

Women at Warp Episode 109: Catsbutt, a Reimagining of “Catspaw”

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 today are crew members Andi

ANDI:

Hello.

SUE:

And Jarrah

JARRAH:

Hello

SUE:

and we're going to be talking about the TOS episode Catspaw. But first before we get into our main topic we have a little bit of housekeeping to do. Our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron you can do so for as little as one dollar per month and get some awesome rewards from thanks on social media, up to some silly watch along commentaries. Visit us at Patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts.

JARRAH:

Sue and I are going to be at Awesome Con at the end of April in D.C. And I will be on a panel called Not Your Manic Pixie Dream Girl about newer tropes for women in sci-fi and other sort of geeky genres in addition.

SUE:

Yeah, we're also doing a panel together on toxic fan culture. And then I am doing an additional one on the second season of Star Trek Discovery. So lots of stuff going on at Awesome Con, in addition to several TNG guests at the event. So come say hi to us, find us. Track us down on Twitter if you will be at Awesome Con in DC at the end of April.

JARRAH:

Yeah and we'll be posting the panel details on our social media closer to-

ANDI:

Awesome!

JARRAH:

Con! *all laugh*

SUE:

You just beat me to it. So let's get into it. Catspaw, this is a weird episode.*laughs*

ANDI:

I like it because it has black cats. That's pretty much the main thing that I like about it. *That* is one thing I say we don't change.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So I mean, we did this sort of experiment a little bit when we did a rewriting of Miri, which we renamed Bonk Bonk, and thought we would try our hand at a rewrite of this episode. First, can I say the first thing that I thought of when I was thinking about this episode? Before I re-watched it, I was like "Number one thing" which I believe I also said with Miri, "is Uhura should be in charge of the bridge." Like, especially this one Because Scotty's down on the planet. And even though I still think Uhura should get to be in charge of the bridge before Scotty, because usually in almost all these situations they also need an engineer in engineering. They have Desalle, and he is *super annoying*.

ANDI:

What a douche.

SUE:

Super annoying.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So Uhura should be in charge. But maybe- should we talk a bit about what the original episode is first?

ANDI:

Sure. So, they go to Castlevania *crew laughs* and some weird shit happens, and then they leave. *all laugh* I mean, tell me that's not correct. Where is the lie?

SUE:

I mean, that's correct for almost any episode.

ANDI:

I know, but this is- OK. We'll get more into the details of it, but this was my problem with it is like, none of this stuff on the planet moves the story forward. They pretty much just run around in circles for 40 minutes and then they leave.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And it was all an illusion, except for the guy that died.

ANDI:

I will say though, that- OK. So the very beginning of this episode is Spock and Kirk and Uhura and they're trying to get Sulu and Scotty on the phone. And I like- all the way up until the credits is actually really effective. They're worried, they can't get any information, and then the super weird rando calls up, and they transport them in, and he is like *super creepy* and it turns out he's like a talking corpse, and it's all very cool! I like that part. I would not change anything of that.

JARRAH:

Yes, totally agreed. I like the creepy corpse voice coming out of the guy's mouth, and I don't have a problem with any of the stuff up until that point. So I'm fine with just leaving that.

ANDI:

Yeah. I mean, I like the tension of they're *already* disappeared. Like, we're not going through a whole load of stuff where they beam down *and then* disappear. We're starting from the starting point of "something's wrong." And I like that. That cuts out a lot of unnecessary running around, that they then triple later on. And then props to the dude who played Jackson. He was creepy.

JARRAH:

OK. One thing that maybe I would change by this point, can we talk about Chekhov's hair a little bit?

ANDI:

Oh the wig is so bad!

JARRAH:

Yes, this is the first Chekhov episode and they wanted him to look like one of you know-

ANDI:

The Monkees.

JARRAH:

The Monkees! Thank you. I kept wanting to say the Beegees and I'm like "No, wrong."

ANDI:

Oh my God! That's our first change. Chekov needs to have like a giant disco beard.

JARRAH:

Yes. **Sue laughs** I mean, everyone does as proved by disco McCoy. So yeah. Also probably if he had a Beegees voice, that would be awesome. **all laugh** But yeah, he's wearing a wig in this episode and it looks like Chekhov got a blow out. **all laugh**

ANDI:

They spent too much money on dry ice for the fog and had no more money left for wigs. Like someone was budgeting this episode, and was like “ten dollars for the wig. Five million dollars for dry ice. Someone help me budget this. My show is dying.” It was a bad way y’all.

JARRAH:

So OK. Then they go down to the planet, and then the next thing we see is Spock, McCoy, and Kirk. Which leaves you with the ship being run by Desalle and Uhura and Chekov as supporting actors. They encounter three witches that are supposed to be disembodied heads, but they're clearly wearing turtle necks.

