

Women at Warp Episode 5: Badass Romulan Women

Sound Clip from "Face of the Enemy" [TNG Season 6, Ep. 14]

Romulan Commander Toreth [Played by Carolyn Seymour]: What have you done?

Romulan Warbird Khazara Pilot Palteth [Played by Robertson Dean]: The transporter beam originated in our cargo bay. Something was transported from there to the Enterprise.

Toreth: So, Major, the mysterious cargo brought on board by Major Rakal of the Tal Shiar, has been transported to the Starfleet vessel. I see two traitors in our midst.

End of clip

Jarrah: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah, and I'm here with crew members Andi, Sue, and Grace. Hey guys.

Andi: Hi!

Grace: Hey!

Sue: Hello!

Jarrah: So, today we're going to talk about badass Romulan women. But before we do we're just going to do a piece of fan mail so Sue, do you want to read that, I think it came in on our Facebook?

Sue: Yeah absolutely. "Thanks for posting this podcast. I agree with the choice of "Yesterday's Enterprise" [TNG Season 3, Ep. 15] as being the best episode for women on TNG. Captain Garrett is such a wonderful character and sketched in just a few scenes. Tasha Yar got a better sendoff, though they sure did ruin it later. I wanted to talk a bit more about the Bechdel Test criteria as well. I agree that a few more women characters would make passing the Bechdel Test a lot easier. There are plenty of times where female characters, especially on DS9, are talking competently about work with other people, but because there are not enough female cast members they work with male cast members, which breaks the Bechdel Test. So, on DS9 with Dax working most often with Sisko, and Kira working more often with Odo and random Cardassians, then it's a lot more difficult to pass even the basic test. I love your podcasts and look forward to our further journeys." from Ruth.

Jarrah: Awesome. Thanks Ruth! I think we're gonna get a bit into the Tasha Yar post "Yesterday's Enterprise" when we get to Sela later in this episode. Do any of you guys have any thoughts on what you're saying around the Bechdel Test?

Grace: It is definitely an imperfect test, but it's what we got.

Jarrah: Yeah and I think it's a good point that you know DS9 just had more characters. And when you do see the women working a lot more than like TNG, so that's pretty cool. But, yeah there's lots of male officers, and also a lot of group scenes that mean it's hard to say that Dax is talking to Kira because Bashir and O'Brien and Sisko are all standing around with them.

Grace: Again, it would be nicer if we had a more concise test than the Bechdel Test, but it's kind of what we've got to work with right now.

Sue: I think the criticism that's posed here, is kind of the point of the Bechdel Test. Like, it would, DS9 would easily pass if there were just more women in the cast. So, failing on that count just means that representation is so low and that is the first problem that needs to be tackled.

Jarrah: Yeah absolutely. I think that the point, you know it's not a perfect test but it shows you a range of where things are at, and gives you an indication that maybe there's a problem. And, in Deep Space 9, I think clearly there were times where more of the you know officers that were around could have been women. Anyhow, so, thanks again for that. We love hearing from you guys and you can get in touch with us on email at crew@womenatwarp.com or on our Facebook page or Twitter or our Web site <http://www.womenatwarp.com/>

Andi: We try and make it really easy for you guys to tell us what you think.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: Because, we like hearing from everybody.

Jarrah: Absolutely. So, let's get into today's topic Badass Romulan women. Before we get into some of the specifics, I thought maybe we could just sort of list off some fast facts about the Romulans. So, when you guys think Romulans, what's the first thing that comes into your head?

Andi: Bad fashion.

Grace: Yeah we're on the same page.

Andi: What's with the boxy shoulders?

Grace: I don't even know.

Jarrah: It was the 80s. I like it.

Sue: I like it too.

Grace: I liked the TOS weird sort of you know group fashion they had going with all of like the pink houndstooth. I liked that better than the you know gray boxes they're wearing.

Sue: That mini dress is super cute, and I would kind of wear.

Grace: Absolutely.

Andi: I mean when I was watching "Face of the Enemy" I just, I couldn't believe that they managed to make Marina Sirtis look that boxy.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: With those huge shoulders and the silver and it's just...

Grace: She's just buried in that outfit.

Jarrah: Okay cool, so what other qualities do the Romulans embody or what else do we know about them as an alien race?

Sue: So, on a more serious note the Romulans are isolationists, they're xenophobic, they don't want anything to do with anybody else. And they are very strict in what they consider their morals. Right?

So, the Romulans, things are either right or wrong, they're black and white, but at the same time they can be very deceptive to the other races in the galaxy. Right? So, they're out for themselves, but as long as they keep to their morals within their society they're cool with it.

Andi: Yeah. I just think that they are a very straightforward race. They are looking to keep their race on top, and they're always balancing power in their minds and how to take advantage of any mistakes that Starfleet makes, or you know I mean every time we see a Romulan come up it's in as an antagonist pretty much.

Grace: They're an antagonistic people, I guess.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, the Romulans were originally introduced in the original series episode "Balance of Terror" [TOS Season 1, Ep. 8] and they were conceived of by a freelance writer called Paul Schneider, and he said that he wanted to create a set of quote admirable antagonists for Kirk, and, he based them on the Romans. However, later Gene Roddenberry is said to have likened them to the Chinese Communists, and in "The Enterprise Incident" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 4] they're stand ins for the North Koreans. So, that's kind of interesting.

