

## **A Moment Behind the Scenes with Jessa (Anne Yatco) - Transcript**

JENNY CURTIS: Hey, this is *SOLAR* director and producer Jenny Curtis. Writer Chris Porter and I got to sit down with Anne Yatco and talk through the intricacies of her character, Jessa. Here are a few excerpts of what she had to say.

JENNY CURTIS: Like you said, you were in these development workshops with us, so you kind of saw the show change and grow.

ANNE YATCO: Mm hmm.

JENNY CURTIS: Was there a difference for you in Jessa from the first time we worked on her in the workshop to what we ended up bringing into the studio?

ANNE YATCO: I think it just got refined. For Jessa, I felt like in the workshop Jessa was already kind of fully formed, and I think we just, like, made little refinements to like exactly how she approached the different crew members.

CHRIS PORTER: How did you find Jessa's voice physically?

ANNE YATCO: I felt like Jessa, just like who lives fully in my chest, if that makes sense. Like, if you think about, like, where a character lives in your body, she's like, rock solid. So, like, if I kept thinking of Jessa as just being, like, the most, the most confident and assured that I could ever be about who I am and what I do like, that feels like Jessa to me. And that's not to say that just Jessa doesn't have, like, her own worries and questions about herself. But she's that rock for the crew. And I wanted to, like, feel that whenever I was in a scene. So that's kind of like the mental image I had in my brain.

JENNY CURTIS: To talk about being in the booth, we recorded this in the height of the pandemic...

CHRIS PORTER: Pre-vaccine.

JENNY CURTIS: Pre-vaccine. So we were in a recording studio, which I don't know about for you, but for me that was like a godsend, being able to be in a studio with other people. Obviously you were on the other side of the glass, so we never got to interact like face to face. But I saw you.

ANNE YATCO: It was nice. It was one of the first projects I got to work on in a studio in the pandemic, because like the pandemic happened and everything went remote and I had to learn how to record remotely. And then this came up and you're like, we're going to record in studio. And I was like, Can we? Is this a thing we can do yet? And it was, and it worked out great. And like all the safety protocols were in place, like everything felt safe and above board and it was lovely to be able to see your face through the glass while we were doing this.

CHRIS PORTER: Just to bring it back to Jessa.

ANNE YATCO: Yeah,

CHRIS PORTER: We obviously very much love Jessa as a character, all of us, but we tried very hard to make sure that they were all very human characters. So from your perspective, what is something that you love about Jessa and what are some flaws that you feel are worth acknowledging?

ANNE YATCO: I love that Jessa is just enough of a chameleon to be able to like, connect with everyone in the crew, because they're all very different. And the way you have to approach each of those people in order to draw them out, in order to get them to tell you vulnerable things, in order to get them to become vulnerable for you. Like that's a different tactic for each person, right? One of the tactics being her big monologue in episode three, kind of baring it all herself, in kind. And I think that's so, so valuable, just trying to relate to people out there in the world. So many people are unwilling to try different avenues to be able to connect with people that they normally wouldn't. And I feel like Jessa's the kind of person who would be able to

*SOLAR CLIP PLAYS*

JESSA: Do, you know, how I lost my arm?

JAMAL: A drunk driver.

JESSA: That's right. One year before self-driving cars became mandatory. I was driving home with my fiancée, we just had dinner with her parents. They thought we didn't need eat or something, so they gave us all their leftovers. I'm sitting there in the passenger seat with four boxes piled on my lap, and I see these headlights coming real fast toward the driver's side window. And I think to myself, these leftovers are going to go everywhere. And that's where my memory just ends.

*SOLAR CLIP ENDS*

JENNY CURTIS: This monologue that we've been talking about in episode three, I swear, like Jessa became a friend of mine and a cheerleader of mine, and I would go back and listen to this monologue when I was having, you know, stress about the show, and stress about life and her perspective, like, helped me as a person. And I guess I kind of want to throw it over to Chris who wrote the thing. What is it you were trying to say with the monologue? Where did it stand in the story and how did you come to the words of it?

