

Transcript: Women at Warp Episode 44: It's Not Easy Being Green

Audio clip from "Enterprise: Bound" Season 4, Ep. 17

Harrad-Sar (Orion Captain): They're sisters. I purchased them at a trading post you once visited.

End 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 thanks for tuning in. Today with us. We have Sue.

Sue: Hi everybody.

Jarrah: And green-skinned Grace

Grace: 'Sup my babies.

Jarrah: And we are going to be doing exciting topic today as usual. Before we do that we just have a quick little bit of housekeeping which is to remind you about the Women at Warp Patreon [<https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp>] this is how we support our podcast, we are entirely listener supported, it helps us make this show for you every two weeks and do Convention reporting and things like that. So you know Grace just got back from Geek Girl Con. So thank you for your support. In exchange you get various perks like access to exclusive behind the scenes content. And one of our Patreon levels the perk is that you get to suggest a topic for us so today's topic which is Orion Women was actually suggested by our Patreon Bonnie. So thanks to Bonnie for your support and the great topic idea.

Sue: Totally. This is a dense one.

Grace: Get ready to dive deep, everybody get ready to dive into this.

Jarrah: Yes. In this case this topic there aren't a lot of episodes that actually feature Orions or Orion women in particular, but there is a lot to talk about, even just from what little we see so I'm excited to discuss it. And we're going to go chronologically, because when we look at Orions they started out a certain way and then when they were brought back in Enterprise there was an attempt to sort of make them more palatable for a modern audience, but we're going to start...

Grace: We say it's hepped.

Jarrah: Yeah, but we're going to start right at the beginning with "The Cage" [TOS Season 0, Ep. 01 aka the pilot], and we're not going to talk about what Enterprise introduced us to in terms of the retcon until we get to Enterprise.

Sue: Yeah you're using chronologically it to mean chronologically by air date.

Jarrah: Yes, and not by Stardate.

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: All right. So hopefully that will make sense, so we're starting with the pilot of The Original Series "The Cage" in which basically the green skinned space babe trope was created.

Sue: It's always been a little bit uncomfortable to me that like one of the iconic images from Star Trek is a slave girl. But, yeah

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. So this is the character of Vina in one of her various incarnations as one of Captain Pike's fantasies, and she's described as an Orion animal woman, but, like she's basically in a harem and Pike is watching her dance. And yeah I mean I think that this is fundamentally the biggest problem with this discussion is like it's not the fact that she's sexy, it's not the fact that she's dancing sexily, it's the fact that she's a slave and that that is supposed to be an idea that's titillating to men.

Sue: Right. And I think it's actually in The Menagerie [Parts I & II TOS, Season 1, Ep 15 & 16] when they use the footage again, that it's Kirk who refers to her as the slave girl.

Grace: Also just referring to a grown woman as "girl" when she's you know sexily performing for your entertainment, a little creepy

Sue: Yeah, that's yet another issue with this.

Grace: And trust me we're going to have a few.

Jarrah: So, I mean it's worth noting that this was really pushing the envelope for TV for the time and this was pretty much Gene Roddenberry's idea. In the documentary "The Green Girl" [<http://thegreengirlmovie.com/>] which is an excellent documentary about Susan Oliver, the actress who played Vina, the fact that they called it "The Green Girl" instead of one of her many other roles, points to how iconic this performance is, but there's a lot of people just talking about how captivating it was to see this green woman dance and Larry Nemecek is quoted in this movie and says it was Gene's way of pushing that censorship envelope as much as he could. So, this was very much designed to make happy a straight male audience.

Grace: Oh, it's pretty clear! Yeah, there's sex being thrown right at the screen.

Jarrah: Yeah

Sue: Yeah, but...

Grace: She is a very good dancer though!

Jarrah: Yeah so I mean I think like this is a good place to introduce the concept of the "male gaze" for any listeners who aren't familiar with it, and this comes from feminist film theory from the theorist Laura Mulvey in the 70s and she talks about how basically conventional Hollywood film is created for three male audiences and we can put before a male in brackets like straight cis male audiences that there is the male viewer who is consuming the image of the sexualized, objectified woman. There is the male character who is also watching that some in this case Pike and the other men that are kind of like you know laughing and ogling her. And then the male director behind the camera. And the idea is like it's not the same as being attracted to or being aroused by but it's that these male audiences don't regard the woman as like a complicated, complex character with her own needs and desires and because she's actually literally a slave in this, it can't really be better illustrated than this example.

Sue: Yeah, I think this is also a great place to talk about the “Jezebel stereotype” because believe it or not you know the Orion slave girl is not only sexist but it's actually racist as well. So, the Jezebel stereotype especially in you know the slavery era of the US was used to sort of dehumanize not even sort of to dehumanize black women by calling them animal like and saying they have an insatiable appetite for sex and this was used to say that you know the black men weren't enough for the black women and therefore desired to have sexual relations with their owners which is just disgusting to even say, and therefore when white men had sex with their black female slaves they didn't consider it rape. And we're seeing the same terminology used when these characters are talking about the Orion women, the animal like sexuality, the insatiable appetite for sex, and it's just really disturbing when you look at it from from that angle.

