

Women at Warp Episode 47: The Baddest Women in the Universe, Part I

INTRO MUSIC

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 crew member Grace.

Grace: Hey everybody!

Jarrah: And a special guest Brittany.

Brittany: Woo! The USS Beyonce rides again you guys!

Jarrah & Grace: Woo!!

Jarrah: You may remember Brittany from our episode on Dr. Pulaski, and we are thrilled to have her back. Before we get into our main topic just a reminder about our Women at Warp Patreon, if you are able to support us then that is fabulous. It helps us do things like promote the show, and go to conventions to report, and things like that so you can go to <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> and in exchange you get access to exclusive content, and there's some other perks in there so check it out. If you are able to support us and thanks for everyone who currently supports us because you the best. So for our main topic today we've been looking since we started the show doing an analysis of the women villains in Star Trek. The problem is there are too many of them so we couldn't possibly do them all in one episode. And some of them deserve a whole episode to themselves. But we also wanted to look at it thematically like what is a good villain mean and what does it mean to be like a woman villain in Star Trek. So, that's why we did decide to pair a few of them together and we will return to this topic in future episodes to cover some of the ones that we don't get to. So, just to remind you we have already covered some of them in previous episodes like Sela, the Romulan Commander in "The Enterprise Incident" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 4], we talked about both of those in our Bad-Ass Romulan women episode. We talked about Elaan of Troyius and Deela in our Kirk's love interest episode and we will be doing a Mirror Universe episode in the near future where we'll talk about Intendant Kira, and then at the end I'll list some of the ones that we're going to get to in future episodes. But for today we're going to start off with a couple of one off characters because Original Series and Enterprise didn't really have a bunch of recurring women villains, so I thought we'd just pick a couple of the more memorable ones and discuss them starting with the Original Series episode "That Which Survives" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 14].

Grace: Not the audience at the end of this episode.

Brittany: Well, no. No, we did survive, she was not for us.

Jarrah: Yes! Well, Brittany do you want to give a quick synopsis of this episode?

Brittany: Yes. Yes I can do that. So, the Enterprise gets to this planet, there's nothing there, they realize, "oh it's some kind of bizarre installation that is manmade or alien made," and then the away team comprising of Sulu, McCoy, some rando, and Kirk go down there.

Grace: Please please please, Geologist Rando.

Brittany: Oh I apologize. That guy.

Grace: Special type of rando. A special breed of rando.

Brittany: Special breed of rando! And, they encounter a woman who says she is for them, then she touches them, and then they die, except Sulu didn't die, because she didn't touch him long enough, and then back on the Enterprise, magic happens, and their flung some light years away, and I guess they're out-of-phase. Then they come back and you know they resolve that situation. I feel like I'm leaving stuff out. But in the end the bad guy dies.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean basically it turns out that this woman was a computer program that was designed to protect the planet and the computer just chose the image of her because she was the last survivor of her people. But because they duplicated her so perfectly the program that was partly her regretted killing the people.

Brittany: Because she did! Words matter you guys, not actions.

Jarrah: Yeah. Also had really really intense eye shadow.

Brittany: Hey, that eye shadow was on point.

Grace: That was triple intense eye shadow, she was ready for Mardi Gras with eye shadow.

Jarrah: Oh yeah, totally and awesome purple bell bottoms that also cover your belly button because it was 60s TV.

Brittany: You know what that was probably a better synopsis than what I gave, it was just that character.

Grace: Yeah that was kind of my response like, "Well, that, wow, yeah she happened."

Jarrah: Well, so the TV Guide when this episode aired described her as "the sad faced siren whose touch means instant painful death"

Brittany: There's like three competing thoughts there that do not go together at all.

Grace: No and sad faced siren makes her sound like a specialized emoji.

Brittany: Clown. Clown emoji.

Grace: Sad over eye shadow emoji, no, who am I kidding, I would do that eye shadow totally if I could.

Brittany: This character could have been amazing, like this entire episode traded on horror movie tropes, that I found compelling. It's just that the execution wasn't so good. This is like the one time when I thought the slow pacing this particular era of TV worked really well with the creep factor.

Jarrah: So, Lee Meriwether who played Losira said about the character, "When she was alive she abhorred killing but now she must kill because the computer is using her as a method of protecting the borders and repelling intruders. All I thought was how in the world am I going to play a computerized image with a soul peeking through." I mean I guess I think she did an okay job of that but I think you're right Brittany that there's just so many holes in this episode that it makes it kind of hard to take it super seriously.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: A bigger sense is the fact that Lee Meriwether is a great motive actress.

Grace: Absolutely!

Brittany: If you watch Batman, she's phenomenal as Catwoman, she could have totally brought more of herself to that, so that you really do have the Tears of a Clown situation. It's just I don't know if its directing or I don't know what happened why that disconnect happened.

Jarrah: Yeah apparently the director Herb Wallerstein told her to play the last part straight, where she's delivering the message from the real Losira about how her people were all dying, and he said, "Play it straight. She's a military gal, the commander of all of them and she had been left alone and she knew this was the last message that any of her people would see." But, I don't know, there's so much cool stuff in the concept and it just didn't really come through. Like, this idea that she's the commander of all her people is a really cool idea for a woman in 1969 TV, and it just, I don't know, I don't think that you get to see that sense she's more just like, I don't know, I guess a bit of a siren.

Grace: Maybe if they hadn't had so many kind of subplots going on at once and they just focused on that one concept they could've done more with it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Brittany: Which is a bizarre statement given how slow this episode actually plays.

Grace: I know!

Jarrah: Okay so the whole like, "I am for you, Sulu" which obviously, like I don't know if I was the only one that thought about the episode "The Perfect Mate" [TNG, Season 5, Ep. 21], like "I am for you, Alrik of Valt." And so I mean it is kind of like she's playing on their masculine desire to like rescue a damsel in distress at least with D'Amato at the beginning, or rando as we shall just continue to call him, we never got to see what she would have done if it was a woman.

Grace: That would have been interesting too, yeah.

Jarrah: Because it was always men on the ship, too. But, I mean there was a lot of diversity in the episode at least.

Brittany: Oh there definitely was, I like that we saw that random black dude in engineering.

