

Women at Warp Episode 103: Discovery's Short Treks

[Women at Warp Theme]

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 tonight are Andi.

Andi: Hey.

Sue: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello.

Sue: And tonight, we are going to be talking about the four-part series, you can call it I guess *Short Treks* that were on CBS All Access/wherever Jarrah saw them in Canada.

Jarrah: Crave TV.

Andi: Yeah, that-- [laughs]

Jarrah: It's a thing you guys don't have. It is mostly good for *Star Trek*.

Sue: [laughs] Before we get to our main topic tonight, we have some housekeeping to do. There is quite a bit of it tonight, so we're going to try and power right on through. As always, we'd like to remind you that our show is entirely funded 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 to silly watch-along commentaries and possibly something more in the future. So, if you'd like to join us there, you can visit patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

Jarrah, you want to talk a little bit about the book club?

Jarrah: Absolutely. We wanted to remind you about our Women at Warp Book Club which you can join at [goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com) by searching Women at Warp under the Groups tab. And our next book club selection is *Letters to Star Trek*. It is a collection that's edited by Susan Sackett who was the secretary to Gene Roddenberry of mail that they received during *The Original Series* and syndication. And we are going to be recording our episode in mid February. So, we're going to start stirring up some conversation in the Goodreads group. If you're reading the book, now is the time to get on it and get joining in the discussion.

Sue: Awesome. A slightly more timely announcement is that along with our sister podcast on the Roddenberry Network, Priority One and Geek Life Rules, we will be helping to host/support the *Discovery* Season 2 premiere party in New York City that is a fan-run event, January 17th at 06:00 PM at McHale's Pub. You can find the event by going to our Facebook page and then clicking events. There will be trivia contests and prizes and screenings, a *Trek*-inspired menu and bar, and a charity raffle and auction with all proceeds going to Pop Culture Hero Coalition which is Chase Masterson's anti-bullying charity. So, if you are in the New York City area and you are interested in coming to that, please check out that event. It is absolutely free, but an RSVP is requested so that we can prepare.

Jarrah: Awesome. We also have an exciting new giveaway that we wanted to let you know about for fan sets enamel pins. We have five sets of four pins in each set to give away. Each set has two *Discovery* pins and two *Original Series* pins. To enter the giveaway, email crew@womenatwarp.com with the subject line "Pins," and tell us what you hope to see from *Trek* in the coming year.

Sue: And just to be absolutely clear, we do not judge the content of your response as you enter the giveaway. It is just to make sure that you're actually listening to the episode.

Jarrah: And sometimes we write a blog post that summarizes some of your best emails.

Sue: Yeah, that too. [laughs] All right, so let's get into the meat of this episode and that is the *Short Treks*, one a month to keep us subscribed to CBS All Access, it seems, and/or Crave TV. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, I know a lot of people who waited until the fourth one came out and were like, "I'm just renewing this week now so that I can get my *Discovery* next week and watch all four of them."

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: I will say this, CBS All Access is mostly crap. But if you haven't already, you should watch *The Good Fight*. *The Good Fight* is the other original series that you can only get on CBS All Access. And it is great.

Jarrah: And I can't get that on Crave, and I am frosty about that.

Andi: [laughs]

Jarrah: But there's some other good stuff on Crave. I don't mean to knock it.

Sue: While we're on it a little bit, this is the discussion that always comes up with *Discovery* is paying for *Star Trek*. I just want to put out there my own personal opinion on this is I don't mind paying for *Star Trek*. A, okay shut up and take my money, that's fine. The problem I have with it is that the platform so often doesn't work. If you're going to make me pay for it, make sure that the episodes are posted when you say they're going to be and that the system doesn't crash every time I try to use it. That's my problem. If I'm paying for it, I expect service for what I'm paying for. Just saying.

Jarrah: Yeah, I know that the *Short Treks* weren't made available outside of the U.S. and Canada, which has really frustrated a lot of people. Because I think everyone outside the U.S. and Canada felt very grateful they could just watch *Star Trek* on Netflix. And we've also been told that in Canada we're going to get pushed to CBS All Access next year, but I guess they have to overcome some licensing hurdles because we have like Canadian content regulations.

But yeah, I agree with you, Sue. I think we have always paid one way or another for *Star Trek*, whether that was paying for a cable package that included the right channel, or paying for VHS tapes or DVDs, or just paying for merchandise. And I think that we try to find ways to make *Star Trek* accessible to more people, and that's great. We have watch-along parties in our groups and no one has to pay to attend those in our local groups. But ultimately, I don't think like the argument, "Well, now we have to pay for it," really holds a lot of water. It's just more about like paying for something, like is this platform worth it when.

And it's frustrating when we're being asked to pay for more and more different platforms when the part of the attraction of streaming was it was kind of all in one place and now it's like, well, okay, but you got like your Hulu and your Netflix and then your Disney XD and like all of the different platforms, and it's just going to end up being exactly like cable, except for instead of buying stupid packages that you only want to watch one or two shows, it's different streaming services where you only want to watch one or two shows.

