

## Women at Warp Episode 183: Pets of the Final Frontier

[Woman at Warp theme]

**Sue:** Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Sue, and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Jarrah.

**Jarrah:** Meow.

**Sue:** [laughs] And our special guest, Heather.

**Heather:** I wish my meow was as good, but it's not.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** I mean, mine wasn't exceptionally accurate. If I was trying to sound like my cats, it would be [meows]. [laughs]

**Sue:** Well, Heather, you've been here with us before, but not for a while. So why don't you introduce yourself a little bit, tell us about your history with *Star Trek*, etc., etc.

**Heather:** Oh, my history with *Star Trek* is all over the place. I've done a lot of different things in the *Star Trek* world. I've done podcasting over at Tricorder Transmissions and Disco Nights podcast with Chase Masterson. Right now, I'm focusing on my pet project, which is Fans Give Back. And I just do nice things for other fans in need through that, like collecting memorabilia that people don't want and then sending little trinkets to people who need a lift during this difficult time in our lives. And I hang out on Twitter. I go to STLV. I help manage one of the convention groups on Facebook. So, I do a lot of different things.

My real-life job, I have a pet care business. And so, I've been doing pet care for about 15 years this, full time. I get to pet dogs and cats for a living, which is what people think I do. It's not quite that easy, but it is a really wonderful job that I'm happy to have had now for 15 years of my own. So, it's really great.

**Sue:** That's incredible. And you're a perfect guest because today we're going to talk about Star Trek pets.

**Heather:** Yay.

**Sue:** Yay. But before we do that, we have our standard housekeeping to get to. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as \$1 per month and get some awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watch-along commentaries. And one of our reward tiers entitles you twice a year to some merch. Everyone at our Warp Five tier and above on February 1st will receive everything that we produce for Mission Chicago in April. These won't be patron-exclusive items, but they will be limited quantities. And this year, our convention merch celebrates 50 years of Star Trek Conventions. We recently revealed the design on our social channels as well as in a public post over on Patreon. So, head over to [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp) and check that out. That's [patreon.com/womennetwarp](https://patreon.com/womennetwarp). I'm very excited about these designs.

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As I mentioned today, we're talking about Star Trek pets, and this was a patron suggestion from Amy Marie. Thanks, Amy.

**Jarrah:** It's our literal pet project.

**Sue:** Yes.

**Jarrah:** I also don't know if you caught Sandwiches purring into their microphone just there, but she is also a guest host for today, apparently. We're just really going all in on this theme is what we're saying.

**Heather:** Yes, the pets may be in the podcast. The four puppy mill rescues in the other room may make an appearance. We'll find out.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yep.

**Sue:** So, let's get started. Amy's suggestion was broad, talk about Star Trek pets, and there are a lot to talk about. We've got several in *TNG*, *TOS*. They kind of peter out for a little bit. Then, we get some more in *Voyager*, a couple mentions of some in *DS9*, *Enterprise*. Well, *Enterprise*, we have Porthos, of course. But before we talk any big specifics on pets themselves, I want to jump right to the question that came to mind as I started thinking about these pets and their owners, which is every time that we see a character caring for their pet, it's a male character. We're told that Janeway has a dog. We meet Aquiel, except not really, and are told that she has a dog. But we don't ever see that relationship. Anytime there's a caregiving situation, it's with a male character and their pet.

**Jarrah:** Another one that someone on my Ladies Who Trek group just pointed out, but again, it's another one, like one off kind of thing, and we don't see like a long-term caregiving relationship implied is Lwaxana 's pet vine in Haven. She does call it her pet.

**Sue:** Yes. She does call it her pet.

**Heather:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** But yeah, they're all just these short-term things and not as much of a relationship as we see with, say, Data and Spot.

**Sue:** I think the one argument you could make against it is Hoshi with Sluggo. But even so, I think Phlox is doing the majority of the caretaking in that situation.

**Heather:** That's true. Isn't it nice that Phlox can just take care of everyone and everything. I mean, is that the medicine of the future, that we don't have specialists, we just have doctors that can do both?

**Jarrah:** [laughs] I mean, certainly on *Star Trek*, we just keep getting doctors that have extra portfolios added from the doctor doing it because there isn't anyone else on the ship in *Voyager* to Culber who treats everyone's health and their mental health.

**Sue:** We just assume that they all have multiple degrees. They're all veterinarians, they're all surgeons. [laughs] They're all pediatricians. It's fine.

**Jarrah:** Everyone is more impressive in the future. Let's be fair.

[laughter]

**Heather:** We're our best selves. [Jarrah laughs]

**Sue:** But do we think this is just an accidental pattern that *Star Trek* happened across? Or, do you think it's just the fact that there are so many more male characters until recently? Or, are the writers using it as some device for these characters?

**Jarrah:** Yeah, well, I think it's interesting to look at how it functions in different situations, and maybe we can make a conclusion about that after we look at some examples, because I think there are definitely a few patterns we see in terms of how pets are used to round out a character.

**Heather:** They're very largely plot devices, [laughs] and not every pet is an expendable pet. I think that sometimes pets are used for really great things, like I-Chaya in *Yesteryear* in *The Animated Series*. I think that's probably one of the most influential uses of a pet I can think of because it leads us into discussion of euthanasia, and that's something that pet owners deal with very frequently and that I deal with so frequently in my business because I have multitudes of pets out there, and I'm often in the position of being asked, "When is it time?" etc. So, I feel like in that case, that was a really great use of a pet. But then, we have Livingston. Why fish? Why Livingston? Is Livingston supposed to say something about Picard--? or O'Brien's tarantula, Christina, what did Christina's-- what were they trying to get across about? I don't know. What do you guys think about that?

