Serpens: Pop Culture Superstar

Intro (00:00)

Jordan: [upbeat music] Hi, I'm Jordan.

Kit: And I'm Kit.

Jordan: Welcome to Starry Time, where stars plus lines-

Kit: Equals stories

Jordan: In this week's episode, we'll be getting silly and exploring the pop culture of the constellation Serpens.

Kit: In this episode, we share our favorite and least favorite occurrences of the month's constellation in pop culture.

Jordan: And we define that pretty, pretty broadly.

Kit: Then we'll end by taking over the brand to Wish Upon a Star for what we wish existed.

Jordan: This month, both anything with the word Serpens or that includes serpent or Serpens in the name is fair game.

Favorites & Least Favorites (00:59)

Kit: But don't worry, we'll be discussing our favorite snakes in pop culture next week in a Creature Corner plus episode. For now, though, let's start with our favorite Serpens, serpent, or Serpens. And I will kick us off, uh, with my first favorite, although I have a bunch of, um, potentials in here. So, you know, um, usually one of the places we like to start with these are with like, a Serpens disambiguation page. Um, and this is hard to find. It doesn't exist, I think because it just seems like a typo of serpent. Um, but I did see that glyph seven on the Stargate is Serpens Caput, so, um, I was pretty happy to see that. That's pretty high on my list. Always a good fallback as a favorite. And the Memory Alpha for Star Trek also reports the use of several Serpentis stars. Many of them seem to be in Starfleet Academy, which I am currently watching,

but I haven't really like, caught these, so they might just be on displays. Um, they're mentioned or visual reports on the Bayer designated Serpentis stars in Discovery, Picard, Prodigy, Enterprise. And perhaps the most notable representation is Psi Serpentis, which in Star Trek Enterprise, has a planetary system that's home of the s- home to the Saurians that are like, reptilian humanoids, uh, who reprodu- reproduce asexually, and there is one on the, uh, uh, Star Trek Discovery show.

Jordan: Love a reptilian humanoid, and the ability to reproduce, um, in that way. What's it called? Parthenogenesis. Not a bad way to go. Really saves you a lot of dates, that's for sure.

Kit: Yeah, so I think that, that was just sort of my collection of things, um, that off the top, uh, got into my favorites. How about you? What were your, what were your favorites?

Jordan: So yeah, I started like we always do in the disambiguation page, and from there I branched out into serpents in general, and this proper noun does include serpent in it, but it is the last word of this, uh, creature, um, which I will describe to you now. The Gloucester Sea Serpent is a legendary creature reportedly seen around and off the coast of Gloucester, Massachusetts-

Kit: Mm.

Jordan: ... and Cape Ann in the United States, so off the coast of Massachusetts. The heyday of sightings began in August 1817 and continued into 1819. Described as a massive serpent-like creature with humps along its back, the Gloucester Sea Serpent has been subject of numerous sightings and tales of encounters by fishermen and sailors. The earliest alleged sighting of this creature was recorded in 1638 by someone named John Josselyn, and apparently occasional sightings still continue to this day.

Kit: Mm.

Jordan: Uh, I did look up to see if this was older than the Loch Ness Monster-

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: ... which, uh, is what it reminded me of. I was like, 1638, that's a long, long time ago. Uh, the myths of the Loch Ness Monster apparently go back to the seventh century-

Kit: Oh. [laughs]

Jordan: ... AD. So yeah, it really, really wasn't close. Uh, but at the very end of this Wikipedia article, there is an in popular culture segment, uh, which is basically the reason I chose it, which quote says, "Although the Gloucester Sea Serpent features in public imagery in the area, according to New England Legends host Jeff Belanger, local businesses have reportedly not extensively capitalized on the legend. During an interview conducted by journalist Arun Rath, Belanger noted that in contrast to the legend of Champ in Lake Champlain, he has, quote, 'Never seen Gloucester try to cash in on it.' End quote.

Kit: [laughs]

Jordan: So I like this 'cause it's like an indie pop culture op- option here. You gotta really be in the know.

Kit: Yeah, if the Loch Ness Monster's too mainstream for you. [laughs]

Jordan: So that was my favorite, and, um, it does count I think in pop culture, at least in like the 19th century.

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: Um, a lot of people were talking about it, so it had its moment. My second choice was also, I'm not sure if it qualifies, but I went with the serpent instrument.

Kit: Oh, I had this one as one of my, uh, potential least favorites, so go ahead.

Jordan: Perfect. All right. Well, let's discuss it now.