SUE:

I never would have guessed that Jarrah.

JARRAH:

Yeah.*laughs*

SUE:

Never would have guessed that they were supposed to be disembodied heads.*laughs*

JARRAH:

Yeah I think- I mean I'm a fan of the witches part of this episode. But it would have definitely been scarier and more weird and alien feeling and less like a haunted house carnival attraction if they had just been disembodied.

ANDI:

OK. I also really like the witches. Don't really need to change anything about them, in my opinion, because they've got a cool sort of like prophetic Macbeth feel. And I really dig how dumb they are, and how much they like sing all of their words. The like creepy music voices, all of that is truly enjoyable. And of course, the best line of this episode comes from the witches because afterwards Kirk's like “Spock, whaaat?” And his only comment is *nonplussed* “Very bad poetry” *all laugh*

SUE:

Best line.

ANDI:

It's one of the funniest things Spock has ever said.

JARRAH:

Yes, exactly. And then he says they're not real. And that's when Kirk makes an allusion to trick or treating, which is how you know that this is a Halloween episode. *Andi laughs* Actually

specifically designed as a Halloween episode, and is the apparently only Star Trek episode to have ever been close to a holiday special.

SUE:

The original air date of October twenty seventh 1967.

JARRAH:

Mm hmm. And I mean, it was written by Robert Bloch, and we are missing Grace for this episode because I'm sure she would have a lot of interesting things to say about that. Also wrote the What are Little Girls Made Of episode so-

ANDI:

That's obviously the best episode ever made. I mean we're talking top tier Trek there.

JARRAH:

laughs I was going to say as a feminist, credentials are *maybe* *all laugh* a little bit questionable, but I don't think that's what he was going for.

ANDI:

So, so far we've decided that dead corpse guy talking? Excellent. Witches creepy singing? Awesome. Spock one liner? Perfection. And I feel like this is really the turning point *Sue laughs* in which things start to go downhill.

JARRAH:

Oh, can I ask another question? It's "Would you have subbed out any of the away team members?"

ANDI:

Mmm. No.

SUE:

I mean, it's quintessential Star Trek that your entire command staff is in peril. It's not smart, but it's Star Trek.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Also I mean, I'm totally down with later- very soon we see them all chained to a wall in a dungeon. And it would have been definitely a bit weirder and different dynamics if it'd been Uhura. So I will stick with the classic trio.

ANDI:

I'm fine with it. I especially need Spock there so he can just look at everything with disdain.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I feel like after that poetry line Spock really isn't used well. So then they find basically a giant haunted castle.

ANDI:

Castlevania!

JARRAH:

Yes yes Castlevania. And it's all- well you mentioned the dry ice.

ANDI:

I was very impressed with how much dry ice there was. Like I made a note of it. *Jarrah laughs*
I was like "Dry ice.Lots"

JARRAH:

Well yes. Also good lighting.

ANDI:

Yeah. I mean, in general the like design of this episode I like. It's super kitschy but it's fun. And I mean if you're going to have a scary Halloween episode *obviously* you have to have fog.
I mean that's kind of a given.

SUE:

Yeah. So they encounter Korob and eventually Sylvia, who just sort of like, as you said, make them run in circles by giving them all these illusions.

ANDI:

We didn't talk about the cat though, first.

SUE:

Oh yeah. And the cat.

ANDI:

But the cat *is* Sylvia, but we don't know that. But like, at the very beginning they let this cat just like hiss at them for a really long time. And it's not scary, but it is hilarious.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Like, it's Salem in the Melissa Joan Hart Sabrina the Teenage Witch level of scariness.

ANDI:

It's like *extended hissing noise*.

JARRAH:

Yes.

ANDI:

And then lots of shadow work.

JARRAH:

laughs Yes. Lots of- and like fun playing with proportions when you have the cat at the end with like what looks like they just have a house cat looking in a dollhouse, to make it look like the cat's turned giant.

ANDI:

Yeah. So I would keep the cat. I *might* do a little less of the really prolonged scenes of it hissing. But I would keep the cat.

JARRAH:

What if the cat had talked with a creepy corpse voice?

ANDI:

Oh my God *laughs* .

SUE:

If you cut the scenes of the cat hissing and growling, then how will they get across the point that the cat is the most ruthless and most terrifying of animals? *all laugh*

ANDI:

I really wish that they could have just cut to Mary, a different black cat laying on her back with her paws straight up like rolling around.

JARRAH:

Someone should make that video. *all laugh* It should just be that one line, and then cuts to different black cats that are not.

SUE:

I just- it was extra hilarious because when I was re-watching this recently, I literally had all three of my cats on top of me *laughs* as Spock delivers that line.

JARRAH:

And you're like "Jeeze, Star Trek. It's partly your fault that black cats are under adopted."*all laugh*

ANDI:

As the owner of two black cats, I can tell you all that they are delightful. Most of the time. *Sue laughs* Like, ninety eight percent of the time.