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yeah, those are good examples that I am also not sure. I mean, I think with Christina, it's more just a humor thing because I don't think we see her in more than one episode.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Sue:** For sure. Yeah.

**Jarrah:** But I do think they are sometimes used. I don't think this applies with Livingston, but I think in a lot of these cases, they are used to show male characters being caring, and especially those that don't necessarily experience the same level of emotions as standard humans in *Star Trek*. I mean, with Christina, I guess you could just be like- It's a surprising thing about O'Brien to find out, and I think it's surprising that he cares about this creature, and then also that it's just a little weirdo thing to have a tarantula.

[laughter]

**Heather:** It's a very exotic pet. It's one that I've never taken care of that I can think of, but I've taken care of a lot of odd things. But I would. I would jump at the chance. I thought it was funny that they named it Christina, and I wasn't sure if it was a joke-- because I know a lot of people who name their pets like human names, what we would consider human names, and it's always funny to me. When I was younger, I was like, "Hmm, I don't know if I want to date this guy whose cat is named Amanda," [Sue laughs] What does that really say, other than he likes the name Amanda or who knows? I was very judgmental back then. I'm very much more open.

But I do like names like Sandwiches better. That's a better name than Christina. But still, I'm trying to- I guess that in the case of Spot, and I'm thinking about Neelix. Can you remind me with Neelix, the cat, did that pop up in *Voyager* or was that *TNG*?

**Sue:** That's *Voyager*.

**Jarrah:** It's in *Voyager*, and he's named after Neelix. It's after Barclay [crosstalk] *Voyager*. [crosstalk]

**Heather:** That is the dumbest question. Wow. Okay, Heather. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** It could have been reverse. You never know.

**Heather:** You never know. We've crossed over so much in these universes, you never know. All questions are good. There are no dumb questions. There's so much *Star Trek*, you need a refresh. Was Neelix a real cat or was Neelix a holographic cat?

**Jarrah:** Oh.

**Sue:** We were led to believe that Neelix is a real cat.

**Heather:** Okay.

**Jarrah:** I don't remember. [crosstalk]

**Sue:** But I have always suspected that Neelix was a holographic cat. [Jarrah laughs]

**Heather:** Yeah. I find Data and Barclay are not the same type of character. I mean, Barclay is human, data is an android. But I know that a lot of fans, we have a lot of discussion over the coding for these two characters, and being neuroatypical perhaps or neurodivergent-- I don't know, what do you guys think of the relationships between these characters and their cats and what that might have been trying to say, if anything, or do, I guess?

**Jarrah:** Yeah, well, I would actually add Spock into that group too.

**Heather:** Yes.

**Jarrah:** Not necessarily because of I-Chaya, because I think that's more of a childhood pet situation. But I think Isis, who is debatably not a pet, because we don't really 100% learn until the end that they're actually also a woman. But you have the whole, like, "I find myself strangely drawn to it," with Spock patting the cat. And so, I do think there is something there about Spock's attraction to a cat-- finding that they're drawn to this cat. And I don't think that it was supposed to be trying to clue you in that it was also secretly a sexy lady. I think it was just supposed to be Spock is into cats. Cats are cool.

**Sue:** Yeah. I don't think it was intentional, but I do think it tells us something that these three characters, who are so often, if not coded, at least interpreted as neurodivergent, are the ones we associate with cats, at least up until *Discovery*.

**Jarrah:** Hmm-mm. Well, and I guess Archer and Porthos, but oh, with cats, yes.

**Sue:** With cats. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Agreed.

**Sue:** Porthos is not a cat [laughs].

**Jarrah:** And we do have this. Okay, so, there's always these viral articles that go around that are, like, "Men who own cats aren't as dateable."

[laughter]

Like, "Women don't want to date men who own cats because they perceive it as feminine." And we have all of these bizarre gendered ideas about what pet ownership means. So, I think in some ways, it's kind of cool that *Star Trek* bucks the trend specifically on men owning cats, because I think it's ridiculous that people would consider that to be a sign of how masculine or feminine someone is. But then also, it does show them showing emotions in a way to a pet, which might be a safer way of expressing it than explicitly expressing caring for another human sometimes.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Data obviously cares for Spot. And then, of course, Data does get his emotion chip and cries when he finds out Spot survived the crash. [laughs] Aww.

**Heather:** So sweet.

**Jarrah:** His eyes were leaking.

**Heather:** I don't know where these studies-- One of the studies we looked at had 700 women. I mean, what is 700 women in this world? I hate that everything is so gendered and that we're stuck with these leftover impressions that I hope disappear over time. So many of my clients are men with cats, and there's nothing about them that sticks out that's any different from women with cats or with nonbinary or transgender or anyone else with cats. And I know that for me, that picture of Spock with Isis is so sexy. Like, "Oh, send me more pictures of Spock with cats." Or really, any human being that owns a pet and that takes good care of that pet, that heightens their attractiveness to me, if they're a potential partner. I think that it does highlight that ability to care and nurture for someone. Overall, I wish we could throw out these old stereotypes.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. [Sue laughs] I mean, definitely wish that we could dispense with silly gendered BS 100%. I do think there's been a shift. And I also question a lot of the times, whether these news stories are actually based on-- This isn't peer-reviewed sociological research or something. These are largely polls that are conducted by public affairs. Like, public monitoring polling firms that are designed to create things to write news stories about.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Or like click tracking on dating sites.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Heather:** And, I mean, just because someone has a pet doesn't mean that they care for other people better than someone who doesn't have a pet? [laughs]

**Sue:** [laughs] That is certainly true.

**Heather:** Yeah. I don't want to put that out there either. But it is really interesting. With this, like, the lack of women that have pets. In *Star Trek*, when I know so many women in the world and other people that have pets besides men. And yet, as we said, we got Janeway's dog that she doesn't actually take care of, that she's breeding for some reason. [Sue laughs] Are we past that in the future?

