

Women at Warp Episode 3: Starfleet's Women in Command

audio clip from "All Good Things"

Beverly:

Geordi, we need more more power, now.

Geordi:

I'm trying, Captain. They're too much for us, I can't keep the phase-inducers online.

[Explosions]

Female Officer:

Shields down to nine percent. One more hit and they'll collapse.

Beverly:

Open a channel.

[Beep]

Female Officer:

Open.

Beverly:

This is Captain Beverly Picard. We are a medical ship on a mission of mercy. Please break off all--

[Explosion, beeping]

end audio clip

Jarrah:

Hi and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as our crew of four-women Star Trek fans boldly go on a biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. This week we will be talking about fabulous female captains in Star Trek, other than Captain Janeway, because she probably needs her own episode. But before we get started we had some listener mail, or rather a listener blog-comment that I thought was appropriate for this episode so I'm going to get Sue to read that.

Sue:

All right. This came in minutes after we released our very first episode

Grace:

How flattering.

Sue:

I know. And here we go. It says,

"Hi. Great first episode. You asked for input. Something that particularly interests me is the default-to-male-setting that I see so much of in the Star Trek writing and/or casting. For example in a Voyager episode I just watched concerning flight, every single one of the non-regulars was male. I don't know if it was because, apart from Leonardo, they were criminals and the writers subconsciously wrote men for those parts.

Also why couldn't Janeway have a holodeck program featuring Hypatia? Though I do get why she'd have been less useful making an aircraft. Also in the Voyager pilot they had a golden opportunity to at least posit the possibility of a ship with a female captain and first officer, since they were going to kill off half the Voyager crew to make room for the monkey. They could have done anything with the officers that had to die without troubling the sponsors. And what do we get? The first officer and doctor are white men. There's so much of this, and I honestly don't know if you can make an episode around it without it becoming a simple counting exercise. But I do find it interesting, so I thought I'd mention it. Look forward to the next episode. Tim."

Grace:

Thanks for writing in.

Jarrah:

Awesome. I think it fits pretty well with the subject of this episode on female captains, because while there are few and they're worth remarking on, I am sure that if we tried to count all of the one-shot male captains that have appeared in Star Trek we would have a much longer list, because I think that there is this sort of default to male attitude. And we see this in in games and comic books, too. That creators have argued, you know, we need a reason to make this character a woman or a person of color. But they don't see like you need a reason to make a character a white man.

Grace:

Whereas a male character is just the default, of course.

Jarrah:

Yeah like I was watching an Enterprise episode that will get to a bit later, and Trip is meeting a new engineering team, which is four people. Three of them are white men and one of them is a white woman and that's a classic example - none of those people have lines. You could have made them more diverse without any skin off your teeth. But it's just considered the default.

Grace:

Which is just lazy.

Sue:

And it's not a Star Trek problem, really, it's an everything problem. But I think that it gets more attention in science fiction because we're supposed to be in the future, and we're supposed to be in a world that has progressed to a certain point. But we're still seeing the same thing that we see today, that we saw 10 years ago, etcetera, etcetera.

Grace:

I think it was like Jane Espenson or someone who said, 'Why would we write a fantasy world that's got the same problems as our reality?'

Jarrah:

Yeah absolutely. So to start off with I wanted to talk about what you guys would be looking for in a female captain. Like if you got to just write a woman captain, who is only going to show up for one episode so you probably couldn't make her, you know, have the most complex life story in the world. But what kinds of qualities would you want her to embody? What would you be looking for?

Grace:

More aliens. Because honestly I'm also sick of seeing humans just be default in Star Trek. I think we've got this diverse cast of aliens and this huge group of people to draw from. And there should be a lot more fun with that. I mean, also for the sake of intersectionality, just saying, 'Well we've got our lady captain, that's our diversity. Or we can have our alien captain.' We can't have both? I don't think I've actually seen someone who is both, who is a Starfleet captain anyway.

Jarrah:

Yeah, and we are only going to get to the Starfleet captains in this episode. So I mean there are a couple of notable Romulan women in particular, but they're very few and far between and you're right, in Starfleet we rarely get female alien captains. I mean there aren't any actually in the list. So I think that's a good point.

I mean one thing I would be looking for is I want them to make a strong impression because they only have one episode. So you don't want the person to be saying, 'Who was that again? I totally don't even remember them.' So for them to be, in some way, remarkable and not for just being a totally one-dimensional stereotype, and I think we'll get to a couple of good examples of that.

Sue:

Yeah I really like that Janeway was a scientist, you know. That she's, I think she was an engineer. I like it when they clearly have had a field that they rose to the top of, and then they took command and became bridge officers and they aren't just there because they need to fill a seat in the episode. And as much as I hate this word when it comes to talking about media: they should be strong characters. And strong does not mean, you know, aggressive or necessarily physically strong but just of good character.