Grace: That's a lot of parallels to be drawn, yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. And they have a rigid caste system, in "Star Trek Nemesis" [Tenth full length movie] we see that they continue to practice slavery and they kill newborns with birth defects.

Sue: Yeah, but that was nowhere to be seen before "Nemesis".

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. It seems that...

Sue: "Nemesis" is kind of, I don't know, I feel like I want to throw it out the window because it doesn't fit with the rest of what we've seen of the Romulans to me.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: I agree in terms of the representation of society and certainly that was one movie where the writer said they were very heavily basing it on Chinese Communists, which is fairly problematic.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Not to say that there aren't problems.

Grace: I don't know there's something to be said about turning them into aliens that kill babies and likening them to any sort of group of people on Earth.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think...

Grace: Not to mention, all that Ron Perlman abuse.

Jarrah: It certainly seems like in "Nemesis" they took new liberties with how they described this society. Previously it had been I think far more like that Roman society that there there were clear divisions, but it was far more focused around honor and nationalism than it was around repressing people within the empire. The the society is militaristic, but there is a government that is controlled by the Romulan Senate which is headed by the Praetor, and served by the Tal Shiar, the secret police. And then there's sort of a balance of power between the military and the government with

their armed force being the Tal Shiar. But, what I think is probably the coolest thing about the Romulans is like right from 1968 in *The Making of Star Trek* which is by Steven Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry and is an excellent book, they say that Romulans are highly militaristic, aggressive by nature, ruthless in warfare, and do not take captives. The Star Empire is a dictatorship with some similarities to the warrior stoic philosophies of Earth's ancient Roman empires. And then there is complete equality between the sexes, women are as often found in command of a ship as are men. So, I think that's partly why we get so many badass Romulan women.

Grace: Nice.

Andi: Yeah, I mean they... I when I was rewatching some of the Selal episodes and it's clearly stated in "Redemption Part I&II" [TNG Season 4, Ep. 26 & Season 5, Ep. 1] that women can't be on the Klingon high council, and I... I mean I guess I noticed that the first time through, but the second time through I was like, "Wait, what?" So, it's kind of nice to see that there's apparently not an equivalent in Romulan society. That for whatever their faults they they tend to value competence above all else.

Sue: Well, they say that it's equal and you're just as likely to find a woman in command, but whenever there's a woman in command look at the rest of her crew, because it's all men.

Grace: This brings up an interesting point when you're analyzing any group in Star Trek, there's the outward concept that they as people project, and what's actually going on inside that group. Which gives you this interesting sort of dynamic of culturalism there to look into.

Jarrah: But, I think that's in one way that's why I respect the uniforms even though yes they are ridiculous, and I believe I've called them like goofy quilted football player outfits, but...

Andi: Accurate.

Jarrah: But, they're really unisex, and that was like coming out of the late 80s there was this whole you know like a shoulder pad power suit thing for women, and I think that it draws from that that this idea like that you... it sort of covers up secondary sex characteristics and really makes the shoulders look very strong, you know maybe ridiculously so, but I think that they're like the fact that made it into the costumes is cool.

Grace: It is really interesting... A really good example of how the fashion of the time influenced the costume design. It works, it's just silly.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, you do see it like later on in DS9 and in "Nemesis" that the uniforms are still pretty unisex, but there are a lot more form fitting and not so boxy and it like everyone is literally wearing the same thing.

Sue: Well, I don't know. I really think that the costumes, especially that we see on Next Generation, make a lot of sense based on the description of this culture that we just went through. Because they're really angular, you know it's straight right angles just like the society is perceived. You know there's right and wrong. They're straightforward. They're you know very pragmatic in that way. So, you know there's not a lot of like flair or or extraneous stuff. So, I mean they might look ridiculous to us but I think it makes a lot of sense for, especially their military, to have that kind of grey square angular uniform.

Andi: Yeah, I mean it definitely tells you right off the bat what kind of people they are. And I mean that's the whole point of the uniform designs anyway isn't it? You know to try and tell us something about the character of the person wearing it through clothes. So, I still think they're hideous, but I certainly understand you know how they could be used in that way to kind of as a shorthand to tell

us the kind of people that we're dealing with. People that are no frills, they don't care about the aesthetically pleasing stuff, they just care about getting the job done.

Jarrah: So, I thought we would go through in sort of chronological order and start with the first Romulan woman we see, who is the Romulan commander in "The Enterprise Incident". So, Andi do you want to kick us off a bit with that one?

Andi: Yeah. I mean, I just watched this one when I was finishing up the original series, and I have to say this is definitely one of the best original series episodes for women. For one thing, we have this Romulan commander that is very much in charge, and basically what the episode is, is Kirk is trying to go kind of undercover into a Romulan ship to take technology back, and then Starfleet can use it to counter the Romulans. And while he is doing that Spock and this Romulan commander kind of have this very interesting relationship in which they're antagonistic, but there's also some romance there. And then in the end Kirk kind of manages to trick everyone and get away with the tech, and it's it's kind of a really interesting almost "Ocean's 11" type episode where they drop us into it without knowing what Kirk's plan is. So, at first you're not sure what Kirk is doing and then his plan is kind of shown bit by bit, and then at the end they stroll off into the sunset with this Romulan tech with mission success.