Jarrah: And Dr. M'Benga was back and he alluded to a Dr. Sanchez.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: And there's Lieutenant Rahda on the bridge although, sadly she is a white woman in brown face.

Grace: Yeah, sadly.

Brittany: You win some, you lose some. You lose a lot sometimes.

Jarrah: The reason I chose this episode for one of our TOS villains to look at is just because it's one of the few where she actually kind of stands on her own I think a lot of the other women villains in TOS they're paired up with a guy who's like for instance in "Catspaw" [TOS Season 2, Ep. 1] there's Sylvia and the guy and in "The Conscious of the King" [TOS Season 1, Ep. 12] there's the girl and her dad, so I thought like let's look at one where it's really just her or a computer pretending to be her.

Brittany: Yeah. Like I said the concept is great. But then they kind of boiled her character down to just how hot she was.

Grace: Yeah. How can she be so evil and so beautiful?

Brittany: Oh wait, there are three quotes that just like stood out if you don't mind me saying them.

Grace: Go for it.

Brittany: "Stop or I'll shoot. I don't want to have to kill a woman!"

Jarrah: Oh yes.

Brittany: "Are there men on this planet? Such evil, and she's so, so beautiful." She just tried to kill him though.

Grace: Again, that "Are there men on this planet" thing, anyone else get the vibe that they're like, "Okay is there a man here we can talk to, someone sensible, at all?" Was anyone else picking that up or was that just me?

Brittany: Oh I hated that.

Jarrah: Somebody's who's not trying to suck our life force.

Brittany: I'm picking up what you put down.

Jarrah: Yeah. And then at the very end where they they're like, "Oh she's obviously very intelligent" but everyone's like "oh and beautiful" which is obviously more important.

Brittany: It really was it was so bizarre they ruined that moment because it's a compelling thought that this woman was so strong, she was so driven, she was so empathetic, that the computer just couldn't not filter those things out, and it manifest itself, and they don't mention that.

Grace: She was too powerful.

Brittany: Then immediately Spock is like, "You know beauty doesn't survive," and Kirk is like "au contraire mon frère." So the lesson is beauty, you guys, that's what survives! Beauty, not even inner beauty.

Grace: It's ok guys no matter what you do in life your looks are what you'll be remembered for.

Jarrah: Good times. All right. Well, shall we proceed to the Enterprise episode "Cease Fire" [ENT Season 2, Ep. 15] and we're going to look at the character of Tarah who is an Andorian who serves under Shran and decides she doesn't want peace with the Vulcans. So, she decides to sabotage his attempt to have peace negotiations.

Grace: Like you do.

Jarrah: So, what were you guys thoughts on this episode and this character?

Brittany: Can I do a compliment sandwich here?

Grace & Jarrah: Yeah!

Brittany: Okay, first bread; Suzie Plakson is one of my favorite things ever in Star Trek.

Grace: She's phenomenal.

Brittany: I loved her as a Klingon, I loved her as a Vulcan, she was great as a Q. My meat; why did all of the humans forget how to act? And three, her hair was on fire this entire episode. That's all I got.

Jarrah: Wait, was the hair the other bread?

Brittany: The hair is the other bread! Did you guys notice that though?

Jarrah: No!

Grace: It was pretty cool.

Jarrah: One of the things I liked about her is that she's sexy without being sexualized like she's described in the original script as "beautiful but fierce," and she's certainly a powerful woman and there's no, like no one makes a compliment about how hot she is which happens a lot in Star Trek like they feel like they need to remind us we just get to appreciate it without being shoved in our face like, "Oh and by the way she's really hot."

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: That's the hair you guys like if you look, if you remember, or if you ever watch this again like all the males around her, and there were only male Andorians, well there are actually three genders there but let's just go with the binary, I apologize. They have their hair all tidy and slicked down and you can see the antennae moving, and her hair is like cradling her face in this crazy halo of hair, that's kind of mussed up. It has that, "I probably may have just had sex or I just wanted to," whichever one.

Grace: She's got post-coital onion hair.

Jarrah: I mean, yeah, I think that part of the problem was because Suzie Plakson is really well known in the fandom, and she's a fabulous actress, that like it was pretty predictable she was going to betray Shran. And so the episode was I would say it's fairly predictable but I really liked her as a character, I think in some ways she kind of reminded me of Valeris where she is this person who just can't get over her racial prejudice, and there's this history with the other race. And, in this case, yeah the Vulcans screwed the Andorians over royally by stealing this planet from them, and forcibly relocating all these people, and it makes sense that she can't really super forgive that. And then she punches Archer in the face and like swings over on a beam and kicks him in the chest and I'm just like I love you.

Brittany: I do love you. And they wanted us to like imagine that both sides are guilty here and I'm just like the time for the Vulcans to get mad, take this planet, it was before they put more money and time into terraforming this planet. Like as soon as they started production Vulcan should have been like "you know what? Screw that business," And probably people would still be mad but they would be thinking about all their ancestors that were forcibly removed. So, I mean I don't know why I'm supposed to be empathizing with the Vulcans and not the Andorians.

Jarrah: I think that this one you're supposed to be neutral, because at the end they have the compromise is something that no one's really happy with and and Shran is certainly the person you like better than Soval in this scenario.

Grace: To be fair with Enterprise I like Shran a lot more than a lot of people.

Brittany: Yeah, Shran is the one that sold me on this entire process anyway. I was like, "Okay Andorians are ready to deal with this. I need to get over my emotions," but the entire time I'm thinking, "You know what Andorians, I got your back. You wanna ride hard on this?" I'm not there, but in my mind...

Jarrah: Alright, anything else on Tarah, or "Cease Fire" before we move on?

Brittany: Yes, please. One of my favorite lines came from Soval and T'Pol as they were being fired upon, and Archer was doing his human thing where he ran out and was trying to you know be of use, "What is there a fixation with our ears?" "I believe they're envious." I'm like, yes!

Jarrah: I like that you know in one episode they did manage to imbue her with motivation and it wasn't just like random angry sexy villains situation or something.

Brittany: I feel like kind of going over the female villains you have here. One of the things that makes them strong or stronger than average is the fact that most of the time they're trading on some kind of shared societal trauma that's giving them their anger. So, I appreciate that out of Tarah.