Jarrah:

Exactly, if we think about some of the male captains that are really memorable for being in one episode I'm thinking, for example, of the man who is in, I believe, the episode is called "The Wounded." The episode with O'Brien's former captain. And he's a character where he's not really strong in terms of being, like he's aggressive but he's definitely not quite rational. And yet he makes a very strong impression. You have a good sense of who he is.

Sue:

Yeah, definitely, strong like well-developed. You know, there's a reason that this person is the way that they are or that she is the way that she is. Let's use our pronouns since we're talking about women right.

Jarrah:
Might as well.

Sue:
Sadly, I can't really come up with a ton of examples. Other than Erika Hernandez, she is the one that I think a lot of people point to.

Jarrah:
Yeah. Absolutely. And my plan was to go in chronological order in terms of when the things aired to actually put Erika at the end because I think it actually makes more sense that way. But she does sort of come up in the first mention of female captains we get, which is in the *TOS* episode "Turnabout Intruder."

Grace:
Oh boy.

[Laughter]

Jarrah:
This is probably another one you could just do a whole analysis of. But for the purposes of this podcast we'll just say that basically it's about James Kirk's former love interest Janice Lester, and she has a line that sort of implies that she wanted to be a captain, and she was resentful because women weren't allowed to be captains in Starfleet and that's been debated whether that's actually what she meant. But in James Blish's novelizations of the original series it's explicitly stated that women couldn't be captains, and because of this she kills her entire crew to be able to get access to Kirk, swaps bodies, and then proceeds to totally you know put the *Enterprise* in total peril in Kirk's body.

Grace:
Like you do, like you do.

Jarrah:
Meanwhile Kirk is in Lester's body. Yep. And yes so do you guys have thoughts on that episode?

Grace:
Ah, I don't think there's anything I can really say that isn't immediately obvious from the descriptions of the episode.

Sue:
Yeah when I blogged through *TOS* us that was the only episode that got a reaction gif, and it was of a real housewife flipping over a table.

[Laughter]

Grace:
Fitting, fitting.

Sue:
Yeah pretty much. I would say the only good part about that episode is enjoying William Shatner's overacting.

Grace:
Well that's one of the reasons we come for it in the first place.

Jarrah:
I think that actually the actress who plays Janice Lester, as bizarre of a part as it is, I think she actually does a good job pretending to be Shatner stuck in her body. But I have a quote from a professor of communications at the University of Pittsburgh named Brenton Malin and he says that the episode is basically a reactionary response to feminism in the 1960s and that Dr. Lester is quote: "A caricature and condemnation of the feminism of the late 60s, evoking a fear of powerful, power-hungry women."

Grace:
Pretty much.

Jarrah:
Yeah. He says: "The message seems clear. Women want to kill men and take their jobs but ultimately they can't handle them."

Grace:
Yep that's about it right there.

Jarrah:
So it's a pretty weird message for Star Trek and I guess you can maybe just credit part of that to the fact that this was the very end of *The Original Series* and that the teams had changed up so much, they were starved for scripts, starved for funding, and starved for ideas. But it's pretty much I think a blight on *The Original Series* and Star Trek in general.

Grace:
It's a blight on the face of science fiction in general, dude.

Jarrah:
Totally.

Sue:
I mean I just don't get it. So we know that Gene Roddenberry is by no means perfect, but he, from the very beginning, wanted his first officer to be a woman. He wanted you know bridge officers like who did actual things. And she would be second-in-command of the ship and then you end the series three years later with "Turnabout Intruder"? What? I

mean, yes, the original pilot did have a few weird comments about having a woman on the bridge, which was obnoxious, but that is a far cry from what we saw with Janice Lester,

Grace:

Pretty much. We go from having a woman in a role of authority and power where she is supposed to be the logical, levelheaded character, to an episode that entire plot revolves around the idea of this character just suddenly coming down with “crazy bitch syndrome.”

Jarrah:

Yeah and at the end, you know, after the bodies are swapped back and Janice Lester is basically sobbing and saying that she wants Kirk dead, Kirk sort of wistfully says she “could have had a life was fulfilling as any woman. If only, if only.” And I don't really know exactly what that means but it sounds like he's saying that you know if only...

Grace:

Couldn't you have just taken what you're given and be happy with it?

Jarrah:

Yeah, just like accept your proper role. So it was such a bizarre installation in the franchise, but I thought it was worth a mention.

Grace:

Yeah

Jarrah:

Because we don't really get to hear about female captains before that point, and we don't can to hear about another one for another 17 years in *Star Trek IV*, when we get to see the captain of the USS *Saratoga*, very briefly, as Earth is being destroyed by the probe, the whale probe.

Grace:

Space whale.

Jarrah:

So this was 1986. Yeah! And the actors who played the captain was named Madge Sinclair and the character doesn't have a name in the movie, but in the novels she's said to be named Marge Alexander. So she doesn't have a huge part. She only has a couple lines, but I think that it's pretty significant that they chose to cast a black woman as the first female captain that we got to see.

Grace:

Which is pretty cool also because intersectionality.