Grace: Especially considering that Star Trek has this recurrent theme of using alien species as an analogy for racism. And, if we go by that standard then we're seeing a pretty negative racial thing here.

Jarrah: And again, like it's not the fact that you're showing scantily clad women at all, it's that like at least in this point in the franchise we see Vina as this example and we're presumably there are others who, it's like their desires are not important. In fact, they are being literally oppressed, enslaved and that the response isn't being appalled, the response is “ooh this is kind of hot”

Grace: At no point does one of the guys go, “Oh my God is going to help this woman?”

Jarrah: You know or actually like try to figure out like, “hey what got you here and how could I support you?” Or, “Wow. Do you guys really treat women like this? What the heck?” It's supposed to be Pike's fantasy to which is additionally creepy like...

Grace: Pike, get it together, man!

Jarrah: Yeah I mean we see The Talosians they're off the mark with what Pike wants so it can't be right is you know what he would choose if he had any choice in the world of women. But, they are drawing things from his memories and they draw other things that he is somewhat attracted to. So, yeah I mean and it is telling that like Vina the Orion woman has her own action figure, I think actually a few of them.

Grace: Yes, she was one of the first Funko figures of any woman they did Star Trek, right?

Jarrah: That is true, they did. She was the only woman in the first line of Funkos she wasn't called Vina, she was just called Orion Woman, but she's dressed in that same outfit and it is kinda a little gross..

Grace: Also, could she not stand up on her own?

Jarrah: She, yes she was the first Funko to be so thin that they required a base to stand up.

Grace: Also telling, yeah.

Jarrah: But I mean just goes to speak to how like that was presented and continues to be accepted I think by a lot of fans is kind of unproblematic that you would just watch this and totally not question whether that was an appropriate reaction to a situation of sexual slavery is that's the part that weirds me out a little bit.

Grace: Yeah, it's worth getting weirded out over.

Sue: There is too that like this Orion culture that they're creating, that the writers are creating, doesn't exist in a vacuum, like real people, in the real world are writing the stuff. And I think I mean we'll get there but I

think it's even more upsetting with, when we get to Enterprise because you know, it's as if some people think that slavery doesn't exist anymore in this world when in fact it does, and it's a huge problem. And sex trafficking is everywhere, and it's a huge problem. And in some ways it's almost treated like a joke. In addition to being treated like a fantasy.

Jarrah: Absolutely.

Sue: And it's it's upsetting certainly.

Jarrah: Yeah, but if we're done with "The Cage", let's move on to you I would say maybe not what you would expect for your second example of an Orion woman which is Marta in "Whom Gods Destroy" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 16]. Certainly as a kid I didn't really remember this episode, and then when I went back and watched it I was like, oh there was an Orion woman that wasn't... Well I mean you know I guess you can debate how much agency she really has. She starts out as a prisoner in a mental asylum and she ends up sort of controlled more or less by Garth of Izar, but she has character and she's rebelling against other people trying to control her.

Sue: So, seeing Marta it makes me really question what the Orion culture is, right, because the the [Orion] Syndicate is described like on Memory Alpha as a criminal organization. [http://memory-alpha.wikia.com/wiki/Orion_Syndicate] But we don't know if the syndicate controls all of Orion or all of the Orions. So, are they the governing body or are they an organization that operates within the culture, but is not representative of the culture. Like do you know what I mean? Like are all of the women slaves and this is how their society works or is it just this one group?

Grace: Again, it's really unfortunate that these are the only women we see of the entire species.

Jarrah: Yeah. Like are they a government, or are they a gang? And I don't think that's... Like it's clear they're criminals, it's clear that they include pirates and slave traders, but they don't seem to have a problem with that. So who's governing them?

Sue: Right. But, Marta isn't, I don't think, ever described as a slave.

Jarrah: No, and she's not actually called Orion either except for I believe she is in the script. And no, I mean we start out, we don't know why, we never find out why she's been institutionalized, but she knows Shakespeare, she thinks she wrote it, but she knows it and Longfellow.

Sue: And so she's educated, clearly.

Jarrah: Yeah and she's creative while you know she does dance, it's described as kind of childish, like Spock finds it, her dancing, childish and nostalgic. It's not, I don't think... I think it's supposed to be a bit more disturbing and not so much sexy as "The Cage".

Grace: Either that, or child dancing on Vulcan is really weird.

Jarrah: Yeah. I had that thought.

Grace: You can't not have that thought!

Jarrah: It's like let's see you do it, Spock.

Sue: Or he's lying and just trying to make them angry.

Grace: Oh that's possible, yeah.

Jarrah: She also has a couple of great lines like that, "Why can't I just blow off one of his ears?!"

Grace: C'mon, let me break one kneecap, ONE kneecap that's all!

Jarrah: Yeah and like making out with Kirk and then pulls a knife on him. I think she's a really cool character. And it is really I think tragic that Garth apparently kills her in order to just demonstrate how powerful he is to Kirk. Yeah but one thing I wondered upon watching it was like the intent of the writers and I wasn't able to find a lot in *These Are the Voyages* or anywhere about how they intended her to be whether, because it starts out at the very beginning of this episode the Enterprise goes to this asylum planet, they've basically found a cure for mental illness, so they they're going to deliver this injection to the population. And they get there, and the governor comes to meet them, Governor Cory, and he's escorting them by Marta's cell and she says basically like "Kirk you're making a mistake. First of all there's nothing wrong with me," and even Spock's like "yes she seems totally rational." And Governor Cory's like "I don't know I don't know. I think she's just making this up" and she's like "Governor Cory isn't who he says he is" and it makes me wonder whether she's supposed to be right at the beginning or whether we're just not supposed to analyze it that much and she was just supposed to be you know, for lack of a better term crazy, because they're depicting this is like kind of comical comically caricatured versions of mental illness.