Jarrah: Well, that's certainly true with the next people we're going to look at which are Lursa and B'Etor, the Duras sisters.

Grace: Yay, queens of the boob windows.

Jarrah: Well, we posted this on Facebook to ask for people who had comments, the first comment was like, "I don't have to say anything right now but can we just take a second to appreciate the boob window."

Brittany: I love that.

Jarrah: Yes, we can, always. We should have like every year just a moment of silence to appreciate the boob window.

Brittany: Well, the patron saints of the boob window, the Duras sisters and Power Girl.

Jarrah: Yes!

Grace: That's true.

Jarrah: Yeah, so what are your thoughts on the Duras sisters.

Brittany: I wish we'd gotten to see more of them.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean I have a quote from Barbara March from the 1993 interview with the Star Trek Fan Club of Canada Magazine where she said, "I think the characters should have been allowed to go further. We should have been more terrifying like the men who are very aggressive and brutal. We should have bumped heads or something. In comparison to the man, the Duras sisters were more sly and calculating. We really didn't do anything really devastating like killing and maiming. I wanted to shoot someone if we're awful, let us be really awful."

Grace: Yeah agreed.

Brittany: I did too. I think one of the things I like about those two though, especially it ties in with their familial history, is that their plot is more Romulan/Cardassian based and not so much Klingon based, because when they plot something they're trading on like your house honor, like you're going to bite your tongue because if you don't all of Klingon society will be destroyed.

Grace: They're very Machiavellian kind of in that sense.

Jarrah: That's true. And they were put in a really crummy situation because their honor was destroyed by their brother, I mean obviously they supported him, but that's because they couldn't be on the council themselves. And it's a situation where if the women could have been on the council maybe everything would have been different, but because they face this discrimination they went about trying to get their own influence and power and voice in like this really kind of devious roundabout way.

Brittany: It is so bizarre, so bizarre that Klingons do not allow women to, by implication, be heads of their own house and also sit on the high council, it doesn't make sense for this particular honor based society.

Jarrah: Yeah, and I mean it was changed since "The Undiscovered Country" [ST VI] because we see the woman chancellor there and then it doesn't really explain why that happened. But I agree with you I don't think that it really makes sense in Klingon society that you would just arbitrarily bar a woman from office.

Brittany: Once again the only reason I can think that maybe they did that was really differentiate Klingons from Romulans and Cardassians.

Grace: Which is unfortunate.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well and also to sort of show Klingons as a bit more barbaric I guess.

Brittany: They are the noble savages of Star Trek, after the Maquis, but even so, it is just one of those weird blind that I've always had with Klingon society because clearly their women are elevated, but for some reason there's this line drawn with the Bat'leth in their dark dark soul of Qo'noS.

Jarrah: So Becca [that's me, the transcriber!] on our Facebook said, "The Duras sisters were great when we first meet them in the Council chambers, unfortunately to me, any time we see them afterwards, they feel like a huge joke, like they are the butt of a joke everybody kind of knows." So, thoughts on that?

Brittany: That's not a lie, especially if you watch "Generations" [Star Trek VII] which I did, again.

Grace: Oh, I'm sorry.

Jarrah: I mean I think in "Generations" and the DS9 episode that they're in, they do really feel like they're, well they're definitely not leading the plot like they're working with other people, in DS9 they're basically like engaging in petty thievery, and snuggling *laughter* smuggling.

Brittany: Snuggling *laughter*

Jarrah: They don't seem particularly snuggly to me. And, yeah it's, they always just seem... I mean even in "Redemption" [TNG Season 4, Ep. 26] where they're huge players but they're basically being directed by Sela and the Romulans. So, they're not really the leaders of their own fate. They're just kind of hitching themselves to different trains to try to get power.

Brittany: And that's even worse because B'Etor, she gets pregnant and she actually has her baby, I believe.

Jarrah: Yup.

Brittany: But anyways, she has her baby, and she has to work through her son again and it's like I don't... This makes sense.

Jarrah: I mean on the plus side of Barbara March said in an interview with Get Critical, "I felt that I did good by doing Lursa because I'm a large woman, I'm 160 pounds, big bones, big everything. When I meet large women who come to convention with their cleavage exposed and for the first time feel proud of their bodies with a sense of dignity and a kind of sexual aggressiveness, I am so grateful. That's important. I'm so glad that those women can come out and feel like they're beautiful."

Brittany: I do love that!

Grace: Paddy Paws Klingon [hard to decipher, not sure]

Brittany: I love the Duras sisters.

Jarrah: I think the actresses do a tremendous job. Those voices the way like Gwynyth Walsh as B'Etor just like hisses and Barbara March has a super deep booming voice.

Brittany: That line she delivered to Picard, "It's not a threat, it's just an unfortunate truth." I was like, "Yes, this is great. I'm here for that."

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: They seem like they're having a great time when they play the characters and as such the audience gets to have fun watching them sink their teeth into these characters.

Brittany: Yes.

Jarrah: Yeah it's interesting. I enjoy them. I just think there was a bit of missed opportunity that they got, they could have maybe had a bit more power in their own even in their own situation rather than teaming up with Soran, or teaming up with Sela, led a plot by themselves.

Brittany: To be honest I think we actually gave them that kind of agency, then Star Trek Next Generation would have been much darker, because Gowron would actually be in much more danger of not succeeding, and Worf and Kurn would be in much more danger. So for the particular ethos that they were going for in Star Trek The Next Generation, I understand, but they really screw the pooch on those characters that I love.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Can you imagine how much it would suck, like you know the whiny Duras kid that they bring in, in "Redemption" to be like you should be a leader. How much would it suck to have to back that guy? Just because he's a dude. It's like yes I know we're really smart but let's just hold our tongue and back this kid.

Brittany: The entire time when Gowron is you know doing his operatic scene chewing, and all that, and Toral is like, "You, I will bring you to heel cur!", and Gowron's like "What is this though?" I can't even stand you. It was fantastic.

Grace: It really was.

Brittany: But speaking of, slight tangent, do you guys, I love going back to when Gowron's bug eyes didn't scare me, and I can be on board with that Gowron.