Jarrah:

Yeah, exactly. I mean at this time we hadn't had a woman captain of, you know, helming a show or a black captain. And those were both huge struggles. So it was still something to show that this is still a universe where anyone can ascend to the rank of captain.

Grace:

Well if Kirk can do it...We're going to get hate mail for that aren't we?

Jarrah:

Let's just say if Decker could do it. Wasn't Decker captain?

Grace:

[Laughs] Yeah.

Jarrah:

OK yeah. If Decker could do it.

Grace:

Yeah. How hard can it be?

Jarrah:

Yeah, but when we get to *The Next Generation*, for the sake of the next one, we should treat it as hard again I think because the first female captain we get to see in *TNG* is Tryla Scott who's in the episode "Conspiracy." Do either of you remember that episode particularly?

Grace:

I can't say I do, honestly.

Sue:

That is the episode with the slugs, right?

Jarrah:

Yeah that's the episode where...

[Laughter]

Grace:

Oh wow.

Jarrah:

There are these sort of bug things that are controlling...

Grace:

Can we just pause for a second and say that the fact that the episode is known as "the one with the slugs" doesn't really say much for it so far.

Sue:

But you know what I realized after I said that that that could be referring to a lot of different episodes.

Jarrah:
Yeah, exactly.

Grace:
It's a slug a heavy sci-fi franchise.

Sue:
It's the one where it's a first season episode, and it is also the one that...

Grace:
So you know it's good.

Sue:
Yeah, it's the one that Walker Keel shows up in.

Jarrah:
Yes.

Sue:
And I remember this specifically because I have watched the scene several times because as a Picard-Crusher shipper that has a little bit of their backstory in it.

Grace:
Right.

Sue:
Just so you know. But that's this alien race that that sort of burrows into your brainstem, and they're trying to...

Grace:
Burrows or bros?

Sue:
Bur-rows.

Grace:
Sorry, sorry.

Sue:
[Laughs]

Grace:
I had a mental image there.

Sue:

And they sort of take control, essentially, and can tell if somebody has one of these bug-things in them because there's a little tiny tail that comes out of the base of their neck. And it's sending people, you know, back to Starfleet to take over. And this admiral's assistant has the head-alien guy in his chest, and eventually explodes. That's the episode.

Grace:

Well I'm just thinking now if they go into your head and they have a little tail is it like a rat tail? Because if so then the aliens are 'broing' into your brain.

[Laughter]

Grace:

Sashaying in there with their popped collars.

Sue:

It is not that elaborate. Maybe? I don't know.

Jarrah:

I kind of want you to photoshop the aliens with a little fedoras now, Grace.

[Laughter]

Jarrah:

I'll send you a picture. So yeah that's the episode. I actually think it's fairly good for season one.

It's at least exciting and you aren't really sure what's going to happen until the end. But the Tryla Scott is has I think a short, but memorable, appearance. She is one of two captains or three captains including Picard who's summoned by Walker to come meet on this abandoned planet and learn about the fact there may be a conspiracy going on and she steps out into the light. And she's also a black woman and Picard goes, "Tryla Scott" and remarks that she's the youngest woman who ever, actually I think youngest person, who ever attained the rank of captain.

Grace:

Cool.

Jarrah:

And says, "Are you really that good?" And she goes, "Yes I am." And I just love that. I think that it's awesome.

Grace:

It's important to know your value.

Jarrah:

It's just sad that then she gets killed because she gets taken over by one of the bug-things at the end. But...

Grace:
Of course

Jarrah:
It was a promising start for season one of *Next Generation*.

Grace:
As far as season one goes.

Jarrah:
Yeah. Next up we have my all-time favorite. This is one who has the rank of captain, but doesn't actually fly a ship, I think the only one we're going to talk about. And that is Phillipa Louvois from "The Measure of a Man."

Grace:
Tell us why she's your favorite.

Jarrah:
All right. Well so if anyone doesn't remember, "The Measure of a Man" is the episode where Data is on trial to find out if he's a human and has human rights, I guess. And...

Sue:
If he's sentient, I think.

Jarrah:
Yes, yeah. Phillipa Louvois is working for the judge-advocate general and she gets to preside over this case. And she also used to, it's implied, go out with Picard and she has this amazing line where she basically says, "You're a pompous ass and a damn sexy man."

[Laughter]

Jarrah:
I just want to be her...

Grace:
That's pillow talk right there.

[Laughter]

Sue:
She's not wrong.

Jarrah:
No. And...

Grace:

Maybe one adds to the other a little bit and vice versa.

Jarrah:

Totally. I think that she's a really great example of what we're talking about, about strong not necessarily meaning aggressive. She just clearly has a really good, forceful personality. But she's also willing to listen and she has opinions, but she reconsiders them when she's offered new facts. And I think that makes her a pretty cool role model. Also, little-known fact: the actress Amanda McBroom who plays that role is a cabaret performer, and she also wrote the song "The Rose" from the Bette Midler movie *The Rose*.

Grace:

You're kidding!

Jarrah:

Nope.