Jarrah: Nice! Yeah this episode was sort of Star Trek's attempt at really like "ripped from the headlines" because I had no idea about this, but it's inspired by the USS Pueblo incident which was a U.S. ship that was caught in North Korean waters with a bunch of spy equipment, and the North Koreans captured the ship. And during the writing and airing of this episode the Americans were being held hostage in North Korea, until I think it was resolved shortly after it aired. So, they really pushed DC Fontana to write this episode really quickly. And she really did see it as a spy story and not a romance story. The commander was originally a man and even when they asked her to change the gender of the commander she really resisted the romantic side of the story.

Andi: Yeah. I mean, that makes sense because I really, really liked this episode especially for the original series, but it is kind of disappointing that you have your first really leader that's a woman and have her be tricked through seduction basically. Spock keeps her off balance and she, she basically lets her feelings for Spock, or her like the way she's drawn to Spock, allows her to not notice that Kirk is stealing from her at this moment. And that's really the only thing that I would say I didn't like about this episode is it would have been nice to have her just be more competent than that, because in every other way they portray her as very competent.

Grace: Because women are fools for life apparently.

Jarrah: Yeah, in the *Captain's Logs* book they quote DC Fontana as saying that, "My biggest objection is the scene between Spock and the woman because I really did not believe it. And I did not believe the Romulan did not suspect Spock of something underhanded. She does know enough about Vulcan and Vulcans to know that something's afoot." Although, it could have been worse because apparently when they took the script out of her hands and passed it up to the producers Fred Freiberger asked Arthur Singer to write the romantic interlude and he apparently described it as, "Spock taking her in his arms and raining kisses on every square inch above her shoulder and saying 'I adore you'."

Grace: Good Lord. That just got bodice ripper-y.

Andi: That's out of character for Spock much less you know worse...

Jarrah: Totally, and I definitely think you know if folks are interested in this they should read more of the, *These are the Voyages*... because it goes into the whole angry dispute about this episode

between DC Fontana and Fred Freiberger and Arthur Singer and her basically saying fans are smarter than this, and it's pretty awesome.

Grace: I don't know, I do kind of like imagining that scene though, but with Spock trying to awkwardly seduce her like "I adore you" [said very mechanically] *muah muah, muah muah muah*

Andi: Like Spock's very terrible seduction.

Jarrah: [also said mechanically] "You are... fascinating"

Andi: But Spock's seduction technique is 100 percent on point here, to be honest. They don't make him go out of character too much, he's still very logical, he's still very reserved, but somehow she's responding to that. And actually the chemistry between the actress and Leonard Nimoy is really good. So, I mean as much as I didn't really like this aspect of her being seduced, I did really enjoy the chemistry between them, and was for the first time really interested in how our relationship might evolve in the future.

Jarrah: Totally. So, what do you guys think of the scene where she slaps him?

Andi: I mean good for her.

Jarrah: I just have this awesome quote from Joanne Linville, who played the Romulan commander who is not named in the episode but she does have a name in the books which Andi I believe knows.

Andi: No, it's her, she is not named in the episode which is really stupid and doesn't make any sense, but apparently she is, we do see her more in the books so they name her in the books as Liviana Charvanek, so I just think it's stupid that they never gave her a name, and so I'm just going to pretend that they did and this is her name.

Grace: Works for me.

Jarrah: Yeah, I feel like they did that a lot more in the original series. I'm not really sure why. I mean certainly when we get to Deep Space 9 we have the female changeling who doesn't have a name. And there's like antagonists that are just basically defined by like their race and gender which is weird, but anyhow. So this Joanne Linville is talking about the scene and she says, "It thrilled me that the strong military woman would lose her discipline for that one brief moment and slap him. And I really slapped him. I didn't tell him it was going to be anything other than a stage slap. I just did it. It was real and he took the slap right. One take babe."

Grace: Excellent.

Andi: Yeah I mean I just as much as I wish they hadn't you know done the seduction, I just really like this episode for one I think it's really well-crafted and interesting, for once I didn't know exactly where they were going throughout the whole thing, and then also I just thought that she had such presence and I mean when she changes out of her uniform and like puts on this very cool dress that's not super sexy but a little bit, trying to think of a better word than seductive, because I've used it so often...

Grace: Alluring?

Jarrah: Something more comfortable?

Andi: Yeah. No, I mean it's just it's really a beautiful dress. But then she still walks around as if she's still in full military uniform. So, towards the end of the episode she is on the bridge of the Enterprise and she's wearing this dress, she's not in her military uniform anymore but she still is holding herself as if she's still in charge which I really enjoyed.

Sue: That really redeemed that scene to me actually, because it really bothered me when Spock's lines were insinuating, you know you can't be feminine and be this commander. This doesn't go together, and she says back to him "the soldier will transform herself into a woman" and just you know that's where I roll my eyes and I say "because he can't be both at the same time?" But, then you know later in the episode as she is on the bridge of the Enterprise clearly she can.

Jarrah: Yes she shows herself to be both, and actually I think a lot of the credit for that does go to the actress, because she says that when she came in to try on that dress that she saw it on a mannequin and it was like designed for someone who was super busty and she says that the costume designer Bill Theiss was going to have her be very sexy. "Well no. Wrong. What he got for me was a soldier. A soldier is lifted chest, direct, honest, two feet on the ground the truth coming up from her feet and through her body. When she sits in that chair she owns that chair and it comes across."