Jarrah: When did it change for you? Was it in DS9 where you thought he was a shapeshifter?

Brittany: Yes it was! And then they progressively just made his character worse and worse so that he wasn't noble in the traditional Klingon sense, he was just a power hungry, "I'm going to get a whole bunch of people killed"

Grace: I'm in it for the blood shed guy.

Jarrah: So let's let's consider the boob windows for a second here.

Brittany: We can always consider the boob windows.

Grace: Consider the boob window, if you will.

Jarrah: I mean as a kid I was like wouldn't that just invite you to get stabbed in my boobs? But maybe that's why they have it because they're Klingons, and they're like, "I'm not afraid of getting stabbed in the boobs."

Grace: I don't know my kind of theory that I always had was they had the open cleavage because like in Xena they had a knife hidden in there that they could just turn out from between the knockers and like throw or stab as needed. They were just an extra holster there.

Brittany: I always thought it was just a conscious choice on their end, they were like you know what if we're going to have to use our feminine wiles I guess we can use them and we'll just be sure to really make the sex the roughest it can be. And so that even Klingon males would be like I don't know about this.

Jarrah: Look or touch if you dare.

Grace: Yeah. That kind of thing.

Brittany: I feel like they're the embodiment of that business.

Jarrah: Do you think they are like constantly just having to be like, "PetaQ!! My eyes are up here!!"

Grace: Yeah I really hope so.

Brittany: I feel like they wouldn't do that. They'll just give a significant look to each other and then that guy doesn't know what happened to him.

Grace: He just wakes up in a back alley somewhere missing both his hands.

Jarrah: Alright, we're going to move on to the next one because this is a significant character and one we will... we're going to return to the Duras sisters when we do an episode on Klingon women at some point. This is a character we will probably do a whole episode on at some point, but for now we're going to spend some time talking about Winn Adami.

Brittany: Ladies she is in my top five of villains of all time in Star Trek. And if I'm honest, if I have to rattle off villains she's still in that top five.

Jarrah: I think she's my top of all, definitely woman villains. She's my top.

Brittany: I go ahead and put the Borg Queen as a top because she has traversed multiple series and still remains compelling. Despite what Voyager did to her in the last season. So, that's the only reason why I put the Borg Queen first and then I would have Kai Winn, Gul Dukat, Moriarty, and I guess you know Kahn in there, and then honorable mention goes to Kathryn Janeway's conception of the Prime Directive.

Grace: Yeah, Winn is definitely one of my top villains as well. I think she's one of those ones that conceptually it's really easy to get just rattled by her because you see her and you see the way she operates, the way she manipulates people, the way she takes the gospel and kind of twists it in her direction. And you can't help but think, "Wow there's still a bunch of people out there who are in charge in

the world who do that.” And that's really scary. Kai Winn is like a reflection of something we are kind that you kind of already are afraid of in real life but taken and put in a science fiction context.

Brittany: I agree with you. Here's why. I'm a change that agreement up a little bit. Here's why I think she scarier for me. Yes you're right. In the political realm and how she kind of is a manipulator. She's also a true believer as you alluded to, but I think that she is honest in her intentions, and that's the worst part. Because, she has legitimately helped a lot of people and a lot of her decisions you can legitimately say she was trying to do the right thing with no caveats.

Grace: That's the worst part though. You want to hate her, totally, but there's bit that you can't and that makes you angrier.

Jarrah: There's episodes like “In the Cards” [DS9 Season 5, Ep. 25] I think is a really good example where she comes to Sisko with her real honest opinion, and asked for his advice in good faith. She isn't always acting hostile. So, that's the one where she's asking if she should sign the non-aggression treaty with the Dominion, and she's basically like “look you can't promise to protect me but you know I'm going to listen to you,” and ultimately he tells her like “I want you to delay but I can't tell you not to do it.” And there's just these little scenes here in there where you see that in some ways she could actually be working towards the same goals or at least like on similar motivations. but because her faith is kind of twisted and her desire for personal power keeps being thwarted, and maybe even more than personal power her desire for a connection with the Prophets.

Grace: Yeah. Whether the Prophets want it or not.

Brittany: Well that's a big one because like in our modern times like right now as we exist, we can have faith in God, right. But, we are never actually sure. And like it's the same thing you run into in DnD, I play DnD a lot, but here whether you believe the Prophets are gods or not they definitely exist, they definitely exhibit strong power, they definitely interfere or meddle or die or are patrons of the Bajorans, and so to not have that connection with them, it's not theoretical for them, she has literally seen other people have this and so from her perspective, and this is the one I'm going to take, Sisko is a black man and so from our standpoint we know how important he is, right. Because of the revolutionary, just different thought that it takes to make a commander a black man, but in their time he is a Federation commander, and he has all the privilege. So, the only thing she sees is that this guy from the Federation is taking a connection that she really feels she's earned, only by dint of him being born to the prophets. That isn't theory at all, and so that is actually a religious blow, that's enough to make people say never mind the whole religion thing because you know their opposite, the Pah-wraiths, exist. We know that. And so I can't be mad at her because if I had the option, if like my mom is mad at me I'm going to go to my dad, then you do that right?

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean she has this sense of... I mean it's sort of like someone who worked, toiled, really hard their whole career and then got passed over for promotion by, like the new guy.

Grace: Yeah, a little bit. Spiritually though, so that even makes it harsher.

Jarrah: Yeah, bigger deal. And so Alan suggested this quote on our Facebook where Kai Winn says, “Those of you who were in the Resistance, you're all the same. You think you're the only ones who fought the Cardassians; that you saved Bajor single-handedly. Perhaps you forget, Major, the Cardassians arrested

any Bajoran found to be teaching the word of the Prophets. I was in a Cardassian prison camp for five years, and I can remember each and every beating I suffered. And while you had your weapons to protect you, all I had was my faith, and my courage.” So that’s I think another good example of this idea that first of all that you can empathize with her, but also this idea that you know she kept her faith maybe more than anyone through the entire resistance, and then devoted her life to the Prophets and she repeatedly makes these kind of passive aggressive remarks like “well you know I wouldn’t know that it’s difficult to know what they say because they’ve never spoken to me.” And so she’s she’s constantly...