Sue: Which, to be fair is what a lot of people were asking for 10 years ago.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Why can't I just subscribe to the channels I want to have and not have to buy a package?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Oh, we can't make up our minds. But anyway, let's dive into the actual content of these *Short Treks* episodes and start with October 4th's *Runaway*.

Andi: Tilly.

Sue: This is the Tilly episode.

Jarrah: Yeah. This one warmed the cockles of my cold Canadian heart.

Andi: [laughs] I don't think your heart is particularly cold, Jarrah. I'm just going to throw that out there.

Jarrah: It has been since October 4th. Not all year round, but during the airing of these four episodes. Yeah, it's a really sweet episode about an alien stowaway sort of fugitive, I guess. She's not a criminal, but she's run away. She finds herself on *Discovery*. She runs into Tilly, who's having some issues with her mom, and the two of them have kind of a bonding moment and realize they can both be more than they imagined. And it's adorable. And there are only women speaking in it, so it's very Bechdel-Wallace test friendly as well as just awesome, generally.

Andi: Yeah. I think this is the one that I heard the most critiques of that there are a fair amount of people who weren't all that impressed with it. I personally liked it a lot. I love Tilly, and I just really liked getting a chance to kind of dive into her insecurity a little more and kind of explore the character arc that she went through on *Discovery* and kind of where she has ended up from all of these events.

And Po is just-- She's awesome. She's like alien Daria. I love her. And it's funny. I think it's really funny. Especially when the Replicator loses its shit and just throws things at Tilly that I died laughing.

Jarrah: I like too when she's like, "Oh, yeah, well did you invent a Replicator that would only make ice cream? No, because you just learned what ice cream is."

Andi: [laughs]

Sue: Mostly sugar. Sugar is awesome.

Jarrah: And when the Replicator doesn't want to give Tilly more espresso, it's so cute. I don't know what critiques did you see of it? Was it like-- Because this was the first one, so I think people didn't really know what to expect, but it is like all these stories are just kind of fundamentally their moments, so they aren't telling us anything really revolutionary. But they're really nice, I think, character insights.

Andi: Yeah. The one that I saw said that it was rushed and that they didn't like the, I guess, backstory. And they didn't think that what Tilly, did basically sneaking her away without telling anyone was believable.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: I don't know. I think that's all fair. But also, I wasn't-- I guess I always kind of go into these things not expecting much. So, I just try and keep myself open. And to me, it was exactly what I thought it would be, which was a quick 15-minute short story basically.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: So, the rushed thing I didn't quite get, and I thought that their chemistry was really good and I really enjoyed them together, so that was more important to me than, I guess, trying to break down the logistics of everything very in depth, because I don't think it really needs that much scrutiny, I guess. It's two women who are feeling overwhelmed and find strength in each other.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: I also really related to Tilly and her mother because I have a lot of issues with my mother and that really resonated with me.

Sue: I have also seen the critique that it felt rushed which, I mean, it's a 15-minute episode, but I see where people saying that are coming from. And I think the episode does the standard things we see in television to show the passage of time like cuts to different locations. But the characters remain both kind of like stressed out and frantic and frenetic for the entire episode, which I think telegraphs right to that feeling of this happened way too quickly, but I don't have a problem with it. The thing that I think this really serves to do is remind us how young Tilly is.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: We're not used to seeing cadets on Starfleet vessels, so I think we sometimes forget that she's not an Ensign or a lieutenant or older than she is. She's, what, like 21, maybe as a cadet still? And Po's just 17. So, we're seeing two very young women who are trying to make decisions about their futures as well. And I think it's really lovely to see them supporting each other in that way.

Andi: And with Po, it's not just her personal decisions, it's that her decisions are going to affect an entire planet full of people.

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: Because she's a queen.

Jarrah: Yeah. But she's also like this badass inventor who's come up with like galaxy-shattering technology by age 17. So, it's cool too, because it's showing like two young women who are super into science.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: I see where the critique as well about some things not being super believable, but I also kind of cut them some slack because it's a short episode and it's not meant to be necessarily as fleshed out as some of the other ones. We see in *Star Trek* that it's very hard to transport someone off a ship with no one figuring out you're doing it, so things like that. And that no one would come into the mess hall the entire time that she's there till the very end.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: And there's also a question of, like, how far did Po transport? Like, how far away was her planet? Because they don't know where she's from. But we haven't really established like how far do the transporters work. But then again, *Discovery* has a lot of different technology that could potentially be seen to challenge some of the sort of rules that we've set out in the other *Trek* series. So again, none of that stuff really particularly bothered me. I can see where it's coming from, but for me it didn't get in the way of finding it a really sweet and enjoyable episode.