**Sue:** Oh, my gosh. How come none of the pets are spayed and neutered?

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** None of them. It makes me angry. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Does Porthos ever get it on, [laughs] or is it just Spot that we learned that about?

**Sue:** I'm not sure it comes up for Porthos, but Spot obviously gets pregnant. But Data also says there are 12 male cats on board, and any of them could be the father. So, not neutered.

**Jarrah:** Oh, my gosh. Did they never watch the *Price is Right* in the 90s?

[laughter]

**Sue:** I mean, it's not just population control, right? You spay and neuter your pets because it prevents certain cancers.

**Heather:** Mm-mm.

**Jarrah:** Also means they don't spray all around your house and, like, tear shit up.

**Sue:** They don't run away, they don't howl. But I can and have gone on rants about spaying and neutering, but as a TNR-certified rescue and volunteer person with animal rescues--[laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah, yeah.

**Sue:** I don't understand it. Spay and neuter your pets.

**Jarrah:** They sometimes seem to have not quite figured out human birth control in *Star Trek*-

[laughter]

-So maybe they were like, "Oh, man, we can't begin to tackle animal stuff until we figure out whether both people are taking their shots or whether it's just one of them." [laughs]

**Heather:** I think that the dog in *Picard* was even- I'm trying to think if he was neutered because he was a rescue, but I feel like I was really judgmental when I saw pictures because I was specifically looking to see if he had been neutered yet. I assume that he would because it was a pit bull and it was a pit bull rescue that had brought the dog in. Porthos, of course, was played by mostly female dogs, [laughs] so nothing there. But it was-- I don't know. I was really happy to see Number One, and I thought it was great that Patrick Stewart requested to have a pit bull in *Picard*, although we see very little of the dog, very little of a relationship between Picard and a dog, or Picard and Livingston, for that matter.

I do wonder about Grudge in *Discovery*, who I absolutely love and adore, as I love and adore Grudge's relationship with Book and vice versa. I wonder if Grudge is really a cat or not. Like, that's the question. What else, what else could Grudge be? But I'm also interested whether Grudge is spade.

**Sue:** One of my favorite fan speculation things that started happening every time, Book said she's a queen, was that she's actually a queen of a cat planet.

**Jarrah:** Hmm-mm.

**Sue:** [laughs] It's my favorite. I choose to believe it's canon.

**Heather:** I love it. That would be amazing for me. And my dogs are all going nuts right now. They heard us talking about Number One. They're all puppy mill rescues and why I don't have any pit bulls. They're all very big proponents of pit bull rescue, so they're very excited.

**Jarrah:** People sometimes say that we're watching *Star Trek* with too critical an eye, but I bet they did not know we were watching to see if the dogs had balls.

[laughter]

**Sue:** You're taking it too far.

**Heather:** When you spend, when you dedicate your time and life's blood [Jarrah laughs] to rescuing these animals, which-- I did American Eskimo dog rescue for several years, and I no longer do it because it was so taxing. And whether it's rescue work or my actual job, compassion fatigue for pet care in general is a real thing. And so, we just become very passionate about things like wanting pets spayed and neutered. I don't think I would ever not want to have a pet in the future. But I did wonder, would I bring a pet aboard a starship or a space station? And would we have the advantage of a holographic pet? And how would that holographic pet fill my need of needing an actual animal?

And that left me with a lot of questions, because I need my animals for emotional support. They're not emotional support dogs, but they have been through a lot with me, and caring for them helps keep me grounded. They know when I'm stressed, they comfort me. And so, I feel like if I was on a starship, it would be a great benefit to have a pet there with me. But would I want to bring a pet in that situation? It's a really hard question, and I don't know if I'd say yes.

**Jarrah:** I also feel like there are some pets that would do better on a starship that we don't see, like reptiles, for example, except for when Spot turns into a lizard.

[laughter]

**Heather:** Right

**Jarrah:** Well, okay, Livingston, I think, fish could do fine. And, I mean, as for what Livingston says about Picard, I would argue just like, he's a little bit snoddy and aloof.

[laughter]

Who the heck has a lionfish named Livingston?

[laughter]

**Sue:** Livingston is certainly a pet, but I think for Picard, it's more those super rich people who have giant aquariums.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it's like an ornament.

**Sue:** Yeah, it's an ornament. It's an art piece. He doesn't care about that fish. It's just decorative. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm. Or he admires the fish as a lifeform kind of thing, is like a beautiful, beautiful scientific lifeform.

**Sue:** But the computer is going to feed it, and he doesn't have to clean up the poo, and it's fine.

**Heather:** I mean, we've already got automated litter boxes, automated feeders, automated this, automated that. So, I can imagine that pet care in the future will probably be easier, and they won't need me. I don't agree, because pets still love people. And don't leave your cat alone for five days. It's cruel.

**Sue:** Oh, no.

**Heather:** But I get so many clients who are like, "Oh, yeah, my cat will be fine. He doesn't care." And no, when I show up for those cats, they're always like, "Oh, hello, stranger. I love you. Be my friend. Pet me." So, animals need that love and affection regardless of what people assume.

**Jarrah:** And also think about, okay, so if you have a dog on, say, the Enterprise-D, like, we see those puppies in Alexander's classroom, which I believe I made a slightly mean joke about how did they just get recycled into the replicator at the end of the class [laughs] because we never see them again, and who is taking care of them? But think about how much your dog loves to smell the air when they go outside and smell everything. And, I mean, I guess if there's a whole bunch of other dogs around, but you aren't, I guess, letting them just pee on the walls in the corridor on the way to the holodeck to go pee. [Heather laughs]

So, maybe if the holodeck has scent in it as well as sight and texture, then maybe your dog is that excited to go to the holodeck to do their business. But do you have to book the holodeck every time or-?