Grace: Passive aggression is her true superpower.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Brittany: Well if you have to have a superpower. I would have mind reading.

Jarrah: Okay, so how do you guys, I know you’re not mad at her for her change of allegiance. But, how do you guys feel about the whole changing and sleeping with Dukat situation.

Grace: I think that it wasn’t what I was expecting, and it is a little kind of I found the whole thing kind of camp, and a little silly honestly, but at the same time for those of us who had been going through the series and just really wanted to see some comeuppance on Kai Winn, her accidentally sleeping with a horrible enemy that is a level of comeuppance that I was not seeing coming.

Brittany: That’s true. Also, I think all of us need to remember that Gul Dukat is a very charismatic man.

Grace: That’s true, yeah.

Jarrah: And this is also not the first time that she’s been confronted with the Prophets not doing anything for her. I mean “The Reckoning” [DS9 Season 6, Ep. 21] is a good example where the Prophets possess Kira, and also speak to Sisko, and she’s basically like “what am I even doing here?” So, I get why Dukat is persuasive, but it did feel like a little quick to me for her to suddenly, and then she gives these kind of cheesy kind of villain lines about how, about what they’re going to do for the Federation and whatever.

Brittany: Yeah I will agree that her hooking up with Gul Dukat was... it lessened her character. It elevated his. But at that point in the story, and the narrative that they were trying to tell, you have to, especially how they ended it, you have to show her as the dark nadir no matter how much it doesn’t make sense, how campy it is, and how much you wish it just did not happen. This was her, “she needs seek some help” moments.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, I was reading in the *Star Trek: DS9 Companion*, it said that it made sense to Ira Steven Behr for Winn to be killed specifically by Dukat. This was because the pair had had sex and according to a horror movie cliché, characters who have sex end up dead afterwards. So, maybe thoughts from Grace on this one as our resident horror movie expert?

Grace: Well I would definitely say is my first response to that. Why? Why would you pick that cliché when you’re essentially getting to be in charge of which clichés get used here. Why would you go with one that if you’re acknowledging it you probably know that it’s pretty dumb and makes people upset. Why would you

pick that one to stick to. I mean the show's not a horror show it's in no way obligated to by any means follow those tropes or cliches. So why pick this one to go with?

Jarrah: It is certainly a sexist cliché. Like, it's not generally like...

Grace: Absolutely.

Jarrah: It's generally the woman who gets killed afterwards and it's like a slut shaming device basically.

Grace: Absolutely and I feel like that's especially prevalent in the fact that Kai Winn is supposed to be a religious figure and this is kind of like their whole "sullyng of the righteous woman" thing which adds kind of insult to injury in the aspect that sex and faith are repellent to each other.

Jarrah: Yeah. There's, I mean, there's some indication that she might have slept with Jaro in season two, but, certainly in this whole thing with Dukat, it's really playing on the idea of her you know her religious purity.

Grace: Yeah. Or how she perceives it as purity.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: I think a lot of her character, a lot of the interesting part for me anyway, built in her character is this idea that she feels like because of her faith and because of her devotion she is owed something, where in a lot of faiths, I'm speaking from my experience as a Jew here, there's this idea of you are not necessarily owed anything because of your faith. You believe because you know it is right. And you do the right thing because it is right, not because you expect to get any thanks. According to my mom, the biggest type of charity that you can ever do is one that you cannot possibly be thanked for. And that faith is kind of supposed to be a thankless thing, but that's part of why you do it. Whereas she really expects, like she's just kind of sitting there waiting for like, "okay, where's the payback for this."

Brittany: Hey, a kind word goes a long way.

Grace: True. That's true. And a little a little redeeming of faith is always nice, but just the fact that she's really, she seems to be doing a lot of it because she expects something in return is...

Brittany: Yeah, reducing your faith to transactional a lot of times the way she did it was sketch at best.

Jarrah: I think even some of her earliest encounters are some of the most evil. Like their very first one is "In the Hands of the Prophets" [DS9 Season 1, Ep. 20] where she's going against Keiko's school but she's also basically persuading Neela the engineering officer to commit violence and basically promising her the Prophets would reward her, and that's that's a really big leap. And then the beginning of season two where she's kind of backing Jaro and The Circle in exchange for becoming Kai. That stuff is all really, really underhanded, and we actually see her I think get less underhanded for a bit when she becomes Kai. She's more just like passive aggressive.

Grace: Probably because she believes she's in part gotten what she has deserved at that point. Like well this is mine and therefore it was supposed to happen.

Brittany: I think I will disagree slightly on the Keiko's student situation. I definitely think she should not have contracted a bombing of that school. Let me preface with that because I don't want anyone anywhere to think that she should have gotten a naive, religiously devout poor engineer to do this, because that's a gross abuse of power, however, once again the Federation is a colonial power and they have just gotten out of an occupation, where a lot of their culture was just decimated. So, for them to come in and to scrub that clean of, even a little bit, issues it's troubling, it's problematic. So, a greater conversation about the place of religion alongside the Federation science is something, a theme, that they explored the entire run of the show.

Grace: Absolutely.

Brittany: But, in this case, I mean the first time it's really brought up, so I think she was justified in saying, "can you add these elements?" I don't think it's a fair comparison, in like modern America where you're trying to change the text to include creationism alongside you know the evolutionary theory. I don't think those are parallel tracks here.

Grace: Absolutely not. No. Especially considering they're coming out of a war where a lot of their culture was oppressed. They are in a position where they're having like you said another group of people who are essentially privileged coming in and being like okay now we're going to teach your children and tell them how the world works according to our beliefs. Up until like pretty close to the end you're mad at her character because I think part of you as an audience member kind of realizes that, and Kira is kind of one of the representatives of being like, "well hey this is our culture. You guys don't get to come in as guests and tell us how it works." But then when we get that scene in the end where Kira realizes "oh you engineered this whole thing," that it's just such a jolt. And that part just horrified me so much, I remember when I first saw this episode it threw me so hard, and I probably should have in hindsight seen it coming but I think it really frightened me.

Brittany: Well, when you think someone is being honest with their religion and their faith then you don't assume that such nefarious ends, once again, I don't think this place should have been bombed.

Grace: No. That was terrible.