Grace:

Oh my gosh. What are the odds?

Jarrah:

So I'll maybe post a video of her more recently singing at a cabaret performance in our show notes because I was like, "That's the same person? Oh my gosh!"

Grace:

Cool. Wow, man. The things you learn from the internet.

Jarrah:

Does anyone else have anything else on Phillipa Louvois?

Sue:

Nothing relevant.

[Laughter]

Jarrah:

Why is she honing in on Picard?

Sue:

Exactly. Pretty much.

Grace:

Because why not? He's there.

Sue:

Like a lot of the people who show up who are Picard love-interests, I just have an immediate not great reaction to it.

Grace:
I wonder why.

[Laughter]

Sue:
But I can, you know, I can look past it now and recognize her. No, I really did not like any of them for a long time. But now, you know, as an adult I see them as their own individual characters. So...

[Laughter]

Grace:
Not just competition.

Sue:
Exact--not for me, for Beverly.

[Laughter]

Grace:
Of course.

Jarrah:
I'm really glad that they never get past flirting, though, because I think that it would have made her role in the show more about Picard. Instead of what she has, which is I think basically her own character with her own function in the plot.

Grace:
Right.

Sue:
Oh no. They would have destroyed it if it actually happened.

Jarrah:
Yeah.

Sue:
Yeah I completely recognize that.

Grace:
In not as many words, yeah.

Sue:
Yeah.

Jarrah:

And this is also an episode written by Melinda Snodgrass, who is fabulous in many ways. So yay for women writers.

Grace:

The Snod. What, what. That's my name for her now, I am declaring it.

Jarrah:

OK. We'll see how she feels about that. So next up we talked about this in our *TNG* episode is "Yesterday's Enterprise" with Captain Rachel Garrett. And I don't know if you guys knew, but in an early draft this was actually going to be a man, Richard Garrett. Which, I think, goes back to a point you talked about previously that if you don't think too much about the gender of your character and just write a good character and then make it a woman it can end up being awesome.

Grace:

Ripley's Law right there, in reference to Alien.

Jarrah:

Yes.

Grace:

I killed that.

Sue:

I get it, and I think that's a great thing that exists that you can say just write a character and the actor who plays it will determine its gender. But I think you can write characters that are specifically women and specifically men, because you know what, we are different so it doesn't have to be that way, it doesn't have to be just write a man and cast a woman. You can actually write a woman, too.

Jarrah:

Oh definitely. I think the problem comes in when people either think too hard about the fact that they're women. Especially male writers, and not really understanding and taking the time to really, you know, ask questions and understand what that might mean.

I mean there's no like one meaning of what it means to be a woman, but to at least try to do some research and talk to actual women. And to get a sense...

Grace:

Do not consider them another species, because then you're already doing it wrong.

Jarrah:

Yeah. Then you can fall into stereotypes, or just create a really bland character because you're trying so hard not to fall into stereotypes. But in the final script she's described as a "tall, handsome woman who commands respect instantly. And the actress who played her, Tricia O'Neil, also played the Klingon scientist that we talked about who is in "Suspicious" as well as a Cardassian scientist in a *Deep Space Nine* episode.

Grace:

Oh I didn't I didn't realize that was her also on *Deep Space Nine*.

Jarrah:

Yeah. One of the two I'm not sure which one, in the episode "Defiant."

Grace:

Yes. I actually think Rachel Garrett is just awesome. She makes a very good impression for the short amount of time we see her.

I just really enjoy getting to see the contrast between her and Picard. Not only for the brief time we see them for their different styles as captaining, but also to show the contrast of the different situations that their respective *Enterprises* are in.

And I thought having two separate characters to do that, instead of like just an alternate Picard or something was really cool and just gave it kind of a level of gravitas. I think if that makes any sense. Just the different-ness of it.

Jarrah:

I agree. I like how, you know, right from the very beginning she really commands respect, and even though she's faced with this incredibly, you know, disorienting situation about being years in the future, she adapts really quickly based on her knowledge that you just have to do what it takes to survive the situation.

And she...

Grace:

She gets thrown there and there is just like, "Well this is what's happening now I guess."

Jarrah:

Yeah and she, you know, she checked herself out of sickbay against Crusher's recommendations and basically is like, "My crew needs me!" And that's what you expect of a captain, especially a captain of the *Enterprise*.

Grace:

Mhmm.

Jarrah:

So we got a couple more captains in *Next Generation*, one who we don't really get to see a lot of from her own perspective is Geordi La Forge's mother, Silva La Forge.

Do either of you want to talk about that at all? Because it's been a really long time since I saw that episode, which is "Interface."

Sue:

You know, from what I remember of this episode, it comes to find, or the crew comes to find out what happened to his mother who disappeared when he was, I believe when he was young, who happened to be a captain. But we only see her as a human, I believe in Geordi's memory. So she doesn't really have any lines, or much action other than like

telling Geordi, "Yes this is me," you know, through physical movements in the present day for them. But she was captain.

