

An analysis of Steven Universe Season 3 Episode 15: "Beach City Drift"

Spoiler warning:

Spoilers for Steven and Connie's friendship and the form that it manifests in. Just watch Steven Universe. It won't make sense unless you've watched up to this point.

This episode deals with obsession and hatred, both powerful emotions.

Let's start with hatred. Obviously, it's a very strong emotion that's prevalent throughout the episode. It's what causes Steven and Connie to fuse. And it may be what causes them to unfuse later in the episode. I'll get back to that second part later, but first I'll discuss how hatred is why Steven and Connie fuse.

So, it's my theory that fusion is caused only by love, in all its manifestations. And that what allows Steven and Connie to fuse: their love for each other, be it romantic love, or, what's more likely: love as friendship. But the brilliant paradox here is that Steven and Connie's love, as friendship/teamwork, is united by their hatred and their will to stop Kevin. Think about that: their united hatred is what causes their united love. It's sort of telling about how some real life relationships may be caused by united hatred of a person or ideal.

But what I think is more interesting is Stevonnie's unfusion. About halfway through the episode, the background disappears, leaving only the road Stevonnie's driving on, which she quickly notices is crumbling behind her. A ghastly image of Kevin with red eyes flashes before her, then she wakes up unfused. It's important to note that this is when Stevonnie's hatred of Kevin is the strongest: she just heard Kevin's fake-out sob story, resulting in her clutching the steering wheel and visibly sweating. It is obvious that Stevonnie is feeling a very strong, negative emotion.

And this is not the first time we've seen something like this: in "Alone Together", the first time we meet Stevonnie, when she noticed that everyone is looking at her, she starting to sink into a murky green graveyard, where she is encompassed by a disco ball. She looks around and breathes heavily, before Kevin comes in and brings her back to reality.

To me, the similarities between the two scenes are clear, both times Stevonnie is feeling a very strong, very negative emotion (in Alone Together, it's social anxiety), which results in her surrounds physically manifesting into her fears. If Kevin hadn't stepped in during Alone Together, Stevonnie would have probably unfused then and there. So, if strong positive emotions like love cause fusion, there's evidence to suggest that strong negative emotions like hatred or anxiety cause unfusion, which is what we see in both episodes.

As fusion is quite clearly a metaphor for a relationship, logically unfusion can be seen as a metaphor for a break up. I think the show is trying to say that a relationship built only on hatred, even if it's uniting, won't last. And this is shown when Steven and Connie re-fuse. They now are united by love again, and have no problems for the rest of the episode.

But unfusion is not the only thing hatred causes in this episode. It also causes obsession. Kevin is right: Stevonnie is obsessed with him. But she's not obsessed in a positive, romantic way like Kevin thinks, but in a hurtful, negative way. In many respects, Kevin is just a troll in this episode: he baits Stevonnie into an emotional response, before taking advantage of her feelings. And responding to him makes it even worse. When Stevonnie is kind to Kevin, he only reels back and gets confused, making him only angry and distressed.

So, surprisingly, one of the take-aways from this episode is "Ignore trolls or just be nice to them, and they'll go away".