Andi: This is going to sound like it comes out of nowhere, but bear with me. So, I've been thinking about this with *Harry Potter* in that *Harry Potter* has a very fleshed out world building, but the problem is with a completely made-up society, the more you dig into it, the less it holds up. And I'm thinking specifically of the hilarious Pottermore tweet that came out-

Jarrah: Yup.

Andi: -where they're like, "Oh, yeah, by the way, in the 14th century, wizards just took dumps on the ground and then vanished their poo." And it's like, "Okay, why did we need to know that?" But like this thirst for more and more knowledge of the world and the more you know about it, the more you go, "Wait a second, what?"

Jarrah: Totally hear you. Although that was the first time that I thought, "Actually, I don't know if I want to go to Hogwarts."

Andi: [laughs] It's just like this natural human thing that we have where we have to make everything work. Or at least, there are people that feel that way like they want to know every single detail they can get their hands on and sometimes authors and creators and stuff will try and supply that for you, and it doesn't necessarily hold up to scrutiny. Now, some of it holds up better than wizards just pooped themselves. [laughter] I mean, that's what this makes me think of, is like you're trying to read so much into something that was not meant to bear that weight. I mean, we're not talking about resolving canon problems. And this is a bigger thing that people have with *Discovery* is whether or not it fits with established canon. When you're thinking about how they were doing it on *The Original Series*, they 110% were not thinking that 50 years later we would be going, "Well, what are the rules of Pon

Farr?"and like trying to make it work. And so, I would just encourage people to enjoy things and not try and always necessarily figure them out. Although that can be fun too. Express your fandom how you like. It just might sometimes disappoint you, I guess.

Sue: Especially with these. These are intended to be character pieces.

Andi: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: They're not intended to give you new information about world building.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah:, yeah. I mean, I have no problem with people who talk about the technology or talk about the timelines and stuff. It's just not particularly a thing that makes or breaks the show to me. And especially, I think in *Star Trek*, there's a lot of stuff that lends itself pretty meaningfully to those discussions. And it is really rare to actually see female friendships, especially between a member of the crew and an alien that just kind of blossom like that and there's a really authentic moment and we still haven't really seen enough of those, so I thought it was exciting to me.

Sue: Yeah, I agree. And I'm one of those people who loves to talk about the discrepancies in the timeline and the technology.

Andi: Sue's Science Corner.

Sue: [laughs] But when I find one, it doesn't ruin my enjoyment of the show. I can hand wave it and move along.

Andi: For me, it's just about internal consistency that I can-- I don't care if the science works because I don't understand science anyway, but it just has to-- As long as it's somewhat believable, I'm fine. I'm fine. Okay, so the wizards and the poo and stuff, that--

Sue: [laughs]

Andi: Okay, I'm with you, JK, whatever.

Jarrah: I also thought that it was cool that this episode and the next one were both directed by women, which is something we've talked about in the past. In the previous season of *Discovery*, I think we had only one episode or two episodes that were directed by women, I believe only one. But we did talk about that in our *Discovery* recap episode. And so, it was cool to see that there was that effort made to hire some women directors. So, Maja Vrvilo, who did this episode, and Olatunde Osunsanmi, who also directed one of the episodes of *Discovery* last season, directed *Calypso*, which is the next one we're going to talk about.

Sue: Yeah, so let's get into that. This has some setup that I have a hard time hand waving. Why is *Discovery* floating in the middle of nowhere a thousand years later? Where did the crew go? You'd think if this was such a groundbreaking ship, Starfleet would know where it was and it would be in like some museum with its drive that they don't use anymore. Where is everybody? How is the ship not breaking down? How does it still have power? The computer says she spent most of her time evolving herself. What? How?

Andi: [laughs] I love how we're like, "Now, guys, don't expect too much from like a canon in science and technology's perspective."

Sue: I know.

Andi: And then immediately, Sue's like, "Okay, but seriously though, how?"

Sue: I'm immediately contradicting myself [laughter] just like *Star Trek*. But these aren't little things. These aren't like, now you can transport farther than somebody else. It's like Starfleet is gone and everyone left *Discovery* at once and got killed? Like, what?

Andi: Yeah. So, in case you need a little refresher, this is the one where Aldis Hodge, mwah, is floating in space and he runs into *Discovery*, which is completely empty, and *Discovery* saves him. And it turns out she is a sentient woman now, and they have a rather melancholy romance before Craft takes off again and goes back home and leaves her alone. So, I will say that this definitely seems to be one of the favorites, if not the favorite. People really liked this episode, which was hilarious, because this is the one I liked the least. [laughs] Argh, why must I always be so contrary? I'm sorry.

Sue: I didn't really care for this either to be completely honest, and not because of my science questions. [laughs]

Andi: I just-- I don't know.

Jarrah: I would say I think I enjoyed it definitely more than Andi, but I still would say it's my least favorite because I cared the least about the characters and how they related to the rest of the series and also just because some of it is definitely done before.

