them.

Sue: I think it's also super interesting that the discourse Spock has with Hodin is specifically meant to reflect the 1967 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings with Secretary of State Rush, where he was questioned about Vietnam and the Middle East and got a lot of criticism for remaining evasive.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: So, they went for it. And it's something that I think we, the four of us sitting around microphones today, wouldn't see immediately, but according to what I have read it was very apparent when the episode aired that they were, you know, attacking this bureaucracy.

Andi: Well, yeah and I was actually kind of impressed with how much shade Hodin was throwing. At one point—

Sue: "There's noise on the line."

[laughter]

Andi: Yeah he was like, "I'm so sorry you broke up. What was that?" It's pretty much like, "I'm going through a tunnel. [makes static sounds]"

[laughter]

Grace: Which you can totally see Kirk doing too.

Andi: Yeah, it did make me laugh, though. And it was funny to me that they didn't bother muting.

Sue: Yeah!

Andi: When they're like, "I don't know how you stand this guy! He's infuriating!" and he's just sitting there.

[laughter]

Sue: But, Ari, to your point earlier about the intention of the writers. Again, *These Are the Voyages* says that, "Slavin and Adams developed the idea that the suffocating population growth on Gideon stemmed from a combination of pro-life attitudes taken to the extreme and an abundance of good health."

Andi: Hmm.

Grace: An abundance of good health is a weird problem to have.

Sue: But they were coming for pro-lifers.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And it's really interesting because the argument that Hodin gives to Kirk is a lot of the same stuff we hear today.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Like, "We value life too much to use contraception."

Grace: Mmhmm.

Sue: And then Kirk's response is, "Yet, you can kill a young girl."

Andi: Yeah. The other thing, too, is that—something that's always interested me and it goes back to this whole policy versus outcome thing I was talking about—is that if the outcome that you want is, say, less abortions. If that is the outcome you want, then the pro-life movement is implementing policies that directly contradict their outcome.

Grace: Mmhmm.

Andi: So, if you are a person that wants less abortions, you want more Planned Parenthood. You want more birth control. You want all of these things that are proven to reduce the abortion rate. And yet, when it comes down to it, they're pushing stuff like abstinence only education, which in the end, ends up with more abortion.

Grace: Because it doesn't work.

Andi: Exactly. So, it's a super frustrating thing because it's like, if you're trying to have this outcome then you should work backwards to, "What are the things that we can do that will end in this outcome?" And they're doing it completely backward. It's like, if you want to strip the moral argument out of it, you're making policy mistakes. Basic ones. So, that has always been interesting to me.

And when I would work on campaigns, when you're going on "doors" and you're knocking on doors and trying to convince people to vote for your candidate, or your issue, or whatever, whenever abortion came up this is always the thing that I was like, "Do you want less abortions? Or do you want more abortions? Because these are the policies that lower the abortion rates." And sometimes people are blinded by their emotion, or what they consider their moral argument, and it results in something totally opposite of what they say that they want. But then you run into, is what they say they want, really what they want? Or is their goal something else that they won't say? Say, controlling female sexuality. So...

Ari: Yeah, it's very complicated, because a lot of the time people—I mean, especially when you're talking about everyday people, right? When you're not talking about campaigners, or politicians, or ideologues, when you're just talking regular folk, a lot of people don't know what they want. They don't don't fully know what are the very specific, granular reasons for their ideology, right? It's like you were saying, there's the emotional argument of someone. Someone says, "I see a fetus as a baby. This is murder." But then they don't actually—they haven't had the chance or the time in their lives, or disposition to look into it, or think about it further, or it has not impacted their lives in particular. And that's when it becomes really, really difficult, I think. Because it's the thing that makes ideology, political ideology, so difficult sometimes to break down, is that it's political ideology is very good at disguising itself as reality, instead of a political interpretation of the world.

Grace: It's the whole mixing of opinions and saying that they are facts.

Ari: Yeah, I use a very, very specific definition of ideology when I'm talking about this, which is a very, very specific one, which basically is about political ideologies that attempt to direct people in a certain way. And so they do that by obfuscating the real situation, the real conditions in the real world. So, what you're saying is, if you want less abortions, really what you should be doing is funding more Planned Parenthood. But this makes no sense and in that anti-choice worldview, because it's a moralistic one that is, in the end, it's about control and not about actual health and well-being.