Grace: Charming.

Jarrah: What if she was right and there wasn't anything wrong with her? She was right that Governor Cory wasn't Governor Cory, he's Garth of Izar in disguise. So, what if Kirk had listened to her? Would she have still conspired with Garth of Izar or was it just that because he was the most powerful person there and for her own safety she did that?

Grace: There's an interesting question.

Sue: I would like to think that's what it is.

Grace: Yeah. It'd be nice, it'd be the nicer option.

Sue: Doesn't really work out for her, still.

Jarrah: Yeah, Garth of Izar is definitely abusive. I mean even before he kills her, obviously, but he you know he calls her a stupid cow, which is a scene that was cut out in one version of the show, and he's you know just insulting her, bossing her around, and then ultimately committing violence against her. And it's very sad... Angry making. Well, you know we have an okay example for the next one. I think I feel like we're on the upswing, I feel like.

Sue: Oh just you wait.

Jarrah: So, we have The Animated Series an Orion woman makes a brief, but memorable appearance in the episode "The Time Trap" [TAS, Season 1, Ep. 12]. So, this is the woman, Devna, who is... This the one where like a bunch of people from different alien species are all pulled together and they formed this governing council and the woman's name is Devna and she has become the interpreter of laws for the council and she is also a dancer.

Grace: Of course! Because, that's just what they do. Also for the record, if we were really catty we could have call this episode a time trap.

Jarrah: I think we're going to call it "It's not that easy being green."

Sue: Which is my favorite thing we might have ever done. But yet, she is their interpreter of laws on this council which shows that she is at the very least capable and educated even if she does say that she wishes she could be back on Orion dancing.

Jarrah: Yeah and there is nothing actually wrong about dancing.

Sue: No, absolutely not.

Grace: It's just funny that it's such a big priority to every Orion woman we've seen, well just about every Orion woman we've seen in the entirety of the franchise, sans one.

Jarrah: Oh of course, it's just that I think this is a better take on it because at least she's herself expressing the desire to dance instead of being ordered to dance by Garth of Izar, or being enslaved into dancing.

Grace: Oh my god you guys imagine if like competitive dance is really big on Orion. I'm just saying some world building opportunity here. Like every mom is a dance mom, imagine it!

Jarrah: Think of all the amazing terrible television.

Grace: Oh my God, that reality show on TV must be the most intensely bad....

Sue: Could you imagine an Orion Abby Lee Miller?

Jarrah: They invented Dancing with the Stars you guys.

Grace: I could see them having done that. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that the Orion Syndicate probably produces some really quality reality TV. Maybe that's what made them criminal in the first place.

Sue: Oh that's terrible.

Grace: Headcanon accepted.

Jarrah: So, definitely we get to see her expressed desire to dance but we also get to see her doing what seems like a pretty important governing role in this society. So, overall I think not a half bad interpretation of an Orion woman. I'll take it

Grace: Yeah, once again The Animated Series surprises us in terms of "oh hey-ism".

Jarrah: All right. I know that the Enterprise episode we're all really eager to talk about is "Bound" [ENT Season 4, Ep. 17] but very quickly before we get into "Bound" we do see an Orion woman in one episode before that in Enterprise. And this is of course in season four when you know Manny Coto had taken over as showrunner and he was eager to inject more fanservice homages...

Grace: Because that's what Enterprise was really lacking, honestly, they had the rubbing down in the sparkle goo it and just random nudity and all that jazz, but really why weren't they thinking about fanservice? They just forgot it happened, I mean Enterprise was so chronically unsexual.

Jarrah: Well I'm particularly referring to homages to TOS type fanservice, so not just like sexy time but...

Sue: You mean it wasn't just the decontamination gel?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: So maybe Freud was right maybe the decontamination gel is just gel that you're rubbing on someone's body.

Jarrah: Yeah it doesn't make any sense like what happens to the part but your clothes were covering.

Grace: There's so many goddamn questions.

Sue: Those parts are contaminated.

Grace: Forever. Contaminated with sexiness. It's catching!

Jarrah: All right, well let's save that for the women of Enterprise episode. In the season four, they started really increasing the number homages to original series and a little bit of TNG. So, we get the Augments arc and there is an episode in that, the first one called "Borderland" [ENT Season 4, Ep. 4] where they end up in an Orion slave market. So, we had T'Pol gets auctioned off cause you know it's Enterprise and that's the kind of thing that happens to T'Pol...

Grace: That's comfortable to watch also hanging like a rag doll. Just the image of her being held up hanging like a little rag doll. That is the iconic image from Enterprise for me.

Jarrah: Yeah and being told how great it is that she got so much money from them.

Grace: Oh yeah. Because if there's one thing a woman knows... loves knowing it's her market value.

