

(Theme music: 'Pirates' by Entertainment for the Braindead playing:

Don't you see my eye patch and the parrot on my shoulder?

Don't you see the broadsword on my belt?

I don't plan on staying in this bay

I'm gonna take what I need and sail away

I heard that's what pirates do)

Laura: Hi everyone, welcome back to Hoist the Colours. We're a Black Sails podcast with a queer focus, and today we're turning our attention to Max's season 2 arc. This episode's gonna be slightly different because we're actually all together in the same room for the first time.

(all cheer)

Laura: As always, I'm Laura.

Trinity: I'm Trinity.

Estefania: I'm Estefania.

Laura: And we're joined today by a mutual friend of ours who we've known for years from the Black Sails fandom, so you might know her as well -- Jackie!

(all cheer)

Jackie: Hi! Long time fan, happy to be here. *(all laugh)*

Laura: So, I thought I'd just dive right in with a potentially spicy question about Max. I was wondering how you initially felt about the start of Max and Anne's relationship in season 2. Because it's - the first scene is right back into where we left off with that tension in season 1. So I was wondering how you felt about it the first time you watched it, whether your thoughts have changed at all about the start of that relationship, because I know it's a thing that lots of people love, some people don't love it.

Estefania: I feel like I can definitely tell that there's a difference in my perception of the relationship. The first time I watched the series I was very non-critical of it, and I was just extremely excited about the representation and seeing Anne's kind-of arc, and her realization of her sexuality. But the second time around, I think because of the influence of you guys and doing this podcast, I kind of have more critical lenses on, and I recognize now, I think, that there are some things that I didn't love about the beginning of the relationship that I really was blinded to. I didn't perceive whatsoever. And now I kind of see, like, a progression from a very kind of turbulent, "problematic" beginning to maybe genuine feelings by the end of the season, but I never picked those things up the first time around.

Trinity: Yeah, absolutely same. I was like, "oh my god, two girls!" (*all laugh*) I was just so happy when the Eleanor and Max didn't work that they gave us something else, because I was just like, "Oh great, they gave us that for like one fucking episode, fantastic." You know? But that was like, that's all I cared about. But yeah it was the same thing, having discussions with you all about it like, oh wow, maybe there's a bit more to this relationship that's not all rainbows and butterflies. (*sounds of agreement*) Even though, I mean, their relationship isn't rainbows and butterflies anyway, like, it's very volatile, however - upon rewatching, yeah. The way that it starts is sketchy, Max's motives are sketchy, it's just - it's *messy*. It is messy.

Jackie: Yeah, when I was preparing for this podcast, I feel the same way, like, the first time I watched it I just thought, "Max is into her, and they got together, and it's as simple as that." And now I'm realizing there's a lot of layers to Max's intentions and you have to wonder when the feelings became genuine, and if they were genuine at all from the beginning, and what her thought process was, so, yeah.

Laura: I do think maybe, for me, the kind of moral ambiguity - maybe moral isn't the right word, but, that ambiguity makes it more interesting to me than if it was just a straightforward, like, "she likes her, and she likes her, and they got together and it was cute." Like, I find it more interesting that there are these layers to it, and like, it *does* start off that Max is doing it to save herself from Anne's anger, which I don't fault her for, but it's not like, a Cute Falling In Love thing. She's doing it to stop Anne from killing her or turning her

out onto the street, so. Yeah, I dunno, it's - it would be weird if it wasn't messy given how messy all the other relationships are in Black Sails.

Trinity: Yeah, but it's weird that Max specifically says she's removing the source of Anne's frustration. (*sounds of agreement*) Like, I'm not saying that that was her only motive, but that was totally in her head. Like, she was thinking like, "maybe I am attracted to her, however, this is also beneficial for me." And, I dunno, if that can be seen as predatory, it depends on the way that you view the act, because someone else might see it as her liberating Anne. It also depends on how you read Anne - if there was some latent homosexuality happening with her, or if Max was just, like, her realizing that that's what she feels like, we don't know. That'll be the next episode. (*laughs*)

Estefania: Anne's relationship with sexuality and women in particular took a lot of my notes in my second rewatch. But, it is interesting - I took a note of that exact line as well, and I thought it was a very loaded conversation that in that moment Jack says her frustration is about Eleanor, that she's reacting to a situation, and Max's usurping that and saying, "No, it's actually something completely different and I'm the only person who can give it to her." And it is complicated, I think that there are maybe a lot more people like me in my initial watch, at least in my perception of the Anne-reception of the relationship, I don't know if I've seen too many people actually dissect how messy the relationship really is. I think so many of us - I can only speak for myself but so many of us leap at seeing the representation and don't acknowledge that Max has always been ambitious and she's always had her eyes open about, "how does this benefit me, what puts me at a disadvantage," and maybe that's an effect of being a survivor in so many ways, not just being a sexual assault survivor but being a woman of color in the world that she's in, being someone so close to the slave experience, and being a sex worker, it makes sense for her character, I think, that she would always have that sort of parallel vision - "what do I want, am I genuinely attracted to Anne and also, how does this benefit me, is this going to put me in danger and how can I stay out of it?"

Laura: Yeah.

Jackie: Well, in terms of her manipulation, something that I thought of was, I mean, what if Anne wasn't queer, then what would she do. Because, I don't think she talks Anne into

anything that Anne wasn't already feeling, I think Max recognized something in Anne and capitalized on it. So, I guess my question, or something that I thought about, was how does Max know that Anne is queer? How did she figure it out? Is it just that she - did she notice looks from Anne, or is it just because in her profession she has a nuanced understanding of sexuality or she can read people's microexpressions and behaviors really well and she just clocked her like that and thought, "I can use this."

Laura: Yeah. I favor it's that Max knows how to read people, because it does seem like that's just something she's naturally good at, but also it's probably a necessity in her profession to be good at reading people and people's intentions. And there's that moment in the last episode of Season 1 when Max is naked in front of the mirror and Anne walks past the doorway and starts to look at her, *(sounds of agreement)*, and like - it's really fuckin' obvious. *(all laugh)* We know what that's about, and Max clearly understands what that's about - yeah. It's interesting to me even that she took the gamble even lying, because she clearly knew that Anne was looking at her that way, but Anne is so volatile that it was such a gamble to go into that room. Because I feel like it's a 50/50 thing that, like, Anne could have just slit her throat. Like, that's a ballsy move, even if you're sure, but like - "yeah yeah yeah, she's definitely into me, but like, she won't kill me for it."

Jackie: Yeah. I mean she seems to know what repressed queerness looks like, and she didn't know, she couldn't have known if Anne was ready for this, so, it definitely was a gamble.

Trinity: I think that reaction that she had showed that she wasn't sure.

All: Yeah.

Trinity: She put that knife to her throat, she was like, "oh shit, shit just got real."

(laughter)

Estefania: But that sort of makes me think of a line - again, this is something that Max says to Jack, and when they're having this sort of heated discussion, Jack says - he's basically interrogating her, he says something like, "you meant to tell me that everything that

happened on that beach is because she's into you," and Max affirms that that's it. And for me, that to me was frustrating because I don't think it was entirely it. I'm completely convinced that a lot of it was identification, and this is, I think no coincidence that Anne is finally telling her story about being a survivor, being saved by Jack. It's funny because we were talking about how well Max reads her but I think in that moment, she actually does misread her a bit.

Laura: Yeah, no I agree, that's something I wrote down as well. That like, because that conversation between Max and Jack - I think its another one of those conversations in the show where both of them are right about a lot of things, but yeah, what Max is saying about, you know, something that's been bothering her for a long time and you know that this is something she wanted and needed for a long time, I think... maybe, yeah, but I think a lot of what was happening was more about her repressed trauma than her repressed sexuality. *(sounds of agreement)* Max, yeah, absolutely doesn't seem to see that.