Sue: Absolutely. I don't really have basis for comparison, but I know in the US, we tend to think of the pro-life movement as a strictly religious movement. And I know it's not, but that is a big part of it. And the religious aspect of it, at least from the Christian, right, which I can speak to having been raised in it, is that it's not just like, "We want babies," it's like, "You can't have an abortion," but it's also, "You shouldn't be having sex."

Andi: Right.

Sue: At all. So, this abstinence only form of health education, reproductive education, is—

Grace: Which, time and again has proven to be ineffective.

Sue: Right, but it's a method of control, right?

Andi: Right.

Sue: And it's obvious if a woman gets pregnant. Cis men can't get pregnant. So, it comes down on being more restrictive to women. And then the idea of, "Well, you shouldn't be having sex, anyway," is like, "therefore you don't need condoms or other kinds of contraception or the pill because you know, if you're on the pill you're clearly promiscuous and that's bad." It's this very conservative, Christian, religion-based worldview. And then as soon as the baby is born, the same worldview is like, "Well, you don't deserve welfare. You don't deserve government help."

Grace: All about protecting the baby up until it leaves your body.

Sue: Right.

Grace: Then it's your problem.

Sue: And it's the same thing we see in the philosophy of the Gideons, right? "We love life so much that we can't stop having babies, but let's kill all our young people because we're overpopulated."

Ari: You know, there's something else. I was watching this with my friend and while we were watching we were saying it's the difference between an ideology that is obsessed, kind of fetishizes the idea of life, versus actually caring about the quality of that life, like what life actually means. And instead it's all about this fetishized idea of what the concept of life is, and pursuing that to such an extreme that it actually massively harms people.

Grace: Well said.

Andi: Another thing that I wanted to point out is that at the very beginning, one of the things that Hodin says when he is saying that they won't allow people on their planet, is that they consider other races to be violent.

Grace: Hmm!

Andi: It made me think about what they consider violence and how we talk about violence and kindness and mistake it—so to me, him infecting his daughter and letting her die and then infecting vast swaths of the population is violence. That to me is violence, but to him the thing he—okay, here's a great example. When Kirk goes, "Oh, that's what my bruise is from." It's because they took his blood. He was like, "Yes, we didn't know how to do it and we harmed you. We're so sorry." To him, the violence was they left their proof. To me, the violence is—

Grace: They took his f—king blood!

[laughter]

Andi: Well, yeah but they violated his consent to, you know, do what he wants with his own body.

Grace: "Sorry we didn't steal your blood better."

[laughter]

Sue: His consent and his autonomy.

Andi: Exactly. So, to me that is super telling. When you hear people talk about violence you'll notice—

Sue: They're talking about physical violence, physical harm.

Andi: Right, but also think about it in terms of when we're having discussions. People mistake kindness with niceness, with politeness, with civility, that sort of thing. They'll be like, "Oh, this was a really uncivil comment." But you could think of it with Samantha Bee and Ivonka, as an example, where Samantha Bee said something rude or vulgar, or whatever you might want to say, but Ivanka Trump is responsible for actual harm to people.

Grace: Yeah, the second you said mistaking politeness and civility for actual kindness, Ivanka was the first person who came to mind.

Andi: Exactly! So, Ivanka is very civil. She's very polite. She's very nice.

Grace: But she's a monster. She's a monster.

Andi: The policies that she's advocating for and the effect of her father's administration is of real harm. So, it's interesting to me the way they dress up their violence as civility and I find that really scary.

Ari: I find that interesting because that's something that I find myself talking about because I live in Scotland, which is part of the UK, and it's something that I find myself talking about; the issue of political violence and the issue of verbal... the very class dictated and racially dictated ways in which political communication is allowed to happen. And so it's like, on the one hand here in the UK you've had Nigel Farage, the former leader of UKIP, who can get on TV, and he's a despicable human being, but he speaks with a proper accent. He's actually quite rude, but, you know, he's a white guy that speaks with a certain accent and so he gets away with saying some things that are quite horrific.