Jarrah: So in this episode Archer goes to rescue his crew members who've been abducted and are being sold as slaves. And with him is our Arik Soong played by Brent Spiner who's the whatever, great great great great great grandfather of Noonian Soong and he is showing Archer around the borderlands where the Orions operate, and Archer is super incredulous that the Orions sell their own people. Because, they put this Orion woman up on the stand she is dressed like a typical sort of slave girl really skimpy outfit and Arik Soong says, "Only the women, Orion females are known for their extreme appetites, their innate skills." So, more kind of like creeping on enslaved women. The Orion woman in that episode doesn't say anything but I thought it was important to mention because as of like six episodes before "Bound" the situation for the Orion the way that they were portrayed hasn't really changed.

Sue: Well, it's important to note because what nine of his crewmembers were actually kidnapped and attempted to be sold on the slave market.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And it's only a few episodes later that that he has the attitude that he does in "Bound" and they don't really seem to go together.

Jarrah: Yeah. Okay, so, like it's interesting briefly to look at it was surprising to me seeing this slave market that it was basically like equal numbers of men and women, and were kind of left to imagine what they're selling them for. And we do see one woman buyer but I still feel like they're assuming the audience assumes men are being sold for labor and women are being sold for sex.

Grace: Wouldn't it be ironic though, if that woman's, like you know, slave dancers get up was actually her coal mining gear? Just saying...

Sue: That seems very impractical.

Grace: It would be a twist on what we expected.

Jarrah: Well, and the comment that they make about T'Pol the slave merchant guy makes some kind of comment that you know she fetched more than his first wife or something. So, it is implied that she's being put in that same category that it's not like "oh look at you you'll be great cleaning the floors."

Grace: It's making me glad they didn't put T'Pol in a slave girl outfit.

Jarrah: Oh thank God.

Grace: I know, small miracle there.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Very small.

Jarrah: Also, we can kind of get that assumption from what Arik Soong says about Orion females are known for their extreme appetites their innate skills which...

Grace: Yeah that's some real jezebel-y there.

Jarrah: So yeah I don't think again he's saying that they're selling them for hard labor.

Sue: No.

Jarrah: Yeah, okay, so you know basically we got the same narrative that we had back in the original series of Star Trek until the episode "Bound"... Sue, I know you watched this like two days ago. Do you want to give a brief synopsis.

Sue: Jarrah knows this because I was messaging her during it. Complaining about it. Yeah. So this is the episode where the Orion women go from Jezebels to Sirens. The difference being that the siren trope is really about how women can't control the fact that these men are drawn to them and they're using it to manipulate them because this is where we learned that these Orion women have pheromones that mess up the men and make them extra aggressive and like sexual because if Star Trek has taught us anything it's that violence and sexuality go hand-in-hand.

Grace: That and that men just can't be held accountable when they're sexually aroused.

Sue: Exactly. And it makes all the women around them get headaches and get tired and irritable. To quote eliminate the competition. So with that out of the way, super hetero normative, but, so Archer happens across this Orion trade ship where the captain, they do some sort of deal because the captain says he knows where something is that they need. And you know they make some sort of agreement and then Archer accepts a quote gift of three slave women from this captain.

Grace: It's like cookie baskets and their culture, really.

Sue: Right? And it feels like an endorsement of the slave trade. Plot goes on, we figure out it's a trap, but in the meantime on the Enterprise the women are causing a distraction, and that's where we learn about these pheromones and Phlox is trying to figure out if he can inoculate the crew so they won't fall victim to these sirens.

Grace: Because remember men are just victims of women's wiles.

Sue: Right. And at the very very end is when we learn that it's actually the men who are the slaves and the women have been pulling the strings the entire time.

Grace: Because that's not anything that we've ever culturally been told over and over again that the women back in the kitchen are actually the ones culturally in control.

Sue: Right. And they manipulate the men and then control the situation, and make them sell, make the men sell them into slavery because they quote like it I guess.

Jarrah: Yeah cause you know they're not helpless victims, they are cruel and exploitative harpies.

Sue: Right. And one of them when Archer tries to tell them you're not my property, you're my guest. One of them says to him that even if she weren't a slave she would want to please him because she can't imagine any other kind of life.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, I've, but I mean let me go back a step here because there's, I mean the overall narrative is pretty messed up. Starting with, like you said, this whole thing about basically Archer just bought into the Orion slave trade like sex trafficking. So, the captain, the Orion captain whose name is Harrad, he says like "they can make you forget most of your troubles. Of course creatures such as these come with troubles of their own. But women are the same throughout the galaxy aren't they." Which feels like such an original series line in a not good way.

Grace: Yeah. This might not be the best tribute here guys.

Jarrah: Yeah it's like Archer and Reed, and is it Tucker who's there at the beginning? Or is it just Archer and Reed?

Sue: I think it's just Archer and Reed.

Jarrah: Yeah and they're both just like "hehehehe, yeah"

Sue: Yeah, they are.

Jarra: No one's like "um... we don't really say things like that anymore. Yeah, even just that part. And so then, they come on board the ship and like immediately the women started getting headaches. And T'Pol, who's like basically the closest we get to a voice of reason in this episode, she goes and complains to Phlox about her her headache.