**Sue:** I mean, I assume you have a puppy pad.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, but then that just seems mean to me, which I assume is what happens with Porthos, because they don't have holodecks, is that Porthos is just peeing in a closet on a puppy pad all the time or something. It just feels like-- I know they had dogs on sailing ships, which is, I think, what they were trying to emulate with Porthos. But I would still imagine that you would have more stuff to do as a dog on a sailing ship.

**Heather:** Yeah. And I always thought that Porthos as a beagle was a weird choice. Beagles are working dogs, so they have a lot of energy. They need a lot of exercise. They need a lot of stimulation, and they also love to bray, which is a really loud howl bark thing, and that wouldn't work. I guess you've got to put them in a soundproof room, because imagine all these dogs howling on the starship, not going to work. So, I definitely think we can conclude that the writers developing all these pets for our *Star Trek* characters weren't pet people, or at least professional pet people or rescue pet people or really considered much of this at all.

**Jarrah:** Or just that they didn't take the writing of it that seriously. They were doing it for novelty or because, like, "Oh, I love my cat. This character should have a cat." But they didn't actually take a lot of time to think through the world building of pet ownership in the *Star Trek Universe*.

**Heather:** Yep. Yep.

**Jarrah:** I mean, I think we can also see that-- Brent Spiner likes to tell that story about conventions, about how someone would tease him that we were going to do-- or tricked him into thinking they were going to do a story where Spot could talk, [laughs] and he was just so angry about it because he hated the Spot stories. So, I think for the actors, not all of them probably loved pets, working with pets all the time.

**Sue:** Oh, no. I've definitely heard stories that all of the cat actors who played Spot were difficult. I've heard that all the dogs that played Porthos were difficult. That is also a stereotype about beagles.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Sue:** In general. I know that they've said the dog that plays Number One is very sweet, but not an actor. It's a rescue dog.

**Heather:** Yeah. Yep.

**Sue:** So, that makes working with that kind of animal difficult.

**Heather:** And then, Grudge, they have two different-- I think they have a sibling pair of cats, a male and female Grudge.

**Sue:** Yes.

**Heather:** I can't remember their actual names, unfortunately. I love Maine Coons. They're amazing.

**Jarrah:** My only issue on *Discovery* with the cat is how they're always making comments about the cat's weight, which is like, okay, first of all- Yeah, whatever. I'm not even going to get into ways that we also anthropomorphize animal discussions of weight. Like, there are legitimate discussions to be made about animal health. But it's a Maine coon. It's an actual cat. That's its normal size.

**Heather:** Right? It's a big, big cat. Oh, yeah, no. no.

**Sue:** And it's half fur.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, exactly. Like, my cat, Sandwiches, looks pretty chonky. And then whenever she goes to the vet, they're like, "No, she's totally normal. She's just half fur."

**Heather:** I'm still thinking about replicated pets. That's kind of a horror.

[laughter]

I think, were the puppies cute puppies? I remember Amanda, the cute-- did they snap your fingers with puppies?

**Jarrah:** Oh, yeah.

**Sue:** Amanda created puppies, but then there was, I think, a separate time that there was just, like, puppy day. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** It's like Alexander's school, yeah.

**Heather:** Yeah. And it's sad because in reality, a lot of people do think that pets are very expendable.

**Sue:** Oh, my gosh.

**Heather:** It's still sadly a prevalent reality. In some cases, I am sheltered in my profession that most of the people that hire me care a great deal about their animals and take good care of them. And rescue, it's absolutely not the case where you're pulling. I mean, not always. Some people do surrender an animal because of a difficult situation where they really are doing the best thing for the animal. And I respect that greatly.

**Sue:** Yeah, I've had to accept a couple surrenders, and they're almost always incredibly difficult because there's a situation that the owner can't control and they want to do the best thing for the animal. But I can also tell you that there are plenty of people who adopt animal for the summer, for a vacation.

**Jarrah:** Or give it as a Christmas present and don't really think it through.

**Sue:** And just leave it when they're done or put it outside. As so many cities locked down over the last couple years, there was so much feel-good news about, "Well, the shelters are empty," but everybody I know, whoever volunteers at a shelter was like, "And they'll be full again in six months when everybody goes back to work." And what do you know? They were full again with people surrendering their pets because they went back to work.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I mean, I think it's just the lack of thought that can lend itself to that. And I guess the fact that Picard can just pick up and go on his mission and seems utterly unconcerned about the fate of his dog the entire time. [laughs]

**Sue:** Well, he's got people working the vineyard, and he's got staff. He's the privileged French guy. Somebody will take care of the dog. [Jarrah laughs]

**Jarrah:** But overall, I think, especially Data's dedication to Spot, and Book's dedication to Grudge and Archers, to Porthos, those longer-term pet relationships that we see, I think, are good examples for how you commit to a pet when you own them. And when Book puts himself in danger, he leaves the cat for someone else to look after.

**Heather:** Yep, yep, and makes a point of doing that. Yes, hire pet sitters. You can hire your friend too, but-

**Jarrah:** Maybe not someone like Tilly if they really don't want to.

**Heather:** Yeah, yeah. Don't force anybody to watch your pets. I always say hire somebody like me because we have a signed contract, and I've unfortunately been in the situation of the friends not doing the care that they were supposed to, but everybody has to go with what they trust. I still-- I don't know. Would you guys have a pet--? If you were on a starship, would you bring your pet?

**Jarrah:** I mean, I would probably bring my cats, because they're essentially indoor cats. And I don't think-- If I had the size of a quarters that they have on, say, the Enterprise-D, probably I could only justify one cat.

**Heather:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jarrah:** But if I had as much space as I do in my apartment, then I don't think that would be a fundamental change in their quality of life. I guess it would just be like what kind of a mission are we going on and is it dangerous?

