

Women at Warp Episode 55: Ripped and Machiavellian

Hello, my name is Barbara Luna, and you are listening to Women at Warp.

****INTRO MUSIC****

Grace: 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 is Grace and thanks for tuning in. With me today I've got Andi.

Andi: Hello!

Grace: Jarrah.

Jarrah: Except for it's actually evil Jarrah with a goatee.

Grace: Oh no!

Jarrah: Real Jarrah couldn't make it. Prime Jarrah.

Grace: Does that mean... do we have the evil version of our special guest also?

Rumman: Yes, because I have really stellar abs right now.

Grace: With us also is our special guest Rumman!

Rumman: Hi you guys.

Jarrah: And before we get into our main topic I'm just going to butt in and remind you all about the Women at Warp Patreon, which we use to support the show by doing promotion, convention recording, paying for our hosting, and various other expenses and contributors on our blog and stuff like that. So, if you're able to support us you can hop over to <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> and pledge a small donation and in exchange you get access to cool bonus content and other perks like that. So, thanks a lot for considering donating and to everyone who already donates.

Grace: You keep us afloat. Now today's main topic we are boldly going where no facial hair and crop tops have gone before, the mirror universe. One of the longest running, and most widely recognized concepts from Star Trek. Now the first episode we get as a start is "Mirror, Mirror" [TOS Season 2, Episode 10] which was written by a relatively important Sci-Fi writer Jerome Bixby known for "The Twilight Zone" a few other Star Trek episodes such as "Requiem for Methuselah" [TOS Season 3, Episode 21] and also the screenplay for the "Fantastic Voyage".

Jarrah: Ah, I did not know that.

Grace: Now you know.

Andi: You know because because Grace came out here with behind the scenes Star Trek history facts, that means Jarrah at some point today you have to do murder trivia. You guys are switching roles today, you have to do murder trivia.

Jarrah: Okay.

Grace: I only know this crap because Jerome Bixby wrote the scariest episode of "The Twilight Zone." You know a little one with the cornfield kid. Spooky spooky. I was going to say a different word, but now I'm going to say spooky scraps, I guess, keeping our family friendly rating. But anyway the original very iconic episode of "Mirror, Mirror" where members of the crew get in a transporter accident and end up swapping places with their counterparts in a more evil universe, or just a more misguided universe. It depends on your on your ideological philosophies, really.

Jarrah: Or, just a sexier universe.

Grace: Definitely. Again, the universe where the crop top reigns supreme.

Rumman: Where men are men, and women are wearing crop tops.

Grace: And women ripped!! Like every woman has a set of abs, it's awesome.

Rumman: Can we talk about the one benefit of the Mirror Universe, is just that all the women are just so ripped. No pilates required.

Jarrah: So, we've talked about this episode a couple times and we talked about it in our episode on Uhura [<http://www.womenatwarp.com/episode-28-her-name-means-freedom/>] as well as our episode on Kirk's love interests [<http://www.womenatwarp.com/episode-6-oh-captain-my-captain-kirk/>].

Andi: It's a hard episode to not talk about when you're talking about The Original Series. I feel like it's one of those, it's probably in my top five, and it's one of those like classic episodes that even if you don't know Star Trek that well, you at least have some passing familiarity with like the evil goatee and stuff like that.

Grace: Yeah definitely and again very iconic episode really commonly included on people's top lists.

Rumman: Well, evil goatee has its own little subculture.

Grace: It is really. But then again most goatees are evil.

Jarrah: I don't know I think that they're not quite as evil as soul patches, but...

Grace: Isn't a soul patch just a type of goatee though?

Jarrah: That is true.

Andi: I just like the idea of a visual cue to let you know that you're in the darkest timeline.

Jarrah: Totally.

Grace: Maybe the goatee is from the mirror, mirror universe where everyone is just kind of ambivalent but plays a lot of hacky sack.

****laughter****

Grace: Just a thought, just a thought.

Jarrah: So yeah I mean, right away, when they get to this universe you kind of know something's up, and part of that is the costumes. So, in the book *Star Trek: Costumes* by Paula M. Block and Terry J. Erdmann they talk about how the costumes created for "Mirror, Mirror" suggested the hedonistic lifestyle of the alternate universe and they look at like the the gold sashes that the men wear. That's pretty much the only difference other than Spock has this weird kind of collar.

Grace: He has a mandarin collar going on yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, in a recent post on our blog [<http://www.womenatwarp.com/the-evil-aesthetic-of-the-mirror-universe/>], there was a discussion about whether the collar that Spock wears is kind of orientalist because it's different than everyone else's and Spock is always kind of coded as like the alien other.

Grace: Yeah I could see that.

Rumman: That's a really interesting point.

Andi: I really enjoyed that blog post. She really she really dove deep. There's also just like a general kind of fascist look to their you know forms very...

Grace: The sashes help with that.

Andi: Yeah, very militaristic.

Rumman: I think more beauty pageant, but okay.

****laughter****

Grace: Are you saying that beauty pageants aren't fascist?

Rumman: I do recall daggers stabbing through the earth thing.

Grace: It is a bit much.

Rumman: If sashes weren't enough, we have a dagger stabbing through the earth just to bring this home for you.

Grace: You've got to wonder who hasn't had a point where they looked at it and said, "Well hang on, are we fascist?"

Andi: "Are we the baddies?"

Grace: Yes.

Jarrah: The fascism I think gets in "Mirror, Mirror" the most clearly it's illustrated in the salute that they give? Which is very reminiscent of a Nazi salute...

Grace: The shoulder hile, yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, and you start to see more overt and repeated allusions to fascism, I think, in the of the next ones like the DS9 and Enterprise episodes, but it's starting to be there.

Rumman: Yeah, I mean it's also very reminiscent of the times right, Cold War, etc. so it was a lot more on people's minds and a very salient topic of discussion, maybe to us feels a little too obvious, but for the times, you know, it was on par with how media talked about fascist governments, or you know alternative governments even and not even fascist ones.

Jarrah: I think that it's, just to take a quick step back, that one of the things that I found when I first started to try to analyze the Mirror Universe is I found it was challenging because I was used to watching prime universe Star Trek, which is supposed to be kind of a vision of how things could be better so you can kind of evaluate it about like is this actually what we would consider better, or how much better is it really. But then the Mirror Universe isn't supposed to be like that. So, I mean you look at it as what is it saying about what it means to be evil or bad.