Sue: No that's Hoshi.

Jarra: Oh sorry, Hoshi. Yeah.

Sue: Right. T'Pol's the one who's like, "I thought the Federation was against slavery, Captain" and he was like, "No, whatever it's fine."

Jarra: Yes, right. So yes, so that's where I was going with that was that, so Archer, his conversation that he has with the woman about "hey you can't actually be my slave because I can't own you." That's super reluctant because T'Pol keeps badgering him about like, "I didn't really think the Federation should have slaves." But even then I think she's kind of meek about it.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarra: And then yeah, Hoshi has a headache and goes to sick bay and Phlox, instead of being like, "yeah you're right. It's like two thirds of the crew, the men on board aren't actually doing their jobs any more what the heck is going on" he's just like "I didn't think you were the jealous type." But then like yeah I mean I wasn't even really that satisfied with T'Pol's strength of bringing out that perspective in this episode, and when I reviewed this for Trekkie Feminist, I wrote about like the difference between this and "The Perfect Mate" [TNG Season 5, Ep, 21] which is not remotely perfect, but like Crusher makes a way better case for the rights of the woman in that episode and a case that is much harder for the audience to ignore than T'Pol does for the women in this episode.

Sue: Of course she does because she's the best.

Jarra: And because they can't read T'Pol.

Sue: Well also that.

Jarra: But also T'Pol, and the reason T'Pol's not affected, her and Tucker, because true love.

Sue: Well she's not affected because she's Vulcan. Tucker is not affected because they have this mental whatever, now they did "it".

Grace: Sex gives you superpowers, guys! Spread the word!

Jarra: Well it was more like monogamy gives you superpowers.

Sue: Lots about this episode was frustrating but I can't get past in both TOS and Enterprise, it's as if the Federation is just willing to turn a blind eye to the slave trade in order to not get involved in a war. Like in order to have a somewhat peaceful relationship with the Orion Syndicate, they're just like "Okay, you do you."

Jarra: Yeah.

Grace: Which is funny considering how many things they have been willing to go to war over.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I mean I feel like just in case this wasn't 100 percent clear that because I do know people who think wow this is such a fun twist on the original and it makes it okay now because the women weren't victims. But again saying that women aren't these like passive sexualized victims instead they're evil demon seductresses. It's just like trading in one bad stereotype for another.

Sue: Yeah

Grace: Yeah

Jarrah: And you're still encouraged to ogle them while you're at it.

Grace: It's kind of... it's not trading up so much as just trading in a different direction on the exact same level.

Jarrah: Yes. We did have some listener comments about "Bound" though. Grace do you want to read one of them?

Grace: Okay. Listener Matthias, he said on "Bound", "They tried to reverse the trope by revealing that women are actually the leaders in Orion society, but it just ends up feeling like a throwaway line to justify 40 minutes of half-naked fan service. And if they really could control everyone through pheromones (a bogus stereotype which I'm sure Sue's science corner can dismantle in 5 minutes)..."

Sue: Yes!!

Grace: ...they wouldn't even need to be half-naked. The "pheromone seduction" trope just keeps appearing in various sci-fi shows, and it never works." Yeah, definitely going to have to agree with you, if they're already able to have superhuman seduction abilities, they don't really need to go the extra mile with the sparkly bikinis do they? Unless they're just really committing razzle dazzle wise. I mean for all we know that on Orion, showmanship because of their you know dance intensive cultural background could just be a major priority. I mean for all we know when they aren't barefoot they're wearing tap shoes, in case a number of breaks out.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean if I can control everyone around me you can be sure that I would be wearing pajamas 24/7.

Grace: Maybe they are, and that's just, they have the level of control that everyone just thinks they're wearing awesome outfits when they're all really just wearing sweats.

Sue: Oh like in "Mudd's Women" [TOS Season 1, Ep. 3].

Grace: Exactly except more intentional.

Jarrah: Oh man...

Grace: Why are you dressed so provocatively? These are yoga pants!

Jarrah: We had another comment from friend of the show Will who says, "The "Bound" retcon is Enterprise trying to be too cute by half and tries to provide a modern real world justification for the 60s objectification of exotic "alien harem women". Except it just doesn't work. The Orions deserved to be explored as meaningful

characters in the same way in the Vulcans, Andorians, and the Cardassians were and not just as perpetual one-dimensional sexy aliens that only cater to the male gaze and horny straight dudes.”

Grace: So let's add that to my, to at least my Star Trek: Discovery wishlists, something where we actually get to see an Orion who's a character, and not a, you know, sexy cardboard cut out, that'd be nice.

Jarrah: Sue you mentioned like the jezebel trope, but we have to mention too that like this harem women thing is it's also an example of Orientalism which we've talked about previously. This idea of sort of exoticized alien cultures and in this case the fact that you know you have sort of this take on belly dancing in like veils and metal, sort of jingly belly dance type jewelry and the atmospheres that you see them dancing in is really like kind of appropriating these parts of varieties of different eastern cultures and like making it this weird exoticized orientalist male fantasy. And it's pretty gross. Okay, so, is that all we have to say about “Bound”?

Grace: Frankly the less said about “Bound” the better.

Jarrah: So now we have one last cannon Orion woman that we have to talk about which is very, very brief appearance of Gaila, Uhura's roommate in Star Trek 2009.