Andi: That's exactly how I put it when I was tweeting it, too. As I was like "this woman is owning the bridge" and the best part is as she has been basically defeated at this point, she lost her battle of wits, so to say. And then at that moment she tells her crew to fire on the Enterprise, with her on it. At no point is she not putting her feelings or... she puts her duty first always and that comes through very clearly in that performance, and I'm not surprised at all that the actress did that intentionally because it really it shows in that scene.

Sue: And it's kind of a throwaway line from Kirk, but that's the Romulan flagship. So, she's not just commanding a Romulan ship she's commanding the Romulan flagship. So, in that sense she is Kirk's equal.

Andi: Yeah and she treats him exactly as an equal throughout the episode. I wish that went both ways.

Grace: Yeah it would've been nice.

Jarrah: So cool. And did you guys have any more thoughts on the costumes from that era of Romulans?

Andi: I loved them.

Grace: Pink houndstooth!

Andi: Yeah I mean I just I thought the costumes were really cool. And as I said I really loved that dress, it was very elegant.

Jarrah: Awesome. Anything else on Liviana Charvanek?

Andi: Just two thumbs up from me. I really liked her.

Grace: Yeah. Wish we'd gotten to see more of her.

Andi: It was really nice for me because I had just gone through so much of the original series where I had been dealing with all this misogyny, and then to have this Romulan commander just kind of stride onto the bridge in that awesome dress and just be like "yeah I'm awesome."

Grace: That must have been a fantastic change of pace.

Andi: It was such a morale booster.

Sue: We have all been there.

Jarrah: So, in between the original series and TNG, we got one Romulan woman Caithlin Dar in Star Trek V. I do not remember her at all I think largely because I blocked out sections of this movie from my head.

Grace: Gee, I wonder why.

Jarrah: But I understand, Sue watched this recently and I don't know Grace if you have any thoughts on her?

Grace: I don't remember her, honestly.

Jarrah: She's she's one of the diplomats that I think is abducted.

Grace: Oh yeah she has a ridiculously shiny outfit that's super pink and glittery if I remember correctly.

Sue: Yeah, she doesn't look really like the TOS Romulans, and she doesn't look like the TNG Romulans, and she doesn't dress like either. I mean I guess she's a diplomat and not a military officer, but she's basically just there to be there it seems. Because there is this conference that the delegates get abducted from, and then at the end they're all drinking Romulan Ale.

Grace: Pretty much, yeah.

Sue: Basically I don't think we should even talk about Star Trek V, ever.

Grace: No.

Sue: At all, ever.

Grace: Not to mention, she looks like she was designed by the character designer from the Jetsons.

Sue: I live blogged that movie a couple of weeks ago and one of the things I said was, "We're 45 minutes in and I legit have no idea what's going on." So... yeah.

Grace: Yeah, welcome to Star Trek V.

Jarrah: Okay, well, I am fine with leaving it at that as well. Shall we move on to TNG then?

Andi: Yeah, because we get some really cool Romulan women in TNG.

Grace: Let's boldly go forward.

Jarrah: I picked out a few that I thought we could talk about, and the first one is Toreth from "Face of the Enemy", because we're big "Face of the Enemy" fans here.

Andi: One of the best episodes of Star Trek ever.

Grace: Pretty much.

Andi: Definitely my favorite Romulan woman.

Jarrah: Really? More than "Enterprise Incident" woman?

Andi: Yes, because I just rewatched it last night in preparation for this, and I just am absolutely amazed at the depth of that performance, because you've got such a sense of who she was and like kind of her history. And we also got a good sense of kind of the split between the military and the Tal Shiar, which I thought was really, really interesting. And the way the actress played that you really got a sense of this woman who had lived a very full life working for the Romulan military, and you know going through these battles, but then also has the background of having lost her father to the Tal Shiar and this kind of bitterness that she has over it. And, it was pretty amazing to me that we could get that sense of her so quickly. and also while she's still maintaining this very practical demeanor like, just hinting at the emotion below. I loved all that.

Sue: And, throughout the episode she doesn't know that Troi is not an officer of the Tal Shiar, and those are the people who are enforcing loyalty, if you will.

Grace: Yes.

Sue: So to butt heads with her, that's risky. She has got a lot of guts to do that and defy her in that way.

Jarrah: She is like a master of passive aggression in this episode, it's so great. It's motivated out of like you said like her father was killed, she really, really dislikes and distrusts the Tal Shiar, but she knows that she'll lose, like she can't win that fight against them. So, she's just pushing as much as she can in the situation, and the actress Carolyn Seymour is just fabulous. And she also plays need a Romulan Commander in the episode "Contagion" [TNG Season 2, Ep. 11] which is the Iconian gateway episode, and she's she's like definitely a cool presence in that, but she has so much more to do in "Face of the Enemy."

Sue: Yeah, there is not a lot for that commander in "Contagion" to do. The only real thing is that you know she's trying to save face while her ship is falling apart, but then accepts help from from Riker and Geordi at the very end of the episode. But, you know you don't see the Romulans reaction to accepting help from the Federation. So, there's not even that much to discuss about it. She's just there, so the Romulans can serve an extra threat in that episode.