Trinity: I found it really interesting with one of their heated exchanges where Max says, "there's a conflict within her and she had it under control, and so Jack started a competition between them, and it's temporary, a state of denial until she finally makes a choice."
...Cocky, first of all.

All: Mhmm!!

Trinity: But I don't think that Jack is the one that started the competition between them. Because Jack was very accepting of it. And Jack also did what Max did which was, "how can I flip this to my benefit?" But at the same token, he was like, "I accept Anne, whatever it is that you wanna do, I'm gonna be here." So I find it weird that she came at him like that.

Laura: Yeah, Max's bravado is something I really noticed this time around. Especially contrasted to the beginning of season 3, when there's the conversation with Jack where they're at that point where she says like, "of course she'll choose you, given the choice between the two of us she'll choose you," so it is interesting that that's kind of part of her tactics in season 2 is kind of just, absolutely acting the part, like, "you don't know what I can do, you don't know what can change in a week in my bed," and like, "I can take her away from you if I wanted to." And I still haven't settled on what exactly it is she's trying to

achieve. And I don't know if you guys have any thoughts about that, that you know, this idea that she's trying to drive a wedge between them. Like, what is her purpose? Because she doesn't - ultimately she furnishes them with a ship and a crew. So is it just a power play? Like, what is her goal?

Trinity: I have no clue. It doesn't make sense.

Estefania: Yeah. My immediate reading is a little fucked up, but maybe it's because I placed that at a moment where I don't know if they have genuine feelings for each other. I don't think that you can brag about your ability to influence and manipulate someone while mutually having genuine love for them. But in some ways when I hear you ask that question, the first thing I think is - Anne's a loaded weapon. And she's vicious and she can take down as many people as she wants and I think that that is a very powerful piece, if you're playing a game of chess with an entire island of people. I do wonder how much it is that she's talking about having influence and being able to take advantage of Anne's capacity for violence, and her capacity to do things that - I think we talked about this in the Eleanor episode - Max and Eleanor together aren't able to have a sort of physical, visceral power. Their expression of power is often influenced, I think, in strategy and thought, but the muscle they both lack. And in some ways I feel like Anne is almost that. Sometimes potentially for Max if directed in the right place. I think that in the moment when Anne has killed Charlotte, you kind of see how she went off and she caused damage and she was kind of not being watched in that moment. I think there's a capacity there for Max to have had been like, "okay this person is completely unhinged, and I can direct them in the right direction and they will get shit done, and they will kill who they have to kill to reach a certain aim." But I think by the time we see that Charlotte scene, we had actually a very emotional moment - the whole "standing between Anne and anyone else that wants to hurt her." So, I don't know, if that manipulative capacity is taken advantage of, I don't think it happens there. I think by then, there's a sort of emotional weight.

Laura: It's interesting because while you were saying that I was thinking, I think it must be the end of season 1 when Vane comes back and sort of puts a black mark against Jack, on his name, and [unsure of wording], but I'm pretty sure that Vane calls Anne "Jack's dog." Like, she has been framed in that way, like, she's kind of like an attack dog. She's Jack's attack dog, and it wouldn't surprise me if that was in the back of Max's mind that, "I could

use an attack dog." It's not a very nice way to think of them, but, yeah. I hadn't thought of that, but, she'd be a useful person to have on the side, where, you'd rather have her on your side than against you.

Trinity: Oh yeah. They knew that too, that - Anne knew that too, when she tells Jack, like, "I need you to watch my back." I never understood that, it's like, they both knew that she was being manipulative, and they both couldn't make what her motives were out, and yet, in Anne went still. So, it was worth the risk to both of them, apparently.

Jackie: Well, something that Max and Anne have in common is that they are really trying to sort out their place in the hierarchy of the political system and everything like that. It makes sense. I mean, Anne does certain things to assert herself in the season, and I think Max - that's a way of asserting herself too, just to show that, you know, she has strength, she has power, maybe her strength is sex-based, but nevertheless she's on top of it, and she wants Jack to know. She just wants Jack to recognize that - 'cause she could have lied, she could have said, "Well I genuinely love her, what do you want?" But she didn't say that, she was very brazen about the fact that she was manipulating Anne right to Jack's face, and that's something that I found really interesting, like, what does she have to gain from admitting that so explicitly? So, to me it was a power move.

Trinity: That actually makes sense to me when I think about when she was in the room with Jack and Idelle, talking and teaching Idelle how to manipulate a man. (*sounds of agreement*) It's like, you knew Jack is sitting right there, and he's listening to all of this, and that's not a detail that Max would gloss over. So, that was very intentional.

Jackie: Yeah. She like literally laid out, "this is how I manipulated Anne. These are the steps I took. What do you think?" So, yeah.

Laura: And that little aside to Jack at the end, like, "Do you want to add anything?" Bitch, you know what you're doing.

(*laughter*)

Estefania: I mean, sometimes you gotta love her guts, man.

All: Mhmm!

Estefania: But I think also in some ways her capacity to almost brag about what she's doing - I feel like it contributes to how human the character feels sometimes to me. It brings me back to the moment where Max and Vane are talking, and she's kind of like, "Don't you want to know how to get over Eleanor?" And it's like, Max, you don't know! Like, come on now! *(all laugh)* Like, you're still hung up over Eleanor, don't play! - But, it's such a deeply human moment I think, and I think that when I see Max kind of have those moments, it's really, I think, a testament to her character which I feel is very consistent in terms of being someone who is just ambitious to a fault, but also in some ways, you know, risking things because she has to have that sort of smart word, and that little bit of pride over being able to influence someone or have power.

Laura: She and Silver really are Snake Twins.

Estefania: Oh, yeah.

Laura: Especially in season 2.

Estefania: That's why everybody wanted them to, you know, have some sneaky little duo. Crazy partnership.

Laura: That would've been too powerful.

(laughter)

(sounds of waves crashing)

Trinity: So perhaps this is a good part to move onto the bane of my Max/Anne existence which is their fucking sex scene.

(all laugh and sigh in commiseration)

Estefania: Which one?

Trinity: The fucking threesome!

Estefania: Ah.

Trinity: The beginning of episode, what, 5?

Estefania: What is going *on*?

Trinity: The beginning of episode 5. So, I can't expect everyone to have known what it's like to have sex with a woman, however - it's like we said in the other episode wherein you gotta have these people in the room. I just feel like someone should have been consulted. People with the same anatomy having sex do it a certain way, that's all I'm saying. I didn't understand it, (*laughter*), perhaps they were having sex a way that I do not know that two women can have sex, but I mean, all hands were accounted for, so I didn't understand what was happening there.

Estefania: That is true!

Trinity: Yeah, it was just like, I've watched it like four times already and I'm just like... I don't understand. I'm puzzled. I'm truly puzzled by what was happening.

Jackie: It was a bump and grind, literally. But that's all it was, bumping against each other. (*laughter*)

Trinity: Maybe!

Estefania: Ahh, but does that a sex scene make?

Jackie: Yeah, exactly.

Trinity: I mean, Jack and Anne were definitely having sex! I guess it depends on what you consider sex to be.

Estefania: A very loaded question.

(all laugh)

Trinity: I mean, depending on who you ask, I guess they were having sex. They just weren't having sex in any way I could recognize, and it just bothers me, sorry. It's just a personal thing.

Estefania: You just gotta air it.

Trinity: It bothered me, it did.

Estefania: Well, that inspires the question - what do you think that bit with Max putting her finger in Jack's mouth was all about?

(all laugh)

Trinity: Uh, yeah. I... I don't know. I couldn't tell you. By that point she's already been so antagonizing to Jack.

Estefania: Do you think that was an antagonizing move?

Trinity: No...

Estefania: Right?