Grace: And what does it mean that this is Star Trek's definition of a reverse utopia. A dystopia, that's the word, right?

Jarrah: Yeah, so like I mean Marlena and like the idea of a captain's woman who is this woman who basically is property of the captain to provide sexual favors. But like Star Trek isn't saying it's good, but it's like titillating right.

Grace: Apparently at one point there were some groups that were like oh captains woman like an official Captain girlfriend, that's cool but should be a regular thing. To which the producers had to send letters to newsgroups being like ask your parents what a captain's woman is, because I don't think you're getting it.

Rumman: You assume they were children.

Grace: Yes.

Rumman: Let's just tell ourselves that.

Grace: Yeah I'm happier thinking that.

Jarrah: Well when we look at Marlena's costume we talked about this in the Kirk love interest episode that the sort of like draped fabric that she wears was apparently because she got really, really ill and couldn't eat and she was so thin she couldn't fit like crop top uniform at first, and so she says in the Star Trek costumes book that "Bill Theiss rushed right over to the set, carrying something. He took me to the corner hurriedly handed me a bikini to change into and then quickly draped material around me. And that's what we wound up with. This beautiful kaftan made a very sheer material. Bill didn't use any tape or anything he just draped it on me."

Grace: It does look fabulous.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: That's some Project Runway level improvisation there.

Andi: Make it work.

Grace: Oh is that Starfleet's new motto cause I'm down with that. Yeah, do you think of the same cold, because there's always the story about how Barbara Luna the actress playing Marlena had strep throat so they had to hold off on filming the kiss scene, so they wouldn't infect Shatner.

Jarrah: Apparently it was related.

Grace: It's funny how one cold can have that much impact on pop culture.

Andi: Fun fact, Jarrah and I answered a trivia question about this at Star Trek Las Vegas. They're like... The category was something like don't you don't get to Google it or whatever, don't look it up on a Memory Alpha, I think, and we're like we have do we know. It was really sure which character had to have their costume prepared like refit or something because just got really, really sick and we were like, we know! We know the answer.

Grace: Oh a caftan related trivia question, we're all over that.

Jarrah: So, Uhura in this episode is amazing, and I love it so much. This is part of the reason why I think it would be in your top five and definitely my top five is just like so awesome to watch Uhura sort of catapulted into this really unfamiliar situation and just totally own it.

Grace: And just the amount of trust that the crew shows they have in her, just that little bit where Kirk is like you can do this, you're the only person who can do this. I trust you 100 percent. It's so cool.

Andi: I also have a huge soft spot for women with knives, as evidenced by my love of Marta, and I like it when Eiaan of Troyius stabs people like I have a thing about sexy women with knives I guess.

Grace: Well, part of their whole logo is a giant knife, so this is just the universe for you isn't it.

Rumman: I'm sensing a theme.

Jarrah: Oh man I'm way over analyzing that logo now.

****laughter****

Grace: **sings** Knife world, knife to meet you.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean I just, I love this episode, I think it is you know it's a really fascinating kind of like 60s edgy look at what an evil human universe might look like.

Grace: And such a 60s Sci-Fi concept, too.

Jarrah: Yeah, yeah for sure. It's an interesting way of exploring their concept and still sticking to a Star Trek message because you have that ending where Kirk is telling Spock like basically you could do this differently.

Grace: My favorite thing is that the big close-out that we get with Spock at the end of it he's like "You can change everything! One man can change everything!" and they leave and Spock goes "I'll consider it." Just like *Andi laughs* the big dramatic send-off is "Eh. I'll think about it. I guess maybe I have the time."

Andi: I just think that this episode is like, showcases everything that can be amazing about Star Trek. You've got you know the heart of it being Kirk and Spock and their relationship and I love that Spock, real Spock, our Spock takes one look at mirror Kirk and is like no.

Grace: He knows somethings up.

Andi: That's not our captain. Put that dude in jail.

Grace: I think this is also just one of the most well put together visually episodes. The opening tableau alone of all of them on the alien planet. And they all just look up at the thunder and lightning and you know they're in the middle of something serious. You're just being dropped in the middle of a conversation that's already happening and you just roll with it. It's so well-done and I love it both for the theatricality of it and, again, you jump right into the story and I think it's done so smoothly and so well *chef kiss* that's a spicy meatball.

Andi: Yeah the colors and the costumes and the guest stars. And I mean *the lighting*. You know how much I love TOS lighting. This is just such a great example.

Grace: And the wigs! By God the wigs!

Andi: *spooky voice* The wiiigs! But also at the heart of it, it's not just a fun episode. It's a serious look at where the human race could go wrong if we make the wrong decisions. Because the whole idea of Star Trek has, to me, always been about optimism for the future, about humanity improving itself, and this is kind of a cautionary tale, like that doesn't happen by accident. That happens because you make the right choices and you decide what you want to value in your society. And if you turn the wrong way or value the wrong values you're going to end up in a place like the Mirror Universe where they may have great abs and awesome sexy women with knives but also lots of fascism.

Grace: So trade off really.

Jarrah: Yeah we can have one without the other. Well, I think that one of the things that, again, is just a seedling in Mirror Mirror but that gets amplified going forward is how fascism is associated with racism and in the Mirror Universe episodes like that it's racism against particular types of aliens rather than races of humans, as we think of it.

Grace: Which has always been kind of a thing with Star Trek using aliens as a stand-in for real life political and social problems. Just having an alien stand-in for racism.

Jarrah: Yes we start to sort of see that the way that Spock is kind of like an outsider in the mirror universe as well as power and obviously we'll see that amplified going forward a little bit.

Grace: Oh absolutely. But that's hush hush for now...

Jarrah: Yes. Any other thoughts on Mirror Mirror before we move on to DS9?

Andi: Another seedling I'd like to point out that *really* grows to fruition in the DS9 episodes is the way that they have combined sex and violence and especially female sexuality and violence. So I mean, we see it way more later but it starts here as much as I love Uhura and her knives.

Grace: Also Marlina just straight up saying "Well this is the position I want to keep. I'll sleep my way through another crew if I have to keep it."

Andi: Yeah. And it's just as much as I love this episode it is kind of an uncomfortable concept to me. The idea that one of the ways that they show that this universe is like a bad place is all the women are hypersexual.