Sue: Yes. It's not new to science fiction, the idea of can you love a computer and can a computer love. It's not new even to *Star Trek*.

Jarrah: Also, can a straight cisman love a female-voiced computer particularly? Not new.

Sue: Right. But I don't even understand why this took place on *Discovery*. This could have taken place anywhere. It had nothing to do with the rest of the show, at least that we know of at this point.

Andi: It's because they wanted to use the same sets.

Sue: Well, yes, practically. [laughs]

Andi: They could have just said it was a different kind of ship that's like *Discovery*. Just name it something else. And then, we don't have to wonder, what the heck? To me, I was sitting there, I'm like, "Has it been so long that Starfleet no longer exists?" because Craft does not seem to know anything about it.

Sue: That seems to be the implication.

In Unison: Yeah.

Jarrah: I wonder how much of it is-- I'll say I've read a couple of-- And excuse me if I mispronounce his last name, Michael Chabon.

Andi: Chabon.

Jarrah: Is that how you say his last name?

Andi: I think so, but now that I'm thinking about it I don't know if I've ever heard it said out loud.

Sue: It could be Chabon. I've only seen it written.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Okay, so apologies there. I've read a couple of his books, including I really, really enjoyed *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*. He's exceptionally creative. I see his hiring as a catch for *Star Trek*. But I think they-- I wouldn't say I've ever really detected strong inclination to challenge gender roles in his work. And I think with this, they were like, "Okay, just be creative," and he's like, "Okay, let's base something on the *Odyssey*." So, it's based on Odysseus landing on the Isle of Calypso and wandering

for a long time and Calypso takes him and falls in love with him. And now, it's like a magical interlude and a story of love in the middle of the Odyssey and so I think-- I wonder how much of that is due to being like, "Here's this amazing novelist. Let us give him free reign to do something," which is not necessarily a bad thing, but then sometimes you're going to end up with things where you're like, "How does this fit?"

Andi: Yeah. And I was really bummed that I didn't like it more, because this is absolutely the one I was most excited for. You have Aldis Hodge, who I love with my whole heart, and the dude who wrote *Kavalier & Clay*, which I also love with my whole heart and you're going to put them both together on *Star Trek*? Are you serious? I about lost my absolute mind. And then to me, it was just like-- I think it's called-- Is it *Her*? The one with Joaquin Phoenix?

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: It felt like that, but in space and not-- I didn't find that interesting. It's just very much like a really sexy female voice who-- everything she does is to make him happy and comfortable. I never understood why. The very beginning, they talk about how he could possibly get home and like, "Well, we could maybe send a shuttle, but it's dangerous." And he's like, "Okay." Like, why would you not go immediately?

Sue: It seems like the only reason it was dangerous is because it hadn't been used before?

Andi: Yeah, what your alternative is to just hang out on the ship and die there, like there's no choice. So, I didn't get that. And I don't know, the second I heard her voice, I was like, "Oh, they're going to fall in love." It just felt ridiculously predictable to me. And I don't know, I just didn't buy it. And the fact that it's so sad is very melancholy. Part of that is pretty-- I like melancholy usually, but it felt super manipulative and I could feel the emotional manipulation which makes it not work on me. As soon as you see that, it loses the magic, I guess. And it really lost me when they're dancing and I was just like, "Really?" I don't know, I really wanted to like this one. I think there are aspects of it that are pretty great. They are both great. The acting is great. The cinematography is pretty great.

Sue: It's beautiful.

Andi: It's beautiful. All of that is great. The emotional part of it didn't resonate with me and it was all emotion. So, when the emotional resonance isn't there, that one doesn't have much else going for it my opinion.

Jarrah: I think it did work for me emotionally. But what I think is interesting, I would say though, that I wouldn't say-- So, Chapman said that one of the reasons he wanted to explore this is that-- And this is an interview with a Hollywood reporter is that, "We're already in 2018, so concerned with and interested in artificial intelligence and how it operates in modern society. It seems like a strange omission." He's referring to the fact that *Star Trek* really hasn't had a lot of stuff dealing with AI unless you count the killer B'Elanna ship, Dreadnought.

Sue: Or Data.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, but he says, "*Discovery* takes place early in the timeline, but by the time you get to *Voyager*, things must have advanced to the point where some ship would be its own crew member on some level. So, it was fun to think about that and try to predict it heading that way." I can see that. That said, if you're going to be imaginative and speculative, can we try to break out of this mold that it's again about like a straight cisman and a woman-voiced computer, and you get into all these issues about like--

Essentially, this computer like while Zora, as the *Discovery* computer has like a personality and a sense of humor, she has to also follow his orders. And that is one of the things in a lot of these fantasies is that it's essentially a submissive woman like a disembodied submissive woman who is like just there to please you and that is kind of a messed-up fantasy.