Jackie: It *could* have been manipulative, the thought crossed my mind - I mean, they were in the moment, it could have crossed her mind that they *have* had so much antagonism between them that maybe it clicked to her that - Jack loves women, she is a woman, they're already in bed together, so, if she can get Jack involved with her in a passionate way, because he pointedly wasn't before. She did point out, "you didn't look at me once." So, maybe this was her way of like, drawing his attention, softening him toward her. It could

have been manipulative or it could've just been a... moments of passion do happen! I mean, strange things happen during moments of passion, it's possible.

Laura: I mean, even if it was manipulative, like, she didn't look horrified to be doing it!

Trinity: She really didn't, she looked into it.

(sounds of agreement)

Jackie: She bit her lip, she was into it.

All: *(laughing)* Yeah!

Trinity: She was into it. I mean, you could read it as her driving to drive the wedge between them further, because that's pretty much what happened. Anne didn't take that very well, and then later on Jack chooses Max over Anne, which didn't fucking help, so. It's like, I want to give Max a lot of credit where it's like, she almost knows the domino effect of the things that she does, but it also kind of feels haphazard, where it's like, because I can't pin down her motives, quite, I'm not sure exactly what the fuck her aim is. And that makes her so dangerous.

Laura: It's an interesting question, though. Like, do you think she's always three steps ahead of everybody else? 'Cause I know some people do, like, she's the smartest person on the island and she always knows what's happening - or is she just [something] John Silver-kind of character, where she sets something in motion, and then she's just ready to go with whatever the outcome is and pretend like she saw it coming all along. 'Cause, I could believe that she's just very good at that as well, at making things look intentional when actually she's just really good at reacting very quickly to whatever happens. That's a skill.

Trinity: Yeah, I agree with that second part. I mean I think sometimes she's head of the curve, but I think most times she's just always reading the room, always on top of her shit to the point where it's like - maybe she's ahead of you, but it's only one step. It's not three.

Estefania: She thinks on her feet very well is what I would think.

Trinity: Yeah.

Estefania: But that scene, to me, is still very confusing, I don't know what to make of it. And I remember the first time around, that I watched the series, it made me reconsider - *is* she sexually attracted to men? *Is* there a validity there? And I think that that's a little funny now in comparison to the fact that when we did our Max episode, we all flatly said within the first, what, minute? That Max is a, like, she's a lesbian woman! You know? So, I don't know if I would - I mean that's the one little moment where I'm like, is it tactic? Is it the fact that this show is so invested, I think, in a sort of sexual fluidity? I think a lot of people, in comparison, read Thomas as gay. And we do know that he had a wife, so I think that the show already has a precedent for kind of having a sort of loose and hard-to-define concept of sexuality particularly in polyamorous relationships. In that moment I thought they were going to go the polyamorous route, and ultimately they don't.

Trinity: That was episode 5 when that happens, and I think like, episode 6 is where this shift happens, and I don't understand that either. Because episode 6 is where Idelle comes to her with her concern. And Max is not having it. Max is like, "no, she's protected here. And that's final." And I don't know when that happened because like, that's like the turning point where it's like, oh she's really - she gives a fuck about her. But like, where was the lead-up to that? Where is it when now I can stop questioning Max's motives, she's decided she's fully invested in Anne now? It was just like a weird jump for me.

Jackie: Well that relates to another theory I had about the thumb thing, which is, I mean, it could go any way, but another theory I had was that maybe because that is halfway through the season, and because that is shortly before we start seeing that she is starting to develop genuine feelings for her, I also - it crossed my mind that maybe she did that as an attempt to connect with Anne, because she does know that Anne and Jack have that connection, and that Anne is deeply devoted to Jack, so it did cross my mind that maybe she was really actually trying to connect with Jack for Anne's sake.

(sounds of intrigue)

Trinity: Ohhh, I like that.

Estefania: Hm!

Trinity: I like that a lot! 'Cause it does answer my question. But then, why would they make it so ambiguous?

Estefania: I didn't think it was a thing. I think maybe there are - there could be scenes we're missing, there could be lines that were cut, you know? I think I agree with you, though. That's definitely a reading I hadn't considered, Jackie, but I think I needed that little bit of something to show me that there was a transition, and I think even a moment where we maybe only get a glimpse of Max showing maybe some guilt over the fact that Jack chose her over Anne. Max reads Anne and knows - Anne is spiraling because she's been betrayed in some way by somebody who she was convinced would never betray her whatsoever. And so she can read her in that way. I think if I had only seen a little bit of remorse, maybe, just a single moment, I would've been like, "there you go, that's it." But we don't have it. And it's very ambiguous.

Trinity: I don't think that's her strong suit though.

Estefania: No.

Trinity: Max plays everything very close to the cuff and I don't blame her, considering how vulnerable she was in season 1, I think that would teach you to hold your cards close to your chest. But, you do run the risk of seeming like you're predatory or you're manipulative, or, because your cards aren't out there, and everybody can't read you. So, yeah, maybe it's a safety tactic.

Laura: You can see that that kind of three-way relationship in season 2 as being kind of, fundamentally a romantic sexual relationship? Or is it really just kind of a byproduct of opportunism and self preservation and power plays? Kind of - is there really a basis in the kind of romantic sexual thing, or is that just the way it goes to kind of make these other things happen? To kind of make this business opportunity work to make, you know, Anne safe to Max. Or is that just the way it had to happen - was that the only route that Max could

see and then the feelings came afterwards? Like, completely afterwards? Or kind of early on? I don't know, maybe I'm not phrasing it that well but - is it just, is it about a business opportunity? Like, this is the way of making, of building what they eventually have?

Trinity: Well, she does definitely sees her as a partner. I mean, she sits her down and says, "I want to build my empire, I need a partner like you." And like, she recognizes her as a strength. But I do feel like maybe it did start where it was just beneficial for her, and then she really began to care. And that shift happened with the Idelle scene, because she was very passionate about that. That wasn't like, "oh this is in my best interest so you better listen." It was like, "no, I care about her, and she cared about me when no one else did," so. Yeah, she had genuine feelings, but did they start from the beginning? I... I don't think so.

Estefania: I don't think so either.

Laura: I guess I just wonder if she thought of another way to do it, would the relationship have happened at all?

Trinity: Probably not!

Estefania: I don't think it would've!

Laura: Yeah.

Trinity: Honestly? I don't think if she didn't have the balls to go in there and Direct Action, like, Anne wouldn't have even looked her way. She wanted to kill her how many times already? Like, even when they started, she - what did she tell her, "you were in that tent mewling and had me all turned around," and like, yeah, she will fuck you up, I think everyone knows. So yeah, it's kind of approaching a scared animal in a corner. (*sounds of agreement*) Which is pretty much what they showed after she killed Charlotte was pretty much what she was.

Jackie: Well I think repression is something that is a consistent theme, and the fact that she does give Idelle that speech about how, "she was the only one that cared when I was on that beach," to me does show that that was, at least in the back of her mind the whole time,

maybe from the beginning, even if - and maybe this is more sympathetic to her than, or giving her more credit than she deserves, but - I don't think that was something that just occurred to her halfway through the relationship like, "oh yeah, remember when she saved me?" (*sounds of agreement*) Like, that was probably at least in the back of her mind and, because another thing she goes through this season is her struggle with getting over Eleanor, I do wonder if she was really in denial and repressing her feelings for Anne because she was protecting her heart. Because the last time she gave her heart to someone, she was completely screwed over.

All: Mmm.

Trinity: That's a good point. That's a very good point. ...Damn, okay. So we could bring it back to a little bit of sympathy for Max.

(*laughter*)

Jackie: Which is crazy, because I never used to be very sympathetic to Max, by the way.

Trinity: Yeah, this is the thing is that we love Max though, we do love Max. (*sounds of agreement*) We can be critical of Max and still love her. But I really like that though, I really do like that, and I think that that's true. It's not something she would have forgotten, again, not a detail she would gloss over because she doesn't gloss over details.