Jarrah: And like convincing Neela to try and assassinate Bareil, is it that she's trying to assassinate at the end where Sisko was like, "noooooo"

Grace: In that great slow jump. Was it trampoline day on the Promenade. But anyway when we get that point of her being like she had a right point that she was using that to do something underhanded that, it's very scary.

Jarrah: I like when at the end of that trilogy at the beginning of season two about The Circle how the minute that she knows that Jaro was going to lose she just cut some loose. She's like yeah what even were you doing Jaro I ever supported that.

Brittany: She pairs her religion and her faith with pragmatism, and it's so disturbing especially when she actually helps people because she is actually helping people. Like, the reclamator situation, I know that it really sucks for that small farmers to have the reclamator removed, but she is trying to grow a cash crop because they are a poor agrarian planet. The sheer scale of that is mind boggling. So, it's like I understand what you're going for Kai Winn, I agree with you in principle, but why are you doing it this way.

Grace: Could you try to be maybe a little less nefarious, just dial that back a little.

Brittany: But she's genuinely trying to help people. I think that she took too many terrible lessons from the Cardassians, because she saw that their way kind of worked, not kind of, it worked really well.

Grace: That's definitely, I had not thought of it that way before and that's definitely a good point.

Brittany: Like how much did the Cardassians suffer for having lost Bajor? They are still honored guests on that station. They still come and go as they please. The Federation still trades with them. So really who lost when that happened?

Grace: Just the Cardassian's egos I guess.

Brittany: Exactly. But, then you start thinking about what made the Cardassians that way, it was like a small illusion in the four lights episode.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: In TNG.

Grace: That there's some really big issues on Cardassia.

Brittany: They went through like a world wide famine and so nationalism, fascism like it rose to like help as many people as they could. So, it's just terrible, but they didn't lose anything. Bajor lost everything.

Jarrah: And they're still trying to rebuild like seven years later when she hooks up with Dukat.

Brittany: Yes. Which is that's just hubris. That's the Shakespearean tragedy right. She's a tragic figure, you guys.

Jarrah: Yeah. Lydia on Facebook says that, "Winn Adami is a villain who forces us to ask "bad guy? And who would that be?" because everything she does is motivated by her love for Bajor and her people. She becomes more power hungry towards the end, but it comes from this incredibly flawed and broken place. I did not like her by any means, but she was incredibly well rounded and I am really grateful her character existed!!"

Brittany: True story.

Jarrah: Yeah I think that for me what makes her one of these top villains is just that she has so much depth. And obviously Louise Fletcher nails that character.

Grace: She's kind of got experience at being good at being a woman who loves being in charge.

Brittany: I've never seen her play a bad role.

Grace: No, every role she does, she does well.

Jarrah: Yeah and she doesn't fall into, other than that the whole the dying because she slept with Dukat thing, she avoids a lot of tropes, I think. I think I've read her quote from Louise Fletcher before about how she saw herself as Margaret Thatcher in space.

Grace: Yes I could definitely see that.

Jarrah: Yeah. Or like an ancient bad Pope like the black Pope, but those aren't really tropes. So I think it's the fact that because she's so complicated it's hard to just be like "oh like she's a sad faced siren" or a praying mantis or a like one of these other villainous women tropes that are used and end up kind of reflecting badly on our entire gender.

Brittany: Yeah. I mean she's not for anyone. She is for everyone.

Jarrah: I am for you, Gul Dukat!

Brittany: But I think we should all recognize that in the end she did do the right thing. Little question mark.

Grace: So, the right thing??

Brittany: Yes, that's exact. Yes.

Jarrah: Only because the Pah-wraiths didn't choose her though, which is like "oh god" it's like you were so mad at not getting chosen by the Prophets that you jumped ship to the complete other side and then they didn't choose you either. Ouch.

Brittany: You guys! Woman Scorned. Okay, you can use that.

Jarrah: Sure.

Brittany: That's not a eureka moment. I'm sorry that came off like that.

Jarrah: I mean I think you can, but I think that she's a bit deeper than like... And it isn't like a boyfriend dumped her and she went crazy, which is what we're going to see with an next character.

Brittany: Yeah, her actual literal god said, "yeah never mind".

Grace: The clouds parted, the Prophets looked down and they said "hmm"...

Brittany: Never mind.

Grace: Ahh, now wait there's this this nice Federation fellow here. We're going to go for him instead.

Brittany: I honestly think that if at any moment the Prophets, I mean they didn't even have to speak to her, they just had to give her like a flash of a nice villa somewhere and she would have been happy the rest of her life.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: And, it would have been great. It just speaks to how alien, and bizarre, and out of time the Prophets are, that they couldn't even muster that.

Grace: Yeah. Poor Winn.

Brittany: I don't know if that's the conclusion we want though.

Grace: No, but it's a conclusion.

Jarrah: I don't know I guess awesome character, love to hate her. She should have had her own action figure, but she did not.

Brittany: Her hat is the bee's knees you guys.

Grace: It's great

Brittany: If you accessorize that, if it comes with, you know, Kai accessories, maybe a Kai Opaka habit that you can put on to Kai Winn.

Grace: Maybe it comes with a book of verses to misinterpret.

Brittany: Yes and one of those Orb boxes.

Grace: Yeah

Brittany: That will never open because you know she's not... they don't speak to her!

Grace: It would also need to come with like interchangeable hands so that one could be pointing the finger. And another one could be shaking its fist.

Brittany: Yes, we're the worst best people.

Jarrah: All right. Well we could talk Kai Winn for longer and we will return to her in a future episode for sure. But we need to get to our last fill in for this episode, who is Seska.

Grace: Oh Seska.

Brittany: Compliment sandwich?

Grace: Yeah go for it. You make that sandwich serve it up and we'll eat it.

Brittany: First bread; why though Seska? Middle bread; you are kind of actually amazing, you Cardassian Bajoran weirdo. Last bread; really though... Why? Baby?

Grace: Yeah, what the hell? .What was your long term plan with that? For real.

Brittany: Where do you go from there, Seska?

Jarrah: I think that was really just the actress was pregnant and they wrote it in.

Grace: God I hope so.