Andi: Yeah. And I don't think that was the intent so much, but when there was whole moments where she's manipulating even the sounds to give him these fantasies and stuff, that is super sweet when

you're looking at it through one angle. And also, kind of creepy when you think about how that's what she's been doing the whole time right down to tacos. I don't know, it just didn't work for me, and it was so sad.

Jarrah: Chabon also said like her behavior only comes as a consequence of a thousand years of solitude. So, this is interesting. I can see this cutting different ways. This idea that basically you are a computer and accepting the weird idea that somehow computers could just improve themselves without assistance for a thousand years, like evolve themselves, if we accept that to be true, it's interesting that the pinnacle of that is you evolve to sentience and then as a consequence, you actually become more vulnerable and more lonely and end up maybe where you would be as a 17-year-old or a 21-year-old versus like a really a human that's been socialized and gone through a whole bunch of experiences to make them more resilient.

Andi: Yeah, that is interesting.

Sue: I was also thinking, as you mentioned, the servile nature of Zora, that she mentions going over and over the entertainment that's in her databanks and finding *Funny Face*, the Astaire movie, her favorite, which means that if she is using that information from the data banks to help evolve herself, whatever that means, and what she consumes, if you will, or watches affects that. That means that she is seeing those old-fashioned ideas over and over again and reinforcing them.

Jarrah: That is an excellent point.

Sue: It might be a little bit far out there for me to go that far, but it's there. What we consume in our media reinforces these ideas that we have.

Andi: Especially if your only example of human interaction was from them.

Jarrah: That's a really great point. And actually, I have no idea if that was intended. I don't know that it was. But that really would jive with what we see with machine learning, that we have bots that have become racist from using Twitter and the like. So, if we're teaching machines with pop culture that reinforces sort of antiquated gender roles, then they might desire to manifest that.

Andi: By the way, we're not dragging *Funny Face*.

Sue: [laughs]

Andi: We're just saying.

Jarrah: No, it's not my favorite Fred Astaire movie, but it's pretty great.

Sue: But for real though, that is one of the reasons that we and others push for diversity and breaking gender roles and all of these different things in our media because it's been so homogeneous for so long.

Jarrah: And one day, the computers will learn from us. [laughter] We better hope they have more than Enterprise to go on.

Sue: [laugh]

Andi: Oh, my.

Jarrah: I am sort of dragging *Enterprise*. Sorry. [laughter]

Andi: Ugh. We're going to get angry letters.

Jarrah: [laughs] Just kidding. I'm actually in the middle of like trying to finally finish it and I'm finding many better episodes that I hadn't seen yet, so--

Sue: It gets way better at the end.

Jarrah: It does, yeah.

Sue: Way better.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: So that's when they canceled it, right? [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: 100%. [laughs] So, that discussion went in directions I did not expect, but that was fun.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: So, shall we move on to *The Brightest Star*?

Andi: Sure.

Sue: And my wonderful Saru and how much I love Doug Jones.

Andi: He is lovely.

Sue: It occurs to me just really quickly that we did not specifically praise Mary Wiseman for *Runaway*. So, I want to do that right now. Mary Wiseman is a gift and a comedic genius and I love her.

Andi: Yes. I feel like that almost goes without saying, but we should say it.

Sue: But we hadn't even, I think, said her name until this point. So, I just want to make sure we do that. And now return to *The Brightest Star*. And this was my favorite.

Jarrah: It's a close call, but I did really love it. Definitely this one and *Runaway* were the ones that I immediately after watching it, I turned to my partner and went just like, "Aww, that was so great." And they both felt like really *Star Trek*-y. This one definitely felt the most *Star Trek*-y. It was really lovely and hopeful and inspiring.

Andi: This is the one where Saru is on his home planet fishing and, I don't know, making-

Jarrah: Things out of kelp.

Andi: Yeah. Pretty much like I was trying to think of a better way to be like, yeah. So doing a whole load of useless crap, looks like. And kind of questioning his society and the rules of his society that he's been told. And he uses technology that fell off a spaceship, I guess, and turns it into a communicator and he calls Georgiou for a ride.

Sue: Lt. Georgiou.

Jarrah: Yeah. And he is questioning his father, who is like a community leader.

Sue: He's like a religious leader.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: And they seem to have this like weird ritual where basically when it's your time, you get selected sort of like randomly through a lottery type process and you get beamed to an alien ship.

Andi: Where presumably you're eaten.

Sue: Yeah, presumably killed.

Jarrah: And he's questioning this basically like, "Okay, but you're our father, what would you do if our names came up?" him and his sister, Siranna. And his dad's basically like, "Yeah, well, that's the way of things," and he just can't live with that. It's like, there's more to us than just sitting around until we get eaten.