CHRIS PORTER: Definitely functionally, with this moment in this story, what was important is communicating who Jessa was and how she works, just like Anne was explaining, she kind of has to be a chameleon and find a way that she fits with these other crew members because

she's not only there to stitch up fools, as Jessa says, she's actually there for their mental health as well. And she knows in this moment Jamal is spinning out. And we know that in the more present timeline, which is the most future timeline of Jamal facing what could be his imminent death, he's also spinning out and he needs to hear these words again that Jessa has relayed to him. So story wise, I knew that that had to be the mission of it. Part of her back story, I knew that she had to have a bionic arm that was caused by this thing. Her story about the leftovers going everywhere is actually somewhat inspired by a true story, where I was leaving a friend's house on Thanksgiving and his family had given us multiple pies. I had them in my passenger seat, about three different pies, because they were like, 'here, thank you for coming to our Thanksgiving, here's a whole bunch of extra pies.' And thank God it was not a drunk driver. It was not a situation where I lost a significant other. It was not a situation where I lost a limb of my body, but I definitely slammed on my brakes, reached over to the pies and thought to myself, 'These pies are going to go everywhere.' And that is where my memory stops, right? Then it does not kick back in for 3 hours until a cop is questioning me, asking what year it is and who the president was. And sure enough, when I found my car and it was totaled, the pies had indeed gone everywhere. But there is always something about that. Like I told that to the insurance people when they were taking my statement, I was like, 'I thought, these pies are going to go everywhere'. And I remember looking back on that and thinking, What a stupid thing to think, what a stupid thing to spend that fraction of a second on. And so that became sort of what happened to Jessa. And I wrote it into the story that way because it just resonated in my brain of, wow, this is the way that humans think.

ANNE YATCO: Yeah, that hit me when I was like reading it and working on it because yeah, we do think about really weird stuff at the worst possible moment and that is just human nature and it's so easy to beat yourself up about that kind of a thing, but you really literally couldn't help it. That was all you were going to think about at that moment. And having to sit with that is, is hard.

JENNY CURTIS: And it's very human. And I think that's what's powerful about the script is there are so, so many human moments in this and everybody has their own truly human flaws. Jessa gets to see all of them. Yes, because everybody spills their guts to her. So what is Jessa's view of all of the other crew members, all these people, you know, so deeply? And let's start with the first two, Jamal and Wren, you become close to both of them.

S2: For Wren, I think Jessa sees like kind of a kinship with her. Like I think she she sees Wren kind of respond to the world in a way that Jessa has in the past. Like, and I think that resonates with her. So I get the sense that Jessa reaches out to her first because she can see her coming down that same path that Jessa might have. But also, I think that makes them closer friends than probably anyone else in the crew. Not that Wren is the most outgoing or easy to form relationships with, but I think Jessa is able to crack the shell a little bit more with Wren, and part of it is probably occupational by nature, but some of it is like just genuinely she appreciates her presence and wants to help her out.

JENNY CURTIS: I love that you said Wren responds to the world in a way that Jessa has in the past, because we definitely didn't give you that. That was something you created as Jessa on your own.

ANNE YATCO: Yeah.

JENNY CURTIS: And I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

ANNE YATCO: I guess I get this feeling that Jessa was a lot like that because she has this – I approach it like just had this life before the incident that she talks about in episode three and then a life afterward. And she talks about having to change her whole outlook on life and having to change her whole way of approaching, approaching this new world. So I feel like before she was different, and I get the sense because, she was she was going to be a marine, she was ambitious and all this kind of stuff. And I think she might have been a little more of a closed off person like, like Wren with the exception of her fiancée, you know?

CHRIS PORTER: I love that.

JENNY CURTIS: Yeah, me too.

CHRIS PORTER: That's fantastic.

JENNY CURTIS: Well, that's a taste of our behind the scenes with Anne Yatco. If you'd like to hear the whole discussion, you can find it on the Solar Panel on Apple Premium.