Jarrah: So they were going to bring her back and do this whole revenge on Chakotay thing and Martha Hackett got pregnant and she was worried they wouldn't have her back, but she told them and they're like "oh that's awesome, we're just going to write it in."

Grace: Okay...

Brittany: Bad decision. The worst part of that character is the fact that they linked her so much with Chakotay, which was senseless.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: And then with Cullah, Maj Cullah, and I was like "NO!" Double no. Hard pass.

Grace: It's just so much of that character is based on the kind of "bitches be crazy" thing.

Jarrah: Yeah, crazy ex-girlfriend.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: But, if you cut through that, even her "bitches be crazy" moments, you're like "but bitches be smart though.

Grace: Yeah, bitches be long term planning sort of.

Brittany: Because she's still Cardassian.

Grace: Yeah. Cardassians are all about the slow burn I guess.

Jarrah: Totally. So when we first meet Seska, we think she's a Bajoran and the actress thought she was a Bajoran, she wasn't told she was a Cardassian spy for like until the episode it happened.

Brittany: Oh that's fantastic.

Jarrah: Although she was kind of annoyed about it. She's like I would have been playing some subtext in here before and then it's the Cardassian spy episode where she's like really amping up with Chakotay and she's like trying to snuggle him in her quarters and he's all like, "We agreed this wasn't going to work" and he's she's stealing mushrooms for soup for him, and then it turns out she's Cardassian, but she obviously even before that he'd been planning to deal with the Kazon.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: So it isn't super clear whether she leaves because she was intending to all along or because they discover her secret and she knows they won't accept her.

Grace: There's a lot of loose threads with Seska.

Jarrah: Maybe that's your "why" bread.

Brittany: Her most compelling relationship was not with Chakotay or the Maj, it was with B'Elanna.

Grace: Yeah. I would say that's definitely...

Brittany: They should have really amped that.

Grace: It would have been really cool to see more B'Elanna and Seska being you know catty friends together and not being totally cool with their position on Voyager and then watching that turnaround happen and watching B'Elanna have to deal with that would have been really interesting.

Brittany: B'Elanna's sense of alienation and general disconnect from everyone and everything around her, until seasons in, was one of the best things about her.

Grace: Absolutely.

Brittany: It could have really been amplified. If they had done that with Seska and stop focusing on her and Chakotay.

Jarrah: Yeah, and Seska's kind of like the devil on B'Elanna's shoulder.

Grace: Yeah absolutely.

Jarrah: It helps them both. So Chris on Facebook said, "One thing they never made too clear about Seska: Why didn't she risk simply admitting her initial deception to the Voyager crew, and trusting that at least they'd share a common goal of getting home, similar to how the Maquis were incorporated despite previous conflicts. The risks of turning instead to unknown Delta quadrant raiders seem roughly around the same level of danger."

Brittany: She's Cardassian, she can't do that with the Maquis.

Grace: Deep cover.

Jarrah: I think she made it clear that she doesn't agree with Janeway, like she fundamentally disagrees with Janeway's approach, and she doesn't think that she actually has a good chance of getting home if she plays the safe Federation route, and so she wants to pair up with the Kazon. The thing that bothers me is I think she is really smart and we actually get see that someone pointed out really in "Worst Case Scenario" [VOY, Season 3, Ep. 25] when we see that she's you know programmed this holo program to kind of trap everyone in this awful death scenario. So like, she's super smart but then she goes off with these super thuggish sexist brutes, and yes she's exercising kind of power behind the throne, but Maj Cullah is demeaning her on a daily basis.

Grace: Yeah it's the kind of thing where you're like I know you're stranded in the Delta Quadrant, but you can still do better.

Brittany: You know after they concluded Seska's arc, and I'm still watching Voyager, I forgot about it, I was like, "I'm not going to be mad anymore" because you know things such. And then I got mad all over again in I guess Season 7 when they had the episode "Shattered" [VOY Season 7, Ep. 11] and you have Chakotay traversing the different timelines on the ship, and Seska, she puts one and one together immediately, and she is on the ball sabotaging all the things, it took literally everyone across time lines to stop her, and even the "Bride of Chaotica!" [VOY Season 5, Ep. 12] business, it took all of that. I am mad that you didn't do more of this when you had her. You jerks!

Jarrah: Yeah instead I really dislike the whole pregnancy storyline like stealing Chakotay's DNA for her pregnancy, it's basically like let me insult your masculinity, and then he's like "my masculinity is totally insulted let me steal a shuttle and redeem it even though everyone else thinks it's a terrible idea." And then everyone else on Voyager is like, well that sucked but I get it because his masculinity.

Grace: Good grief.

Brittany: Bitches be trippin.

Jarrah: Yeah I think "Maneuvers" [VOY Season 2, Ep. 11] the one where she kidnaps him and steals his DNA is really just full of bad sort of "bitches be crazy" stereotypes and you don't really get to see her being that smart.

Grace: Not to mention that whole I have your baby so now you kind of like owe me forever thing is such a harmful stereotype.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Brittany: I mean like that's every dude's primal fear right. He accidentally gets some woman pregnant and then she comes back and takes all that he has and then she's basically stalking him. Yeah why would you do that. I mean of all the things you can characterize on the show that is made in not 1950, this is what you do.

Grace: That trope just makes me so upset.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean it's something you hear a lot in arguments against a woman's right to choose actually, and I think it's unfortunate that they brought this in here. I think it's, I don't know, I didn't buy it and it seemed beneath Seska and beneath Chakotay.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: It was beneath everyone on that show forever and all time, in perpetuity.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: But yeah. Torres says basically that she thinks that Chakotay was in love with Seska but then found out everything he knew about her was a lie. I guess, I don't know, I don't ever see him really being in love with her...

Grace: Yeah, I'm not seeing a lot of love I'm seeing a lot of "oh you're around".

Brittany: I mean, I'm here, you're here.

Jarrah: Yeah, and Torres is like can you imagine what it must have been like for someone as private as Chakotay to be publicly humiliated by someone he loves and then as if that weren't enough she came back to taunt him in front of the entire bridge crew.