JARRAH:

So when they first meet Sylvia and Korob they're like escorted by brainwashed Scotty and Sulu.

ANDI:

Which- OK. Can I interject? That Scotty and Sulu literally say nothing in this episode? And it's something, I have feelings about it.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Apparently it was supposed to be rando's, but Fontana was like "Well we have actors, why don't we use the people we are already paying and that people recognize? Because they won't just care if it's some random dudes that are being brainwashed, but they'll care if it's people they know and love." But I didn't really care that much, because they didn't say anything and they weren't doing anything other than just pointing phasers.

ANDI:

Yeah, I feel like you could have gotten the same effect from like a wax statue holding a gun.

JARRAH:

I feel like it would have been better if she made them wear different outfits. I don't know exactly what but-

ANDI:

Like sexy outfits?

JARRAH:

Well. That is, I admit, what I was thinking. *all laugh* Although I am questioning my politics around that. *laughs* And whether that is regressive, or progressive, or feminist, or anti feminist. I'm not sure. So I am open to just *other* costumes. Like maybe like they could be like Discovery section 31 and just all be wearing black leather. It's like a *little* sexy but we're not talking like exploitative sexy.

ANDI:

So you know, I think that they should be wearing like a Dracula costume.

JARRAH:

Oh yeah! Apparently the original script called for bats and Robert Justman has a memo that's like "I've been unable to find a thousand trained bats. Can you make do with a parakeet?" *all laugh*

SUE:

I want a copy of that memo.

ANDI:

Robert Justman is good at shade. * Sue laughs* He's really good at it. There has been more than one time that I have like laughed out loud at him just being like "What are y'all doing?" *all laugh* But yeah totally. Like tuxedos.

JARRAH:

Oh man! Okay so I am referring to the These Are The Voyages entry for this episode while we record this, and I see now going back to Desalle, and I apologize for jumping around all over the place, but he is actually in the captain's log the *assistant* chief engineer. So they have *two* chief engineers that are out of the picture, and still Uhura doesn't get to command the bridge.

ANDI:

She does get to relay messages though.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And she does in our version get to command the bridge. So we're taking care of it. Check.

ANDI:

Yes. And in our version she is kicking ass up there.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Desalle is just not even in this episode.

ANDI:

Yeah. No. We don't need him to hang around and call Chekov "Mister."

JARRAH:

And say like "I bet you credits for navy beans!"*all laugh*

ANDI:

He was so weirdly intense! *all laugh* OK, I feel like the story with Desalle is that he has always wanted to be a captain, but he's not really all that good at it. But like, he thinks this is a shot. Like if he's really good at captaining that maybe he can get into that command school Tilley is in. So he really just has to make everything seem very dramatic.

JARRAH:

It's all about delivering your lines

ANDI:

intense Desalle voice "Credits to Navy beans!"

SUE:

Is it supposed to- is the navy beans an expression? Or is that supposed to be like "Dollars to doughnuts"?

JARRAH:

I think it's "dollars to navy beans."

ANDI:

What are Navy beans?

SUE:

It's a kind of bean.

JARRAH:

It was a U.S. sailors century, where by the person making the wager is so confident of winning that he'll gamble valuable dollars against undesirable military grub. So basically "I'll put my dollars against your crappy military food that I'm right."

ANDI:

All right. I mean that seems like a Roddenberry touch to be honest.

JARRAH:

Possibly.

SUE:

I mean the thing is if you Google the phrase "Dollars to navy beans" you just get results for this episode.*laughs*

ANDI:

Well, this episode started a new trend.

JARRAH:

OK. I might call this into A Way With Words, the language podcast. I'll let you know if anything comes of that.

ANDI:

He does deliver the line *very* intensely.

JARRAH:

Oh yeah.

JARRAH:

I give him credit for that. Yeah I buy it's a thing.

SUE:

Nickels to navy beans! That's what it is.

JARRAH:

Ooooh. So chained in the dungeon, there's a skeleton that's clearly fake, and they're hanging by their wrists sort of. They're clearly not actually hanging. Their wrists are just above their heads. They're clearly standing quite flat on the ground. Which is good because that otherwise is pretty bad for your back. *all laugh*

ANDI:

Can I just point out how often TOS has their leading men in chains?

JARRAH:

That occurred to me as well, because there's like there's the Nazi episode I think, and maybe one of the like Roman gladiator episodes?