Grace: Yeah the whole hedonism is naturally part of this evil society thing. Not great.

Jarrah: Yeah I totally agree and that's definitely one of the more problematic elements is when you're looking at someone becoming evil why does that mean women become sexual? Oh you have sexual desire? Like OK, but ..

Grace: That's an evil thing! Clearly.

Jarrah: In the blog post that Ali Frances wrote on our blog she talks someone how like in the 60s because of still like changing roles for women *that* did seem like a more like a more challenging idea to have women express like flaunt their sexuality like that would have still been like a bigger difference from society whereas then when you get to later episodes it's like what? This is weird?

Andi: A-whaa?

Rumman: And I mean and it's no no small thing Uhura is a black woman doing that as well.

Jarrah: And Marlina, Barbara Luna is also a woman of color and one of the things that she said about this role was she really appreciated was that the role was not racialized. Like she was used to being cast in these like "ethnic roles" where she'd have to like fake an accent or fake a culture and *they're* like "oh we just want you to play this role. It's just like a woman who does these things." so certainly like a gendered role but not necessarily racialized role but she is a woman of color with an overt sexuality.

Grace: Right.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: And abs.

Rumman: Lets not forget abs. *Always* abs.

Jarrah: Well f-ab-ulous. Maybe before we get to DS9 just like a super quick touch on, I think we mentioned it in the Diane Duane episode-

Andi: DARK MIRROR! Dark Mirror! *chanting Dark Mirror Dark Mirror Dark Mirror!

Grace: I think Andy wants to talk about Dark Mirror.

Andi: OK! So TNG doesn't have a mirror universe episode but Diane Duane did write a TNG Mirror Universe book and it's *awesome* and you should read it.

Jarrah: Yeah and Troi is basically like a psychic torturer like she uses her empathic abilities for evil.

Andi: She is HARD CORE, man. Hard core.

Grace: Yep and there's currently an arc that IDW has going on in the Star Trek comics about next generation Mirror Universe.

Andi: Yeah it's it's interesting because you've got Picard, like mirror Picard and Troi are basically locked in a battle for control over the Enterprise because she's like the security officer or something. Something like internal security or whatever. So like technically Picard is in charge but she's constantly undermining him and they're playing all of these power struggle games. It's so cool.

Grace: And if you want to see some incredible scary evil lady outfits again check the comic out. Cuz damn.

Andi: Plus Picards guns

Grace: and kind of Borg lookin Data. It's cool all around is what I'm saying.

Jarrah: All right. So shall we DS9 it up?

Grace: Feeling fine about DS9.

Jarrah: So the first DS9 mirror universe episode we get is Crossover, in which we learned that Kirk's speech to Spock basically led the entire Terran Empire to become weaklings.

Grace: *sad trombone noises*

Jarrah: Peace won out, and the Klingon Cardassian alliance has taken over, and they got the station on Terrok Nor, and it is run by sexy Intendant Kira.

Grace: Leather pants and leather crop top Intendant Kira.

Jarrah: Well not a crop top really-

Grace: -its a top over a jumpsuit.

Jarrah: OK. And like, sort of leather straps and massive heels and this like hilarious kind of silver headband.

Grace: The psuedo-tiara.

Andi: It is so obviously, like a homage to Dom-y culture. But like, poorly done.

Rumman: "Yes this is what *I think* these women wear."

Jarrah: Like 50 Shades of Grey before 50 Shades of Grey.

Andi: People who would read 50 Shades of Grey be like " Yeah that sounds right. Seems like an accurate representation of this culture."

Grace: Although Nana Visitor does look great in those leather pants.

Andi: She is gorgeous.

Rumman: She is. Yes. Absolutely.

Jarrah: So Andi what was your first impression of DS9 mirror universe having, you know, just become acquainted with it recently?

Andi: The first thing that I remember is laughing at how annoyed Kira was by Bashir.

Jarrah: *laughing* Oh my God.

Andi: And one of the first things that I tweeted was a side by side comparison of Kira and Bashir and then back in the day when O'Brian and Bashir still hated each other of them both sitting there just like rolling their eyes while Bashir is like *muppet noises*.

Grace: *muppet voice* I'm delightful! Listen to me yammer! I'm going to be loud while you meditate! Lalalala!

Rumman: Can we count the number of sentences he starts with the word "actually"? *all laugh*

Jarrah: I love when they send him to the order processing plant on Terrok Nor because Terrans are slaves basically.

Grace: Also can we enjoy the fact that Kira just refers to regular Bashir as dumb and privileged?

Jarrah: Yeah! Basically she's like "Don't kill him. He's a super privileged Terran who needs to learn how the other half lives."

Grace: Kind of, yes.

Jarrah: Aww. Poor Bashir. Watching these episodes the dirtier his face gets the more attractive I find him. *all laugh*

Andi: Yeah the thing about Bashir is, and the reason that I actually love him after a season of just being like "Send that dude into space", was that when Bashir is tested that's when he's at his best. So like he's at his worst when he is just like puttering around DS9 being a douche. And like when he is actually thrown into this shit like he comes through and I saw that too and in Past Tense is another good example of like when he's tested. That's when you see his steele and that's when I start to really like Bashir. And you can see his like growth through that and it actually becomes very interesting because the beginning of DS9 he's this sheltered little rich boy who is you know hanging out in "the frontier."

Grace: He's slumming it as far as he's concerned.

Andi: Exactly and-

Rumman: "see how the *natives* do things."

Andi: Yeah! And it's cool to see him grow as he's exposed to more and more things and as he, you know, finds out more about himself and the world. So I have actually found it to be a really cool arc and one I didn't see coming really because I just thought he was awful.

Rumman: Bashir's evolution is really great.

Andi: And I also love that he gets into that place and the first thing he's like as soon as O'Brien sees him first. They haven't met but for some reason O'Brians like "That dude."

Grace: "This dummy"

Andi: "That's my dude right there!" Like the mirror universe cannot tear them apart.

Grace: Their bromance is *too strong*.

Rumman: It's a truism across all universes. All times.

Grace: That and Garak's just not having time for anyone's shit.

Jarrah: Yeah like, in DS9 a lot of the characters aren't that different actually like Quark is basically the same but more timid maybe? Garak is basically just more amoral. But basically the same otherwise.