Laura: Well, considering when she says to Idelle after Anne has just completely lost it about - that speech she makes about kind of, betrayal, and "how would you feel if the one person you thought would never betray you did and in doing so bought themselves a future?" Like, that's what Eleanor did to her, at least from Max's point of view.

All: Yeah.

Trinity: Damn, Max is a good parallel.

Laura: Max always learns.

Estefania: She does. I think we talked about in the first run-through of Max's arc, whether or not the show forgets she's a survivor. I remember asking you guys, did you want to see more follow-through in terms of the trauma. And I think that we don't get follow-through in terms of the trauma. I think that there might've been a more realistic, in some ways, narrative in which she can't necessarily engage with sex immediately after having been so violated, but setting aside the story I would've liked to confront the story I actually have, I think that that capacity to kind of hold her cards close, like you said Trinity, and always to always learn, like you said, I think that does show that she is a character who has evolved through her trauma. To me, that is a survival tactic that does show that she is a character who is progressing in a certain way, and if we don't necessarily get how her trauma is made manifest in certain aspects of her life, at least we have this character who I think does show progression. I think the relationship between Eleanor and Max gives me enough that I can read that maybe Max was a more naive person. I think that knowing what she knows by season 2, she would never get down on her knees and ask Anne to just, you know, to "stop being a pirate and stop being violent for my sake!" She wouldn't ask someone to sacrifice who they are for love, which is what she did for Eleanor. I think she is progressing and growing. And it is all a reflection of all the things she has been deeply hurt by.

(sound of waves crashing)

Trinity: We talked about this in the Eleanor episode, when Max visited Eleanor about her father and how Eleanor basically dragged her for filth. *(laughter)* I wonder though, like, do - what do you guys think was Max's real motive for visiting her? Was she trying to pay respects or was that simply another tactic that Eleanor completely saw through?

Laura: Reconnaissance, it was definitely reconnaissance.

All: Yeah.

Laura: The way she [unsure of wording] when she goes in there, and she says, "some bread and fruit from the girls," - it's not from ME, it's from the girls, just make sure you know that. I don't think she didn't really hide it when making any attempt to like - it's not really -

Trinity: Then what is the shock on her face then, when Eleanor reads her? Is it that she thinks she's smarter than her? Or does she think, she couldn't fathom that Eleanor could be that calculating?

Estefania: I think it's that. I think she expected Eleanor to be broken to pieces because she knows, like, Eleanor's character has been so drenched in wanting that validation from her father from season 1, so I don't know if I think that Max was expecting that sort of cold calculation. I think that Eleanor not falling into that sentimental moment was a surprise. That's how I read it.

Trinity: But I feel like because of what happened to Max - I mean I feel like if that happened to me, I would be like, "this person has no fucking feelings." Like, so I feel like the shock is just weird to me. It hits me weirdly because I don't see - I don't see a reason for her to be shocked by Eleanor's ruthlessness. We all know that she'll do what she needs to do.

Laura: Maybe she just has never seen it in person before. Even if she knows secondhand what Eleanor's capable of, or if she's heard talk about the things Eleanor's done and is capable of, I'm not sure she's ever had it directed at her, like...

Trinity: That makes sense.

Estefania: I think if we compare moments where Eleanor has chosen against Max, they've always been deeply emotional. When she doesn't run away with her, she doesn't look like she's making an easy cold decision, she's conflicted. And when she tries to defend Max in that, surrounded by the crews, she's also extremely angry and she's extremely, again, very emotional. I think the difference for me is that she's extremely cold and calculating - I mean, she says it right then and there, like, "Now is the time for cold hard truths, we're not doing this story." And for me I think that is a difference. I don't know if Max saw that side of Eleanor directed at her or in front of her until that moment.

Trinity: That's true, because that's what she says when she walks out to Jack. She's seen what Eleanor can destroy when she's angered, what she can build when she's ambitious, I think she says, and then Jack asks her like, which one is she now? And she says, "Neither. I've never seen her like that."

Estefania: There you go. That's the shock.

All: Yeah.

Estefania: Well, you mention the thing about the girls, and one thing I thought about in terms of Max is - I felt actually uncomfortable by the fact that she does not give a shit that Charlotte was killed. (*sounds of agreement*) And Charlotte's death is brought up again by the last season of the series but it isn't by Max, it's by Idelle. And it does frustrate me that despite the fact that Max is a character that has been a sex worker for so long, aside from Idelle, for whom I don't see a lot of sentimentalism for the most part, she seems to have no connections with other women. And I think it's only made more messy when you consider the fact that her entrance into Jack's perception of like, "Max could be an ally while I own this brothel," is that she essentially like, slaps a woman and tells her "You better get in line." There's no sentimentalism, there's no sense of camaraderie or solidarity between the sex workers or these women, it's more like - I'm gonna get on top and you're gonna be on the bottom. Like, I wish that we had seen a little bit of community. I think it may be unfair of me to complain about a story that I didn't get as opposed to a story that I do have, but I wish we'd gotten that.

Laura: Yeah.

Trinity: I think the world has kind of taught her that there's no space for that. Not from her. She doesn't have the luxury at the end of the day to really think about anyone but herself.

Laura: But I feel like it goes beyond that. Because it does make me uncomfortable, it feels like she uses them as pawns, without caring. (*sounds of agreement*) Like, she encourages Charlotte to go back into that room even though Charlotte doesn't think it's safe, and then she doesn't seem particularly or even at all upset that Charlotte's killed, she's just like, "Fuck, this is a mess." She uses the girls' money to buy, kind of, the tavern and things when they're gonna get [unsure of wording] --

Estefania: Their private money!

Laura: I mean, yeah, she really doesn't seem to give a shit about them at all other than the way in which they can be useful to her.

Trinity: She didn't even wait. She didn't even wait to start buying stuff up after Eleanor. She had like five seconds of shock, and she asks Idelle, "do you think that they try a woman the same way that they try a man for piracy?" And then Idelle - it's funny because Idelle has a moment with her the same that she has with Eleanor, where she asks her, "I imagine this might be very complicated for you." Idelle pretty much says the same thing and Max is just like, "Not as much as you think." (*sounds of agreement*) "I'm just having a moment. I'm gonna get over it. And then she springs right into action. But that's kind of what she does."

Estefania: It is what she does, and when I was thinking about my question, I realized there's a lot of parallels between Max and Silver, and so I always check myself. Am I criticizing Max for something I wouldn't criticize a man for? But at the same time, even though Silver himself would definitely betray anybody, especially in season 2, at least before the end, if it inconvenienced him and not give a shit about the people around him, Max has had a community. Meanwhile Silver never has had one. And that's where I feel like their differences are and where I think that I wish that the writing had done a little bit more. I can agree completely in your reading that that's just not who she is, but then when I read about the actual narratives of sex workers, a sense of community is very very consistent. Because you guys are going through similar traumas and violences and you have to stick together because when you're working with men particularly, they're gonna tear you to pieces. So, you know, I don't know. It's something where it's like, it doesn't - Trinity's reading is the closest that I will give it, because in terms of the series itself I can't seem to buy that she would just go through being a sex worker for however long and just never establish any sort of relationship with other women. I think that is a failing on the level of writing and understanding what sex workers are like, what their experiences are like, beyond just kind of being like, oh well they work in the brothel, we gotta have a brothel, we gotta have all these naked women, sexy scenes. It's a little bit where I'm very critical of the writing but I think, Trinity, if there's anybody kind of swaying me to believe that it's not just bad writing, or a failing on the writing, it'd have to be your reading.

Trinity: Well we also have to understand that Max, even though she does have this camaraderie with her occupation, she's still a black woman.

Estefania: Fair!

Trinity: And that solidarity is not gonna be the same. She doesn't move through the world the same as anybody else.

Estefania: That's very true.