SUE:

Yeah. They're imprisoned quite often.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And I mean now I'm like "I get where a lot of the Kirk Spock fan fiction tropes come from." People were not *only* just thinking of it out of their heads. But this is interesting too because that was- something that was like often in *feminist* pop culture critique. We're talking about things like Wonder Woman being tied up, and like women damsels in distress, of you know the decades before Star Trek but also still into that time. So it's interesting that the guys are tied up a lot, and that I don't think they're portrayed in a way that makes them sort of conform to those same problems with damsel in distress, that like they're weak or they need rescuing. It's like "they're going to think they're way out of this one."

SUE:

"Think or fight" for sure. They rarely have someone come to their rescue, unless it is in that animated series episode.

JARRAH:

Yes. So that's a good point. OK. So zombie Scotty and Sulu escort them to Sylvia and Korob. And then this is where I start getting confused about what the heck they even want.

SUE:

Yeah I definitely don't know.

JARRAH:

Cause it sort of feels like a little bit like Squire of Gothos, where you know Korobs trying to like give them all these things cause he wants them to stay there or something? But then they are also threatening them, and want to- I mean it seems like they need to be in their *minds* to understand them? Because they're sort of this advance party for like a colonizing species. And so they've drawn all of this stuff out of their subconscious. All of like the fears. It's sort of like If Wishes Were Horses, where they're like pulling things out of their minds and then manifesting them to try to get some sort of reaction or to try to learn more about them. Only it's more malicious than the DS9 episode.

SUE:

A little bit like The Cage and Menagerie too.

JARRAH:

Yeah! Yeah. Very much.

SUE:

This is a very reused Star Trek idea of "I'm going to create the illusion of the thing that's in your brain." Even with- is it Future Imperfect with Riker and Minuet?

JARRAH:

Oh yeah. Yeah. That and Coda with Janeway's Dad. I'm sure we could think of more. Fairly confident this is not the only time.

SUE:

Oh no, not at all. But they never really tell us what they want; they tell us that they're explorers from another galaxy. They want the Enterprise to go away.

JARRAH:

But they trap them there. Like the Enterprise would totally go away if they were like "Here's all your people back."

SUE:

But there's no indication that they're after like, galactic domination. So did they just want to colonize that planet?

JARRAH:

Yeah I'm not really clear on that.

ANDI:

shouting That is my biggest problem with this episode! *all laugh* I don't know! Over and over again they ask her, and she just is like "Oh we need information." What does that mean? Information for what? What is the end goal? What is the purpose?

JARRAH:

And then if the people that are zombies that are being controlled by them do, does that mean that she has all the information from them?

ANDI:

Yeah. I mean it was kind of implied that they became zombies because she drained them of information? But that doesn't make any sense, because they're not permanently damaged in any way.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I mean she talks about *controlling* them, but then mysteriously doesn't want to do that to Kirk. But then mysteriously like- OK so we're sort of in the part now where they're meeting Korob and Sylvia, Korob is like manifesting all their desires, what he thinks their desires are.

SUE:

Based on their *Halloween subconscious*.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So interesting again, that also there's nothing Vulcan there. 'Cause Spock didn't know anything about Halloween. This is partly why Spock's kind of badly used in this episode, is that he shows up, they don't even really explain that like they can't access his mind because he's a Vulcan, or like use his powers in some cool way. But then they also don't show his Vulcan halloween.

SUE:

Missed opportunity.

SUE:

Yeah. I mean, they do say "You're the one who thinks differently." And like are we supposed to take from that? That means you can't read him or control him?

ANDI:

Yeah. It's kind of implied but nothing is really stated out loud. And it was also weird to me because what's his face Kolob? Kokoro. Ko-bla-bla-bla-

JARRAH:

Korob.

ANDI:

-ub-ub-blub says something at one point, when he messes up and gives them like jewels or whatever. And Kirk is like *intensely* "We don't care about jewels." and he's like "Oh but I read-" What did he read? Where did you read this? I thought they were getting all of their information from everybody's mind.

JARRAH:

Maybe he just means "I read their mind"? *laughs*

ANDI:

That's a weird way to say that. *Jarrah laughs* Maybe Sulu really loves jewels? So he thought everyone else would love jewels? I don't know. So I think that if we fix *this* problem it would make his episode a million times better. What is their motivation?

SUE:

What are the stakes? We don't know.

Exactly! Because there are none. It really is just like "How many creepy visuals can we push into this." And like they just run around in circles.

SUE:

"What do we have in the costume and props shed?" *all laugh*

JARRAH:

So then, not long after this is the part where Sylvia Korob start to have conflict, because she is so like into the idea of having sensation. Because she doesn't experience the same like physical and emotional sensations when she's not in her human body. So I like- I kind of like *that part*, but then you have to explain why can't they just feel those things without other people? And it kind of makes me- then like we're straying like really close to the Squire of Gothos if we say like "They're trapped there, and they need people to experience these things." Although the additional layer being that like, it's also an *interesting* sensation to hurt people.