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: Um, it has appeared in certain pop culture- ... movies, usually fantasy things like Lord of the Rings, um-

Kit: Mm-hmm

Jordan: ... or something analogous to that. But yeah, it's looks like a, a, a long, serpentine trombone.

Kit: Mm-hmm. Yeah, so this sounded... I listened, you know, to the different, uh, audio of it. It sounds like a trumpet to me. Um, I don't know, I just, like, some of the pictures, they just looked really big and I don't know, something about the, like, serpentine shape of it is unsettling to me. Um, and so yeah, so nothing against the instrument, but, uh, it definitely looks like it would be challenging to carry it. Like, if you're the person that plays this, if you, if you wanted to learn this in, like, middle school, that is not a case you wanna carry, you know? [laughs]

Jordan: I thought it just looked cool. I can also understand why it would be someone's least favorite, 'cause it also looks burdensome.

Kit: Mm-hmm. I had some honorable mentions. Um, eh, so the first one is just the Serpent Steel Roller Coaster that was at Six Flags AstroWorld, so in Texas, designed by your favorite, Arrow Dynamics. Um, yeah, it was that park's first roller coaster, and yeah, it looked really cute, and, you know, always, always a fan of a roller coaster. Anytime we can shout out manufacturers of roller coasters is an important day for us. [laughs]

Jordan: Um, what I loved about this roller coaster is that, you know, it is currently defunct. That's fine.

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: Um, I've described other defunct roller coasters, but on the Wikipedia page, um, they have a quote from the Houston Press by somebody named Cory Garcia, who describes the coaster as, quote, "Chill," and-

Kit: [laughs]

Jordan: ... "So laid back, even of those of us most afraid of rides could probably handle it with grace, or at least only a few screams." I love just a chill and laid back coaster. That, uh, dichotomy just really appeals to me. Do you have any other honorable mentions?

Kit: Um, I'd like to shout out the sea serpent element of a, uh, roller coaster, staying on brand. So this is two inversions, uh, similar to a cobra roll. Um, there is one in Rock 'n' Roller Coaster at Hollywood Studios. I don't know if it's actually still called Rock 'n' Roller Coaster though, now that it has its Muppet re-theme, but I am just a big fan of... I, I don't really like the, like, straight down drops, but I love a twisty, roll-y, uh, part of a roller coaster. So I saw something that one of the rollovers is called Sea Serpent, and that, um, that's appealing to me. I like that.

Jordan: I think they used to do this on Dueling Dragons.

Kit: Mm.

Jordan: I think I'm ready to go to my least favorites, of which I have a few.

Kit: Great. Why don't you start us off?

Jordan: My first least favorite was, I don't know if you looked this up, the whole Serpent and the Rainbow, uh, universe. Did you look this up at all?

Kit: Nope. Nope, don't know about this.

Jordan: So yeah, it's from Wes Craven. It's a horror film.

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: It basically, like, takes a bunch of fake voodoo, voodoo being the word that they use in a sort of, like, uh, appropriative fashion, with somebody who's, like, an anthropologist, and he's in the rainforest, and he drinks a potion, and-

Kit: Mm-hmm

Jordan: ... you know, he starts creating zombies and stuff. Fun, multiple movies and remakes. To me, it seems kind of exploitative of a, a Haitian culture that has existed for, you know, hundreds of years. But-

Kit: Mm

Jordan: ... the good news, uh, is that it does star Bill Pullman, our favorite-

Kit: [laughs]

Jordan: ... actor from Independence Day.

Kit: Mm-hmm. Yeah. [laughs]

Jordan: So this one I've known about for a while. That was my first least favorite. I'll let you tell me your next least favorite before I get into my honorable mentions.

Kit: Yeah, so this is just a personal, you know, um, personal least favorite. It is a, I guess what I would call maybe, like, a coffee table book called Serpents, um, by Jacqueline Goy and Guido Mocafico I'm gonna go with, who's a photographer. Um, this looks like it would actually be very cool. Like, it's photographs of different snakes. Um, but I am scared of snakes. I'm, and like, I'm not actively scared, but, like, when I'm like, "Ooh, I wanna peruse, like, an interesting coffee table book," I'm, I don't wanna see snakes. So, um, I think if you like snakes, this looks like a beautiful book. Um, but, uh, not for me.

Jordan: Yeah, it seems like you really have to be, um, you know, very relaxed to take something-

Kit: Mm

Jordan: ... that threatening in coffee table form, you know?

Kit: [laughs]

Jordan: You're, like, having a pretty chill, chill evening if you're, like, willing to just look at giant pictures of terrifying serpents, um, recreationally. Like, maybe that's something you like to do. I mean, you know, more power to you, but certainly not, uh, on my favorite list.