Grace: She has two scenes. She gets lines in one.

Jarrah: Yeah, but she's in Starfleet Academy.

Grace: That's at least a step in the right direction.

Sue: She has two scenes, she gets lines in one, but this is the appearance that really led me down probably my most research before this episode. because I'm trying to figure out why/how an Orion woman is at Starfleet Academy, like and the explanation is nowhere, did something happen after the Kelvin incident that caused relations with the the Orion Syndicate or the Orion world or whatever to be at a point where there are other Orions living and working on Earth and in Starfleet? Because there's not just her we see other green skinned people in wide shots in the background. And there's no explanation given, and there are no really other green skinned aliens.

Grace: Maybe she is a refugee or she sought asylum or something.

Jarrah: So that was the explanation on, which I think is on the Blu ray features, Roberto Orci, we're going to say that I'm saying that correctly, said that he was asked “How did an Orion get there?” And he said well he would expect that there would be some kind of underground railroad smuggling people out of life's of slavery in the Orion Syndicate.

Sue: So the source I was able to find for that quote, because I definitely came upon it as well, is not on the internet anymore. It's from an interview that was actually done with Jordan, who does the you does he Engage podcast now, but you can get the full interview if you use the wayback machine you know the archive.org wayback machine. And actually I have a link to it if we want to put on the show notes, but it's him asking her like how does Uhura have an Orion roommate? And what's noted right after that is “nervous laughter.”

Jarrah: Oh dear.

Sue: And then Jordan throws out his theory and that's when Orci says how it's transcribed here is, "or... there is an underground railroad of some kind." So, I don't think, while this is often cited as like this was his idea that this is what might be, based on the original source material, it seems more just kind of like spit balling. So, I don't know how much stock we want to put into that explanation, certainly it's not canon.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: It's an explanation.

Jarrah: I don't think that that was their top of mind, certainly they were trying to make a sexy woman for Kirk to sleep with.

Sue: And the "green girl" is iconic.

Jarrah: Yeah, and there's a discussion about how they gave her red hair because it was so hot to see the red hair with the green skin.

Grace: Merry Christmas!

Jarrah: Yeah, but I mean apparently there was a deleted scene where, Kirk sends Gaila an email which contains his cheap patch for the Kobayashi Maru that she had basically, he basically used her computer lab access to help him cheat on the Kobayashi Maru. But, I guess like this, so that's not really cool, but the cool part about that is that she she was sort of like a computer science type person.

Grace: Which is cool definitely and definitely adds more actual characterization to her.

****WARNING: Small IDW Comics Kelvin Universe Spoiler Below****

Jarrah: Yeah. So I mean in the IDW comics that have come out since that movie, and which take place and in the Kelvin universe, she gets a backstory which is that her father saved her from being sold into slavery, her like mother was going to sell her and her brother in slavery, father saves them, takes them to Earth, her brother really wants to join Starfleet Academy, and her, and so she does as well against her father's wishes and later her mom kidnaps her back. Sorry spoiler for the comics. I mean yes, so if you want to find out more about her non-canon backstory, but obviously like the comic series for IDW is very intimately tied into the production team for the movies.

Grace: And there's some stuff in there.

Jarrah: Yeah, so, I would check that out if you want to learn some more about Gaila

Grace: My favorite tying-in detail in those comics is that they draw in the lens flare, so that that's consistent.

Sue: Well, there is an article I found, again more doing some research for this on on Lady Geek Girl [<https://ladygeekgirl.wordpress.com/>] talking about, you know examining the stereotypes and the Orion women and the author makes a suggestion about how they really had a chance to sort of set right all the issues with the Orion women and suggested that you know imagine if somebody was you know shooting off the stereotypes that we know from TOS and Enterprise towards Gaila and Uhura had the chance to say "you know these are the same stereotypes that were used to enslave my people centuries ago."

Jarrah: Oh cool.

Sue: And imagine you know shutting that down and she gives several examples of how this could have worked. And it just it sounds so cool and also so powerful. And it reminded me of “The Measure of a Man” [TNG Season 2, Ep. 9], as everything always does, and that scene with Guinan and Picard, you know and how great would that have been.

Jarrah: Yeah. That sounds super cool. Unfortunately they would have had to you know they would have had to make her a more important character to justify spending that extra time on her. Although I mean I guess it would have illustrated something about Uhura as well, but I mean though those first two movies really lacked a lot of interesting women characters so it would have been cool to see Gaila given more of a role.

Sue: So, one interesting thing of note which is again blink and you'll miss it. But in “Star Trek Into Darkness” there is a star chart in Admiral Marcus's office that has a section labeled Orion Union, so if you know, to what we were talking about before maybe there was an event because of the Kelvin incident that change that part of history. And now there is an Orion Union instead of an Orion Syndicate or maybe the Orion Syndicate is a criminal organization that operates within the Orion Union, but I feel like because I brought it up earlier I should point out that that is there in “Into Darkness”.