ANDI:

Yeah. I got the sense- OK, so what's his face at some point, I'm never gonna remember that name it's too dumb. He says something about "The old ones" at some point?

JARRAH:

Yeah.

ANDI:

OK, so this is number one, we're really writing- we're getting out our typewriter here. We need to know *why* they're on this planet, why they left their previous planet, and where they want to go. Like it doesn't have to be complicated. They could of like, their people died. And they are in search of a new planet that they can live on or something. That's *basic* crap.

JARRAH:

Or they like- what will the old ones do if they come back without completing their mission?

ANDI:

Yeah!

SUE:

What even is their mission?

JARRAH:

Maybe their mission is that their people ultimately want to conquer the galaxy? And so their mission is to figure out how to control humans. But then by turning *into* humans they figure out that they really like being humans, or feeling like humans.

SUE:

Very Doctor Who.

JARRAH:

Yeah it is. But can you blame me?*laughs*

ANDI:

It's less that we need this really complicated story, so much as we just need a *whole* story. Yeah, because the way it is, as it stands, is just like "Sylvia cray cray. She likes killing people." Like that's not helpful. And I think the actress does an ok job. But she's super rational, and like part of that is we don't know what her goal is. So how can we determine whether she's rational or not? If we don't know what her plan is? And we never find out. We never find out! It's so frustrating! We get to the end, and they die, and it's just like "Alright, dodged that bullet. Bye."

JARRAH:

Well, I'm even more confused about what *his* goals are, because at least we know something about her motivations. We know nothing about his motivations.

ANDI:

He has a pretty great wizard robe though. And a wand.

JARRAH:

Yes. The wand is pretty unimpressive. The "transmuter."

ANDI:

No, the wand has a knob on the end. It's very impressive.

JARRAH:

laughs Yep. It's hard to like fix that problem, because it's so fundamental to the episode. But they definitely need a reason for doing what they're doing.

ANDI:

I mean Sylvia could just be a sadist, and that's fine. That's a motivation. But I don't know.

JARRAH:

But then I think she needs to start like that, and maybe like by the time the away team gets there Korob, if Korob is even in this. Like, does Korob even need to be in this episode?

ANDI:

I think they put him in there for a conflict with Sylvia, and also to show that women when they get, you know, emotions go bananas and start you know manipulating everyone.

JARRAH:

Right. But what if you just had Sylvia, and what if she was a sadist, and from the beginning when Kirk Spock and McCoy beamed down that it's like she's trying to ensnare them in her game to- basically just out of like a lust for power.

ANDI:

Yeah. And just having fun with her toys.

JARRAH:

Yeah. She's just like an evil alien, and they happen to wander into her backyard. Like yeah, it's not the strongest motivation ever, but it-

ANDI:

-Is one.

JARRAH:

Well it's better than like, these sort of weird convoluted references that don't really like add up to anything.

SUE:

But I feel like if you accept the premise that their natural existence is without sensation and when they take on human form then feel sensation, like as weird as that is, if you accept that premise I think it's totally reasonable that she could become essentially addicted to sensations. And when you're dealing with an addiction you don't act reasonably, you don't act logically. As long as you can find more.

JARRAH:

Yeah. That makes sense. I mean I say cut Korob but and I think that would help.

ANDI:

But that means we lose his awesome wizard robes with the eye on on them.

JARRAH:

I already said that Scotty and Sulu needed different outfits...

ANDI:

Oh there you go.

SUE:

Put them in wizard robes.

JARRAH:

That's what she dresses them in. *Andi laughs*

SUE:

Renaissance Fair realness. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

I also think though, that if they go that route of you know having it be about like "Suddenly I'm human. And I am addicted to these impulses or the feelings that I get from doing these things." There probably would need to be a moralizing speech in there somewhere. How about there's more to being human and part of being human is that we don't always act on these things. I mean that's not a good parallel with addiction, but I feel like it's not super Star Trek to be like you know humans instinct- well I mean, I don't know. Star Trek does flirt with the idea that human's instinct is to hurt others. But then they usually go to "But we don't now."

SUE:

But we also had some TNG episodes that explored like aliens trying human things and the reactions being so different. Like the one that like had to learn anger, and the one that Troi took to eat chocolate.

JARRAH:

Yeah and the Vorta who just wants to eat all the things.*laughs*

SUE:

Yeah. And even when Q becomes human, and again there's chocolate. *all laugh*

ANDI:

Well let's face it chocolate is one of the best things about being human.

JARRAH:

There's not enough chocolate in this episode. Given that it's a Halloween episode, there's no candy.

SUE:

For sure. You want a sensation Sylvia? Have this dark chocolate.