**Heather:** Yeah. Sue. Sue, what about you? Would you bring--?

**Sue:** Yeah, I think I'm right along those same lines.

**Heather:** I think I totally would have brought Dieter. We no longer have Dieter or cat, but I think a cat would do really well. Unfortunately, I don't think my dogs-- I don't think I could bring a dog. I just don't think it would provide what a dog really needs. I would totally elect for a holographic dog if it were a thing and was similar to the comfort that you could get from a real animal. But I don't know.

**Sue:** Yeah, I think it's an excellent point though that you both brought up. It's not just about what we get from the relationship, it's what serves these animals. Is a cat going to have enough space? Is a dog going to have enough space? What is their quality of life going to be? But I think so many other hypotheticals we talk about in the *Star Trek Universe*, the 24th century and other centuries, but just in general, [laughs] the future that *Star Trek* presents alleviates so many obstacles. You're not paying for pet food. If your cat needs a prescription food, no problem, the replicator can handle it. If you're stuck at a late shift, your computer will feed your cat for you. It can probably even transport your dog to the holodeck for a walk. There is so many issues that can be eliminated.

**Jarrah:** I know that I said that Archer and Porthos are a good example, but I do just want to call Archer out on a couple more things.

**Sue:** Stop feeding your dog cheese.

**Heather:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Okay, so that's one. That's one. Stop feeding your dog cheese. Also, "Let's just take my dog to a bunch of strange planets" thing. As much as I was saying that your dog's quality of life might depend on outdoor time, maybe not on a strange planet where it might get sick and then you're going to have to make us all watch an episode like *A Night in Sickbay*.

**Sue:** Or because a diplomatic incident.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, well, both of those things. But I think, honestly, the suffering to the audience was greater.

[laughter]

**Heather:** I do appreciate Archer's love and adoration and that he was very concerned and wanted to stay with Porthos through everything. Like, that's totally me. I've been that person 100%. So, I really think that even though maybe not the best episode, still a good, loving-- [laughs] showing some love and appreciation for your pet, instead of it being expendable.

Like, veterinary care in and of itself, that's another financial setback that I think is really one of the biggest for people, because veterinary care is wildly expensive and very cost prohibitive in cases, and that is often what leaves people with no choice to provide care for their pets, because they just don't have the money to afford it. So, I think that would be an amazing luxury. Just like universal healthcare for people, we have universal health care for

pets, and we'd see much happier animals. I can't imagine what that vet state would have cost for Porthos.

**Jarrah:** Mm-mm. The other thing I wanted to bring up, just talking about the issue around gender in pets, which *Star Trek* also doesn't necessarily reproduce, but are you familiar with the kind of, I guess, idea which I think a lot of people have as children, actually, that all cats are girls and all dogs are boys? [laughs]

**Heather:** [laughs] Yes.

**Sue:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Which is also a joke in *Community*, where Pierce is like, "He thinks all dogs are boys and all cats are girls." And Troy is like, "There's no way to disprove that. Have you ever seen a cat penis?"

**Sue:** Oh, God.

**Heather:** [laughs] yes, I have.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** And I think my sister used to think that when she was little. So, again, it goes with this whole idea that cat ownership is feminine, but also cats are feminine. And there is a TV trope called female feline, male mutt, which is in cartoons often that the cats are voiced by women and the dogs are voiced by men, and the dog faces tend to be drawn blockier or narrower and more angular, and cats are given more delicate features. And, of course, there are exceptions to this, but it is kind of this stereotype that we have on what gender we associate with both on the ownership side and actually those pets are that sex.

So, we don't necessarily see that reproduced exactly in *Star Trek*, because we have Spot switches and, well, they don't know what sex Spot is at first. And then-

**Sue:** Well, Spot also sometimes has long hair and sometimes has short hair.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Sue:** And I'm convinced that Data is just a bad cat dad. It's like Snowball on *The Simpsons*, and it's like Spot 3, Spot 4[crosstalk]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Heather:** Yeah. Yeah,

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, I mean, I guess that's good that it's not reproducing that. But I guess, also part of what I wanted to mention is where some of that stereotyping comes from. And there's been a fair amount of sociological and historical writing about the association of cats with women in history, which goes way, way, way, way back. And partly connects to witches, cats as witches' familiars. We have the stereotype of crazy cat ladies, but even before that, cats as a pet belonging to spinsters. And there is this idea that it's potentially because cats were more in the home and were seen as more domestic and sensitive than dogs, which clearly people had not met dogs because dogs can be very, very sensitive. Yeah, and cats are more neurotic like women, I guess. [laughs]

So, we have all of these stereotypes that are ascribed to cats and then connected to women, which is really weird. And I think some of it, obviously, I think there's been some reclamation around people proclaiming themselves proud, crazy cat ladies. And some of them, I think people wouldn't necessarily say anymore, like cats are neurotic, just like women. But it is interesting that there's some of these stereotypes and tropes that persist and these associations with cats are girls and dogs are boys, and women own cats and men own dogs that still persist.

**Sue:** It's interesting because when I think about what I perceive as the current stereotype of cats and dogs, it's that cats are aloof and independent and don't really care about you. And dogs are very loyal and loud and-

**Jarrah:** Loyal and best friends.

**Sue:** [laughs] Yeah, best friends, sidekick. But those don't seem to align with the current stereotypes of feminine/masculine traits.

**Jarrah:** No.

**Sue:** Right. Because the masculine power stereotype of the up-and-coming guy in the workplace is the aloof, uninterested in you business cat, I guess. [laughs] And girlfriends are depicted as a golden retriever. Really happy to see you and-- [crosstalk]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. But then there is also an idea of you can tell a dog what to do, but a cat is not going to listen to what you have to say. [laughs]

**Sue:** [laughs] The cat'll listen. It just might not care. [crosstalk]

**Jarrah:** Does not care. [laughs]

**Sue:** [laughs] But even those stereotypes of cats anyway, I'm not as familiar with dogs or haven't been since I was a kid, aren't true. Like, cats love you.