Grace: And Sisko is scary as hell.

Jarrah: I love mirror Sisko and it makes me really sad that they kill him off for the second episode because I would have liked to see more of him and he's also like that tie-in to that original series like type message of hope for, in this case, like the Terrans should resist the slavery of the empire or alliance rather. Sorry. Star Wars. But he starts out as kind of like this scary kind of pirate working for Intendant curagh and he does it so well. Yeah he's just kind of like the scary kinda pirate for Intendant Kira and he's just given into his fate and has sort of convinced himself he's happy with what little power he has. But he's still basically a slave.

Grace: And you get to see Avery Brooks unleash the full crazy eyes and it's incredible.

Jarrah: It's great. And mirror O'Brian's just really timid Smiley. So back to the fascist thing because here you know we get the like very clear racism against the Terrans to the point that there's a lot of similarities to the Bajoran occupation and then to also the treatment of Jews and other marginalized minority groups in World War 2. They have to like wear these badges that show the planet Earth on their shirts to show that they're Terrans and things like that, that are sort of underlining that this is like a serious situation.

Rumman: And DS9 does it a couple of times when they talk about the way it was on Terrak Nor. And you know the Bajoran, concentration camps basically, and this universe while they do a really good job of imagining that very not-so-far away scenario from our past in the future and it's really compelling.

Jarrah: Because you have like Kira, she's like "Oh I've worked in oreprocessing" because she did during the occupation and now like Bashir and the humans are forced to work there.

Grace: It really is kind of a case of, in different ways, seeing how the other half lived. But for her Kira it's like "Yeah this is how I have lived."

Jarrah: Yeah I do think you know flipping the tables on the Terrans has kind of two outcomes. One is like you said. I think it does make it more able for the audience to empathize with the oppressed group because you're like "Oh that's totally unfair. Those are humans like us!"

Grace: But their society tried to do the right thing. Stupidly

Jarrah: Yeah. But then maybe it makes you less able to understand how the evil side got evil? I don't know.

Grace: I feel like it is only with this stuff that's further exploring the mirror universe, post-original series where we really get it driven home that this fascist society doesn't just pop up overnight. That it just was a result of some bad decisions being made. And I like that better than the idea of an entire universe being just inherently evil. Just a place where things went wrong.

Jarrah: I feel like we need to talk more about Intendant Kira and I mean I guess in Crossover it's also a Kira-centric, I mean a prime universe Kira-centric episode because she's like, kind of using Intendant Kira's narcissism against her or attempting to. And she's put in the situation where she's seeing this mirror of herself and then Intendant Kira is all basically like "I love you."

Grace: "I love me!"

Andi: Yeah. I have to say that it's really disappointing to me that you have Intendant Kira apparently being bisexual or maybe pansexual and then that's nowhere to be seen in our universe. But apparently over there like just her sexuality became more fluid because she was more evil? I don't know and it really bothers me because one of the tropes of bisexuals is that they, well we're untrustworthy. And promiscuous.

Rumman: Right. Or sexual predators.

Andi: Yeah exactly. So that didn't make me happy and I wanted to be happy about Kira being mad sexy because I like sexy Kira but just the way that they have framed it, they made like her sexuality a part of her villainess.

Grace: It's an aggression.

Andi: Yeah and it makes me really uncomfortable and also frustrated because this is the reason why people like, people will literally say they will not date bisexuals because of stuff like this like this. This perception of-

Grace: -they are just people who can't make up their minds or who want it all or-

Andi:- can't be trusted.

Rumman: Sexual fluidity is some sort of sign of moral fluidity.

Grace: Again with this we get the whole throwbacks the whole problem with the original series episode that sexuality is inherently hedonistic and bad.

Andi: Yeah. So I like her bisexuality combined with her like dom-y inspired outfit, the whole thing just makes me uncomfortable and disappointed.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think that Nana Visitor does an incredible job like giving incredible change to her character in terms of her physicality and her voice. And I think she does a really great job with what she's given there. So there's like scenes that I do really enjoy. But I agree the implications of her sexuality and you're right it has like, seriously problematic implications if you think about it and try and apply it to how we think about people today.

Grace: Ugh. Now I'm angry again.

Andi: I just want to say another thing that I want to add about this is that, bisexuals are more likely to be involved in domestic abuse. So this like, connection between bisexuality and violence. That's another reason why it makes me uncomfortable.

Grace: It is very harmful. Just look at what happened to Amber Heard in how so much of her divorce coverage was preceded with "bisexual woman" divorces and accuses Johnny Depp of hitting her.

Andi: Yes exactly. And she is actually exactly who I was thinking about when when I was thinking about this because so much of the coverage about that, it was not only changed by the general misogyny that usually accompanies that kind of coverage like, "women lie" kind of thing but also "she obviously must have done something and it was obviously tied to her sexuality that their their marriage you know went wrong" and stuff like that. So there's this kind of idea actually does active harm to people so maybe we could stop if possible.

Grace: Any writers out there listening be aware of this please.

Jarrah: Yeah. And then like you said it's really contrasted by the fact that we were you know didn't, other than Dax in Rejoined, get bisexual or pansexual or otherwise queer characters really regularly on the show that presented this as like "Hey this is just a normal thing." So it's only shown in this abnormal amoral universe. So just a couple of other things that I want to say about her character is just like what really struck me watching it was just how kind of deluded she is about herself and she's so narcissistic. Like the whole thing where prime Kiras saying like I'm afraid of you and she's like I don't want your fear I want your love. And she keeps letting people like Sisko and stuff go because she's attracted to them and she wants to believe she can make them love her. But at the same time she's telling Prime Kira to love her she's like just going to go execute Quark over here

Grace: Which is very scary because isn't that, Andi you cover your ears for a second. Hum loudly. Something. Isn't that kind of a conversation we get with Gul Dukat and his views of the Bajorans? Like "I just want them to appreciate all I do for them and love me for it." That's part of what makes that really scary.

Rumman: And it's a common thing among oppressor's right? To infantilize the people you are addressing. You know "they couldn't live without me without the structure I've given them. They don't know how to handle themselves."

Grace: And the whole mentality of colonialism is "We helped them. We saved them from themselves."

Rumman: Right.