Grace:

That's exactly what we know of her. We know she is Geordi's mom, and she is a captain. We don't get to really see much more of her than that.

Jarrah:

I don't think we can draw a lot really from this episode about her character because, like you said, it's basically through Geordi's eyes. It's sort of like if we, you know, took only Sisko's memories of Jennifer Sisko and was like, "This is who she was!" But...

Grace:

Which is sad because it's very limiting.

Jarrah:

Yeah absolutely. I think that's just the function in this episode. But I mean, I guess it is another example that's good of showing that women of color can be captains in Starfleet.

Grace:

So there's that much with it, to it.

Jarrah:

So Sue, do you want to talk about the next one? Because I know you have have a special fondness for her.

Grace:

Oh boy.

Sue:

That would be Captain Beverly Picard, and "All Good Things."

Jarrah:

Yeah!

Grace:

[Sing-song] Captain Beverly.

Sue:

We know that I love her. So this is just going to be a thread throughout the entire podcast forever. But...

Grace:

Make it so.

Sue:

She's very, it's very brief, of course. The finale episode, you can say it never actually happened, because that is not the timeline that came to pass, but we do see her, you

know, standing up to her ex-husband and her ex-captain. I can quote you that speech if you'd like. [Laughter] And I think she even yells at both Worf and Riker at some point you know, and she's not letting them, especially Picard because of his health at that point. You know she's putting her foot down at a certain point and saying, 'I know you want to help him, but helping him isn't the way he thinks he's going to be helping him.' So that happens and then she, as Beverly Crusher, she does also command the ship occasionally on the night shift. There are a couple of episodes that show that, and she was I think acting captain during a lot of "Descent," one of the Borg episodes, and she flew the ship into the sun stuff.

Grace:
As one does.

Jarrah:
So I have the action figure of Beverly Picard. So I think if you have the action figure that means it happened.

Grace:
Does she have a little bun of command?

Jarrah:
She does.

Sue:
Yes she does. I have that action figure too.

Jarrah:
Awesome!

Sue:
I also have her in her Dixon Hill costume.

[Laughter]

Grace:
Nice.

Jarrah:
That's amazing.

So you know how after *The Original Series* that you know the creators were working on a *Star Trek Phase Two* series but there was also another spinoff discussion with Gene Roddenberry and Darlene Hartman, who I think had written a couple of episodes, where they wanted to do a spinoff episode called "Hope Ship," with Dr. M'Benga from *The Original Series*.

Grace:
Oh, wow.

Jarrah:

But I totally would have watched a USS *Pastor* spinoff.

Sue:

Oh my gosh totally. Yes. Yes. Medical ship. I would watch the heck out of that.

Grace:

There's potential there that could be just like the Red Cross in space. There's much to be done there.

Jarrah:

Yeah like I guess let's say space-*Private Practice* or space-*Grey's Anatomy*, because it's starring a woman.

Sue:

Space-*Grey's Anatomy*? Will there be like a Dr. McDreamy, please, in space?

Grace:

That's Ensign McDreamy to you.

[Laughter]

Jarrah:

I thought that you would want that to be Picard.

Sue:

He's not a doctor.

Grace:

Good times.

Jarrah:

I bet you I can find that fanfic though. Riker's like, "That's my job!" Riker was McDreamy before there was McDreamy.

Grace:

He's the proto-McDreamy?

Jarrah:

Oh no.

Grace:

Maybe we should like put a call out to any listeners to write that fanfic. Oh, what have we wrought?

Jarrah:

I'd be really surprised if there wasn't *Pasteur* fanfic, but if anyone knows of any good *Pasteur* fanfic, you should definitely email it to us.

Sue:

I can tell you that I've probably read it, if it exists. Anyway...

Grace:

You're our resident expert.

Sue:

Let's continue before I take myself a deeper hole.

Jarrah:

All right, on to *Deep Space Nine*, where we only have one captain in seven years who's a woman, and she's only a captain for one episode.

But that is Erika Benteen. She is introduced in as a commander in the episode "Homefront," and then is promoted to captain by her supervisor, Admiral Leyton, who is corrupt and promoting people he trusts into key positions. So she's promoted to captain in the episode "Paradise Lost" and then is ordered to shoot down the *Defiant* to prevent it from reaching earth with key evidence against Admiral Leyton. Do either of you have strong memories of this one?

Grace:

Unfortunately. Well, fortunately, it's a very active and exciting couple of episodes. And sadly I can't say her character is one of the things that stands out in it. There's a lot happening and for a character to have stood out she would've really needed to have made an impression, which I'm sad to say she didn't.

But it's cool that there were, you know, was at least one woman getting something good out of this, you know, whole big cluster of inequity and corruption in Starfleet.

Sue:

I have to say I don't really remember her at all. And you'd think *DS9* being a station that there would be more ships passing through with more captains who happen to be women. But what do I know?

Grace:

You really would think so, wouldn't you. Yeah. Again just a thing we didn't really get to see.