ANDI:

I got it! I got it! I got it! I figured it out. I've cracked the code, you ready? OK. Sylvia and her people were on a planet, and she started using their powers for bad things. And she like sucked her planet dry and killed everyone and now she has to find a new planet to start all over again. But she only made it to this uninhabited planet before she like ran out of power or something. So she's stuck there. But what she has to do is not only feed herself from the crew, because she's addicted or whatever, but also get them to take her to the ship or whatever so she can get to Earth and suck it dry. So like a mixture of evil spider lady, which they already have that kind of vibe right, and then also addiction, and then also like virus almost? I mean it's better than what they have.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And that like her instinct is to do that through threatening, versus like pretending to be a victim. That's actually not bad. But like she's like "Look, I have so much power. You need to do what I say" versus like "poor me." Like you know, like What Are Little Girls Made Of or other episodes where they find a woman who appears to be helpless but is actually totally going to take over your ship.

ANDI:

And like she gets off on like the fear.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Sort of you know elements of Wolf In The Fold, but-

ANDI:

I basically smooshed together like five different sci fi tropes.

SUE:

laughs So can we also cut the "I'll be whatever kind of woman you want me to be, Captain Kirk."

JARRAH:

Oh my gosh! OK. We have to talk about that, especially the woman with whatever that white wig is *all laugh* like that.

ANDI:

I was going to say the second look is actually not bad at all. It's like I Dream of Jeannie on like LSD. *Sue laughs*

JARRAH:

Well it's sort of like leather I Dream of Jeannie.

ANDI:

Yeah! It's not bad. And then she transitions to *pause* whatever *that* was.

JARRAH:

It's like a paisley onesie. *Andi laughs*

ANDI:

I can't wait to go to the store and be like "I'm looking for a paisley onesie." *all laugh*

JARRAH:

And it's like this white wig with a weird asymmetrical top ponytail.

ANDI:

And she also does this shimmy. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

Yeah she looks like an LSD hippie clown.

ANDI:

laughs Now normally I would be all for that, but she doesn't pull it off.

JARRAH:

No. And like Kirk is doing a big smile that's like "Yeah. Oh yeah girl." And you're like "No. *Andi laughs* I don't buy this at all. You're totally lying Kirk." Also, did she pick the right person to seduce?

ANDI:

I mean, does she have to seduce anyone?

SUE:

He's the lead.

ANDI:

Yeah. I mean if she has to seduce *anyone* it might as well be Kirk. Although I think it might be more interesting, if we're going with my spider lady idea, that it'd be Spock. And like he's the one that she can't feed off of. So she's like fascinated by him.

JARRAH:

Yeah. That was the only other option I was thinking of. I don't necessarily mind that it's Kirk, because I just wondered maybe that was an option that you could use for Spock. But then if she's not going to seduce them, I mean I think the seduction thing is not particularly progressive because it is very like black widow-y. But it does lend itself to the whole rationale of being addicted to sensations and not having felt this before.

ANDI:

But I mean they really sexed it up. There was a lot of like talk of "joining" and stuff. And I was like "Wow, y'all are really going for it." I can't quite remember the music, but my impression of the music was like saxophones, and I know it probably wasn't right, but it was like space porn music.

SUE:

The music was very different this whole episode.

JARRAH:

scatting sexy music Bah bah bah bah bah bah bah bah bah.

ANDI:

Yeah!*all laugh*

JARRAH:

But I also- when they were basically making out I was like "I don't remember making out like that being a thing."

ANDI:

Yeah! It's so weird! It's like he's like kissing all over her face or whatever and they're talking in between.

JARRAH:

Yeah it's as if they are simultaneously turning their heads in opposite directions while talking and trying to make as much lip contact with whatever part of their face possible.

ANDI:

It's impressively un-erotic.

JARRAH:

Yeah.*all laugh*

ANDI:

I mean the talk of the joining was pretty sexy, but this was not sexy. I mean, I personally like really fraught metaphors *all laugh* but this is just like "What are you doing?" *all laugh* I mean, on her end she's probably never kissed anyone so that makes sense. But on Kirks end like, what are you doing bro? Like that's not what kissing is. But I do kind of like the idea of keeping the seduction, and keeping it with Spock. Like she can't get anything else from him so like he becomes something else to her? And I would like to take this moment to point out that McCoy is very poorly used in this too. He's basically pointless.

JARRAH:

He uses the creepy stairwell.

ANDI:

Yeah I mean, well that's a given.

SUE:

He's there to declare two different people dead.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I actually thought when I re-watched it, I forgot and I thought that McCoy was faking being brainwashed. And that would've been cool, if somehow he was able to fake it. I don't know how, but then help them escape instead of being under her spell. Because otherwise it's like, we miss something because she calls McCoy away and then is like "Captain you're next." But then Kirk is actually the one she has designs on, and McCoy she doesn't do anything to, other than make another henchman. And we don't even see that happen.

ANDI:

Yeah boring.