Grace: One thing I also really love about this character though in "Face of the Enemy" is that her as a character acts as such a great foil for Troi as a character in the sense that she's engaging in this sort of passive aggressive warfare here, she's like constantly subtly fighting at you, sometimes less than subtly, but that goes so much against what counselor Troi is all about. She is about being forthright, and straightforward emotionally, and saying, "This is how I feel. This is what I think we need to do." And so having the two of them as characters working together or against each other it makes her such a great foil I think.

Andi: Yeah I agree. And you definitely get to see Troi step up because if we hadn't had such a strong antagonist we wouldn't have been able to see Troi be as awesome as she was.

Grace: Yeah, definitely. We get to see Troi at her Tori-est.

Jarrah: I absolutely love the dinner scene in that episode. I think it's maybe like my second favorite Star Trek awkward dinner scene after Star Trek VI, where it feels like just the tension in that room between the two of them, this is when Toreth is talking about you know very passive aggressively like basically what did my father ever do to the Tal Shiar, he was an old man and he was dragged

down and killed, and everyone is like looking between them, and it just has like all the awkwardness of combining the scariest job interview with your high school prom, and that is the tension that is in the air that scene.

Grace: It's even got the puffy shoulders of your high school prom.

Jarrah: Yes! And I got the really shellacked hair.

Andi: Yeah and I mean I really like that scene, too, Jarrah, it's really cool, there's a lot of layers there because Toreth doesn't realize that Troi is Troi. So, there's... and then Troi is just trying to make it through this dinner without betraying herself. So, on the one hand you have the conflict of the military versus the Tal Shiar, which Troi is not interested in at all, she's just trying to make it through, but then she has to take up the mantle of the Tal Shiar to keep her cover and there's just so many layers of like conflict in that scene. It's awesome.

Grace: It's a great piece of psychological warfare.

Andi: I love it when she says, "Well, I guess your father was a traitor then," to Toreth, like that was just the strong way she says it and the way she takes up this character so passionately and she was like, "Well if he was taken away by the Tal Shiar, he must have been a traitor. Sucks to be you," and Toreth's reaction to that. That is such a great scene and great acting.

Jarrah: I kind of imagine that there's an alternate universe where like Troi comes back as herself and it's just like, "Hey, no hard feelings for all of that right? Like you seem pretty cool," and you don't go off and like run for president and vice president together.

Andi: It's just so amazing to see Troi be so aggressive.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: It's pretty awesome.

Andi: Yeah, I mean she's really canny in this episode, and she's been thrown into this situation with no preparation at all and she rises to the occasion beautifully. Man, we love this episode. Did we mention how much we love this episode?

Jarrah: Fun fact, Naren Shankar, when he was writing Toreth didn't know what gender she was going to be but imagined her to be Sean Connery in "The Hunt for Red October."

Grace: Oh cool!

Jarrah: It's pretty fun to just like imagine.

Andi: One thing I really like about Toreth is she is honorable. That's the best part about her, is she's on the opposite side of our crew, but she gets very upset when people are killed and they didn't need to be killed. And you can see that she does have this very strong moral core. It just happens to be in conflict with the Federation and Starfleet. She just happens to be on the opposite side but she's still a strong and moral person.

Grace: Very good example of the difference between a bad guy and just an antagonist.

Jarrah: And there's often this tension in the Romulan stories about sort of your personal interests versus the national interest. There are far more leaning to the side of you have to suppress your

personal interest for the national interest. So, last but not least for our TNG list we have Sela. So, Andi, I know you rewatched "Redemption" probably most recently do you want to start in with that?

Andi: Yeah. We do get a little bit of like shadowy Sela earlier than this and I think it's "The Mind's Eye" {TNG Season 4, Ep. 24}, but we don't actually get to really see her until the end of "Redemption, Part I" where, who looks like to us Tasha Yar steps out of the shadows and is a Romulan and everyone's like, "what? what's going on?" I actually really like that at that moment we find out that the Romulan that has been pulling the strings for this entire, I don't know, story arc of Worf and the Klingon civil war has been someone that looks exactly like Tasha Yar, and she comes out of the shadows with this line that's like, "Humans you know they're always where they don't expect you to be." It's just so meta. It's like we did not expect to see you. And she has that great line, so she's only in it for the last you know couple of minutes, and then we go into "Redemption Part II" where she very much is kind of the puppet master of this whole situation behind the scenes.

Jarrah: I really like the last couple of minutes of "Redemption, Part I", you know you imagine that this was the cliffhanger, and then people had to wait all summer to see the conclusion. And I can imagine being really excited about that conclusion just from the like the energy in her eyes and how creepy she looks. It's pretty cool. I'm not sure that that excitement totally gets fulfilled in the second part.

Grace: No, but it definitely amps you up.

Andi: Can you imagine what it would have been like if there had been internet message boards during this? I mean...

Grace: All the speculation...

Andi: All the fan theories of how Tasha Yar could possibly be a Romulan commander.

Sue: I was reading up on this and it turns out that Denise Crosby is actually the one who came up with this idea, in a way, but she called the producers, she was saying that you know "Yesterday's Enterprise" was so much fun. I wonder if there's another way that I could come back. So she was thinking this was Yar and Castillo's daughter. Right? And that it would just be this person raised by Romulans. And then she called the producers or the writers and they said "No, I think it's better if they kept Tasha alive, made her backstory even more troublesome, and then there is a half Romulan daughter."