**Jarrah:** And there's a wide range on both sides of dogs and cats. Just like genders.

**Sue:** Absolutely. I think a lot of the stereotypes come from people who are familiar with dogs interacting with cats and expecting them to react the same way. They're different animals, and they don't react the same way.

**Heather:** It's like we assume that because they're all domesticated, they're all the same, and they're all good with people, and that's it. And that's just not true at all. I tell everyone, I tell my clients and friends to throw the breed stereotypes out the window. Like, yes, in some respects, you can-- Like, pit bulls have a terrible reputation, etc., but you need to go on an individual basis, because we know it's not just genetics. It's not just nurture. Both are involved with individual animals, just like individual people.

I see similar stuff with parrots, and, "Oh, well, do I get a hand-fed parrot? It's going to be a nicer parrot versus," a wild-caught parrot, which you should not ever have a wild-caught parrot as a pet. I'm not even a big proponent of having parrots as pets, even though there's one 5ft away from me in the other room.

Ultimately, I hope that we, in the future, move past all these dumb gender stereotypes. Maybe, we can adopt the tribble-- Like, we see tribbles and they have no gender, they can reproduce, or they're nonbinary. I don't know. But I just hope we drop all of this even when it comes to words that we use to describe women, which I won't say on the podcast, but which

are used. Even now, even in queer culture, the use of the B word is widely accepted and used in empowering ways. But at the same time, it does bother me how prevalent that word is.

Let's just get past. [laughs] I hope that we move past that kind of stuff, but I think it is, you know, ingrained in culture and will slowly be weeded out, I hope, because they're-- the stereotypes that we use in the gendered way that we think of pets and even with dogs, my little dogs are always girls, even though two are boys. Always, always, little dogs are feminine. Big dogs are masculine. We just need to throw it all out because it's just all outdated nonsense.

**Jarrah:** It's kind of bananas how deeply ingrained that stuff is. Because I have actually, on occasion, caught myself apologizing to my cats by calling them the wrong gender nicknames. And I'm like, okay, they don't actually have gender.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** They're actually just cats.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** They're also fixed so they have sex, but they don't actively manifest that in their day to day lives. So, to apologize for calling Sandwiches my buddy instead of what I would normally call her is ludicrous, but I still sometimes do it, and then I'm like, "What are you doing?"

[laughter]

**Sue:** What blows my mind is whenever I see people "misgendering" an animal and then the owner corrects them, the person who didn't know is always so apologetic. Falling over sideways and backwards and doing backflips to apologize for using the wrong pronoun for animal that literally can't even care about it.

**Jarrah:** Maybe just focus a little bit more of that on misgendering humans.

**Sue:** Exactly. I wonder how many of these people would feel as badly if they misgendered a human and were called out on it. They'd probably actually just get defensive and yell.

**Heather:** Yes.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Did you want to talk about Tendi's dog, Sue?

**Sue:** Oh, yeah, I thought about that one as we were speaking and then wondering, is The Dog a pet?

**Jarrah:** I think it starts out that way. [Sue laughs] Before you know that, it also is definitely sentient.

[laughter]

**Heather:** Yeah. [laughs] And I don't know what happens to, I don't remember the end of that episode. And if we-

**Jarrah:** It goes to live on the planet of weird things.

**Heather:** Oh right, right. With that weird episode.

**Jarrah:** I think it's hilarious. The whole Tendi doesn't actually know what a dog is and thinks this is what a dog is and-- yeah.

**Heather:** It was great. And I love that it was Tendi because just Tendi's so enthusiastic about everything. She's just the best.

**Jarrah:** Do we have any pet wishes for future Treks? Maybe answer the whole spaying and neutering thing? Like, just have someone mention, "Yeah, we got the cat neutered." Just mention it so we know what's happening.

**Sue:** I don't know what was going on the Enterprise-D. Maybe they got feral cat colonies under control.

[laughter]

**Sue:** But damn.

**Heather:** It is one of, you know, I don't know what we'll ever see from *Star Trek* about pets. I do appreciate that in *Discovery*, Book had a carrier for Grudge. Like, that's a good thing. I like seeing positive elements of good pet care. is probably the most that we're ever going to see. Should we see more animals? Which is why it's so important to have discussions like this.

**Sue:** I feel like we've spent a lot of our time mostly with cats and dogs, with our common domesticated animals. There are some less common ones in *Star Trek*, if we want to bring up any of those really quickly. Or, I was also thinking, do we want to hop back to the animated series and talk about I-Chaya?

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I-Chaya is great. I mean, I guess just some of the other weirder examples we see is Phlox's bat, which is great. And Worf also, I think, talks about having a pet, kind of-

**Heather:** A Targ?

**Sue:** A Targ.

**Jarrah:** Yes. Pet Targ. Thank you.

**Sue:** Yep. And there's a laping, which is like a plant creature in *The Most Toys*.

**Heather:** Plants are the new pets. I just have to say, like, I don't have very many because I have too many commitments of things to keep alive already. But we are seeing a plant boom right now, and I think that plants make great pets if an animal or other is too much for you

**Jarrah:** Should we have put Keiko on this list as a pet owner to discuss?

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. More and more plant owners, I'm cool with that. And we did also have the pet in the original series that is like the Venus flytrap type thing.

**Heather:** Uh-uh.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Sue:** Sulu's thing, right?

**Jarrah:** Yes.

**Heather:** I was doing some *Star Trek* pets research, and in one article, I came across-- they referred to the tardigrade as Lorca's pet. And while Lorca may have thought that, no, that was not a pet. That was a hostage. That was animal abuse. Like, let's leave that there.