The way that, in Britain in particular, there's this obsession in political discourse, with politeness and civility because there is an entire class based ideology that someone discussing politics has to be polite and proper and speak the Queen's English and all these sorts of nonsense. And it's this thing that Britain, especially England, exports as its worldview to the rest of the world, whereas England, the UK, has been guilty for massive atrocities. But they export this with this facade of, you know, cup of tea and politeness and the Queen and all this, you know what I mean?

Sue: We see that everywhere from TV to Facebook comments. "Well, I'm not going to listen to your valid points anymore because you were mean to me. And I said this terrible thing but I said it politely."

Ari: Yeah, and the thing is, if you live in the UK and you're not in, shall we say Oxford educated circles, you will know that the way that the culture is in working-class communities, in POC communities, communities where it's not... where people aren't rich, cursing here is very, very common and I would say, in my experience, is a bit more common than in the US, even. So, it's a very, very easy way for posh people to filter it, because curse words are such an intrinsic part of the way people communicate. And you can just completely lock them out of political conversations if they curse liberally, you know? And it's this really, really very obvious thing.

Andi: The other thing that this makes me think of is the way that—okay, so, people will say, "I'm just expressing my opinion," but their opinion is that a group of people deserves less rights, or something like that. And then when your response is, "F—ck off." Oh, well you're the one that's intolerant. You're the bad guy. [Ari laughs] There's actually a poem by this guy named Nizar Qabbani, he's Palestinian, that always makes me think of this when I'm thinking of this whole concept is that you're allowed to treat me poorly and harm me in my everyday life, but because you're doing it with a smile, I'm supposed to smile back, kind of thing.

And the phrase in the poem is, "If you cannot spit upon the knife that is stabbing you, you are in exile." And the idea is they're literally harming you. They're stabbing you with their knife, but you're not supposed to spit back.

Grace: Yeah. How dare you try to defend yourself?

Sue: Mmhm.

Andi: Exactly. And I find that to be something that comes into mind whenever we're talking about this sort of stuff. If you can't spit upon the knife that is stabbing you, that's when you know that that's true oppression. Of course it was a Palestinian poet that managed to put that so perfectly.

Ari: Yeah.

Andi: So, anyway, this is why I wanted to talk about this episode, actually, though. Because a lot of the actual episode is silly as hell, but some of the issues it makes me think of are so deep and that violence one really made me go, "Wow. Let's think about that." Because his version of violence and my version of violence are very different. And his version of kindness and life and my version of kindness and life are very different.

Sue: We have one more issue, which is the concept of the right to die.

Andi: Ah, yeah.

Sue: So, it's kind of where everything else was sort of related. This one is, I think not as much, but for the most part we have Odonia saying over and over again, after she gets ill, that this is her choice and she's not afraid. And, you know, Kirk wants to provide medical care and he's even asking her, "If you would just allow me to treat you." And then she eventually loses consciousness and that's when they just take her back to the Enterprise, without her consent, to cure her.

Andi: Yep.

Grace: They pretty much violate her DNR.

Andi: Yeah, and she's happy about it.

Sue: Mmhm!

Ari: Yeah and there's that scene [laughs] at the end where she's like, "Oh," you know, "how can you look at me? You should be disgusted by me because I tricked you." And Kirk says something like, "Oh, well, you know, considering that you tricked me, the least you should let me do is look at you." [Grace groans] And when we were watching that—with my friend, my friend is this guy, you know—and we both immediately, we're both like, "Eww! Ugh! Gross!" [all laughing] and then he offers his arm and she's really charmed and then I'm like, "No, ugh! Dump him!"

Grace: You can do better!

Ari: Yeah, that's one of those things, you know, that happens a lot. I mean it even happens in **Next Gen**, I think. Like, you're watching it and there's something really progressive going on, a really interesting conversation, and then the show reminds you of when it was made and by whom. [laughs]

Grace: Yep!