Jarrah: Yeah. And we see that even more in the next mirror universe episode Through the Looking Glass where she's talking about "If only the rebellion would stop. Then we could stop being so harsh to them."

Grace: Yeah "It's their fault we treat them this way."

Rumman: *shudder* Ooh that narrative, that we've heard uttered from a lot of dangerous people's minds over time.

Jarrah: Yeah exactly.

Andi: Pretty straightforward abuser tactics. "I wouldn't have to hit you if you didn't make me so angry."

Rumman: Yeah. "I apologize. but." "I'm sorry. But." conditional apologies.

Jarrah: Yes. So in Through the Looking Glass Smiley kidnaps Sisko from the prime universe and brings him back because mirror Sisko is dead, sadly because he was awesome, and he wants Sisko to talk mirror Jennifer Sisko into joining the rebellion and not building a weapon of mass destruction for the alliance. I mean OK Can I just like get the worst part of this episode out of the way. Which is the part where undercover Sisko sleeps with mirror Jadzia?

Crew: *noises of violent revulsion*

Grace: Not ok. Not ok. Not ok.

Jarrah: So he's been briefed by O'Brian for like 15-20 minutes on like "You have to convince everyone you're mirror Sisko" and right away he has to punch mirror Bashir. Like mirror Bashir is way worse than prime Bashir in terms of being a jerk. So you know in that universe kind of justified I guess but then mere mirror Dax like kisses him and then slaps him and O'Brians like "Yeah she's your mistress" and he kind of lamely protests? Like maybe you know "I have a lot to do I don't really have time to sleep with you right now" and she just is kind of like "Nope" and he's like "Yeah you're right." And sleeps with her.

Grace: Kirk didn't go that far.

Rumman: In the context of their relationship she's like his mentor. And like a father figure. Right? Her previous host was this father figure. There's all sorts of oedipal things happening. None of which I'm ok with.

Andi: Not to mention the fact that it makes it seem like the only reason Dax is even in that episode is so Sisko can sleep with her. She doesn't do anything else in that episode. She shows up, Sisko sleeps with her, and then she leaves.

Jarrah: Yep. So sleeping with someone under false pretenses is sexual assault.

Grace: It's called coercive rape. Yes.

Jarrah: A Starfleet officer should have that *sputtering* that like amount that he protested was so minimal that it seemed like the minute he saw her he was just like *hmm noise*. Which is gross

Andi: And un-Sisko like. Very uncharacteristic.

Rumman: Very un-Sisko. He's so on the up and up and he's always a gentleman to women and treats women so well and like when Cassidy comes along the way he talks to her the way he treats her even when they argue and disagree has always been pretty darn good. And to see this very uncharacteristic behavior- and what's worse it's almost under the guise of "oh I'm supposed to be a bad guy" kind of like "oh I was drinking, you know my faculty's". No, you're still responsible. You're still responsible.

Grace: You were still in control here and you took control.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I mean like talking about how he's generally not like that remotely to other women, the whole way that like Jennifer Sisko sees through him is that she understands that he's a guy with principles which mirror Sisko didn't have. So it's just very uncool. So it kind of it kind of taints the episode for me. But in this episode we have mirror Jennifer Sisko who we meet for the first time and I don't know I'm kind of meh. I'm like "She's a scientist" but this is I guess part of what we're saying about DS9 is not making the characters very different we don't know a ton about Jennifer. We know she's like the nicest woman that ever lived basically

because she's this, you know, angelic missing mother figure kind of. And she's very much like mythologized because she's no longer alive and then she's just kind of like the same. I just kind of wanted like something interesting out of her other than being pissed at Sisko.

Rumman: That's a really interesting point. Yeah. And it feeds into you know both Jake and you know his father idolizing this woman and who knows if she really was like that in real life right? And who knows what terrible arguments they would have gotten into. And you know whether or not he she and Jake would fight all the time about stupid things you know just the way kids do with their parents right. And not that she would've been a bad parent or anything but that-

Grace:- maybe the implication here is that prime Jennifer was actually a huge jerk. *crew laughs* And that the reverse version of her is just super nice and cool and all that.

Jarrah: Yeah and just because we only ever saw like two scenes of her and Sisko and Jake are just going to take her just like in their minds reimagined her but she was really nice.

Grace: Yeah. Oh that was dark. I like it.

Andi: I think that's that's about all I have to say about that episode. Yeah.

Jarrah: I mean basically they got themselves kidnapped so that they can get Jennifer off station. And they ultimately succeed and then Sisko goes back home.

Andi: OK. Now apparently, I got to leave you because you get to talk about Worf, which whaaat?

Jarrah: Thank you for joining us Andi! Look forward to revisiting these when you're done DS9..

Andi: *whoops* Can't wait! All right. Bye guys!

Jarrah: All right. Shattered Mirror. Regent Worf. Go Rumman.

Grace: Worf getting to be full Klingon.

Rumman: Right? That's the thing I love. I'm re watching TNG and the big thing about TNG was for me was that Worf never got to be actualized as his Klingon self because he always had to be ashamed and deny it. And you know suppressed that part of himself. Or felt like he had to, to belong. And the beauty of Worf on DS9 is that he doesn't do that any more. He's just like "eff this."

Grace: He is totally a born again Klingon. Its great.

Rumman: It's beautiful. And then here's you know sort of the dark side of it. But the scene, the big scene is the Worf and Garak with the key. Oh my gosh.

Grace: I just love the dynamic between mirror Worf and Garak. It's terrible, don't get me wrong but it's very entertaining.

Rumman: Yes yes. I'm like "Oh it was great!" well wasn't great. But oops! My bad. Stabbed him in the stomach. Meh. So that's my big thing I love about that episode.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean I really like that you know he's holding Garak and they're having these sort of mind games. And I don't know it's not like an inherently funny situation but just like knowing those characters. It's kind of awesome.

Rumman: Yes yes absolutely.

Jarrah: So Shattered Mirror is the episode where Jennifer Sisko comes back to basically kidnap Jake to make prime Sisko go back to the mirror universe so that he can help them fix the defiant which I don't know why they wouldn't just kidnap prime O'Brian Because that would be-

Grace: Prime-Brian? *crew laughs*

Jarrah:-And then like fight the alliance which they do and where Dax slapped Sisko for sleeping with her under false pretenses which is a nice way of putting that he assaulted her. And Jennifer Sisko gets to die again and be a heavenly angelic mother figure again.

