

Women at Warp Episode 7: The Ferengi Feminist Revolution

Audio clip from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine - Profit and Lace (S6.23)

Grand Nagus Zek (Wallace Shawn): Three days ago I added a new amendment to the Ferengi Bill of Opportunities giving females the right to wear clothes.

Rom (Max Grodénchik): In public?

Ishka (Cecily Adams): Anywhere we want.

Quark (Armin Shimerman): That can't be the good news. If Ferengi females can wear clothes in public then they can leave their homes. If they can leave their homes, they can go to work. If they go to work, they can make profit.

Ishka: What's the matter, Quark? Afraid of a little competition?

Begin WAW

Sue: 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 Sue, and I am here today with Jarrah and Grace.

Grace: Hello.

Jarrah: MOOGIE!

Sue: So we are talking today about the Ferengi feminist revolution, as we like to call it. But first we have some feedback, some emails from listeners about our lady captains episode.

Jarrah: So the first one was from Connor who said, "I was really bummed out that you all skipped over Captain Lisa Cusak from the Deep Space Nine episode 'The Sound of Her Voice.' I know that we never see her in action. But as far as adding to the canon, this is a complex lady captain that the DS9 crew are all but psychoanalyzing. We learn so much about her. She was off exploring the Beta Quadrant and all that epic adventure jazz. And, yes, the crew is playing the rescue the damsel role, but they fail. Captain Lisa Cusak dies a horrible lonely death. It's pretty tragic, but that's a really good character." So thanks, Connor, for that. That was totally my fault. I was the one putting together the outline, and I based it on a list of captains based on who had photos -

Grace: Ah, because we never see her face on screen.

Jarrah: I know! And it is a really good character, but I'm sure that we will come back to her in a future episode and give her the attention that she deserves. The reason we didn't really get into her was we didn't remember her until the very end and then none of us really watched the episode recently so we didn't want to give her shorter shrift than she deserved.

Sue: Okay. This email is from Aerwid. I'm sorry if I'm pronouncing that incorrectly. "On the topic of the comments about Janeway not being able to have a relationship compared to other captains, I have a few thoughts. Janeway's attitude towards relationships seemed, at least to me personally, to be more about not having a relationship with an officer or crew member, which most of the time was all she had to work with given their situation. She always was really strict about certain principles except for the rare occasion when the writers decided she wasn't. So I think it's very much in character, although I think developing the thing with Chakotay would have made more sense considering the writing earlier in the show. As I recall, and I might be wrong, of the few relationships Picard had, the only one which involved another officer or crew member was the one with a piano-playing science officer. And I seem to recall that she had to transfer because Picard could not be entirely objective when she was involved." I have thoughts on that. "But Kirk was just Kirk in an era where things were not nearly as formal and structured and I think even he usually did not end up with Starfleet women."

Jarrah: So what are your thoughts on that?

Sue: So that episode that's being referenced for Picard is called "Lessons."

Grace: And what do we learn from it?

Sue: We learn from it that she's evil. No. And that roll-up piano. That's a real thing.

Grace: That's pretty neat.

Sue: But I can't remember her name now and that's the worst. But that character has been vilified in the Picard/Crusher community. Not surprisingly. Just like all the rest of them. Let's be real. But when taken Picard's individual relationships - which just like the Kirk show, we're going to talk about at some point - he's not very much better. Like the only reason we see any of them more than once is because Vash just keeps showing up.

Jarrah: I think it is a good point though about Janeway because, yeah, she didn't really have a lot of people she could choose from that wouldn't present her with a conflict. But Sisko dates Cassidy, and there's a bit of a weird thing later on where, you know, he decides he can't really have her on the Defiant during the war, but only because it's her being in his workspace just has a weird dynamic. It isn't that he's worried he might accidentally order her to her death or something. With Janeway, I think it goes beyond just crew members because there's the episodes "Workforce" where she falls in love with that man and at the end she's sort of like, "Well you could come on board, but we couldn't have a relationship." And in that case he

wouldn't be an officer. He would be a civilian on the ship which would put him in a similar situation to Cassidy on Deep Space Nine. But, I mean, it still doesn't mean there wouldn't be issues because you're all alone out there and your main goal is to get home, so it's not like if you broke up you could avoid seeing each other.