Jarrah: Yeah. Cool. Okay, so we don't usually get into a lot of non-canon materials when we're doing our main episodes, and I know though that we have talked about doing an episode just on some of the Star Trek fan films and fan series, but for this discussion I particularly want us to talk about an episode of Star Trek Continues called “Lolani” [Star Trek Continues, Episode 2 <http://www.startrekcontinues.com/>] because it is another modern day take on the Orion slave girl, and it tries to retcon it in a very different way than Enterprise does. Did anyone else get a chance to watch this?

Grace: I haven't, I'm afraid.

Sue: I have.

Jarrah: For anyone who's not familiar Star Trek Continues, you should watch it, but it essentially tries to fill out the last years of the five year mission. So, the episodes that didn't get made because to TOS was canceled. But it is with a more modern sensibility, so like there is a woman counselor, as an additional female character, who is awesome and just a little bit more sensitivity to modern politics and diversity I guess. So in “Lolani” they come across a ship where a bunch people have been killed and they rescue and Orion slave girl who may have killed them all. And Lolani in this episode, that's the name of the slave girl, and she basically begs them not to return her to her master. And Kirk is very sensitive to her argument. But the Federation is ordering him to return her because of their need to maintain good diplomatic relationships. They can't afford to annoy the Orions and they don't have any proof of what she's saying, etc. She uses her pheromones, so they do maintain that aspect from Enterprise, to try to convince, sort of seduce a security guard to help her escape. But that plan fails, and ultimately even though everyone knows she's going back to this super abusive slave master, who's played by Lou Ferrigno, she has to go back and she ends up killing herself and the master by blowing up the ship as it departs, and she leaves a videotaped message that she hopes will inspire a revolution to end sex slavery on Orion.

Sue: Yes she tells us that she was not born on Orion and was not raised in that culture. But I guess was then captured and because she is an Orion woman she is automatically a slave is the impression that's given. And here's where they you know outright say that they're going to return a slave because they want to keep good diplomatic relations, and it's just it's so unsettling and there's even a line in this episode, I think it's a Kirk line, where he says, “The Federation will not commit an act of war over one slave.”

Jarrah: In that way I think it kind of like it feels like what the Enterprise episode should have been, because this is the kind of politics that we do see in Enterprise more often, but you have to see them acknowledge what is horribly wrong with it. Right? And that they still like understand what the right thing to do is. But it's a tough decision. Whereas in Enterprise we don't we don't even get barely that.

Sue: So it's worth noting that these are supposed to be you know the fourth and fifth season of the original series, but they were created after Enterprise aired.

Jarrah: Yes.

Sue: So that canon exists in there. Yeah.

Jarrah: Oh yeah. So that's what I mean is they brought in the pheromones, but they did not suggest that all Orion women were controlling all Orion men.

Sue: Right. And they were able to inoculate the crew against the pheromones in this episode.

Jarrah: Yeah. And they kind of seemed to like put in a bit of a way of explaining away what happened in Enterprise.

Sue: Oh no, they really did though, there's this whole like big exposition...

Jarrah: Like, "oh they were in charge but now they're in on charge again."

Sue: Yes 70 years ago the women were in charge, and held dominion over the men, and then there was a revolt in the civil war and the men gained control. But instead of abolishing the slave trade they made it worse.

Jarrah: Yeah but I still I feel like this representation is the best attempt at like here's how you should analyze this situation.

Sue: Yeah I mean we're making fun of it clearly. But I actually really liked "Lolani" and I liked that her entire motivation was to change things, like she kept saying over and over again, "I want to be a force for change. I want to see this be different. I want to fix this" and that was her whole goal it wasn't just to get away from her slaver, it was to to change the entire system.

Grace: it's the most proactive Orion we've seen so far.

Sue: Absolutely.

Jarrah: Yeah absolutely. I feel like in some ways it reminded me of possibly better ended version of "The Outcast" [TNG Season 5, Ep. 17] in some ways too that she has this character who sees what's wrong with her society, the Federation isn't totally able to help her out but everyone understands that she's on the right side of this thing except for at the end of this instead of being like brainwashed she basically decides to martyr herself, and it's I think it's powerful.

Sue: I think overall this is one of the best Star Trek stories even though it's not canon, that is dealing with this, but there are just there are problems with the tropes, I think no matter what you do.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. And I mean if this had been an actual episode of, say I don't know just say, you even put this episode like in The Next Generation or something, you would have kind of run out of stories at some point unless you're going to constantly be revisiting this revolution taking place, it kind of felt like it felt like it fit a bit more for this episodic television, and it felt like you could trust that you could guess that things were going to be okay ultimately on Orion.

Sue: Yeah, although there is a brief mention on Deep Space Nine an episode that the Orion slave girls are still one of the most popular holosuite programs.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: So they're still around in that era.

Jarrah: Yeah, or at least the programs of them are we don't know whether...

Sue: The fantasy is... the fantasy survives.

Jarrah: Yeah but I mean certainly if it had been exposed as like an intergalactic barbaric thing that you would hope that people would have a bit more issue with having the fantasy of it, but there's a lot of weird shit that happens in the holosuites.

Sue: Yeah

Jarrah: Not super enlightened and they're not all Federation people coming there. So before we wrap up we had a question, or a couple of questions and comments, I guess from people about the MAC makeup line and like how we felt about the fact that one of the four women they picked was an Orion slave girl. Do you guys have any thoughts on that?