Rumman: Right?

Jarrah: You know I was really kind of disappointed with both these episodes. I don't know the mirror universe can be fun that makes you think and I just felt like it was kind of neither.

Rumman: Well it was like an hour "Haha let's make these two characters, you know. Ben Sisko and Jake, miserable again." Reliving the pain of you know wife or mother dying.

Jarrah: And like how nice was she really that she made Jake go through that?

Grace: Yeah. It raises a lot of questions.

Jarrah:

"I'm going to bring your dead mom back to life and then you can get to know her and that I'm going to kill her again" like I know that's not really exactly what happened but like she had to know there was a strong chance that they could die she could die.

Grace: It's kind of a zero sum game with Jake's emotions innit?

Jarrah: Yeah I got to think that both of them would have been in therapy for quite a while after that. And I was thinking also Jake

Grace: Jake's not already in therapy??!

Jarrah: How would Jake deal with Kira having seen Intendant Kira shoot his mom?

Grace: Yeah there should have been some real backlash that should have carried over. I would really like to see that. That's just something I wish we saw more of in a lot of shows, let's be real. Something terrible happening to a character means a lot more if it isn't just one off and never spoken of again. If you can make it affect your character long term rather than just having it be a bad thing that happened to them *once* then it carries a lot more gravitas and it just keeps viewers with you for the ride a lot better.

Jarrah: One thing I noticed in this episode was when you meet the evil mirror Nog and he's like got all these dabo girls that looked exactly the same as prime universe dabo girls. Which is interesting. I mean I guess maybe you could spin that as like that's *positive* because it shows that there's like maybe some questionable

ness of that happening in the prime universe? Or maybe you say it's like more example of showing that sexuality is negative. But I feel like the dabo girls especially in this episode like when they're used as basically props is like not empowering.

Grace: They really are props.

Rumman: Well I would like to think towards the positive which is that by making them almost exactly the same we are pointing out, and because there's so much more obviously props in the mirror universe, it's pointing out that there are flaws in our universe too. It's not terrible right? Like I said exploitation is exploitation whether or not you know you pay them a nominal wage that's barely a living wage or whether you don't.

Jarrah: So I was slightly disappointed with those two episodes. Let's get onto what was probably the worst mirror universe episode at least in my opinion. Resurrection in which mirror Bariel comes to the main universe and turns out to be pretty much as boring as prime Bariel.

Grace: *grossed out seal noises*

Jarrah: I wouldn't say this is like the most problematic, I'm just thinking it's the worst. Like the one that I least want to watch.

Rumman:

I only want to go to a Dax and Worf hosted dinner party.

Jarrah: YES!

Grace: That would be super fun!

Jarrah: So mirror Jennifer like, Jakes like "You guys totally have to get back together!" and Siskos like "She's not the same woman" but they still kind of were connected and then in *this* one it's like right away she's like dating mirror Bariel. And its weird like that you wouldn't be at all leery of the fact that he looks exactly the same as your lover who just died except for he's clearly a thief.

Grace: Girl you got to be leery like Dennis. *Jarrah chuckles* Dennis Leary?

Rumman: *groans*

Grace: No? I tried. It's weird. OK? It's weird and it's weird.

Rumman: It is weird.

Jarrah: I don't really have a lot to say about this episode. It's kind of like, brought back Bariel, thanks/no thanks.

Rumman: Let's have a party, dish.

Jarrah: Intendant Kira is bad. People in the mirror universe can change but only a little.

Grace: Funny how that works.

Jarrah: So yeah good times. I guess, Ok so can we infer from this episode that there's no Bajoran spirituality in the mirror universe or just like Bariel-

Grace:- I don't know, we get Kira still wearing her earring and everything.

Jarrah: And it seems like Barel is aware of there being a religion in the mirror universe, but he just was like "Oh that's crap." So yeah. OK let's move on to the last DS9 mirror universe, the Emperor's New Cloak

Grace: Which is actually dedicated to original series episode writer Jerome Bixby who had passed away right before the episode came out.

Jarrah: Nice. I have to say that as a kid I had this episode on a VHS tape and I *loved* this episode. Like it's really funny at least? I think it has a lot more of like, a ridiculous kind of humor to it than the previous three episodes. This is the one where Quark, Zek, and Rom they end up in the mirror universe trying to steal stuff to bring back to the prime universe. Mirror Ezri is there.

Grace: We also get mirror Zek, no wait not Zek.

Jarrah: Brunt.

Grace: Yeah mirror Brunt! Who's super chill.

Jarrah: Because a mirror Ferengi must die in every mirror universe episode.

Grace: More or less I guess.

Jarrah: No actually like true. I don't think Resurrection, but Quark died in the first one then Rom then Nog and then Zek in the last. Er Brunt the last one.

Grace: *deadpan* Alas poor Ferengi we hardly knew ye.

Jarrah: I mean I guess the most notable aspect of this episode for women is the fact that Intendant Kira seems to have some sort of relationship with mirror Ezri and then at the end of mirror Ezri is kind of seduced maybe by mirror Leeta?

Grace: OK. OK. *Rumman laughs*

Jarrah: So again like more of those sort of problematic representations of bisexuality or pansexuality although Ezri is I think shown in a much more positive light than Intendant Kira.

Rumman: But we do still get that sexually fluid equals morally fluid. Which I'm not a fan of and then Rom constantly getting confused because he's Rom. Can I say how much I love in this episode, a really good example, and again like I said I'm watching TNG and you know like they try to make the Ferengi this like evil something and you're like "Dude no one takes them seriously". And then DS9 really found a better way of portraying the Ferengi that just has so much more depth and trying to make them the next big evil thing and not quite working.

Grace: Well they're not flying giant croissants which helps.

Rumman: Oh yeah definitely.

Jarrah: I mean there is an aspect of evil but it's more like an evil that we can understand about like greed and selfishness versus like wanting to you know electric whip everyone.

Grace: It's capitalism versus cartoon villainy.

Rumman: Exactly. Unfettered capitalism.

Jarrah: Yeah. So I don't know, it's disappointing that they tried to throw a bone like "Hey we can show two women kissing as long as it's like evil mirror representations" than they feel that they could show that in the prime universe..