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: So, instead of making her like raised by Romulans and have Romulan ideals they made her half Romulan.

Jarrah: Gah! I was at Geek Girl Con a couple of years ago Denise Crosby said that when she took that idea to Rick Berman he basically was like, "Well, I don't see how you and Castillo could have had sex in that episode." She's like, "Well I don't know how long it takes you..."

Grace: Ahh geez.

Jarrah: But I mean that would have been, I think so much more of a palatable story that she had had this baby with a guy she cared about, and the baby had been kidnapped, versus basically "Yesterdays Enterprise" was meant to redeem Tasha Yar's death, and give her a meaningful death, but then you just gave her another even more unmeaningful, horrifying death in "Redemption, Part II" when you hear that she was executed for trying to escape with her daughter from her Romulan rapist.

Sue: And then the daughter that she does have grows up to hate her.

Grace: It's cringeworthy.

Sue: It's squidgy, I don't like it.

Andi: This is my main problem with Tasha Yar as a character, is they never let her not be a victim. They give her like these brief moments of not having everything be horrible to her, but they were trying to write this, or at least you think that they were trying to write, this strong woman security officer and then they just make her be victimized over and over and over again. And how horrifying is it to think of her, because Sela says that she was trying to run away when Sela's four, so you have to imagine that's like five years of forced imprisonment and constant rape and then to be betrayed by her daughter who then rejects everything you stood for. It's horrifying.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: And there's this really weird scene where Guinan goes to Picard to tell him, "Yes, she's telling the truth" and tells him about what happened in "Yesterday's Enterprise," but she goes basically like, "This whole thing could be your fault." Which kind of undermines how much role Yar had in "Yesterday's Enterprise" of saying like this is what she wanted to do.

Grace: Is also just crazy unhelpful.

Jarrah: And it just never and it never plays out in that episode that like yeah that's a horrifying thought that, you know Picard could have ordered Yar into this situation, when actually that's not what happened, where this horrible stuff happened to her. But then the episode is so much more about Worf that that anxiety doesn't get resolved. It's really unfortunate.

Sue: But, Sela, really has it out, well a lot of the Romulans really have it out for Picard. Like specifically, it's almost like you know the Ferengis in the early season and how it was just about getting Picard, which is weird to me.

Grace: It's all about Picard apparently.

Andi: Well, I mean I guess he is the person that keeps foiling their plans most often.

Jarrah: What do you guys think of, other than the horrible origin story, what do you think of Sela as a character?

Grace: I like some of what's been done with her. I really enjoy the way she's been used on Star Trek Online as the main Romulan figure if you choose the Romulan track, her's is the voice you hear every time you level up, you get to have her as kind of the main antagonist or either as the main leader. I feel like she can be utilized well, we just didn't get to see very much of that.

Andi: Yeah. I mean they had her as kind of like this shadowy figure who's making all of these plans behind the scenes, and then revealing her which is how we see her again when we see her after this in "Unification, Part I & II" [TNG Season 5, Ep. 7 & 8], again she comes out of nowhere to be our antagonist, and she always gets foiled and fairly easily. I just feel like they could have made her much stronger, a much stronger antagonist and then just much more competent. I mean who leaves Picard and Data and Spock in a room with a computer, and just leaves and there and is like, "Yeah. So, nothing bad will happen now. I'm going to go and everything will be fine."

Sue: That room is presumably her office too, right?

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: Who would walk into their own office and not notice that the walls were suddenly closer together?

Grace: She really, really did not take after her mother I guess you.

Andi: I mean, you would lock them up put them in a jail cell do not leave them in your office alone with no guards. What are you thinking?

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, I think that seeing her introduced like working with Lursa and B'Etor doesn't really speak well for her competence, because their character has had that same problem where they were just I think foiled way too easily. It didn't make you really respect them. And it's unfortunate because I think from that first scene where we see Sela you think, "Oh my God this could be amazing." And then it just doesn't really play out, she's not made quite is hard to beat and smart and savvy and manipulative as she could be.

Andi: Yeah and I just can't, it's really hard for me to get over the fact that you know she looks like Tasha Yar, but she is the exact opposite. And thinking about Tasha turning into this and then yeah I just they might have made her into the coolest character ever and I don't think I could have gotten over that origin story.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, there's a couple of Romulan women I want to talk about beyond TNG and we're going to be careful because Andi hasn't seen these yet.

Andi: Should I plug my ears and go la la la la la la?

Jarrah: Well, I'm hoping we can just talk about the characters and not so much the plots of what's happening, and it's going to be okay because they're fairly minor characters, like we don't get to see any of them as much Sela or in depth as we do Toreth or the Romulan commander from "The Enterprise Incident." In Deep Space 9, there's a couple of them and I think the most memorable one is probably Senator Cretak who's the Romulan liaison during the Dominion War. I just rewatched "Image in the Sand" [DS9 Season 7, Ep. 1] today. I think that's what it's called. Where she's kind of in a in a standoff and the Federation are trying to figure out whether... like she's so important to their war effort, but she's really pushing some boundaries in terms of what is acceptable with other Federation allies, and the Federation is trying to figure out whether they're going to shut her down, or let her kind of do what she wants in the service of the Romulan Empire even though it might mean that after the war the Romulans could really easily attack the Federation. I think she's pretty cool. You guys got any thoughts? Grace or Sue?