Trinity: I don't even think there are any other black prostitutes in that brothel that I saw.

Estefania: None that are significant at all.

Laura: Yeah.

Estefania: If they're in the background, they're extras.

Trinity: Yeah, but I don't even remember any extras.

Estefania: Yeah, that's what I'm - I'm thinking the same.

Trinity: Yeah, I don't think there are any.

Estefania: I think the only time we see black women is explicitly when they're servants.
(*sounds of agreement*) That's a very good point.

Jackie: You have to question if Charlotte was black, would she have used her in the same way? It's hard to say.

Trinity: Yeah, I think about that too when it comes to all of the other black women that Eleanor ends up buying and incorporating into the tavern. And then when you find out about Maroon island and all of those things, I wonder, like, what Max's motives would've been - or what they were. But you see later on that Max's loyalty is to herself and whoever she cares about and whoever can benefit her. So I think if she can still work in her own best interests against her own people, she's definitely gonna do it to the white girls!

(laughter and agreement from all)

Laura: I mean do you think, because she says that thing about Anne, that when no one else cared what they were doing to her on the beach, she did - is the implication there also that "none of YOU girls cared about what happened?" And at the same time, like, what can they do? What could they actually have done? But, you know, that's another implication that then, like, "You don't give a shit, and as soon as I was back you were just like, you need to decide what you're doing, like, and get back in the game or you need to do something else, and like, everyone's wondering what we're gonna do." There was no question of like, "Are you alright? What happened to you? We were so worried about you!"

Trinity: Right! There's the solidarity thing! *(sounds of agreement)* It's like, "nobody had any for me!" So in that way I don't blame her. Like, I am critical because of the person that I am, but I also feel that. It's a self-preservation. At a certain point it's like, especially when the one person that you love does it to you in the very beginning, it's like she - I don't know, I have a soft spot for her because I feel like she has a lot of fuckin' cards stacked against her and she's in a world where she's the least and she still manages to make moves and sometimes they're messy and sometime they're just not good in terms of what we feel like a good person does, but like, I understand at the same time, so.

Jackie: I also wonder if there's a measure of projection there because - and like a mixture of that and the way she learns from her experiences, because like, she might view compassion as weakness and when she showed compassion for Eleanor, she got screwed over. And Anne showed compassion for her saving her on the beach and now she's screwing Anne over. So I could see her thinking if she shows any compassion for the other girls or if she shows them any leeway, that she's just opening cracks and doors for them to manipulate her. So she has to like, be - it's almost like when you're working a job and you have all these coworkers and then you get promoted to the boss, you can't really hang out with your coworkers anymore because they'll take advantage of you. So I wonder if she, because she sort of rules above, you know, if she sees herself in that role as like, "I can't even show you a measure of compassion because you'll walk all over me," which is kind of what she would do if she was in that position.

Laura: I mean she's sort of been doing it to Jack, so I guess she has to really make a demonstration of like, "You won't do this to me," and like, "I know the tricks, I know what you'll do, and I'm the Madame now, I'm not one of you anymore."

Jackie: Yeah.

Estefania: I think it lends itself to a really rich reading. I'm not saying the show is doing this amount of work but when I, especially when I heard Trinity speaking, it made me think of the fact that historically, we know that there have been projects to suggest that women of color, but black women particularly, don't feel pain, and don't feel pain as much as white women. Which is not only a social perception but one that has literally infiltrated medicine, and the history of surgeries, and like forced sterilization and experimentation. When I think about the fact that - again, the show might not be working this hard, but - if we're placing a black woman in a time in which narratives specifically say, "people who look you like you don't even feel pain," it makes me think, what does compassion really look like for someone like her who is living in a world in which, like, people feel 100% okay not even once showing them empathy? I think if I lived in an experience where people just kind of felt that I was a being that didn't even warrant compassion, when I see it I would be skeptical. And I would see it as a form of weakness, because maybe I wouldn't believe that it's sincere. As well as, what solidarity would you have among people, particularly white women, or white people in general, when you know that that sense of humanization and sympathy very seldom is extended to you? So I think, again, that kind of gives a little bit of dimension in terms of, if Max really is that solitary and that willing to take advantage of anybody, that context is like - yeah, go for it, because who could begrudge you that?

Trinity: Yeah, it's the reason she came into the world.

Estefania: Mhmm, literally.

Trinity: That's her context, so. That's really where I come at it. And I mean, I can still - I'm still critical of her, though, at the end of the day! But, yeah, go for yours, 'cause no one's gonna do it for you and no one's gonna bring you with them. She has nobody but her. Until later on, but. It's not black and white. It's messy, but, I like Max at the end of the day.

Estefania: Me, too.

Trinity: That's good.

(laughter)

Estefania: I've gotten more critical but I still love her.

Trinity: No, absolutely. I did have kind of just like a blind affection for her. So, it is nice to be able to be critical of her and still come out like, I still like her as a character fundamentally, so.

Estefania: But it's disappointing that there are some characters for whom because there is a sense of like - you *ought* to like her or you *ought* to like him, because they're queer, because they're this or that, you *can* engage critically, and you *can* do both. You can like a character and be critical and ask those crazy questions. And you can also dislike a character because you're critical, and I think Max is a character for whom I know a couple people who've not been able to voice, like - I just don't vibe with the character. And that has to be, that's so loaded in a sense of like, moral condemnation that people literally keep that opinion to themselves and it's... I don't know, I don't love that. I don't love that characters like Thomas, as well - we can be critical of him. And it's like, you *can* be! You *can* make complaints! You can just dislike a character. But I think like, a show like this, you ought to be able to engage critically. You shouldn't just blindly love, you should also ask those questions and at the end of it, if you still love that character, that's a really well-written character.

(sounds of agreement)

(sound of waves crashing, hoof beats)

Laura: It's mainly slightly more general but I was thinking about when Max talks to Anne about being about identity, and feeling that there's no place in the world for you, and I just find it interesting how, kind of, construction of identities is a central theme of the whole show, really. And it's interesting that it is just - is this a thing that people can't seem to escape Nassau, and is it because of that? Because Nassau is somewhere where you can construct an identity where elsewhere in the world you don't, or it's taken away from you in

some respects? Because I think I've wondered before, like, why does Max stay in Nassau after everything that happens to her? Why would she stay there and not go somewhere else? And is it because of the opportunities that are afforded for you to be able to build yourself and identity in a place like that?

Trinity: I don't think she could've gone anywhere else and been able to amass the influence that she did in Nassau. She would've had to start *all* over again. And probably at an even lower standpoint than in Nassau. At least there, she was in a brothel and she had some measure of protection. But like, I can't even imagine what she would do elsewhere. Like, I feel like she learned all of her skills on her feet, acting out being the player in the game, basically. So you'd have to go somewhere else and learn *their* game. (*sounds of agreement*) Start all over, build your allies, make your strategy, and it's like, who has the time? It sucks everywhere, everywhere's a dumpster fire, let me just make the best of *this* dumpster fire. (*laughter and agreement*) That's what she did.

Jackie: I mean, she's almost like Eleanor in that, you know, when Eleanor goes on that speech about, I think it's in a later season about how she knows everything and it's Woodes that doesn't know what's going on on the island. So, I think Max has that, I mean, when she's - you know, she doesn't just - she's not like an outside recruit for Madame, she's promoted from within. So, by the time she's Madame, she already has the trust of every girl there, they come straight to her with leads, I mean, so. Already having that inside knowledge of who knows what and who she can trust and who she can't is a huge advantage. She already knows people, she knows the system, so. Yeah, it would be a step down to leave.