Andi: Making nets and sitting by candlelight and listening to your dad talk about the balance.. I liked this one, too. I thought it was actually pretty antireligion. And I'm not antireligion, but I am very pro questioning. And I liked how-- It kind of shows that not just religious beliefs, by the way, but like these kind of rigid beliefs can make you accept things that you should not accept. At no point should your society be completely cool with just offering yourself up as a sacrifice to some random dudes in the sky. Bad, no-

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: -let's not do that. And I like how he was like, "You know what? No, I am going to question and I am going to look for a better life than this, because there has to be a better life than this." And I dig that. It also made me really impressed with Saru, considering that he grew up in this society that had no technology at all, and now he is an effective captain of a Starfleet vessel. Like, that's mind blowing to me. And he's just very special. It's very clear that he's very special and I like that.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think that it felt like you could imagine that like ten years from now, these people could be the subject of a *TOS* episode, and Kirk would be going down there and be like, "Bones, what are these people doing? [laughter] Are you telling me they get to make the decisions for you and decide who lives and who dies?" [laughter] It felt like-- Only, I would say like-- Yeah, definitely like critical of religion or other types of dogma like you said can let people be blind to injustice and other-- your own people getting eaten.

Andi: I mean, this is the way the things are and have been and always will be is never a good answer and you should always question it.

Jarrah: And we'll make a whole system to justify it. Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. And it's always so convenient how these systems have been set up to benefit one-half of this great balance so explicitly. Yeah, fight back, y'all. Fight back. Fight the power.

Sue: I think I have mentioned on the show before, probably in our episode on religion in *Star Trek* that I am a pastor's kid and watching Saru have these conversations with his father hit so close to home for me. Obviously, we did not use the exact same words, but I have had the exact same conversations with my family. I have asked the, "But why?" and sciency questions and gotten the overly religious dogmatic responses. I have asked the, "But what if this thing you support because of your religion affects your family?" And gotten the, "Well, then that's the way it is, and that's God's plan answer." So, there was just--

I already love Saru, which I have professed both on the show and in the blog, because of relating to anxiety issues, but this just connected me to this character even deeper, and I was incredibly affected by this episode. And I realize that is a very personal connection that I had with this story, but I absolutely loved it. Whenever you see something that is so personal and you think nobody else could possibly understand these feelings, and then clearly somebody does, whether that is a religious conversation that somebody had or a cultural conversation that somebody had, because it can be applied in so many ways, but it was just absolutely striking to me.

Andi: Yeah. And that's one reason why art is so subjective. Because of your background and your experiences, it resonated with you in a stronger way than it might resonate with somebody else. That's one reason why it's hard to break things down to good or bad. It's really just-- It's like, how did you view it? How did it impact you personally?"

Jarrah: Well, I think a lot of us can imagine times that we would have just been so grateful for a Georgiou to come fly down out of the sky and tell us we're exceptional.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: I thought that was so delightful too because we weren't necessarily expecting to see her in these episodes. And we've talked about in the show missing our Prime Georgiou, and it was really nice to see her again. And, I mean, although-- Wait, how do you guys feel about the whole-- I mean, they're basically like, "Well, we have a prime directive. So, you can never come back, but we're going to take you because you've proven you're special."

Andi: I would like to see an episode where Saru goes back.

Sue: I mean, we've basically been guaranteed that in season 2.

Jarrah: Yeah, I do want to see more of his sister. I was like, "Ah, we get a lady Kelpien." And then, it was like, oh, she doesn't really question anything either. I don't know. It would have been nice if she was maybe like a little bit of the way there or if Saru tried harder to get her there. I just was sad we didn't get really more dimension from her. Or maybe we could see how the society differently impacts women.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: Mm. Well, besides Saru and his father, she's, I believe, the only other Kelpien with speaking lines.

Jarrah: That is true.

Sue: So, I'm sure the point of her there in this episode was to show us how most Kelpiens would respond to this information and how unusual Saru is.

Jarrah: And I think also to make it harder for Saru to leave, you need to appreciate the gravity of the situation. And I think while he believes his father is beyond hope, I think-- at least like I interpreted it, that he loves his sister. If he had the time to persuade his sister, he 100% would, and he would take her with him if he could, but at this point, he has to make a decision.

Sue: I agree. And the fact that she sees the shuttle leave, even if she doesn't understand what it is, I think is-- I would not be surprised if, when we return to-- Oh, now the name of the planet left me. When we return to the planet, [laughs] that she will be the one.

Jarrah: Kaminar.

Sue: Kaminar. Thank you.

Jarrah: It's like *Canamar*, which is an *Enterprise* episode, but Kaminar, that's how I'm going to attempt to remember it, but we'll see.

Sue: [laughs]

Andi: And then we get a Mudd episode.

Sue: Yeah. So, we'll go to number four, the fourth and final before season 2 begins, *The Escape Artist*, which just recently became available.

Andi: So, I was not sure what to expect from this because as y' all might know, we are not the hugest fans of Mudd rounds these parts.

Sue: [laughs] Little bit trepidatious, sure.