JARRAH:

I also like the idea of her seducing Spock better, because with Kirk like this is something we've talked about a fair amount, is this idea of about like sexual coercion and the fact like she has all the power in this situation. But this scene is not seen as problematic because Kirk is such a womanizer that well of course he'd like enjoy making out with his captor. And you know like, I don't think it's particularly insidious, but it's just problematic in the overall scheme of things that like you know "Well if a woman's in charge, and like a guy like Kirk, well of course he'd be like totally into this because it's sexy fantasy time." Whereas like Spock you can't, you know, if she's trying to seduce him because she can't get to him. And you're not really sure like how successful she is, then it's a little bit like Enterprise Incident but from a different perspective and just less of a sort of obvious power dynamic problematization.

ANDI:

Problematization?

JARRAH:

Yeah.

ANDI:

Yeah. Cool, yeah. And we've got to give something to McCoy to do. Like, I feel like McCoy should cure them. Like he should spend the episode figuring out what's wrong with Sulu and Scotty, and cure them.

JARRAH:

Maybe their tricorder still works, because there's no real reason for their tricorder not to work. Like I get why she's disabled their Phasers and Communicators, but maybe she just doesn't even think that their tricorder is going to be a problem. Maybe he figures out like using *that* how to cure them.

ANDI:

Definitely a hypo spray. Just like adrenaline straight to the brain. Wake up! But he just needs something to do, like otherwise he's just hanging around being weird. And it's boring.

JARRAH:

Or maybe she makes McCoy, Scotty, and Sulu be her backup band. *Sue laughs*

ANDI:

Oh my gosh. I like where this is going.

JARRAH:

And that's why she needed to make McCoy into another henchman, because she needed a drummer before she went after Kirk.

ANDI:

And in this case we should probably make it Chekov instead of Scotty. So he can have his Monkees-

JARRAH:

hair moment.

SUE:

Right.

ANDI:

I mean I really feel like we're making some important changes here.

JARRAH:

I mean they're henchmen/backup band, but really I mean if she's into sensation she hasn't even tried music yet.

SUE:

That we know of. Yeah it would be like creepy Halloween music.

JARRAH:

But she she definitely didn't try it before the people got there. I mean she probably also like plumbed the depths of Scotty's brain and came up with some pretty great bagpipe stuff.*all laugh*

ANDI:

I have to say though, that if the biggest problem of this episode is a lack of motivation or plot, the second biggest is just the pacing of the last two acts. It is *boring*. I mean, I like this episode for the most part. Like I don't think it's super bad or anything. I just like, I really lose interest. Cause you know they're not gonna get stuck there. So like *pause* it's just counting down until they leave.

SUE:

Well the thing is that like, I actually really like the overarching sci-fi idea behind this. Of these super foreign, unknown, unusual aliens that are like the farthest thing from humanoid that we see on Star Trek, using their telepathic abilities to not only manipulate but just to communicate. And then they see their true form and they're like three inches tall and fuzzy little blue things. And I think that that frame is a really interesting one for Trek. But it just went down this like, novelty Halloween path. And we don't know if we're ever going to see these fuzzy blue creatures again.

ANDI:

Well those ones *died*.

SUE:

Well yes. I mean the race of creature.

ANDI:

We don't even know what they're called.

JARRAH:

Yeah. We also don't- there's just no- in that the whole last scene there's not really- so Korob tries to sort of help them escape, and they're just lacking a change in the action or momentum, like a setback other than the fact that- so Korob gets crushed by a door. Kirk steals the transmuter. But it's mostly like you said, just running in circles. They have to fight off Sulu and

Scotty and McCoy, but once they do maybe if they were shaken out of their stupor, and somehow like came up with a cooler plan then “hope Sylvia doesn't touch the wand.”

ANDI:

Yeah. And I do think that there needs to be either more or none of the Enterprise, because switching back and forth was really jarring.

JARRAH:

It was just not necessary after the candle part. For sure. Like, they really didn't need the part where they're contacting them, and “Oh I can only get one of them-”

ANDI:

Felt like time killing.

SUE:

But it was also just so jarring and silly. Like, “I'm raising the temperature” “They're raising the temperature!”

JARRAH:

“Look at them all sweating!” *Sue laughs*

ANDI:

Sweat did not do that wig any favors.*all laugh* It got real frizzy looking. I mean, if you thought that it wasn't possible for that way to get worse, you were wrong.

JARRAH:

They needed to demonstrate her power over the ship, so that the stakes were higher. But already she has power over the *entire main cast*. But it like, it shows something that *that* wasn't seen as high enough stakes because it was just kind of boring. She wasn't really doing anything with it. Like making them sing for her! *Sue laughs*

ANDI:

Oh my gosh. It needed to be a Monkee's song too.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So I don't know what we'd like- can we give them a better plan? Maybe they have to, I don't know, maybe the transmuter isn't just in Korobs hand and able to be grabbed like that? Like I feel like Sylvia would not let it get out of her sight that easily. Like maybe she has it locked somewhere. And they have to make a plan that involves all five of them to get it back.