Estefania: But I think it's interesting that despite the similarity between her and Eleanor, Max isn't romanticized, I think, about Nassau at all. She's one of the few characters, I think, who doesn't romanticize the island, and I think Anne is another character who outrightly says like, "this place just ends in blood constantly." I think it's very interesting - she has a very practical, I think, understanding of what the island is that Eleanor doesn't exactly have because it's so loaded with this concept of a birthright, and in comparison to characters like Flint, it's like this promise-land with all this potential but Max, I think, is the one who kind of sees it for what it is. She knows that this is, like you said, the place where she'll have a specific set of circumstances that she won't be able to perfectly experience again, and so

she takes full advantage but never really loses sight of some idea that this is a grand place where she is gonna have safe haven. She's still on top of her game.

Trinity: She knows the place is still sand.

Estefania: Yep! That's true!

Trinity: She knows. But I like that, because it's like, it speaks to her life experience. Where it's like, "Someone of my standing is not even allowed to have the things that I have." (*sounds of agreement*) "Here it's amazing, so, I'm damn sure not gonna have it anywhere else."

Jackie: I mean I think it speaks to Eleanor's privilege that she can envision a better life, she can envision all of these things that Max cannot even envision, because for Eleanor it's possible. She knows that. So it's really easy for her to - yeah, envision that, whereas Max is like, no, no matter where I go, it's never gonna be good for me, so, what do you want?

Trinity: And that's as someone who's a mixed black woman. Like, you can't even imagine if Max was like Madi.

Estefania: Yep.

Jackie: Oh mean, yeah.

Trinity: 'Cause like, I honestly feel like a lot of the things that Max was able to accomplish is because she's mixed and she looks mixed.

Estefania: Colorism is a thing.

Trinity: Exactly.

Estefania: I think the fact that she's not a dark-skinned black woman is also a conversation you could have.

Trinity: Yeah, and I also think about, you know, that being a lot of the reason why she didn't feel any type of obligation to any of the Maroons or any of the women who Eleanor bought. No one, like, there was no one that she felt loyal to unless she chose them. Like, there was no sense of solidarity with anyone. And that, yeah, I think that has something to do with it too, because I think if she were just - Mr. Scott's daughter or something, she would have felt a much more sense of obligation to think of someone other than herself. So it's a double-edged sword, it's funny, 'cause it's like, you can be critical of the same thing that you congratulate her for, depending on which way you look at it, and I just, I love that about her.

Estefania: That's an angle in which I think it's interesting how seldom people explore that she's a mixed-race woman, and that is not interchangeable with being a black woman or an African woman, and I think a lot of times people over-conflate one angle of identity or even just sort of like, "oh a woman of color so it's just this all-encompassing thing," - no, there are tiers and there are complex experiences that you just can't exchange. And the exchange between what a mixed-race, light-skinned woman of color would feel when she can pass as racially ambiguous, when she's got hair a certain way, when she's got attributes and features that are coded as attractive within a certain culture, versus a lot of the black women who permeate the show who don't have those same features, and where they're standing. They're not necessarily being seen as the "attractive potential love interest," they're being seen as the servants. And I think if we got a little bit - we got it when we get Madi into the scene but, if we had other characters who could speak more to that experience, we'd have completely different narratives, and maybe we could see the differences between Max's relationship with her racial identity versus other characters who get her same level of, kind of, narrative space. Which again, I don't think we really get until we get Madi on the show.

Trinity: Yeah they really don't - I've noticed that in the show, like, that's never an issue of contention with Max. With herself or with anyone else, and I found that really weird honestly.

Estefania: It's very realistic.

Trinity: I mean, like, I understand the sexualization of her, but I still feel like it should've been mentioned once, just for like, realism, honestly. Like, I just feel like it just - *she* mentions it when she's telling Anne later on about her childhood, but I just, I don't know, I just find it

weird that it's never used against her in any kind of way and that makes me feel like it's kind of unrealistic.

Estefania: I mean I think, an experience for so many mixed-race or so many women of color in general who may, you know, within the black community and outside of it - this idea of being neither black enough or white enough, or whatever that marker would be, I think even - this is an experience that even bisexuals feel, in that you're neither straight nor gay. The sense that you are not fully occupying one end of the polarity, I think that is an experience that everybody has had, when you are a person of color, when you are a queer person who doesn't fit into one polar end, there's gonna come a point where somebody's gonna say you're not included because you're not *this* enough, and when I think about great books, great movies, TV, that is created by black or people of color creators, I often see that conversation being had. This show doesn't do that.

Trinity: Well I mean, I kind of understand why.

Estefania: They don't have a lot of real estate to get into every single angle.

Trinity: Yeah, I understand. I understand. It's just, you know, things that I pick up on just because of things that I'm sensitive to personally. I just, I pick up on those things. And being as she is the only representation someone like me has, I was especially, like, sensitive to. So, I don't expect everyone to, like, even think about that kind of stuff, you know.

Estefania: No. ...But it'd be nice if they did!

Trinity: It'd be great if they did. A lot cooler if they did.

(laughter)

(sound of waves, boat creaking)

Laura: Haven't we talked about her plot with Silver? Don't know if there's much to say about it.

Trinity: Well he's the one that basically sets the whole gold thing into motion, right? But I feel like he just like, sets it into motion and that's it. He doesn't have anything else to do with it. It becomes Max's campaign and then she recruits Jack and the crew and all that and it's like, where did he go? He disappeared in the mix!

Laura: I've always been curious about that gap between season 2 and season 3 where like, you know, all this negotiation happened between Flint and Jack and Vane about who's the custodian of the gold, what's happening with the gold, but also Silver saying in series 3, you know, "we're given the claim to it, and I wanna know what that looks like." I dunno, I just find it curious that - actually this is kind of getting ahead of ourselves, but - so he immediately thinks of going to Max to set this scheme in motion, and it almost seems like he reads more into their partnership than she does. Because by the time you get to season 4, and he, like, goes to her and is like, "I'm giving you the opportunity to kind of, like, buy in with us and, like, be our friend," and she's like, "I don't want to be your fucking friend, like, what?" (*all laugh*) And I just, I dunno, I dunno if there's anything to say about it, I just find it curious that he kind of thinks that like, "Oh we've dealt with each other before, we have a history," and she's like, "Mmm, no? Like, no. A lot of shit has happened, so, no interest in dealing with you again."

Jackie: And that's in character. As we just established, people she has previously had camaraderie with, she will just dump, so.

Laura: I guess it's interesting in terms of, you know, because there's so often, you know, we've done it multiple times already, that there are characters you compare because there are so many similarities between them. But there are some really significant differences as well.

Trinity: I always found it interesting that she acts against her best interests in that situation, where it's like, she's literally welcoming colonial rule. That's how you know it's purely about what's good for her in this situation. And I feel like that fundamentally defines who her character is. She's not like, she doesn't have this big picture of civilization and, like you said, about romanticizing the island. She's just like, "how can I make today better than yesterday?" (*sounds of agreement*) And like, I feel that. I feel that, and I also feel that people who are like, you know, "Revolution!" Like, I get it, you know? But at the end of the

day she's gotta live in her shoes, and she's gotta make a way for herself and that's what she does, even when it fucks everyone else over.

Estefania: I do love that Silver recognizes, though, that she is not someone to underestimate. I think she's more - correct me if I'm wrong, but I think she interacts more with her than he does with Eleanor, really. *(sounds of agreement)* I think it'd be completely in character to say that he would see more power in Max than in Eleanor in some ways, in terms of, "Who am I really gonna show, like, if something's going on, if someone needs to be read or whatever, I'm gonna side on this end." That's my perception of the character, but point blank I just love the fact that he isn't blindsided. She's a dark horse for a lot of people and for a lot of good reasons, but he's called it from the beginning, like, he knew, from first season, "you're very similar and you're somebody to keep an eye on." *(sounds of agreement)*

Trinity: Well yeah, game recognize game.

Estefania: There you go!

Trinity: They are very fuckin' similar and Silver is very out for Silver. He's like, you are an ally to me, you're looking out for yourself, I'm looking out for myself, as long as our paths are going the same way, we're good partners.