Jarrah:

So I watched this just yesterday and Erika Benteen is played by Susan Gibney who also played Leah Brahms in *Next Generation*, and she was also considered for the role of Captain Janeway. So I think that this was a bit of a consolation prize to get this role in these couple of episodes. But if you pay attention to her she's acting the best she can in that role. She's doing a pretty good job with a pretty limited set of scenes.

In the first episode in particular there is a scene where Admiral Leyton is being, is actually taken over by a changeling, and he is being super rude to Odo, and just the look, looks on her face are really subtle and compelling. And she's reacting really well in that scene. You can tell she's trying really hard even though she's not giving her a lot to do. And in the second episode, in "Paradise Lost," she is sort of passive-aggressively grilling Sisko about why he's still on earth. And you get the impression that she could have been a really interesting character, but it's kind of too bad that she's the only woman captain in *Deep Space Nine*, and she gets promoted basically only because she's loyal to this white-male superior who's corrupt. And you don't really get a ton of sense of her motivation except for that she is loyal to him, and he's spent a lot of time drilling into people the value of loyalty.

Grace:
Creepy.

Jarrah:
But at the end of the day she decides not to shoot down the *Defiant*...

Grace:
Oh, yay!

Jarrah:
And kill all the crew. So that's awesome. But you don't get to hear from her or you get to hear from Worf, that Captain Benteen powered down their weapons, so...

Grace:
Straight from the Worf's mouth.

Jarrah:
It's kind of disappointing that she doesn't really get to speak for herself. So then we're going to skip over *Voyager*, because there's only a couple of Starfleet captains in *Voyager*.

Grace:
Yeah there's a very limited selection.

Jarrah:
Yeah, so I mean we're not going to talk about Janeway this episode. But the only other captains there are there's you know Captain What's-His-Face from the *Equinox*. And so there are a couple of dudes that we meet. But they're all dudes. So *Enterprise*, and Erika Hernandez.

Sue:
It's been a really long time since I watched [laughs] her episodes.

Jarrah:
How about you, Grace?

Grace:
I honestly don't think I've actually seen it...

Sue:
Fail!

Jarrah:
Well I'll go.

Grace:
It's all you man. All you.

Jarrah:
So Erika Hernandez we first meet in Season 4 right at the end of the Xindi war. And at this point the *Enterprise* crew has returned home, the episode is called 'Home', and they're being treated as heroes. And we meet Erika, who has just been appointed the or promoted to captain and she is going to be the captain of the *Columbia*, which is the only other warp-five vessel other than *Enterprise*. So that's pretty cool. It's also cool that she's, again, a woman of color. The actress, Ada Maris, is Mexican-American.

And maybe less cool, or I would say more shrug-worthy, is the fact that she's also Archer's old flame.

Grace:
Of course.

Jarrah:
Yeah, I think she's a really cool character, but her role in "Home" is very much to facilitate Archer's character development. He is feeling really upset and conflicted about the things that he's been forced to do because of the war, compared to the reasons he went into space in the first place and he's really cynical and emo in this episode. And Hernandez basically takes it upon herself to follow him mountain climbing. And then when he gets super angsty she kisses him, because she says maybe she can help him find whatever he lost out there.

Sue:
[Groans]

Grace:
OK.

Jarrah:
I mean for first impressions, I think, like, it shows that she's strong. She's definitely, even though she is there to help him, she doesn't let him walk all over her commands, like she asks him for advice. But when he says things that she doesn't agree with, that she should have a whole squad of MACOs on her ship, and he's kind of rude to her, she goes, "Aren't you being a little cynical?" And he goes, "Have you read my reports?" And she's like, "Yes, Captain, I have." So she still holds her ground.

Sue:

I don't get why she's attracted to him at all.

Jarrah:

Well by the time I see this episode I'm excited for, I'm excited to see more. And then I have to wait like 12 episodes to see more. And I guess it's also worth mentioning at this point that Erika Hernandez shows that something was definitely off in "Turnabout Intruder" because there obviously were women captains.

Sue:

I mean you can make the argument that they're not really Starfleet yet.

Grace:

Yeah.

Sue:

That they're not like the Federation yet. And I have seen people make that argument.

Grace:

Mhmm.

Jarrah:

Yeah.

Sue:

It's a weird timeline thing that have seen people say to like keep the continuity. But I am perfectly happy to believe that the Star Trek writers decided to retcon it to try and make it better.

Grace:

Yay! "Turnabout Intruder" didn't happen.

Jarrah:

I mean certainly if the writers looked at it and said, "Screw it," then I say go writers, because like I said we only got one woman in *Deep Space Nine* so it would have really sucked to go another four seasons of *Enterprise* without any women captains. So the next episode she's in, it's a bit of a two-parter as well, is "Affliction," and this is the one where Phlox is kidnapped to try to cure the Klingon Augments.