Grace: Adds more to that whole idea that being queer is a deviancy thing.

Rumman: Right because the only time they show it on the DS9 you know in this you know series or subplot and you know when we have the technicality of it being a previous hosts wife for Jadzia. So you know, they kiss on a technicality.

Grace: There's a lot of caveats there

Jarrah: And going back to this blog post again Ali, the author, argues that that the sexualization is also linked with orientalism, a little bit in DS9 by the way in Intendant Kira has these kind of harems. Because they do really feel that harems in her quarters where she has like you know two men giving her a bath and she's like lying on this half naked guy. And a lot of the people that attend her are racialized. So it it again just serves to kind of take away agency and to make sexuality seem like weird and alien

Grace: And then again goes back to the whole bisexuals just want to have sex with a ton of people thing.

Rumman: And even if it's "Oh hey it's a woman" you know. So you know in the original series you had the captain's woman and he arguably probably had a harem type of things but "Hey it's a woman this time." It's still not empowering in that. At all. It's a very one directional where you know one way of assuming power happens.

Jarrah: OK so we better get on to Enterprise, which I kind of love these episodes actually. And not to say that there's no issues with them but,

Grace: There will always be issues with Enterprise.

Jarrah: I find them really fun to watch.

Rumman: Can I just say it's not the usual intro and that just made it so much more. So much!

Jarrah: Oh yeah I mean like the very first scene is like from First Contact and this is a scene that means a lot to a lot of Trekkies including myself where you see the Vulcans come down and you see Zefram Cochrane greet them and normally you watch First Contact it's got that music and you're like "Humans are going to be OK guys!" And then you watch this Enterprise episode and Cochrane just like pulls out a gun and kills all the Vulcans and then they steal the ship and it goes into the intro that's like to this dark music and it's all these like scenes of war and it's awesome.

Grace: I appreciate how much that cold open pretty much gives us further establishment of that idea of this doesn't just add an evil dimension. This is just a dimension where horrible choices were made and it screwed everything up.

Jarrah: Like, how scared were you of these people who look different than you? And maybe that would set the rest of your species on a course for disaster for several centuries because you were scared of people who looked different than you

Rumman: And in that sense it so beautifully aligned with what I think a lot of us think Trekis about, which is that you can't just judge an entire race, society, group of people, religion by how they appear, or even by an individual's bad actions. Like you guys have been saying it doesn't mean that humanity is fundamentally *bad* because we've done these bad things. It just means that there are bad people or people making bad decisions it doesn't reflect on everybody.

Jarrah: And like the fascism and the racism are both super visible and this when you still have that same fascist salute. You also have the men all wear these Sam Brown belts which are like were used in largely the Australian military but other sort of colonialists militaries that like the belts across the waist and then there's like a sort of sash belt kind of thing going over your shoulder.

Grace: *perky voice* The double belt, in case your elbows wander off!

Jarrah: Google it or look at that post on our blog because it talks about it. And their uniforms, especially the Admiral's dress uniform, looks you know like the medals are much more prevalent, the patches. The Mako uniforms actually don't look that different but they're wearing like black gloves so they're scary. But then we have women in crop tops again. And this is like what, 2003?

Grace: Always with the crop tops!

Rumman: I mean because it's 2003. That's why there are more crop tops. In the fashion of the early 2000s.

Grace: Oy. Spare me.

Jarrah: I mean, Ali the blog author says that for her that doesn't work because by the time we got to tha, the whole crop top thing had already been like a fad and out because of people like Britney Spears and stuff. So that putting it in there just seemed like, really?

Rumman: Oh yeah it's not it's definitely not a justification for them doing it. It's ridiculousness.

Grace: And a lot of them don't have the *awesome abs*.

Jarrah: I mean Hoshi had some pretty great abs.

Grace: *She* has some sweet abs not gonna lie.

Rumman: Uhuras really more, like I was saying earlier, we need to do a "Who wore at best?" because Uhuras like, she's got that definition. And that, like it's not just about having a flat stomach it's the definition. I mean so logistically, and I wonder this about the miniskirts too, don't you get cold? Like I would be cold just like even if I looked that good in that outfit i'd be like "I'm just kind of cold right now." And your back in this metal seat?

Grace: And just the whole concept alone of a midriff baring jumpsuit outfit.

Rumman: Kind of defeats the purpose of a jumpsuit.

Grace: It boggles the mind.

Jarrah: Plus she apparently just has to hang out in the captain's quarters in a bra and panties and a negligee. Like reading books while she is waiting for him to come back and maybe want to have sex. Which seems annoying.

Grace: Yeah sounds boring.

Rumman: Again I would just be cold. Just, get me a sweater.

Grace: "Hey how about if I wear this sexy cowl neck?"

Jarrah: So I kind of like mirror T'Pol. I feel like she's the one who's discovering that in the prime universe, that Vulcans aren't slaves and trying to sort of foment a mini rebellion of her own with Phlox and Soval and stuff like that. To be like yeah we don't actually have to be treated like crap just because we're Vulcans and Archer is like super racist to Vulcans and basically kicks off anyone who's not human except for Phlox because he thinks Phlox's people are like inherently not resistant or whatever. So that is kind of a type of attitude that we're somewhat familiar with.

Grace: I like that we get T'Pol as the proactive character in all this.

Rumman: That's not surprising though. It's not very surprising knowing how she is in the series Enterprise in general. It seems like something she would do it fits headcanon at least for me.

Grace: Yeah and it definitely also works as a throwback to Spock being the one who ends up making the big change at the end of Mirror Mirror. I think I'm very grateful for it, cause if I had seen T'Pol put in the position of like captain's woman or something I would have flipped my damn shit. But I wouldn't put it past Enterprise during certain points.

Jarrah: Yeah. I just don't see T'Pol as the character you play like a manipulative like woman who's using her sexuality to manipulate but the fact that it's Hoshi is also again like tying together women of color with sexuality which is uncomfortable although sexy women with knives so when Andi gets to that she has something to look forward to.

Grace: Good for Andi!

Jarrah: And I mean of course she ultimately deceives everyone and takes over which is freaking awesome.

Grace: Yeah it's pretty cool.

Jarrah: I think I was just disappointed because before I saw it, I knew that she becomes the Empress and I didn't know that it's the very last scene of the second part. And I'm like *plaintive "Nooooo!"