Sue: I mean, the right to die is getting to be a bigger and bigger issue. I'm reminded of the Terry Pratchett documentary that he made before he passed called *Choosing to Die*. Really quick, in case that name is not familiar, Terry Pratchett was a fantasy author. He wrote the **Discworld** series and was diagnosed several years ago, probably about 10 years ago, with a form of Alzheimer's that was getting progressively worse. And from that time he started looking into, basically euthanasia. He didn't want to live if he couldn't—if his brain didn't function the way he wanted it to. And that was, you know, illegal in the UK. It's illegal in other places in Europe. And he became a real advocate for this right to die movement and I highly recommend the documentary. It is, even if you don't necessarily agree with it, it's just very interesting, I think, to watch and get these opinions because it's something that's, sort of, really difficult to wrap your head around in a lot of ways, I think.

Ari: Yeah, I think it's very complicated on that side of things because I feel some of the bits that are forgotten, like the discourse on those discussions are the perspectives of disabled people, a lot of the time.

Grace: And a lot of the time it's disabled people who this exclusively affects, yes?

Ari: Yeah, so, it's complicated. It's one of those things where I just feel that it's a very nuanced kind of argument.

Sue: Absolutely. And that's, I think, why it has to be—why I'm not arguing anything. Yeah. No, I just think that discussion is best, in my opinion, for me to listen to by people who have a stake in it, if that makes sense. But, I mean, yeah, that's—the right to die issue was the last thing I had on my list. And it sort of just falls in line with what **Trek**, especially **TOS**, does all the time of, “Well, you think you know what's best for you, but really Kirk, Spock, and McCoy know what's best for you.”

Ari: Mm...

Grace: Charming.

Andi: I also want to point out that this is one of the patented “Well, We Saved the Girl! Bye!” that I absolutely think are so funny from **The Original Series** where it's like everything was terrible, nothing was resolved and then it's like that tinkly music and they're on the bridge and they're like, “Well. That was fun. Let's leave now.”

[Ari laughs]

Grace: “We out!”

Sue: [laughing] They saved the girl, but they're still sending her home to infect everyone else, but the pretty girl is going to live.

Andi: Yeah, I know. Oh, **TOS**. Such a gem. Seriously though, I really did like this episode much more on the re-watch than I did on the first one, just because it made me think about some cool stuff and took me into some interesting places, which is a good thing that I enjoy about **Trek**. But yeah, some of the decision making in this episode is questionable, at best. [laughs]

Grace: Mm, to say the least.

Ari: To say the least, oh my god. The thing that I get every time I watch an **Original Series** episode—even the really well regarded ones—there's always a very bizarre creative choice in an **Original Series** episode. The

one for this episode that lasts for five seconds and I completely hyper focused on, was when they first open communications with the Gideon, after Kirk has been beamed away, and when they first get them, you see the Gideon council chamber on the screen and they are behind this, sort of, cross hatch kind of fence because basically, the camera is from behind the fence. And then the shot changes and then when they're back to the Gideon it's actually a close up. And I'm like, "Do they have a camera that was between the fence?" [laughing] I was just like, "What??"

Andi: There's lots of zooming when it comes to security camera—the amount of footage type shots that actually are frames and zoom and stuff is pretty funny when you watch **TOS**.

Sue: There are a lot of odd shots especially in this episode.

Grace: There's just a lot of odd things in this episode.

Sue: We see Kirk from below, through a glass table. I think one of the shots of the bridge is shot from under the OPs station. [laughs] Why? Maybe to add to the creepiness factor?

Grace: Maybe to tell us that Kirk is someone we need to look up to...

[Sue groans and laughs]

Ari: It's weird. That one about the view screen when they turn it on and you're literally seeing them behind a fence that is really close to whatever the point of view camera is and I'm like, "But why, though?!"

[laughter]

Andi: But why? But why, though?

Sue: [amused] But why?

Ari: Oh, god. Well, you know that bit at the end where him and Hodin are talking and it's shot from below the glass table and I was like, "What? Why is this shot in this way?" it was really puzzling.

Sue: So, we did have one comment on our—I think it was Twitter—feed about this episode that was asking about the title. I could not find anything specific about that; why this was the choice, why they name this planet Gideon. I can tell you what I did find is that Gideon is the Hebrew word for destroyer or mighty warrior. So perhaps the mark of Gideon is like you have been chosen to die?