Grace: Yeah, it is kind of a - if you pardon my language - shit where you eat kind of scenario right there. But at the same time they keep running into all those aliens. Like think of how many, you know, just exotic space chicks you see flirting with Tom Paris. Why couldn't Janeway have gotten a little bit of that action?

Jarrah: Yeah, and, I mean, obviously she allows other people on the ship to do it, and she just kind of says "I can never do that because I'm the captain."

Grace: Maybe it's a self-confidence thing, but that makes it really sad. Like, "Oh, I could never just hook up with someone. Ah gee, I'm Janeway." I don't know. We don't know.

Sue: But we know a little bit from the real world perspective, right? Because apparently Kate Mulgrew has said that the first few seasons of *Voyager*, she was very adamant about certain things with Janeway's character. She didn't want the love interest. She didn't want typical feminine stuff for this character because she felt like there was so much pressure on her as, you know, the first woman heading a show for Star Trek as the captain. And I think she said at some point she just went to the writers and said, "You know what? She's just like any other captain now." And I think that might have been when we started seeing the weird relationships on the holodeck. And, you know, "Computer delete the wife."

Jarrah: Well, it was better than Chakotay giving her back massages and passive aggressive legends. Yeah, and we're planning a Janeway-centric episode in the near future. So I say that we save up all our Janeway discussion for that, but thanks very much for the fan mail, Connor and Aerwid. And we also had a couple of folks wrote in to just quickly correct something from our Romulan women episode, which is that we stated that you don't find out until *Star Trek: Nemesis* that the Romulans kill babies who are disabled. But actually it's in one of the episodes with Geordi and the Romulans where he's on a planet with the Romulan, and the Romulan says if he was born blind, he would have been killed. So that is in TNG. Apologies for the wrong information.

Grace: Don't you love that we can crowdsource our fact-checking though?

Jarrah: Totally.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yay fans! Thanks guys.

Grace: Keeping us informed.

Sue: So Ferengi?

Grace: Ferengi.

Jarrah: Ferengi.

Sue: So from the audience perspective, we first meet the Ferengi in season one of *The Next Generation* in "The Last Outpost." And they were supposed to sort of be the new big threat to replace the Klingons, to act as they did in TOS. That didn't work out so well.

Grace: No. No, it did not.

Sue: But before we go there, the Federation - or I guess pre-Federation - actually meets the Ferengi for the first time, even though they didn't know it, in the season one *Enterprise* episode "Acquisitions." And I watched that recently and I know Jarrah watched it recently, so I'm going to let you talk about it.

Jarrah: Oh Lord.

Grace: You know that's going to be a good start when you hear, "Ohhh, that."

Jarrah: I was actually excited because for some reason in my brain I thought that this was a season four episode, and then I realized it was in season one, and I just went, "This is going to be terrible," and I was right. So really like the Ferengi meet Trip in his underwear.

Grace: They were going to offer him some goods, but they saw he already had some.

Jarrah: Oh my God, Grace. This is the episode where they cast a few amazing actors as Ferengi. Like we get Jeffrey Combs as a different Ferengi, and Ethan Phillips. And they knock out everyone on the ship except for Trip who is in the decontamination chamber in his underwear. And they are trying to steal a bunch of stuff from the ship including women because women are stuff to the Ferengi. So they come on board the ship, and Trip sort of has to figure out - along with Archer, who gets woken up so that they can make demands of him - how to deal with the Ferengi. And one of them is super creeping on unconscious T'Pol, and it's just so gross.

Grace: Something new and different. T'Pol is there to be ogled. Yeah.