**Sue:** That was a captive.

**Heather:** Yeah, that was just- No, that was not a pet. That really upset me. Oh, that was-- really hard to see that type of animal abuse in *Star Trek* in the future. But again, we have to know that kind of stuff still exists so that we can say, "No, it's bad," and still fight against it, I guess.

**Jarrah:** I think it would be cool if we saw that someone on a ship was keeping a beehive.

**Heather:** Ooh, yeah.

**Sue:** Oh, that's cool.

**Jarrah:** Especially on *Voyager* and stuff, we had hydroponics and having on-ship food production, which I think is actually a cool idea. Even though we have replicators, they always do say that other things taste better. And we're growing plants, so you could raise bees.

**Heather:** That could be cool.

**Sue:** It would be nice to know that bees might make it to the future.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Yeah, it would. Sorry, I just started thinking very passionately about bees. [laughs]

**Sue:** We also haven't mentioned tribbles.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. They start out as pets and then become vermin.

**Heather:** Yeah, well.

**Jarrah:** And then become food.

**Sue:** I think they're food first.

**Jarrah:** Oh, yeah, I know. I was going chronologically in production, not in universe.

[laughter]

**Heather:** Yeah. It seemed like a great pet for Uhura, and I love seeing her with her little tribble and just in love with it, because that's me with every animal, but probably not- again, spay and neuter, I guess. I don't know if you could [crosstalk]

**Sue:** Spay and neuter your tribbles.

**Heather:** I'm not sure how tribble biology works.

**Jarrah:** I like to think that that Lorca's tribble is fixed or is not procreating. I think we see a tribble also in currencies in *Discovery* that just is like- Yeah. So, I think there's an implication that we've managed to find a way to have them not just be menacing pests.

**Heather:** My thought specifically when I saw that tribble was, they must be spayed and neutered now. Because there's no other way. There's no other way.

**Sue:** But it's before *TOS*, which makes-

**Jarrah:** No, but it's current season *Discovery*, so it's in the future.

**Sue:** Oh, yes.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** But, I mean, when Lorca had it, that was a *pre-TOS* tribble.

**Heather:** We can assume that Lorca was doing things to his tribble.

**Sue:** And I always assumed it was a mirror universe situation.

**Jarrah:** Mm, yeah.

**Heather:** Lorca.

**Jarrah:** But I think that fixed tribbles would be a great pet. I mean, they might eat a lot still, but I don't know if they have to eat as much if they're not reproducing like that.

**Sue:** Hopefully not. That'd be a lot of energy. But I do just want to mention or shout out rather, D.C. Fontana, as the writer of *Yesteryear*, where we meet I-Chaya and she has had specifically said in interviews that she wanted to portray the death of a pet. And even though they didn't necessarily target the animated series at kids, it definitely aired on Saturday mornings, and there were more kids watching than usual. So, for a lot of viewers, young viewers, that was probably their first introduction to something like that. And it's showing us as a child and as an adult, because adult Spock is upset as well, that it's okay to grieve the loss of a pet.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it's a super powerful episode.

**Heather:** I would still show it to kids and adults today because that-- I think that we are very, very lucky that we have the option of making that choice for our animals and hopefully in the future as people. I know we've got a- Well, let's hold the rabbit hole when it comes to people. Regardless, I think people struggle in a variety of ways with death and with pet death, and especially with making that decision. It's not an easy decision to make. I've had clients who have prolonged the lives of their animals while their animals suffered, and that is a decision that I think people make for themselves without just being able to let go, being able to really

see what their pet is going through. I don't want to shame anybody, this all comes down to a personal experience.

But I think that the more stories we see about the process and giving an animal peace, the better that can help people feel good about making that decision. Because for me, it's the hardest decision I ever make. It doesn't matter the pet or the animal, it's just you're taking that responsibility. I take a lot of peace in knowing that I'm giving them a peaceful passage with me there. I will sideline this really quick and say that when you put your pet to sleep, please be with your pet. Your pet will look for you. Your pet needs you there. PSA. Sorry. It's something that I know people really struggle with, but it is so important to that animal to see you. Something that I think about a lot is becoming some pet grief counselor or something to help.

So, it's something that we don't see, like what we got *Old Yeller*, where the dog gets shot. It's a subject that we don't see in a lot of media and that we should definitely see more of. And I really appreciate that Dorothy took that opportunity to write that story, because it's an evergreen story that's still relevant today.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm. Agreed. I think even though I don't think that having pets is the same thing as having children, I think that losing a pet is one of the most significant losses that we go through in our lives, and it should be treated seriously. And also, it is something that kids feel really strongly. And so, I think it's a really powerful episode, but also shows the power of memory of that beloved pet. And so, I think that it's ultimately a sad episode, but it's also a hopeful episode and shows why it's worth continuing to invest our love for animals.

**Heather:** Yeah, that's one of the hardest things that I deal with hearing from clients when a pet passes, is that they don't think they'll get another pet. I don't identify with it because I need pets in my life, but it breaks my heart because I know it hurts. I just-

**Jarrah:** You don't need to do it super quickly. But it's like any loss that we go through that sometimes it takes time to get into a place where you're ready to open up to loving another pet, but it's definitely worth doing.

**Heather:** I think so, for sure.

**Sue:** I'm trying to get to a place where I can say this without breaking down. [laughs] Their lives are so much shorter than ours so that we can help as many of them as possible.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm. Yep. Sometimes, when I'm having a bad day personally, I just think that if my purpose in life is to make a couple of cats at a time very exceptionally happy and spoiled for the rest of my life, then I am doing pretty okay.