Grace: Why couldn't have just been the entire second episode? In fact why couldn't they have been both episodes? That would've been rad.

Jarrah: I mean there was talk, I believe, of holding the entire fifth season if there had been a fifth season of Enterprise from the mirror universe and then we would have got to see that. And I actually think that could have been pretty awesome. I don't know how it would have worked or how we would have ever got back to the prime universe or cared about it after watching a whole season in the mirror universe but-

Grace: Probably not. No.

Jarrah: But yeah it's cool that Hoshi ultimately just was able to not just like preserve herself in her position as the captain's woman but elevate herself above that.

Grace: Yep, very Machiavellian of her like a little *looking for the words* like a little Machiavellian in a negligee with a six pack. Good for her.

Rumman: Isn't that what we all just wanna be?

Grace: At the end of all day. Ripped and Macchiavellian! That's going to be our new catchphrase.

Jarrah: Episode title!

Rumman: Episode title. No but you know to your point maybe it's some attempt at validating these women, or not validating. But you know putting them in a position of power by showing her taking control. You know although no one can argue all these feminine wiles arguments. It's just sort of a tired thing by the time you've watched all of the Mirror Universe episode. It's funny you know I watched them so far apart from each other. And you watch them all in one go you're just like *tired *"*I get it.*"

Jarrah: *exhausted* Women can use their sexuality for gain. I get it.

Rumman: Yeah and it's like you know guys, I don't think women are as obsessed with using their sexuality for political or social gain as much as dudes think we are.

Jarrah: Yeah and that's why I think mirror T'Pol is a little bit refreshing because yes she's got the crop top but she's not like seducing people to get what she wants.

Rumman: Like surprise! We have other capabilities.

Jarrah: And yeah Archer says he's not killing her because of her capabilities and he's talking about like her sciencing skills.

Rumman: Right. Right.

Jarrah: So that is, I feel, like a step in the right direction although I was very disappointed that the only scene where T'Pol and Hoshi interact is the cat fight in the hallway.

Grace: *That* was unnecessary.

Jarrah: Oh right! Yeah she does actually. Sorry I forgot. T'Pol totally does use sex to get what she wants because she mind-meld assaults Tripp to trick him. But like Hoshi and T'Pol are basically like you know, T'Pol accuses Hoshi of being a slut and Hoshi basically accused her of being bad at sex.

Rumman: *sarcastic* Well you know because women can't handle being around other attractive women we just get threatened and that's what we do.

Jarrah: They must compete. They cannot cooperate.

Grace: Like ferrets. If another powerful one is nearby we attack.

Jarrah: Yeah I take back what I said. Mirror T'Pol was moderately refreshing, except for the part about Tripp. It definitely did seem though that she had more of a range of options to her than pretty much all the other like, than Hoshi, than Marlena.

Rumman: Agency. She had more agency and exercised it at least.

Jarrah: Like she was the first officer so, and even Hoshi had a job as well. Like you see her in her uniform working on the bridge. So it wasn't just like, I mean they do show her just like lying in bed waiting for the captain. But she actually also had a position in Starfleet in addition so...**sigh** So complicated. It's really like I mean it's just as fraught if not more to be like "Here's what we're going to show evil looks like" as to say "Here's what we're going to show good looks like."

Rumman: Right. Can we tangent and imagine what Mirror Mirror would look like, well I guess we sort of did when talking about the comics in the books that talk about mirror universe in TNG. But can we, can you imagine an episode like, I love evil Deanna. I love evil Beverly! Yeah I think evil Beverly would be awesome. Because she's always like a mommy figure. She's so not-

Jarrah: Not like evil ever.

Grace: Let me just float this idea to you guys. If we're in a universe where there's evil Beverly, evil Wesley?

Jarrah: I feel like that's not as much of a stretch.

Grace: No I'm just saying think of his chaotic power that he seems to have of screwing everything up but concentrated for evil. Imagine.

Rumman: So wait so does mirror universe evil Riker *not* have a beard? **dramatic dun-dun-duun**

Jarrah: Or are they both have beards and then you can't tell them apart. And then what would you do if you had a mirror Riker, prime Riker, mirror Thomas Riker, and prime Thomas Riker and you could have two Riker riches at once? **all laugh**

Grace: One is just completely bald but with sideburns.

Jarrah: Like mutton chops or something.

Rumman: **laughing** Mutton chops. You know now that I think about it TNG people, they were just you know, they were so nice all the time. Most of the time at least. So I'm trying to imagine like mirror universe Geordi. Like what would he do? You know like "Haha! That's salt instead of sugar! Haha!"

Grace: **laughing** He's just a merry prankster. That's your idea?.

Jarrah: And he like respects women. **all laugh** and mirror Picard just like can't string two words together.

Rumman: And he loves babies.

Grace: He's Vin Diesel. Mirror Picard is Vin Diesel!

Rumman: Daddy Day Care.

Jarrah: Any other final thoughts?

Grace: I'm interested to see what else can be done with the mirror universe. But *please* just try and think outside of the women using sex for power box. It's getting a little old.

Jarrah: But you know if you must have a crop top or two, OK but maybe you could like equal-opportunity crop top it.

Grace: Yeah tastefully crop tops, but with every one crop top. *struggling to speak* top.. crop

Rumman: All crop tops or no crop tops.

Grace: Both.

Jarrah: New slogan.

Rumman: Or men in miniskirts, women and in crop tops.

Grace: *satisfied* OK.

Jarrah: Any combination of those really. Basically, they have cast some attractive people for Star Trek Discovery and I am eager to see them all in crop tops.

Grace: Yes. We had a great time today! Thank you for joining us and listening in. Jarrah, where else online can people find you?

Jarrah: You can find me on tumblr at Trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com or on Twitter [@Jarrahpenguin](https://twitter.com/Jarrahpenguin).

Grace: And Rummon, Where can people find you?

Rummon: You can find me on Twitter [@Ruchowdh](https://twitter.com/Ruchowdh) or on my website at rummanchowdhury.com.

Grace: And if Andi were here to tell you, you can find her [@firsttimetrek](https://twitter.com/firsttimetrek) on Twitter. And I'm Grace and you can find me at [@Bonecrusherjenk](https://twitter.com/Bonecrusherjenk)

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