Jarrah: I mean I think there's a couple weird things about this episode. The T'Pol thing, actually, I have mixed feelings about it because I found it really disturbing where you see the Ferengi hauling all this stuff back to the cargo bay, and then you see this pile of unconscious women

crew members including T'Pol and Hoshi, and it's just really a hard image to feel is funny. And the one of them - who I think is actually the one played by Jeffrey Combs - keeps sort of caressing -

Grace: He creeps well, what can you say?

Jarrah: And he's caressing her ears and saying - they're talking about how they're going to sell them into slavery, and he's like, "Maybe I won't sell this one into slavery right away." So he's basically saying he's going to rape her. Then Trip finds a hypospray that he uses to wake her up, and she ends up seducing this Ferengi to get him to let his guard down. So she sort of starts giving him oo-mox and then gives him a neck pinch.

Grace: Good grief.

Jarrah: And that's a really I think kind of fun scene, although it's still kind of problematic that the way that she triumphs in this situation is by seducing this guy.

Grace: Being the honey trap. Yeah. Which she has to do a lot, it feels like anyway.

Jarrah: Yeah what did you think, Sue?

Sue: I was just rolling my eyes at this episode. And it's interesting because we always hear the Ferengi use female as a noun, right? And I noticed while watching this that the Enterprise crew used "women" and "female" but not interchangeably. When they were angry and like just trying to bully the Ferengi into leaving them alone, it was "Leave these women alone." But as soon as they started trying to, you know, play them and manipulate them it was "females." And just every time I heard "female" as a noun my skin started to crawl. I just - I can't handle it.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think this was the first time that I really made that connection between that discussion in our own society because that is something that I've seen more people on the internet talk about in the past few years - is how people have to really stop calling women females because it reduces women to their biology. Sounds like you're talking about like a scientific specimen.

Grace: The female species if you will.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, when you watch "Acquisition," it is really stark just how degrading the term can be. That basically your value is in your reproductive capacity. It's really gross. So I mean in that way, I think it was kind of effective. That's interesting that the Enterprise crew is using it. It seems like they thought about how they were using it. The writers did.

Sue: Yeah, at least that's the impression I took from it while I was - sadly - watching that episode earlier today.

Grace: There's no way to happily watch that episode.

Sue: Exactly.

Jarrah: One other thing I thought was really just annoying about that episode is I felt like Archer figured the Ferengi out way too quickly. I think this is supposed to be the first time they met them, and they have no clue who they are, and he only learns two or three facts: that they're into profit, they're going to sell these women, and then he's basically able to totally masquerade as a Ferengi. So the stuff that he says - oh this part really bothered me - so I said Krem, who's the character played by Jeffrey Combs, is asking what species T'Pol is, and at this point she's not unconscious, but she's pretending to be. So Archer says, "She's a Vulcan. They're really not all that interesting once you get to know them." And then Krem goes, "I'd like to get to know this one. Maybe I won't sell her. Not right away." And then Archer goes, "Trust me, she's got no sense of humor. She's always complaining." And I'm like, "Oh Archer, your crew member is potentially going to be sold into slavery and sexual assault, and you're still making racist digs at the Vulcans."

Grace: Good God, Archer. Give it a rest.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: But anyway.

Sue: But Archer and even Trip - once people start to, you know, wake up and are in on the manipulation of the Ferengi, they're essentially treating them like unintelligent children. Right? Which is the same thing that ends up happening in that TNG episode. They're supposed to be this huge menacing threat that they've never met face to face before. And by the end of the episode they're treating them like children. But we haven't even talked about that episode yet.

Jarrah: It's a pretty bad episode. I think both of us watched it today and that was painful.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: But I think Armin Shimerman says in that episode they actually directed them to jump up and down like crazed gerbils

Grace: Gerbils, huh?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: That's very specific. But they are kind of flailing their arms about and doing weird things with their hands.

Jarrah: Ira Steven Behr comments that the Ferengi later on are sort of meant to represent - they're caricatures of humans today, that they exemplify all of humanity's vices. But this idea that they're really stupid and yet they have this incredible sense of entitlement over women's bodies is really weird to me.