And at this point for some reason *Columbia* has still not got out of space dock, so I think there's a lot of missed opportunities in the gap between these two episodes to have *Columbia* get under way. But they seemed like they were more interested in using *Columbia* as a place for Trip to go when he was having problems with T'Pol, versus actually like let's make them do cool stuff in space. But they do help out *Enterprise* in this episode and in the next episode, "Divergence," significantly in their battle with the Klingons

So that's pretty cool and they do this cool like warp-bubble maneuver where they like join the two ships together and Trip gets to go like on a zip line between. So it's pretty exciting and it shows that they could have probably done a lot with that character and that ship if things had continued.

Grace:

Oh missed opportunity thy name is *Enterprise*.

Jarrah:

The scenes that she does have though in "Affliction" and "Divergence," there are a couple when she's, you know, in charge of her bridge and fighting Klingons. More, probably the more significant scenes in terms of what the writers were using or for is when she talking to Trip, and trying to figure out like where he's at. So again like she's there to kind of help out a male character.

Sue:

Yeah and we could stretch a little bit and say that some of the women admirals that we've seen throughout the series have had to pass through the rank of captain you know such as Nechayev. I would love to see the ship that Admiral Nechayev commands. Let me tell you. But...

Grace:

Oh yeah, that would be a tight ship in every sense of the word.

Jarrah:

Right.

Grace:

So we know that they are there we just don't get to see much of them.

Jarrah:

And actually there is the one episode that I didn't write about but isn't "The Sound of Her Voice" about a woman captain?

Grace:

Yes, yes it is.

Jarrah:

So there is one that we *hear* for an episode and I can't remember her name, unfortunately. But I think that the reason I wanted to talk about captains particularly and not, you know, just like senior-ranked people in Starfleet is because the way that the show is set up the captains are the heroes. They're the protagonists in every series. And so having these other captains around...

Grace:

It is a captain show.

Jarrah:

I mean even you have Kirk being, "Never let them promote you." There's this idea that you shouldn't want to be an admiral, and in many ways the admirals act as antagonists in several episodes.

Sue:
Right.

Grace:
Well they can't rebel against authority and, you know, the hard ass unless there's someone to rebel against.

Jarrah:
Absolutely. But I think, back to Erika Hernandez for a second, I think that she was probably still one of the best developed female captains, other than Janeway, that we got in the show. And maybe if *Enterprise* has gone longer, because her last two episodes were pretty late in the game, maybe we would have got to see more stuff.

Sue:
Yes she was the only one who wasn't a one-off, really.

Grace:
Which is pretty sad when you think about it.

Sue:
And if we extend our look to the novels there are plenty more lady captains. It is difficult to find a full list of the characters that we know from television series Ezri Dax is promoted to captain.

Grace:
Go Ezri!

Sue:
And so is Commander Shelby from "Best of Both Worlds."

Grace:
Oh, no way.

Sue:
Yeah. Those are the only two I know for sure, because they're the only two I have encountered in my reading of the many many novels. At least that I can remember.

Jarrah:
Apparently in the episode, I think it's, what's the episode when Dax and Worf get married?

Grace:
"You Are Cordially Invited."

Jarraah:
Thank you.

Grace:
You're welcome.

Jarraah:
So in "You Are Cordially Invited" Dax references a Captain Shelby, but apparently the powers-that-be got actually really mad about that because they were planning on making Shelby, Shelby was still a commander in the novels at this point, and they were planning on making her more important in the novels. So they said that, you know, "We're really glad you only mentioned her last name and we can just pretend it was a different Captain Shelby." That's kind of weird.

Grace:
Maybe there's a family of Shelbys.

Jarraah:
So I just recently read *The Destiny* trilogy, which features Ezri prominently as a captain. And it also features Erika Hernandez in the, I think the *Federation 150 Years* book, that came out after *Enterprise*. They say that Erika Hernandez was missing in action and that the whole ship was missing in action. Which is kind of crummy, but then in the novels they found a way to sort of explain what happens where they had Hernandez's ship crashed.

There's a very complicated, sort of, basically half of her crew mutinies because she refuses to kill the lifeforms on the planet to escape.

Grace:
Well that could be interesting, why didn't we get to see that?

Jarraah:
I know. But then she ends up sort of being given these sort of immortality.

Grace:
It's better than nothing.

Sue:
It's all coming back to me as you go through. It's been awhile since I read these too.

Jarraah:
But it's pretty cool she's confronted with a lot of difficult decisions to make, and people turn against her, and she really witnesses a lot of pain and suffering. And at the end of the day she becomes she's basically the most powerful human...

Grace:
Rock on.

Jarrah:

So apologies for the spoilers. But Ezri in these novels is also really cool, at this point she's broken up with Bashir. So I say yay to that. And...

Grace:

And no surprises.

Jarrah:

She basically tells Picard like she has this idea for a mission and Picard says, "No it's too dangerous." And she's basically, "Then fine. I'll go do it myself." And she would totally do that twice except her she needs the *Enterprise*, so she convinces Worf to help her convince Picard to help them out in these mission. So she's basically having all of the great ideas and having to kind of take Picard along with her, which is, I mean, it's sad to see Picard in a bad state but it's really cool to see Ezri so in control.