Kit: No, this would be a great gift for somebody who likes snakes, though. So if this is you, um, this could be your favorite, and you know, these things are all subjective.

Jordan: Speaking of great gifts for snake fans, did you encounter the Serpent Squad at all?

Kit: Um, yes. Yes, I did.

Jordan: Did they make your favorite or least favorite?

Kit: It was in a category that I said, "Serpent themed super villains," uh, and then I had a series of links underneath it. [laughs]

Jordan: Absolutely correct. Yeah. So this thing just blew my mind, that there is, like, apparently, uh- A group, uh, a mercenary group of all snake-themed villains [laughs]-

Kit: Uh-huh

Jordan: ... in Marvel Universe, um, which is great. I didn't know there were so many, but, you know, they ha-

Kit: Mm-hmm

Jordan: ... they have Anaconda and Black Mamba and Death Adder and even Princess Python.

Kit: Mm. Pretty cool.

Jordan: And Madam Hydra.

Kit: Mm.

Jordan: These are some characters I would've never, you know, imagined, but I'm glad that they've found some sort of solidarity, the Serpent Squad.

Kit: Yeah, I do see this, so I see under Serpent Society, the group is organized as a super villain labor union, so I love that for them.

Jordan: I didn't even know that they had labor unions in the MCU. Apparently, the Serpent Squad has made an appearance in one of the Captain America movies. I didn't know.

Kit: No, I didn't know either.

Jordan: Uh, love to see a squad, love to see alliteration, uh, and, uh, they're on my least favorite list, um, just because I, I'm sad I didn't know they existed until today.

Kit: [laughs]

Jordan: So those were our favorites and our least favorites. If we missed yours, you can let us know over on our socials.

Kit: We are at universeodon dot com slash at starrytimepod. [upbeat music]

Wish Upon a Star (13:41)

Jordan: Okay, Kit, let's use the Serpens brand directly for our wish for section. I'll let you go first. What do you wish used the Serpens brand?

Kit: Well, I, I came up with two things, and then I came up with the best thing. So my things that I came up with-

Jordan: [laughs]

Kit: ... that I kinda, like, discarded was Serpens Nightclub, Serpens Still House, and then, and then of course, the real inspired choice, which was Ser-Pens, serpent-shaped pens. Done. It was perfect. [laughs] What more, what more could I ask for?

Jordan: Wow. Wow, wow, that does rule because, yeah, those squiggly pens that-

Kit: Mm-hmm

Jordan: ... would have, like, tornado shapes.

Kit: Mm-hmm.

Jordan: Those w- those were very cool. I like those a lot. It's hard to make a pen cool.

Kit: Right.

Jordan: I'm impressed.

Kit: [laughs] Ser-Pens.

Jordan: Was there ever a point where you ever thought it could be, like, S-I-R Pens, like some sort of medieval Sir Pens, uh, sword or anything like that, or that-

Kit: Wow

Jordan: ... that wasn't part of it?

Kit: It wasn't part of it, but I feel like, you know, that's, like, another tab on the website, you know? Sister, it's a sister site.

Jordan: Brilliant. All right. So what I wish for existed is a video game, actually, where you get to be in charge or play as Echidna.

Kit: Mm.

Jordan: Finally, it's a first-person game where you get to write the story of what Echidna does and who she loves and how she survives. So this is an RPG game where you're Echidna, but you're also trying to figure out, or at least part of the game, is mutating monsters-

Kit: Mm

Jordan: ... uh, which you can do over generations, which is, of course, the name of this game, uh, which I remember is your favorite, Serpens Womb.

Kit: [laughs] Gross. [laughs]

Jordan: Yeah. So my wish for is a video game, first-person RPG, Serpens Womb, where you are Echidna and you are making monsters and sending them out to protect... It's actually kind of based on your retcon-

Kit: Mm

Jordan: ... to, uh, you know, protect the, the lands that you care about.

Kit: Yeah, I feel like there's been some, like, popular Greek myth-inspired games lately, so I feel like this would be a good new twist on one. I feel like perhaps, you know, the focus groups might have some feelings about Serpens Womb, but, you know, um, they can take that up at, uh, with, uh, with, uh, with the focus groups.

Jordan: Truly, Kit, it's only a matter of time before one of these wishes comes true. [upbeat music]

Outro (16:57)

Kit: This has been Kit.

Jordan: And Jordan.

Kit: Sisters who love stars and stories.

Jordan: And we'll see you next time.

Kit: On Starry Time. [upbeat music]