Grace: It makes it kind of just so creepy

Jarrah: It's actually mentioned twice in "The Last Outpost," I think when they see Tasha Yar and you know, "You let your women wear clothing? It's true!" kind of stuff, and it's in that episode I actually - I mean it's a terrible episode. It's really boring and the villains don't come across as menacing, but I don't really mind it in that context because I think the whole point of that episode is there's this god creature who comes down and judges which of them is more civilized and judges that the Ferengi are basically barbarians. So it's not legitimating that attitude towards women in any way.

Grace: Yeah. It kind of takes those characteristics that they're showing, though, as being the Ferengi characteristics that are exaggerated human ones and makes them cartoonish and no longer feel like a real issue. It makes them feel like a joke.

Jarrah: Yeah I agree. I think that's a really good point. I definitely don't think it makes you feel like it's something we need to act on in our own society.

Grace: It's one of those things where if you watch them just doing their whole, you know, jumping up and down, waving their arms around thing going, "Oh, a female. Why is she wearing clothes so we cannot see her?" That just is like, "Ahh, we're so far past you know objectifying women. Good thing that's not a problem at all ever."

Sue: The few times at the Ferengi pop up again in *The Next Generation*, at least for me, they're kind of an eyeroll. You know, great this is here. They're more of a nuisance and annoyance than they are any kind of credible threat. And I think if not for Quark and Nog and Rom on *Deep Space Nine* they probably would have been brushed aside. I feel like Armin Shimerman's Quark essentially redeemed them. And even though their culture is still ridiculous I somehow - I don't know how this happens - I have this soft spot in my heart for the Ferengi. I think because they are so ridiculous.

Grace: They're ridiculous, but at the same time with Armin Shimerman's performance and the way the character was played up in *Deep Space Nine*, we get this really great Falstaffian quality that he's not that serious. They as a people are not that serious and that acts as kind of a buffer to the rest of the galaxy.

Jarrah: I agree, and I think that it probably helped that they did not have giant codpieces. Which I was just looking up, and Gene Roddenberry had told writer Herb Wright to create this nemesis based on sort of issues of the 1980s, and Herb Wright chose sort of corrupt capitalism. And in an interview in *Cinefantastique* magazine, he says that Gene Roddenberry's "sex fetish" had an influence on the characters and says, "He wanted to put a gigantic codpiece on the Ferengi. He spent 25 minutes explaining to me all the sexual positions that the Ferengi could go through. I finally said, 'Gene, this is a family show, on at 7:00 on Saturdays.' He finally said, 'Okay, you're right.'"

Sue: Gene Roddenberry was an interesting guy. I don't even know what to say.

Jarrah: Yes. I just had to throw that in there before we got into the discussion of the awesome stuff or better stuff in *Deep Space Nine*.

Sue: I have no transition from that, so we'll just move right along into *Deep Space Nine* where we really start to learn more about Ferengi culture and women in Ferengi culture before any of the reforms that we see begin to happen. There are a lot of rules.

Jarrah: The Rules of Acquisition.

Sue: Well there are those.

Jarrah: Yeah, there's a lot of ceremony in Ferengi society. It's really interesting how they're portrayed as having their sort of cultural/government/economic/financial regulation. Like everything is all in one. There's not really a big separation. I guess military as well. It's all connected.

Sue: Well, everything is a contract. Literally everything is a contract in Ferengi culture, including marriage. I mean, what do we know about the rules for the females - ugh - in Ferengi culture? We know that they couldn't earn profit. Pel tells us early on - the first Ferengi woman - I'll say it - that we meet - tells us that women on Ferenginar are not allowed to learn to read. But then that is contradicted because mothers are responsible for teaching their sons the Rules of Acquisition, and we also see Quark's mother Ishka claiming to be writing letters to his cousin as if that were no big deal. That's a little odd. They couldn't travel, they couldn't wear clothes. They especially weren't allowed to wear clothes in public. That's a little confusing too because there is -

Jarrah: We learn also they aren't supposed to talk to men who aren't their relatives.