Grace: Yeah, it's nice seeing a recurring you know Romulan figure in a story where the Romulans are a sort of central point of conflict for the show, but it's cool to have that reminder. Yes, Romulans, still here, the rest of the world is going on still outside of this plot.

Jarrah: Yeah. And again, like, it's cool that they had a woman be the the main government liaison, but she's also in charge of some military operations.

Grace: Definitely, yeah.

Jarrah: And she, I think she has a shadow of the awesomeness that was Toreth in terms of she's really a master of brinkmanship in these negotiations and in really pushing the limits on what's acceptable for her to do in this alliance. She's played by two different actresses in her last episode "Inter Arma Enim Silent Leges" [DS9 Season 7, Ep. 16], she is played by a different actress and that

one's really more like a Bashir episode that they just kind of needed someone to put into this spy story, but again cool Romulan will ladies in spy stories.

Sue: I just feel like after TNG, the Romulan threat was just if not gone, more ignored. You know they were there because in DS9 because they were part of the Alpha Quadrant trying to get rid of the Dominion. Right? The threat was gone, like it was still kind of there but it wasn't as intense as it was in the next generation, like in TNG if you saw a Romulan ship uncloak you knew something bad was going down and DS9 not so much.

Jarrah: Maybe just because you knew they got rid of the shoulders. Just like sorry we just can't take you seriously anymore because we feared that if you conquered us you would make us all wear those, and that was the most terrifying thing of all.

Sue: Much less intimidating.

Jarrah: But there also was just that issue in Deep Space 9 where there is so much of a focus on the Cardassians, and even though there are differences I think there's also similarities in terms of the like tend to be cast in these kind of like spy intrigue stories, they're very nationalist and xenophobic. I mean the Romulans are more isolationist and the Cardassians are more conquerors, but there are these similarities that I think maybe made it harder to bring in Romulans much more. But last but not least we have "Star Trek Nemesis."

Grace: Oh boy.

Jarrah: So without giving away...

Grace: Can we not?

Jarrah: Too much. I actually like the Romulan women in this though, as much as the rest of the movie is terrible in many ways, and I'm sure once Andi has seen it we will analyze it. Unless we decide to relegate it to the realm of things we never discuss like Star Trek V.

Sue: I'll start a list.

Jarrah: But, you have two women in charge in the Romulans. And, I think we only really see, other than the main antagonist in the movie, we only really see women. So, there's commander Donatra who is the military commander, who is trying to decide basically what side she's on and she wants to work for the Romulan people, but does that mean siding with her new leader or does that mean siding with the Federation. And I understand she also plays a role in Star Trek Online is that?

Grace: I think so. I don't have a very good memory right now because I haven't gotten to play in a while actually.

Jarrah: No worries. But I like how she has that similar thing about you know she's very interested in what's good for her people, but she isn't really sure what that means. And then there's Senator Tal'aura, who is played by Shannon Cochran who also played Martok's wife, Sirella, so when we get to our Klingon women episode I'm sure we'll talk about that.

Andi: I'm looking forward to that episode because there there's a lot to talk about when we talk about Klingon women.

Grace: So many boob widows.

Jarrah: Oh yes. And, she's pretty cool too. She's definitely more on the devious manipulative side of things, but in the novels in the *Titans* series afterwards both Donatra and Tal'aura play really important roles in the first couple of books and they're still there's tension with each other, Tal'aura in the books becomes the Praetor of the Romulan government, and there's some really awesome scenes where Troi who's like the chief diplomat on the Titan just totally gets to tell Tal'aura off, it's pretty great. So, I think that those characters had a lot of potential even though "Nemesis" like I said was a problem.

Andi: And then we had Romulans being the main antagonist in the new rebooted 2009 Star Trek and they have a ship full of Romulans with no women.

Jarrah: Shocker.

Andi: Yeah. So the only Romulan woman that we see is Nero's wife, in his like I don't know pictures that he has of her.

Grace: Yeah, but I would like to point one thing out though if I may really quickly, there is a Romulan woman who's on the crew who, we don't really get to see her on screen but she was cast and they wrote sort of a mini backstory for her and the woman they cast was I want to say a Muay Thai specialist who was once declared the most deadly woman in the world.

Andi: What?

Grace: And they said, "Yeah that's the kind of Romulan women they would have on this crew."

Sue: Then why isn't she in the movie?

Grace: Exactly! It's so sad that you look it up and find out this cool stuff like, "Really? They had that just sitting... she was just sitting in the background there." I think you see her for like a split second and that's it. But they had a Muay Thai expert on crew.

Jarrah: I also just really dislike the look of the Romulans in 2009. Like I think worse than the boxy the shoulders feel like weird like face spots and bald heads. I don't know. I feel like they're trying too hard to make them look bad ass, instead of trying to make them good characters.

Grace: Isn't that generally what happens though in a summer blockbuster movie?

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: Unfortunately it's kind of that kind of what you get.

Jarrah: Doesn't mean I have to like it.

Grace: True enough.

Andi: The other problem being that we have really done to death back story in that the wife and child were murdered. So, it goes right to the concept of "fridging" which is a concept that Gail Simone names.

Grace: Gail Simone, what, what!