Brittany: I just wish they had instead of doing that just amped the situation with the fact that they are Maquis, she is a Cardassian, she sold them out, down the river probably numerous times, and now all of them are remembering every time that they got so close and failed instead of linking her to Chakotay and not giving her that big sister mentor relationship we want between her and B'Elanna.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think it would have been cool if we would have got to see, because so Seska talks about how she reached out to the Kazon because we need allies if we're going to get home. And the Kazan's obviously aren't trying to get her home but it would have been cool to see if she had actually built an alliance of other races against Voyager.

Brittany: Oh that would have been fantastic. Like in Season 4 just all of a sudden, there's Seska, it's like "what are you doing Seska." Like "these are my peeps, got my back, you'll see it's not just the Maj. It's other folks because you have for like three seasons now screwed over a number of people, we heard about Arturis, we heard about that business."

Grace: There is just so much wasted potential with Seska.

Jarrah: Yeah exactly like maybe Seska teams up with those ladies on the "Favorite Son" [VOY Season 3, Ep. 20] planet that suck men's life force.

Brittany: Please don't ever have anyone team up with those ladies, because that entire story like I was like "Poor Harry, you finally have the validation that you want, downside, they gonna kill you bro!"

Jarrah: Oh man that was such a bad episode... Anyway... I mean so just going back to the pregnancy thing for a bit because you know clearly this is how well he's like me and Grace interpreted this as a bit of a I would say a negative trope but just to give another opinion, Elly on Facebook said, "I also think it's interesting that the Seska/Chakotay 'relationship' reverses the trope of a man being able to manipulate a woman through their child; the disturbing ambiguity of Seska's comment that she took Chakotay's DNA while he was unconscious made me feel pretty uncomfortable until it was made obvious that it was from an injection she gave him." So that was that's another take on it.

Grace: Yeah.

Brittany: No, I'll have to disagree with this particular Facebook user. Women always use their children or when they have them, and there's a contentious relationship, and there are children, they have generally been shown as the aggressor in using those children to get to the father. I know all these stories about how men, righteously persecuted, having to fight for their right to even be involved with child rearing, which is such a 180 from when dudes could just take women's children. Before you know, and this, the preference given to women in these situations is a response, is a backlash to those hundreds of years where men just took women's children. So I'm going to have to disagree with that person.

Jarrah: I mean certainly Seska violated Chakotay and that's not cool, that's disturbing. I also disagree because I think that the stereotype that I see way more often is that women use kids to manipulate their

fathers. And this has like led to a whole father's rights movement, and a subset of the men's rights movement, and there are some legitimate changes that could be made to court and custody processes, like there's a lot of problems on all sides. But, you know there's a book by Michael Kimmo called *Angry White Men* that talks about the stats and how it's actually not as unequal as the father's rights movement would have people think that most custody cases, the vast majority are decided without going to court. And when people do go to court it's not nearly as unequal as people claim. So, it's not just like kids are automatically given to the mom.

Brittany: I feel like that to that point it depends on the state you're in.

Jarrah: Yes.

Brittany: Some states are bit more aggressive than others. I mean in terms of that, but yeah on the balance I think it's gotten better. I think there's legitimate space for men to really seek out you know the things that they've been denied. But once again that's a patriarchy issue. It's not "women be trippin'" issue right?

Jarrah: Yeah exactly, like I mean and there are other countries where there is like very strong maternal preference and there are other place where it's a strong paternal preference. And I don't agree with either of those. But in a lot of ways the fact that there is inequality is like you said a symptom of the fact that there was unequal marriage for so long and so there was an assumption in the case of maternal preference that like women are innately better at caring and men will be able to give their kids the attention they need because they're just better at earning money. And like that's that's not like reverse sexism it's a symptom of the unequal society that was created and originally privileged men...

Brittany: Women didn't come up with that business. Laws were made and could only be prosecuted by dudes for so long.

Jarrah: So yes. So Seska I feel like reinforces this idea that women are crazy, and using men's kids against them. And certainly I mean the fact that she assaults Chakotay is not cool or redeeming and I don't think though that it's treated so much like a joke as it is in some other series.

Brittany: I would agree.

Jarrah: Okay so any other thoughts on Seska.

Grace: Seska, Seska, Seska... what could have been

Brittany: Like much of Voyager, she was lost potential.

Jarrah: But, certainly interesting. So, yeah that's our selection for this episode. Next time I think for sure, we are going to talk about the female Changeling, the Borg Queen, and then some other ones that we'll fit in either in the next episode or a future one. Valeris, the sphere builders from Enterprise, we've got Janice Lester, there's Martia from Star Trek 6. There's Sylvia from "Catspaw", Kara from "Spock's Brain" [TOS Season 3, Ep. 6], Nona from "A Private Little War" [TOS Season 2, Ep. 16]. Lots of other original series one offs. Ardra from Next Generation, possibly Admiral Satie from "The Drumhead" [TNG Season 4, Ep. 21], Keyla from the Enterprise episode "Two Days and Two Nights" [ENT Season 1, Ep. 25], so yeah we got a lot more to cover, so it'll be another few episodes we're not doing them like directly one after another so it'll be a little ways from now. But hope you enjoyed the first installment of our look at women villains. I will just say

before we wrap up quickly that we had another comment from Mary-Denise Smith on Twitter just generally about these characters that she, "Liked that they were motivated by recognizable impulses - vanity, greed, patriotism, that they were baddies mostly from the Federation point of view." So, I thought that that was a good point it wasn't just like they were sitting there like cackling maniacally and that's how we knew they were evil.

Grace: There was little to no mustache twirling.

Jarrah: Yes. Alright, well thank you so much for joining us Brittany. Where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet or is there just anything else you would like to say to sign off?

Brittany: You know just find me on Facebook at Women at Warp, that's all I have to say, really. Thank you for having me on, because as always it's fantastic. I welcome disagreements and critique. So, if you're on Women at Warp and want to call me out, we can tussle.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely if you want to get in touch with any of us you can go on our Women at Warp Facebook page and comment on this post. You can also e-mail us at crew@womenatwarp.com or go on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> or go on our website <http://www.womenatwarp.com/>, so lots of ways to get in touch with us, we always love feedback. Grace, where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet.

Grace: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk> I live there. Please come visit. I'm so alone.

Jarrah: And you can catch me, I'm Jarrah, on <http://trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com/> or on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin>. Thanks so much for listening.

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