Sue: But yet there's the wearing clothes and wearing clothes in public, and then later they say if they are allowed to wear clothes, then they can go out in public. So that's strange.

Jarrah: But I really love Pel. Pel's great.

Sue: Pel is great. We are talking about DS9 Season Two, Episode 7 "Rules of Acquisition."

Jarrah: So great.

Sue: It is a really good episode. In the litany of bad Ferengi episodes so far, this really is a great one. This is the one where Quark has a new waiter, and this waiter has great business ideas, and then he's sent on this mission for the Grand Nagus and brings this new waiter with him as his consultant, and this new waiter Pel turns out to be a woman. She is using fake lobes that she puts over her ears because the woman's ears are smaller, right, and essentially binding her chest even though it's never really said in those terms.

Jarrah: Yeah, I really like this episode. I think that it's an interesting tension like Grace was saying, when you're trying to make these things funny, how seriously can you take them in our own society? So, you know, making the Ferengi sexism funny is kind of problematic. It doesn't really encourage you to treat it as a serious issue now. But there's some really good moments in this. And Pel is really the first woman Ferengi that we get to see, and she really challenges Quark's belief that women are naturally bad at business and naturally stupid. So there's a really cool moment in this episode where Dax and Pel are talking and Pel confesses that she's in love with Quark, but Dax still thinks that she's a man. And Dax has picked up on the fact that Pel is in love with Quark and doesn't think that it's at all weird. She's actually really surprised when Pel says that, "He doesn't even know I'm a female." And I think that's just a cool understated thing about Dax's openness and not judging a same-sex relationship I think is pretty cool.

Sue: Yeah, I noted the same thing. Watching that episode, Dax is pretty fantastic. I think because of the nature of that character, the writers could do stuff like that without, I don't know, upsetting perhaps some more conservative viewers at the time. Is that fair to say?

Jarrah: I think so. I think that the downside though about this episode is I don't really love how Dax is so just amused by the Ferengi sexism. Like there's the beginning of that scene she's telling Pel about how adorable it was that Quark made this holosuite fantasy of her childhood bedroom or something and then tried to seduce her in it. And that is really gross. That's really gross, and she's just like aw ha ha ha.

Sue: Yeah, that is definitely a weird thing about the Ferengi men that we know. We see this with Quark and Rom and Zek even that even though they all at some point have these very traditional Ferengi beliefs of women should be submissive and not have opinions and be naked all the time.

Jarrah: They should chew the men's food for them.

Sue: Right. They all are attracted and flirt with and hit on, whatever you want to call it, these sometimes aggressive women.

Grace: Even the Ferengi can't deny it.

Sue: Yeah. We see Zek flirting with Kira, and Quark is always after Dax, Jadzia Dax specifically, and Rom ends up with Leeta.

Grace: Also his Klingon girlfriend at one point.

Jarrah: Yeah, Quark's Klingon wife. And also the Cardassian scientist he's in love with, an intelligent, independent woman

Sue: Aggressive was not the right word. I should say outspoken, confident.

Jarrah: Independent.

Grace: Aware.

Sue: Certainly not about to take any of the Ferengi crap. Let's just put it that way.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, I just kind of wish though - So there's a quote in "Rules of Acquisition" where Kira is saying about the Ferengi, "They're greedy, misogynistic, untrustworthy little trolls, and I wouldn't turn my back on one of them for a second." And Jadzia Dax goes, "Well neither would I. But once you accept that you'll find they can be a lot of fun." I mean, yeah, okay.

Grace: Compromise!

Jarrah: I'm not condoning Kira's blanket racism in that quote, but certainly from the way that they treat them - I think today if I was treated like that I would hope I would respond a lot more like Kira instead of just being like, "Boys will be boys."