Andi: Or destroy.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: Ooh, either way.

Ari: Gideon is a Biblical character?

Sue: Yes, he destroyed the statue of Baal. He freed the Israelites and led them away from worshipping false gods, but he turned down the opportunity to be the king of the Israelites.

Grace: Well, nothing good happens to kings of the Israelites, let's be honest.

Sue: I mean, true, but if you want to read more about Gideon his story is in Judges. The book of Judges, so sure. But yeah I just wanted to say that I went and tried to find an answer and that's the best I found. So, does anybody else have any closing thoughts on *The Mark of Gideon*? Anything we didn't touch on or anything you would like to reiterate?

Grace: Well, I did see that in our notes we've got a quote from the writer Stanley Adams talking about this as a beehive society and I'm only just now getting, "Oh, that's why they got all those weird octagons in their decor and outfits."

Andi: Oh, yeah!

Sue: [laughs] Over their turtlenecks?

Grace: [laughs] Octagon turtlenecks! It's eight sides of awesome!

[laughter]

Ari: I did like the I like the polygon jumpers. Pretty good. Good, solid fashion choices. Every time you saw a close up shot of Hodin I was impressed by the eyebrow game.

Andi: [laughs] Yeah! I noticed that.

Ari: Wow. [laughs]

Grace: He looked like Brad Dourif wearing ridiculous facial hair makeup.

[laughter]

Andi: Yeah.

Ari: Yeah. I mean, I guess we didn't talk a lot about the pattern of Spock dealing with bureaucracy and it was just weird.

Grace: Which feels like an odd choice to have Spock be the person going up against bureaucracy.

Andi: Yeah, usually it's McCoy.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Hmm.

Ari: Yeah and McCoy's kind of like sitting there and basically everything that he says Spock is like, "Oh, yeah totally." You know what I mean? [laughter] Spock is like, "Oh, yeah I know buddy." And at one point McCoy is like, "What are we gonna do?" And Spock is like, "Well, you know, you've got to have hope." And I was like, "What? What is happening?"

Sue: That frustration line about prolonging a crisis, to me, is much more of a McCoy line than a Spock line.

Ari: Maybe the scripts were delivered wrong and then by the time they were recording they were like, "Will somebody tell Deforest and Leonard?"

Sue: Eh, they'll figure it out!

Sue: Just let them do it. They're great, they're good at what they do. They're great.

Sue: Alright, I think that just about does it for us this episode. Ari where can people find you on the internet?

Ari: So, you can find me primarily on Twitter. It's at @ab_silveira where you will find me tweeting about things like Irish feminism and the political campaign that just ended about repealing the 8th amendment and trans feminism as well as you know Kamen Rider. [laughs] You know, it's a very varied, good Twitter.

Andi: And Steven Universe.

Ari: And Steven Universe, which I wrote my masters thesis on.

Sue: What?! That's amazing!

Ari: Yeah, it was about the translation of songs in the Latin American version. Yeah. Also, I'm on Facebook if you look for AB Silveira. That is my Facebook Like page, which I need to update more. And more importantly the Angel Two Podcast you can find us on Twitter @angeltwopod.

Sue: Awesome! And Andi?

Andi: You can find me on Twitter @FirstTimeTrek, where I'm still slowly, but surely live tweeting my way through **Star Trek**. I'm on **Voyager** and **DS9** right now.

Sue: Grace?

Grace: You can find me on Twitter @BoneCrusherJenk and in a crowd of dudes in turtlenecks just constantly bumping into each other.

[laughter]

Ari: "Oh, sorry. Excuse me. Sorry. Sorry! Sorry."

Sue: And I'm Sue you can find me on Twitter @Spaltor. You can also find Women at Warp on Twitter @WomenAtWarp, on Facebook at Facebook.com/WomenAtWarp, now on Instagram @WomenAtWarp, online at WomenAtWarp.com and if you'd like to reach us by email you can do so at crew@womenatwarp.com. And finally, for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, you can visit Podcasts.Roddenberry.com for information from the Trek Files, Mission Log and Priority One podcasts. Thanks so much for joining us!

[WAW outro plays]