**Heather:** I have had the same exact thought. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Mm-mm.

**Heather:** Yeah. And ultimately, I really encourage people to rescue your animals. There are so many-- even from my puppy mill rescue, where these dogs have lived in cages for their whole lives, the dogs, [clears throats] excuse me, that I've adopted have all been just wonderful and loving, and there's just so much out there. There's so much opportunity for your own personal growth through animal ownership.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And don't adopt a pet that you aren't ready to take care of. If you've never owned a pet before, adopting a special needs cat without knowing or special needs pet without knowing what you're getting into might not be the best idea.

**Heather:** Don't do that.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** But patients can pay off with a lot of animals, and just knowing that when they feel that they can trust you and open up to you, then you can have a really beautiful relationship. And there are a lot of animals that might seem like a little bit standoffish at first because of their background and being scared of you but can open up and be super loving companions.

**Heather:** Yeah. Animals can teach you a lot about trauma and how we process trauma and how the body processes trauma as well. There's just so much wealth from having pets in our lives.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Just putting everything in perspective. Just realizing that my pets are not preoccupied by the same kinds of worries and concerns that I am on a daily basis. And sometimes, I can just be a little bit more cat and just be okay being where I am right now.

**Sue:** I am regularly amazed and even inspired by my special needs cat because she was abused, nearly didn't survive when she was very young. And this cat loves people. She runs to the door when the doorbell rings. She wants to go out and explore. She's so adventurous. Nothing ever stops her. And to have that kind of trauma inflicted by people and still be so excited at the idea of hanging out with new people, that is something that is-- I don't know. I don't think that as a human, I could do that. But this cat is incredible. Do I sound ridiculous? I feel--

**Heather:** No.

**Jarrah:** No. you are not at all. No. I also know people who have super rewarding experiences adopting senior dogs. And because I know senior animals are animals that often struggle to find adoptions as well as black cats, weirdly tortoise shell cats. Definitely find animal that fits the amount of time and energy you're able to put into the relationship with it. But don't stress too much about the appearance.

**Heather:** Yeah, yeah. Just do your research like you would when you do buy anything. But this is a life, and you're responsible for it.

**Jarrah:** Don't just think you can snap it into existence and snap it out again.

[laughter]

**Heather:** Yeah, that's not how it works. But, Sue, no, you don't sound crazy at all. I see the same thing with my rescue dogs, with dogs I take care of, with dogs I get to know. I don't know the relationships that I've developed with animals that I have cared for, many for their entire lives, I don't forget these animals. I don't forget my life experience with them. I don't forget what they've taught me and given me. And I know that because these animals can be so resilient, that I can be that resilient too.

**Sue:** Well, I didn't expect to cry on tonight's podcast.

[laughter]

**Sue:** Generally, I know we're out of the *Star Trek* realm right now, but if you're out there and you're listening to this and you're considering adopting animal, as I mentioned before, I volunteer with a local rescue. If you are looking for a reputable rescue, if you have questions,

if there's anything I can do to help you reach out, I'd be happy to answer your questions or point you in the right direction. I'm willing to bet that Heather would agree with that statement. [laughs]

**Heather:** Yes, I will do anything I can to help somebody get a pet that they will love forever.

**Jarrah:** Can also suggest a variety of *Star Trek* characters to name your pets after if you're looking for that.

**Heather:** Yes.

**Sue:** But to try to bring it back around and tie it all up in a nice bow, any final thoughts on pet ownership in *Star Trek*? What it says about our characters, what it says about our writers, what it says about our future.

**Jarrah:** I think it says that any human has the capacity to have a meaningful relationship with a pet and to give to that pet and receive in return something valuable. And I think that it shows that largely they're not thought through exceptionally much by the writers, but overall, I think we like to see them.

**Heather:** I just stand by spay and neuter your pets.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Also, Raktajino would make a great *Star Trek* pet name. Just saying.

**Sue:** Oh, that's great.

**Jarrah:** Cat named Raktajino.

**Heather:** I love it.

**Sue:** I think the prevalence of pets that we see in the *Star Trek* future tells us that no matter how far we think we can advance, that there is something special about that relationship and that bond that is not going to be replaced by technology or holograms or the internet or what have you, that is going to remain a special thing between people and animals.

**Heather:** I will gladly apply to be the starship's pet sitter. [ Sue laughs] Just call on me. I'll watch your pet.

**Sue:** All right, well, I think that's going to about do it for us today. I hope you enjoyed this fun episode. I really enjoyed it. Heather, where can people find you on the internet?

**Heather:** I spend most of my time when I'm online on Twitter. I'm [@bathleb](#)-- I don't even know my name, [@batlethbabe](#). So, find me there. And seriously, if you have any questions about just about any animal as a pet, feel free to reach out to me, because it's what I do for a living and what I've done my whole life. So, I'm happy to help.

**Sue:** And Jarrah?

**Jarrah:** You can find me on Twitter, [@jarrahpenguin](#). That's Jarrah Penguin. And you can tweet at me there, or you can even tweet at my cats, Sandwiches and Odo. I can't promise they'll understand it, but I will read it to them.

**Sue:** And don't they have an Instagram account?

**Jarrah:** Oh, yes. Sandwiches and Friends on Instagram. It's [@sandwichesandfriends](#).

**Sue:** All right, I am, Sue. You can find me on Twitter [@spaltor](#). S-P-A-L-T-O-R. Like I said, if there's anyway I can answer questions or help however, in pet adoption, hit me up. I'm there. I'm available. And you can follow my cats on Instagram, [noodlebeanpotato](#). Noodlebeanpotato, they make a great soup. [laughs]

To learn more about our show, contact us or send us pictures of your pets, visit [womenatwarp.com](#), email us [@crewomenatwarp.com](#) or find us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram [@womenatwarp](#). Thanks so much for listening.

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