Grace: Well again, it is a very iconic Star Trek image, so it makes sense that when they're thinking what is you know the image of beauty that people are going to automatically think of when they think of Star Trek. I'm not crazy about it, but it does make sense that they picked it.

Sue: Yeah it's certainly from an iconic image point of view because I mean she's not a recurring character like one individual Orion woman is not a recurring character, but if you ask somebody in the general public what they know about Star Trek and women and make up they're going to probably think of the green girl.

Grace: They're probably going to say sexy alien chick.

Sue: Right. So it makes sense in that way. I think from a design standpoint, it is also like an obvious way to get some unusual colors into the palette, because otherwise there is like a lot of gold and silver and like purples that I think you'd expect. But yeah sort of like it's the same kind of question that you get with the the line of Funko Pop Figures. Why choose the Orion slave girl over Uhura, or in the case of MAC why choose the Orion slave girl over you know our first woman captain in Captain Janeway or first woman captain to lead a series before I get all Erika Hernandez up in here, but you know there are lots of other women in the Star Trek universe that they could have chosen from, and I think there are lots of factors to it, but I feel like the people at MAC didn't...

Jarrah: It wasn't like they were going, "hehehe slaves." They were going like :who are the iconic sexy women of Star Trek."

Sue: Yeah I don't think it was just random. I don't think they like looked at people and chose something. But I would be curious if that question was posed to them directly, like how do you how do you resolve the fact that one of the four women you chose is technically a sex slave.

Grace: Yeah I really would like to hear a response to that.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean my preference would have been that they scrapped the Orion woman in favor of say, I would have said Dax because there wasn't a woman from Deep Space Nine and I think you could have gone with interesting blues that work that didn't end up in the line instead of greens, Janeway, and I don't think has like an iconic enough palette that you could go with, and same with Kira, I don't know I think some of her stuff like her colors could be covered by other people. Crusher would be another person who would have blues, but you have Troy there so my preference would have been say scrap the Orion go with Dax, but I think that when you hold those characters altogether Dax doesn't really stand up to those other ones as, as iconic as Uhura, or even Seven of Nine, because there wasn't that same like sexy alien babe marketing, or just the history when you look at Uhura and the awesome class of Nichelle Nichols. So yeah I mean I wouldn't say that it made me super upset but I think it could have gone a different way and I don't think that it was deliberate, like "let's make this a slave." but, it was about just trying to cover different aspects of color range and iconic characters. So yeah we have a couple listener comments that I wanted to do to sort of close out the show. So Sue do you want to read the comment from Karen.

Sue: Absolutely. So Karen wrote, "I think that the stories is based around the Orion women are bringing back the tropes of the Siren, the classic sailor stories of women who call to them, cause chaos for them, and their ships. I think that they were also brought on as eye candy but I'm glad that we have these characters to love/hate. Plus they are awesome fun to cosplay."

Jarrah: Grace do you want to read the comment from Brooke?

Grace: Sure! Brooke says, "It's an interesting take, but the idea that the women secretly control the men the pheromones while maintaining the guys sex slaves is... well it doesn't hold up, does it? Especially considering that's never mentioned again. Why wouldn't Orion women use this advantage to put themselves in a better position? It makes no sense."

Jarrah: That is a comment obviously mostly on "Bound" but I thought it was interesting to like why wouldn't they use the advantage to put themselves in a better position?

Grace: If I was in control of a massive crime syndicate, I would not make myself the backup dancer. That would not be my first choice.

Jarrah: At least not as like my full time job. All right. Do you have any other final thoughts on Orion women?

Grace: I'm not green with envy of their position.

Sue: Karen's comment actually made me think about Leia and the slave Leia costume. And I know that we're Star Trek but I'm going to War for a little bit. There are tons and tons of women who cosplay as Leia in the metal bikini. But so many of them and you talked to them about it and I think if this is the Karen I think it is she is one of these women who says that you know what I'm just cosplaying in this costume, I'm not slave like I'm Leia the Hut Slayer. So this character in this scene is put in this position and then takes control of the situation and kills her oppressor with her chains. And it's so incredible and I just wish that there was something like that in the canon for the Orion women.

Grace: That would be so nice.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. I mean I think that there is an element of being like I'm cosplaying an icon and hey it's fun to paint myself all green. And you know as a person who's doing cosplay you have agency that that character didn't necessarily have. So you can be doing it in a way and find that empowering for you. The problem is that the source character was someone who had no agency. If you're looking at Vina at least.

Grace: Yeah. It's not easy being green and it's not easy discussing women being green, that's what we learned today.

Jarrah: Yeah that is true. Well I hope you all enjoyed our episode for today. Grace where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet.

Grace: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk>

Jarrah: And Sue?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/spaltor>

Jarrah: And you can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin>. I'm also on tumblr <http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com/> If you want to contact our show you can find us on the interwebs, we're at <http://www.womenatwarp.com/> You can e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.com or you can comment on our Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp/> or on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> or leave us a review on iTunes which helps other people find us and we always appreciate the feedback so thanks so much for joining us. Whenever you're listening.

Audio clip from "Enterprise: Bound" Season 4, Ep. 17

Harrad-Sar (Orion Captain): Of course creatures such as these, come with troubles of their own, but women are the same throughout the galaxy, aren't they?