ANDI:

Yeah, because McCoy has cured them. That's useful. Good job McCoy, way to do something in this episode. I personally would love it if the last act turned into a heist movie. *Sue laughs* And like, they are heisting, and Spock goes in and like distracts her with his wiles.

SUE:

It could be way simpler if Kirk just destroys the transmuter as soon as he gets it. Rather than this weird standoff of like "Don't touch it! Dooooon't touch it!"

ANDI:

See, what's worse is that she told them about her own weakness. Why did you *groans* girl.

SUE:

Classic villain move.

ANDI:

"Let me explain to you during our weird making out session where all of my power comes from."
Jarrah laughs There is so much good things in this episode, but structurally it's a bit of a mess.

JARRAH:

So if we're sort of okay with heist movie ending, and then what do we want to happen to Sylvia and not Korob, because we've written him out of this.

ANDI:

Can I say that I find it kind of weird that they break it, and then they just watch the aliens die? They don't try and help them or they don't even seem to care that they died?

JARRAH:

They don't capture them in a specimen container.

ANDI:

Yeah. Like, they could save them.

SUE:

Yeah, I would like her to be able to survive without her transmuter. And for them to like, take her to a star base or something where maybe they can communicate.

JARRAH:

Also clearly the transmuter is like, I'm guessing, an image manifestation of a wand vs. that's actually what the actual tool looks like. Cause it's like three times as big as what they actually are. So how would they wield it? And what would it look like for the little blue guys to wield a transmuter?

ANDI:

I just thought it was weirdly dispassionate for them to just watch them die.

SUE:

Well and McCoy, the doctor, going "Well it's too late now." *crew laughs* All right. "Do no harm" right friend?

JARRAH:

And you're like, "But they're just little crab Muppets now." *Sue laughs*

ANDI:

They were *so cute*. I would not change the design of them at all.

SUE:

Not at all.

JARRAH:

No. Yeah, I mean that would be a good good moment for them *passionate voice* "Have some compassion man!"

ANDI:

Yeah. I don't understand. It's just- and then they just leave and then they're just gone. It's just done. I feel like if you cut 20 minutes of running around on the inside, you could have some follow up on like the moral ambiguities brought up in the episode.

JARRAH:

Or you could have them on the bridge, being like "Now that the creatures are safely at the Starfleet research facility we've discovered blah blah blah." And then you could have some sort of sassy joke.

ANDI:

I mean that is patented TOS ending.

SUE:

"Maybe we can teach them some better poetry." *all over the top laugh*

ANDI:

I like that actually. That's pretty great. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

Yeah I like our vision too.

ANDI:
I do too.

JARRAH:
I'm a fan of the original, but you're right there's a lot of not going anywhere and definitely no *why*.

ANDI:
Yeah I mean, I really just- it was frustrating because throughout the whole thing I'm like "But why though?" Why? So I feel like that's the main flaw that needs to be fixed. But some of the visuals are pretty great. Some of the *looks* are pretty great too, except for that weird one. The Paisley onesie.

JARRAH:
Yes. I like her black dress though. That's cool.

ANDI:
I like the necklace.

JARRAH:
Yeah. **cat in background meows**

ANDI:
Is that Sylvia? Oh no, she got Jarrah! **all laugh**

SUE:
Well it was Tilley, so **all aw**

JARRAH:
Another Sylvia. Cute.

SUE:
She's a pain in the butt. Cats butt

ANDI:
Please let us call this episode Catsbutt. **Sue laughs**

JARRAH:
laughs Why not? **all laugh**the cats. Catsbutt: a re-writing of Catspaw. **all laugh** OK. Is there a giant litter box? **Sue laughs** Is that one of the nightmares? **all laugh** Oh, it's one of my nightmares.

ANDI:

You know what? I'm throwing everything we changed out, and I'm changing it like this: instead of the crew it's a cat going through their nightmares. So it's like the vacuum cleaner. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

Yes. *all laugh*

SUE:

So Andi, if people want to talk to you about their cat's butt, where can they find you on the Internet?

ANDI:

Nowhere. I don't want to hear about that. *Sue laughs* You can catch me on Twitter @firsttimetrek.

SUE:

And Jarrah?

JARRAH:

You can find me on Twitter @JarrahPenguin, or at Trekkiefeminist.com.

another meow in the background

ANDI:

What was that Mary? *Meows again* Oh OK.

SUE:

laughs And I'm Sue. You can find me on Twitter @spaltor, that's S P A L T O R. If you'd like to contact the show you can e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.Com *cat meows again* or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com. Thanks so much for listening. *final cat meow*