Laura: I mean they're both masters of, kind of, insidious quiet power. [Unsure of wording] and like, yeah, he knows that, he can see that.

Trinity: I like it. Snake siblings. *(all laugh)* We needed more snake siblings, that would've been awesome. The curly crew.

Estefania: Too similar, too similar.

Laura: Do you guys have any thoughts about the choice to end season two with a shot of Max? Max's face when she sees the gold? Because she closes out season 2 and season 3. Flint in season 1, and then season 4 is the flag. I just find that interesting, Max is the last shot for half of the seasons.

Trinity: It's like a sense of hope, though. Her smile is so cute. *(all laugh)* She's just like, "I can't believe this really happened! You guys really pulled it off!" I think that that's cute, because it's like, you think because she's so driven and she's so calculating and focused that it's like, like you said, you think she's three steps ahead. Like, she knows that this is gonna work out, so seeing her be like, "Holy shit! This actually worked!" is I think really cool.

Laura: But I feel like it segues into that, because I think it's, like, that's what happens with Flint in season 1 as well, like, it's a similar shot of like, they see the gold, and it's like, the situation's changed and they both have their moment of reacting to that, and like, Max's is like - holy shit, it worked! But then it segues into like, holy shit, what am I going to do with this? Like, what is the plan? Like, it's straight into that, kind of, scheming.

Jackie: Well I do like - this is maybe more about the show than Max specifically but just in terms of tone, I mean, everyone talks all the time about, like, how bleak Black Sails is, and it's like, it's so bleak and it's so depressing, no one's allowed to be happy, and a lot of shows end, like, their big cliffhanger at the end is like, "Everything's gone wrong! What are they gonna do, wait 'til next season to find out!" But instead Black Sails actually ends on a note of hope for 3 out of the 4 seasons - I mean... I guess actually all of them, really. But I mean, yeah, so it's just like, "Something finally went right. Stay tuned and see how they deal with it." *(laughter)* So, I like that. And it *is* interesting that they would use Max as the agent for that hopeful tone two times. She goes through a lot, so, yeah.

Trinity: I never realized that, you're right. All four seasons. *(sounds of agreement)* It all depends on how you read it for the 4th season.

Laura: I dunno, is the third one ending on a hopeful note? Because that ends on like, "Long John Silver is here to fuck your shit up."

Jackie: Yeah, but that's kind of exciting!

Estefania: Well, exciting and hopeful are two different things.

Jackie: True, but it's like, a turning point nevertheless. It's not like - it's like, they're building something, they're creating something.

Estefania: Or they're dividing something. They're on two different sides of the island.

Jackie: True.

Estefania: You actually don't know if they're going to continue to be joined. I do adore that it makes me think of how deeply important she is for the first time. I went into Reddit and I saw - I just looked up "Max" and every single thread was like, "Does anybody else hate Max?" As if there aren't 1,200 other people ragging on Max, and it's like, there are some shows I think where you understand, this is fanservice, this is definitely creators reacting to audiences. I love that - who knows if the creators every got a sense of how much people were unfairly ragging on her because of very obvious bigoted reasons? But despite that, she's still so damn important that she closes out 2 seasons! And she's a key player from beginning to end. It's a total side comment, but I just adore that her relevance is never ever negotiated no matter her fan reception. It doesn't matter whether or not a whole bunch of dudebros hated her for being who she is. There's valid reasons to dislike her, there are also completely invalid reasons. And so, kind of adore that this show didn't take any shortcuts and say like, oh we gotta shortcut on, gotta pull back because people don't love her. Nope! Let her stay messy and complicated and dislike her if you want but she's still gonna have a narrative from beginning to end.

Trinity: You could say the same thing about Eleanor.

Estefania: Yeah!

Jackie: Yep!

Trinity: I love that the women on this show are messy.

Estefania: Absolutely.

Trinity: Because we're allowed to be. And, I mean, we're not allowed to be, usually in media. But we're allowed to be messy and calculating and self-serving and that's okay. We contain multitudes, bitch! *(all laugh)*

Estefania: That's exactly how it was said in the original!

(laughter)

Trinity: Yes! Yes!

Estefania: A direct quote! I love it!

(sound of waves)

Jackie: Well I did, when I was preparing, one thing I was thinking about, like, in terms of just talking about Max's identity is like, just, I mean - I'm sure this probably came up a lot in season 1 too, but, her relationship with sex and how she uses it? I mean I just think another thing about her manipulation is that I feel like she relishes the opportunity to provide value in a way other than through sex. Because the whole thing with Anne, she seems very proud of the fact that sex is her main weapon, she's very good at it, she brags about how good she is at it, and she almost implies that sex is, like, the most powerful weapon there is, and she talks about herself in a way that she thinks that sex is the *only* way she can provide value. So by the end her getting involved with Silver and doing things that are about politics and, you know, all this other stuff, I mean - it's not sexually related at all, it's about everything else, you know? Leads and secrets and all that. So, yeah, I can see her jumping at the opportunity to to be like, "I can do more than just gain power through sex. I can gain power other ways."

Laura: Do you think she has a thirst to prove herself to other people in some way?

Jackie: Possibly, I mean, I wonder where the switch is between her being so proud of the fact that sex is something she's so good at and uses so skillfully. Does she become ashamed of that fact and want to move away from that or does she just add something to her repertoire?

Estefania: I don't think she's ashamed of her sexuality in any way. I think "know no shame" is ironically something that doesn't really apply too much to her. But I always read that her - because I don't think that sex is a singular power, I think it could be simply an act, but when Max engages with sexuality it's always intellectual and emotional manipulation tied into it. Even the whole concept of, like, her relationship with Eleanor, I don't think it was manipulative and I don't think it was power-driven, but she knew Eleanor more than everybody. She knew about the relationship that she had with Vane and the violent aspect it had, and she also was in a set-up where she didn't have to have sex with men, because she was in this relationship with somebody that kind of didn't necessitate that. So I think her power has always been intellectual and emotional as well. I think it goes into how she can often be somebody who is calculating steps, because I think sex alone without design, without intention, doesn't get you very far. Particularly when you're one prostitute in a brothel. So I think she's always had more gifts and she gets into situations where finally they come out more into light. But I think they were always there from the jump.

Trinity: Well you have to think like, what's safe for her to use? It's safe for her to be sexual, and to use her sex as a weapon, but until she starts to amass some sort of power and makes some real ballsy moves, she wouldn't know what was safe for her to try and do. So she might have had all of these skills but like, just been too scared to even try to make any type of moves.

Laura: I find it interesting that there are a lot of sex scenes between Jack and Anne and Max in varying groupings in season 2, but none of them are gratuitous sex scenes just for the sake of having sex scenes. Like, I feel like, their season 2 arc is a really perfect demonstration of how to use sex effectively in a story to further the plot, to further the character development. That there's always something to take from them about - the struggle for power, who's in control, it's about showing Anne turning away from Max after that one sex scene, she's not rejecting her completely. And I find it interesting, as maybe a contrast to some of the Max/Eleanor stuff in season 1 that we had this conversation about is this just for the male gaze, and I feel like potentially some of the Max and Eleanor stuff wasn't particularly necessary in the form of a sex scene to learn anything about their characters.

Trinity: I think all of Anne's scenes are like, all of *Anne's* sex scenes definitely are character development. Because it's like, it's weird to just see her having sex anyway. 'Cause she's so like, sexuality is such a detached part of her identity whereas Max is like, that's how we meet her, is as a sex worker. But it is interesting to see her and Anne. Because you get to see Max at work, then you get to see Max with someone she actually cares about. And I like the fact that those sex scenes are different. I like at the energy between them is like, very palpable energy, where it's like, these are significant things happening between these women. I do feel like, I feel like Max definitely understands the weight of the sex she's having with Anne, and she specifically says like, "It doesn't have to happen again," because she understands the weight. But I also found it interesting because I feel like, and this is just me personally, I just feel like she knew that it would happen again anyway.