Grace:

It's cool to see her also get to come into her own as a character going from being that very insecure, "I just got joined, I don't know what's going on," person to someone who's a captain is making big calls.

Sue:

And if I remember correctly in the *Destiny* books she sort of is going through that as a captain, too. Like she just got promoted and she's like, "Uh...?"

Grace:

That's the entire Ezri story arc: getting thrown into uncomfortable situations.

Sue:

But she has this almost epiphany at some point where she's like, 'You know what? I'm a captain. I don't have to listen to you. You are not my superior. We are equals and this is what I'm going to do.'

Grace:

Sweet.

Jarrah:

Yeah, she gets promoted because three people above her die in this war. So she, again, is thrust into an unfamiliar situation. But she really takes it on in the *Destiny* trilogy is about her, Captain Picard, and Captain Riker on the *Titan* so putting her up in their league I think is really significant.

Grace:

Nice.

Sue:

Essentially we're recommending these books.

Jarrah:

I recommend them. Yes. So I guess at the end of the day, what do we wish we saw more of? I mean other than just more women captains generally?

Grace:

More ones that aren't just there to serve a purpose for a male character would be nice for one thing. That'd be a good start.

Sue:

Hear, hear.

Jarrah:

Yeah.

Grace:

And for another, ones that we just get to see do more, ones that aren't just there to be seat-fillers. I would like to see more effort put towards putting more female characters in a story and not just saying, "Oh, no no! They're there. They were sitting in the background. They exist really. You can pause it and see like two there. Yeah we've done our job."

I want to see them as actual characters.

Jarrah:

Yeah absolutely. I think I would like to see them be able to do the kind of awesome things that we get to see male captains do...

Grace:

Yeah.

Jarrah :

I mean we get to see Erika having, you know, a sort-of casual relationship with Archer. But, you know, you look at, particularly like Captain Janeway, and there's this implication that like you can't be with anyone that, you know, my job won't let me do that. But then you see, you know, Sisko gets married. Kirk is off, you know, love interests right, left, and center...

Grace:

They're just being thrown at him.

Jarrah:

So I think I'd like to see that. Yes. And I think I'd also like to see more bad women captains I don't mean to like being bad at their job, but I mean being...

Grace:

With villainous intent?

Jarrah:

Yeah like the guy in “The Wounded,” but having a really clear motivation for that. I mean we see Benteen sort of turning villainous. At least she's not...she's on the wrong side. But you don't really get that really deep sense of why she's doing that you do with Captain Maxwell.

Grace:

An antagonist with good motivation, then.

Jarrah:

Yeah, exactly.

Sue:

I'd like to see more cultures that they encounter that have more women in them. I mean in *Voyager*, I think even when we were including alien captains, non-Starfleet captains we weren't seeing a lot of women. Why? We're meeting races that we've never met before, because we're stuck in the Delta Quadrant. You're telling me they all have problems with representation too?

Grace:

Apparently.

Jarrah:

In the *Destiny* trilogy Hernandez's crew and Ezri's crew both have, actually even the *Enterprise* and the *Titan* crews, have tons more women on them than we normally see in the show.

And that's another reason it's sad we didn't get to see more stuff going on on the *Columbia* because the one the scene we see Erika Hernandez's bridge you see, I think, at least three women on the bridge. And the most we ever get in another series is the two women on the bridge and one woman in engineering.

Sue:

They have so much more freedom in the books than they ever did on TV.

Jarrah:

Yeah.

Grace:

Yeah I would think so.

Sue:

And that's not just in terms of gender representation, but there are LGBTQ+ characters in the books. And they get into Andorian reproduction, and that culture has four genders so it gets really interesting and some of the books...

Grace:

Which just sounds fun.

Jarrah:

Yeah, and I mean you can understand why in terms of, you know, the really, really complicated aliens that they just couldn't afford to create those for TV. But there's no reason why you couldn't afford to cast a woman or couldn't afford to cast a person of color or couldn't write a character as LGBTQ. So I think that you know just stepping the diversity up a notch would be awesome...

Grace:

Show us a little effort, man. Show us what you can do.

Jarrah:

All right so that brings us to the end of our show. So if you have any comments or questions for us you can email us at crew@womenatwarp.com. Or check out our Facebook page at facebook.com/womenatwarp. You can also visit us at womenatwarp.com or on Twitter at, you guessed it, Women at Warp.

Grace:

I'm sensing a theme.

Jarrah:

So Grace where can people find you?

Grace:

You can find me on Twitter at [@BonecrusherJenk](https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk), or you can read my writing on the Mythcreants blog.

Jarrah:

And what about you Sue?

Sue:

You can find me over at anomalypodcast.com.

Jarrah:

And I'm Jarrah, and you can find me at trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com. Thanks for tuning in and we'll see you in a couple of weeks at Women at Warp.

outro music and sounds from "All Good Things."