Andi: And I enjoyed Rainn Wilson's take on the character. And *Magic to Make the Sanest Man Go Mad* is actually my favorite *Discovery* episode. But I did feel like they had made a weird misstep with Mudd and making him overtly a killer because before he had just kind of been like-- They were trying

to put him into that lovable rogue kind of archetype and they made him a lot darker in *Discovery*, but I really liked this one.

So, it starts off with Mudd being sold to this dude where he banged this dude's sister and then stole his cudgel, as you do. I mean, that happens to everyone. And this guy, this Tellarite is going to bring him back to Starfleet for a reward. And Mudd spends the journey kind of trying to convince the Tellarite to not turn him in, and he fails. And then, the Tellarite turns him into Starfleet, and Starfleet's like, "You got hosed, bro."

Sue: [laughs]

Andi: And open a closet full of Mudds. And it turns out that the awesome lady Boba Fett from the very beginning, who is selling Mudd, is actually Mudd, and he's been selling clones of himself to these thirsty bounty hunters to sell back to Starfleet. And it ends with Mudd sipping gippers on a beach in his starship and running his con as you do.

Sue: This was really smart.

Jarrah: Okay, what are gippers?

Andi: I don't know. I assume that they just made up something that sounded like it could be a cocktail. I did like the garnish. It had like star fruit. Like, not actually star fruit but fruit in the shape of stars, looked kind of like kiwi on the rim of a martini glass. I'd try it.

Sue: I think it just might mean drinks.

Andi: Yeah. Who knows?

Sue: Urban Dictionary describes it as a British slang for drunk or happy.

Jarrah: Huh. Interesting.

Sue: Sipping gippers might mean just drinks is my best guess or he could have just made it up.

[laughter]

Andi: So, I really liked this one.

Jarrah: It was funny. It went a little ways towards bridging *Discovery* Mudd with *The Original Series* Mudd, which they both seemed very dissimilar, but in ways like both blink and you'll miss them. When we get the whole cupboard full of Mudds, there's one with the epaulettes outfit that Mudd wore in *I, Mudd* in *The Original Series* and stuff. So, there's these Mudds that harken back to show they're the same character, but also the whole how he's a scoundrel because he seduced this guy's sister and then stole something, that aspect was a bit more strongly represented than was in *Discovery*, but it did that without reverting to really difficult to accept, like shrugging off of him being really misogynist.

Andi: I also liked the way it subverted the "he likes to surround himself with sexbots."

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah. But it also ties to that episode so well. It makes a lot of sense.

Andi: When I was writing the recap for this, I was like, two things, one, I can't believe how much bondage gear they put him in.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Especially the part where the Orions got there with crops ready to whip him.

Andi: Yeah. [laughs] He was hanging there. I'm like, "Really, guys?"

Jarrah: It's also really funny how the Orion guy is really dumb and just goes and buys into his plan and the woman comes in and is like "You know there's cameras, right?" And she's just so disgusted. And he's like, "Yes, I almost tricked him."

[laughter]

Sue: I kind of loved that because it actually also ties us into *Enterprise*.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: And their attempted assertion that it was the Orion women who were actually in charge on those ships.

Jarrah: Yeah. But it didn't feel like implying that all the Orion women are like the praying mantis types. It was just like this one woman is smarter than this one dude.

Sue: Right.

Andi: So. Yes, bondage, gear check. The second thing I really liked is I spent the whole episode-- And I was enjoying it. It was like one of those things where I was laughing at the jokes. I was like, "This is fun." But I was thinking to myself, the problem with Mudd is that he is such a shallow character and he's so empty and everything he says is a lie and everything he says is a con, and every emotion and feeling he shows us is a mask. And then, they made that the literal plot of the episode.

Jarrah: Yeah.

[laughter]

Andi: I was very impressed because I was like, "Here are all of my problems with Mudd," and they made them literal. That closet full of Mudds was brilliant, where they were all just spouting these just really annoying one-liners over each other. And I was just like, "That is such a commentary of what Mudd is. I can't even handle it."

And then, what kind of man could act like Mudd does with other people? He treats them like not people. He treats them like pawns, like objects, like marks, always. And it's the kind of person who could do that to himself. He could literally enslave versions of himself. Someone who has so little regard for humanity. And then also, I really liked-- And they did this a little bit in *Discovery*. They had him be kind of a mouthpiece for this idea that actually the Federation is imperialist.

Sue: Yeah. Not great for everyone.

Andi: Exactly. And they are all, "We come in peace. But then also, we will control everything."

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Andi: And I really like that idea. And I really would like to see that explored further. And they kind of did it with him in *Discovery*, but I don't feel like it was fully fleshed out. And we get a little bit more of that here where it just made me start thinking about what the Federation looks like to the open space before they get there.