(all laugh)

Jackie: I was just gonna say that, yep.

Trinity: So, it's kind of like that thing, like, I'm just, like, being, you know, appeasable.

Jackie: Yes! That's how I read it.

Trinity: Like, it doesn't have to happen again, you know.

Estefania: But we know.

Trinity: Yeah right, like, I know you're gonna come back, though. *(all laugh)* I'mma be here when you come back. But, no pressure.

Jackie: I mean, she tells Jack as much. "She'll be back!"

Trinity: Yeah! Basically! Yeah, she knew.

Laura: What do you think went through Max's mind when Anne brought Jack up with her? Because she didn't know, Jack didn't know, they had a conversation about it like, "did you know that was gonna happen?" That's an interesting moment.

Trinity: It's interesting the way that she does it, too, because there's just no words.

Jackie: Well actually, I disagree that Max didn't know because when Anne gets up there, Anne gets there before Jack does and Max asks her, "did he see you come up?" So to me that was an implication that, I thought Max orchestrated the whole thing and talked Anne into it. That's how I read it. I at least wrote down, "who's idea was it?" Because I don't think it was obviously Anne's. I think it was either Anne proposed it and Max said, "that's a good idea," or Max like, subtly, was like, "You know, what if we just had a threesome, there you go, then we don't have to be rivals, me and Jack!" Because, her asking that, "did he see you come up?" to me implies she was part of the orchestration of that first threesome, I'm pretty sure she was. That's how I see it anyway.

Laura: That's interesting.

Estefania: I read it based on secrecy. Because when Jack goes in and sees them in bed together, he's like, you know, "I understand why you didn't tell me." For me, I do feel like there is a, it's still drenched in a bit of "extramarital," and stuff. I think it is still at that point, like seemingly almost an affair that Anne is having.

Laura: Yeah, I read it as, I mean, you know, Max is being very antagonistic to Jack at that point in the season. But yeah, I read it as like, yeah, "did he see you? 'Cause, like, do we want him to actually see you coming into the room? Do we want to put it into his face like that? If we're not, like, directly controlling the situation as he's seeing it?" Like, I don't know. "Do we want to rub it in his face like that?"

Trinity: Or, "I need to know what's happening so I can make my next move."

Estefania: But the way that Max and Jack look at each other when Anne walks away makes me think that it was not preconceived by Max.

Trinity: Yeah, 'cause they both kind of looked like, "is this what we're doing?"

Laura: Yeah, kind of a silent negotiation like, "okay, I guess? Sure."

Trinity: Right! And so then Max takes her clothes off and then Jack shuts the door with his foot, like, "this is what we're doing." I love that that's all, like, non-verbal, too. (*sounds of agreement*) So it's like, "yep, this is what we're doing! Alright! Let's get in it!"

Laura: That's interesting though, I've not thought of it in the way you read it.

Jackie: Well I only just thought of that recently. My original take was actually in agreement with you guys. That's only a new opinion that I've formed. Because originally I did think it was completely Anne trying to bridge the gap between Max and Jack, and, yeah. So, but now that I've started thinking of Max as more manipulative and trying to piece together every one of her moves in terms of where she's at in her manipulation game, it kind of - that lens sort of changed the way I saw that. But I did notice that after Max has that whole speech to Idelle about, "she's the only one that cared when I was on the beach," then when Silver approaches her, Silver approaches her and she is like, lost in thought. Like, I don't know if you remember, but she's like, by herself, and she's drinking, and she's like, spacing out, and I just noticed the expression on her face just seemed very like, almost like when she gave that speech to Idelle, it's like she realized it herself, almost. And she seemed kind of shook to me, like, "damn, maybe I really have feelings for her, for real for real."

Trinity: I think feelings do kind of sneak up on you like that. You're like, I'm doing this for whatever reason, to have fun, or to meet my ends or whatever it is, and then you're just like, oh shit.

Laura: The start of that threesome that we talked about where Anne asks Jack to come up with her, that's a moment when Anne takes her shirt off, and it's the first time we've ever seen her take her shirt off and she's got those huge scars all over her back, and Max looks kind of shocked and horrified, like, I don't know if she's seen them, and Jack looks sad, he's definitely seen them, but. I wonder if that's a bit of a moment for Max realizing that, like, she's been through some shit. Like, I don't know what that is yet, but like, some things have happened to her. I dunno, maybe that's a moment when Max suddenly realizes that like, Anne has a past and it's probably not a great one. And maybe that's kind of overloaded for her [unsure of wording]. I dunno.

Trinity: She's human.

Laura: Yeah. That we have something in common in terms of a traumatic past. I mean, that we - 90% of the population of Nassau have some sort of traumatic past. But, yeah.

Trinity: Not everyone wears them like Anne does. (*sounds of agreement*) We don't all have physical scars. So those things can be very jarring. And Anne definitely, for someone like her, we would need the physical scars because she's not gonna come right out and tell you what happened to her.

Laura: Do you think Anne felt comfortable taking the shirt off because Jack was there or because both of them were there?

Trinity: That's true. She's had a really weird go with her shirt when it comes to sex. She doesn't normally take it off. So that was a real moment of vulnerability. I guess that does speak to how she feels about Max because she definitely wouldn't have done that, whether Jack as there or not, I feel like if she didn't trust Max she wouldn't have done that. So it invites a lot of questions. Even though I still feel like she'd be like, "fuck off, I don't have to answer your questions." But, still it's like, she invited them.

Jackie: I mean, if that threesome was indeed Anne's idea, I think her doing that was like an invitation for them to be vulnerable, too. Like, you know, I'm asking you to do something that's out of your comfort zone, and so here we go, I'm gonna bear myself completely, bear my scars, do this with me, let's be together. So.

Laura: It's a whole different type of bravery than we've seen from Anne before because she's clearly a very brave character but that's something very different. That kind of vulnerable bravery.

Estefania: But I do love, going back to your question Laura, that there are a lot of effective sex scenes that are, that make sense for the narrative, and I think that right now because we so often have examples of sex scenes that are really only there to titillate the audience really, in a way that I don't even understand, I don't - I think that we made it clear in the fandom episode, we are no strangers to sexual content, nor do we have a problem with it,

but it makes me think about the way that sex is used in fandom and it is often an expression of intimacy, an expression of conflict. there can be stories where it is really only about sex, the content. But there is still an emotional narrative or suggestion, oftentimes, and so it is nice to see a show that kind of does the same thing. That is using, you know, even a very quick sex scene to suggest like, how are these characters in relation to each other, what is the aim, what is the level of intimacy and emotional transparency that's really happening? And I think different sex scenes, in my head, point to different answers.

(sound of waves crashing, a bell ringing)

Laura: And that's our Max season 2 conversation. Hopefully you managed to make it through to the end alright but sorry again about the recording quality. I thought I'd save you from the bad quality just for the outro. Thank you to Jackie for joining in with us, it was so much fun to have a fourth voice and someone who, she knows the show back to front just as well as we do, so it was fantastic having you involved, thank you Jackie.

We'd love it if you get in touch with us, you all know the show backwards and forwards as well. We'd love to know your opinions, if you agree with us, if you disagree with us, let us know, we love those conversations. If you go to hoistthecolours.podbean.com, you will find all our episodes, the information of how to get in touch with us, there's links to our Tumblr, our Twitter, and our e-mail address us if you want to send us any longer thoughts. Thank you for listening and promise next time, the audio quality will be better when we're discussing Anne in season 2, which is gonna be a really juicy one, I think. Thank you and see you again soon!

Hey, hey, hey, ho.

Hey, hey, hey, ho.

Hey, hey, hey, ho.

Hey, hey, hey, ho.