Andi: I know, big props to Gail Simone for being awesome in every possible way. She is a comic book writer, and basically she's she started this idea of all of the comic book heroes who their main

motivation is revenge for their murdered wives, or daughters, or children and everything like that and she started calling it being fridged.

Grace: After Kyle Rayner's girlfriend was murdered and left for him to find in the fridge in the Green Lantern comics.

Andi: Yeah it's just this like basic concept where women are only used as plot devices and as victims, and this is a pretty straightforward use of that.

Grace: The sad thing is it just started as a basic list, and if you look it up the list has gotten pretty extensive and well catalog people being like, "Oh hey yeah, that's a thing, isn't it."

Jarrah: And there are more of them in Star Trek, too.

Grace: So no shortage.

Andi: Back when we get to the Klingon women we'll discuss this again.

Grace: Oh boy!

Jarrah: But, yes, Grace, I just looked up and there was a woman who was named in the collectible card game Romulan Officer Livis who was apparently the communications officer in 2009, and her real name is Lucia Rijker, so I may be pronouncing that wrong she's Dutch and yes she was dubbed the most dangerous woman in the world. She's never been defeated by a female opponent in boxing or kickboxing. She's only been defeated once by a male opponent in a kickboxing match. So that is pretty cool.

Grace: How badass is that? Why doesn't they use that?

Jarrah: Yeah exactly it's that's pretty unfortunate.

Andi: Now I'm picturing like that whole last scene with Kirk and Spock on the Romulan ship totally differently with this Romulan woman just handing Spock and Kirk their ass.

Grace: And just kicking them to pieces.

Jarrah: I'm looking at this picture of her and she has hair which makes me kind of disappointed but like if they were going to go for the shaved heads they should have just shaved everyone's heads.

Andi: I mean I guess if they had kept everybody bald maybe there were some Romulans in the background that were women that we didn't notice, but I just thought that was interesting and sad.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Missed opportunity.

Grace: Right?

Sue: Lots of interesting and sad in the reboots.

Andi: But at least we got some of these really really cool Romulan women.

Grace: Oh no kidding. We also got Adrienne Barbeau as a Romulan at one point, which I loved.

Jarrah: Yes she was one of the great Cretak's wasn't she?

Grace: Yeah I think so. I want to say so but I just thought Adrienne Barbeau made a really good Romulan. It's always cool when you get to see this actress who for a long time was known as just this total sex kitten actress and her you know wearing the Romulan outfit and being like no I am super serious and scary right now, okay?

Jarrah: So, she was the second actress who played Senator Cretak. The first one was Megan Cole. I think they were both good. I'm not sure really like what the issue was but she was good. Okay, well that was all I have for Romulan women, because I think we basically, I mean there are a few more kicking around but I think those are the really the most memorable ones.

Grace: Pretty much, yeah.

Jarrah: So overall I think pretty positive moments.

Andi: We got a Facebook comment that I thought was really interesting because one thing that we've been doing that we will continue to do is post what our subjects are going to be on Facebook so people can kind of discuss these characters before we talk about them. And there was one from Jenny who said that to her "Romulans have always been boring but now that she thought about it all the good ones were women." And good being in the sense of interesting slash cool slash scary and I thought that was kind of interesting that she didn't like the race as they were portrayed, but the ones that she did like were women.

Grace: If any writers are listening take that as a hint right there.

Andi: Write us more badass Romulan women please.

Grace: Or just more badass women in general.

Andi: Yeah that would be good.

Jarrah: Yeah I'd also be interested to hear if we have any readers who have read the novels about Liviana, the Romulan Commander. I looked up some of the information on them, but I don't know like how she was portrayed. I mean it seems like they have her work with Spock a bit more from prison, and then eventually get out and have a new career. But, I'd be interested to hear if anyone has any recommendations on some good novels that she was in.

Andi: Yeah because I don't have a ship for the original series, this is the closest I got for it to actually having a ship. I like these two had such chemistry, I would have loved to see their relationship extended in this kind of antagonistic but sexy chemistry.

Sue: I bet you can find a list of her appearances on Memory Beta.

Jarrah: The closest thing I have to a ship for the original series is like Sarek and Amanda and it's more like an awww ship. Not so much a sexy ship.

Andi: I guess I just have to be grateful that I got even this one and then you know looking forward to new ones in the future. I have a couple of ships for TNG.

Grace: New ships to sail in your fleet.

Jarrah: I am looking forward to when we get to discussing shipping, but awesome so well thanks so much everyone for joining us for our discussion of badass Romulan women in Star Trek. If you're

interested in finding out more about Women at Warp you can check us out at our Web site <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> and if you have any questions or suggestions for upcoming episodes feel free to e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.com or join in the discussion our page on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp/> where you can talk with other fans about Star Trek and any thoughts you have on our show and upcoming episodes. So, thanks so much for listening. Can you guys tell the audience where they can find you, let's start with Sue.

Sue: Sure you can find me at <http://www.anomalypodcast.com/>

Jarrah: Andi?

Andi: You can follow me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/FirstTimeTrek> where I am live tweeting my first time watching Star Trek, and I am currently about to watch the original series movies, so that should be interesting, and then I get to start Deep Space 9, which I am very excited about.

Grace: And I'm grace, and you and you can find me at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk> and you can find my writing on the Mythcreants blog <https://mythcreants.com/>

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah, you can find me at <http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com/> Thanks so much for listening.