Jarrah: And we saw that a bit in *Beyond* as well. Although we talked about in our episode on *Beyond* that it didn't execute necessarily 100%, but this-- Yeah, again, idea that-- We see a lot in *Original Series* and *TNG* particularly, going out and then basically preaching to "less developed" societies, like what you need to do to be more like us.

Andi: And we saw a little bit of it from the Klingons too. That's what their whole "Make Klingons Great Again" deal was they did not enjoy The Federation coming and trying to impose their values on them

and diluting their culture in their eyes. And that was pretty explicit, but also not super fully explored, I don't think. And I would like to see more of that.

Jarrah: Yeah, agreed. I think-- I didn't see it-- Like, some people were asking, "Does this mean there's actually a resistance?" I don't think that this was supposed to indicate there actually is a resistance. I think it was like his sort of the whole, "But I've never heard of the resistance." That's because it's a secret resistance.

Sue: I'm one of them. Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. I didn't read it as actually a spoiler.

Sue: If it does exist, he's not one of them.

Jarrah: No.

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: But I did like having a Tellarite. That was fun.

Sue: I did not recognize him as a Tellarite until--

Jarrah: Until he said Tellarite-

Sue: Yes.

Jarrah: -and then I was like, "Oh, right." Yeah. I will admit I didn't either. But it's nice to get another original series alien species.

Sue: And another change to makeup? Gasp.

Jarrah: Yeah, well, you can only expect it at this point.

Sue: The Tellarites look different, Jarrah. I can't watch the show anymore.

Andi: Throw it in the trash.

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: I did like when he was talking about making out with the Tellarite's captain's sister though, and he was like, "Oh, her tusks and her hair."

Andi: Okay, but we were talking about the bondage vibe earlier. When he's on his knees and is like, "I'll polish your tusks." I'm like, "Y'all are not subtle. Like, not at all."

[laughter]

Sue: Now that we're back at the bondage aspects of the episodes, I would like to point out that not only did Rainn Wilson star in this episode, he directed it. So, take from that what you will.

Andi: Maybe we can blame it on Rainn Wilson, but I would also like to point out that a lot of *The Mirror* episodes are super bondage-y too. So, there's that.

Sue: Yeah, for sure.

Andi: I mean they put Lorca in leather and then put him on his knees and had Burnham pet him.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: So, we can't blame it all on Rainn Wilson.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Very definitely. I also saw some speculation like does this mean we're going to see a Mudd spinoff series? And I think it's because partly people are talking about this possible Section 31 series that it looks like Michelle Yeoh's in talks to make. And we still know that there's going to be a couple more *Trek* series that they're in development, but we don't know what they're about. Thoughts on that?

Sue: Just today, they announced that one of them would be another animated series.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: So, we know we have two animated series. We have the *Picard* series. We have this possible Section 31.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, isn't that all of them or is there one more that we're still waiting?

Sue: There might be one more, but I could be getting confused.

Jarrah: I forget if it was five including *Discovery* or five plus *Discovery*. So, there may be another live action one. Well, I don't want to see three series in the same timeline and same universe. So, if we're going to get a Section 31 show with Mirror Georgiou, I would probably be down with that because it's Mirror Georgiou even though I'm not 100% sure I'm interested in a Section 31 show although it could be interesting. It would certainly be interesting to see that tension explored more fully. I definitely would not be into a Mudd show, I think on top of that and it would be-- I can't say I would never be into a Mudd show because I said I wouldn't be into Mudd in *Discovery* and I was clearly wrong.

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: But I don't think I'd be into it on top of *Discovery* and on top of a Georgiou spinoff.

Sue: Even now, I think Mudd is a character that is best in small doses. I think a full series of Mudd would grow old very soon. We did also find out today, the day we are recording that *Short Treks* will be returning in the spring. I'm going to just read this quickly directly from TrekCore, "Kurtzman revealed today that the four-chapter *Star Trek: Short Treks* project will continue after *Discovery* concludes its second season this spring. And in the franchise's first move out of the live action arena since the 1970s, they will both be animated events." So, I take from that there will be two more *Short Treks* in the spring and they're both going to be animated. So, that is yet another thing to look forward to.

But for now, we do have to wrap up tonight. So, Jarrah, where can people find you on the internet?

Jarrah: You can find me @jarrahpenguin on Twitter and I'm also moving my Trekkie Feminist site off Tumblr, and you can find the new site located at trekkiefeminist.com.

Sue: And, Andi?

Andi: I am @firstimetrek on Twitter where I'm live tweeting through my first time through *Star Trek*.

Sue: And I'm Sue, you can find me on Twitter @spaltor. Don't forget to check out the event in New York for the *Discovery* Season 2 premiere, as well as our giveaway again at the beginning of the episode.

And if you would like to reach out to the show, you can do so with crew@womenatwarp.com, on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram @womenatwarp or on our website at womenatwarp.com. And if you'd like more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, you can find it at podcasts.rodnenberry.com. Thanks so much for joining.

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