Grace: Yeah. I'm guessing from Dax's experience of having, you know, been a man a few times, she has a kind of different perspective on it.

Sue: You think Dax is a dude bro?

Jarrah: Curzon sounds like he was.

Sue. He does, yeah.

Grace: She's not going to let being a woman get in the way of her bro-ing out. Sometimes you gotta get your bro on.

Jarrah: Bros before hosts.

Sue: Ten points

Grace: Nice.

Jarrah: So why do you think the Ferengi do, you know, fall for these independent women or the writers choose to have them go that way?

Grace: I could be an exotic concept to them that they naturally, you know, find kind of exciting and alluring.

Sue: I was thinking that too. But I think with Quark it might get a little creepy and possibly Oedipal because his mom is that way. Ishka is definitely not the traditional Ferengi woman which leads us very well into "Family Business" where we first meet Moogie. Season Three, episode 23.

Grace: Moogie!

Jarrah: I really like this episode too. I think that it kind of goes up in *Deep Space Nine* - the Ferengi episodes kind of go up for a bit and then they go down at least in terms of the women/feminist messages. But this is so great. And Andrea Martin is just hysterical.

Sue: She is so wonderful! I'm so sad she didn't come back for the other Ishka episodes. But they put her in a lot of makeup because she is only a couple of years older than Armin Shimerman. So all of that old age stuff, even like her knees and her shoulders and her hands, all of that is makeup.

Grace: Right, because they have a scene where she's naked. So she she had to go full body, didn't she? Which I guess would put you off of playing just about any character if you had to do full body makeup just right off the bat.

Sue: And the reason she gave was that the makeup routine was just too much for her.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: She's awesome.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think she gives such a strong impression in that episode, and there are just so many really comedic moments. I mean, it's another example of a Ferengi woman who is succeeding at being a Ferengi. She's earning profits well that would make Quark exceptionally wealthy. And I love how in the end she sort of, you know, tricks Quark into thinking - she tricks

everyone into thinking she gave it all back because everyone's underestimated her and can't believe she really earned as much as she did. But she actually is holding back like a third of it for herself.

Sue: Except Rom. Rom knows the truth.

Grace: Because he loves his mom too much to tattle on her.

Jarrah: Yeah. But I think that's also the episode where she sort of tells Quark, "You're like me. You're the one who has the head for business. The lobes for business." It's really cute. I mean there are quite a few examples of her, you know, saying she's going to do something and then at the end sort of deciding - like originally she says she's not getting any of it back on principle. She won't get any of the money back. But then at the end she does because it'll ruin Quark. But I think that given the arc of her character it makes sense. It's strategic that she would make that decision. And it's cool that she was still kind of gaming the system by keeping some of the money.

Sue: Well, it wasn't about the money in that situation. It wasn't, "No, I'm not going to give it back because I want to keep the money." It was, "I'm not signing this confession because if I confess to something it means I was doing something wrong. And I don't believe that I've been doing anything wrong." And I think that's the important part for that character.

Jarrah: Yeah I agree.

Grace: It's more about making a stand than making profit for her.

Jarrah: Yeah. Although certainly she wants to keep the profit and she wants to succeed as a Ferengi in terms of earning profit, and we get to see that more in "Ferengi Love Songs" which is, I think, her next big one. We find out Zek is losing his memory and they're in love and she's been acting as his financial adviser. And in that one she again is still very much counseling what we know is typical sort of Ferengi Rules of Acquisition and business ethics and profits being up being the main thing. What do you guys think of Cecily Adams in the role? I don't think she's that bad. I just think she's not Andrea Martin.

Grace: Well, it would take Andrea Martin to be Andrea Martin, but she carries the role.

Sue: Yeah, she serves it well. So now that Ishka is with Zek, now that they're a couple, she can sort of influence from the inside, which she is. Zek doesn't seem to have a problem with her being clothed. He has no problem trusting her to give him financial advice, to keep track of his day planner, to, we get the impression, remember his passwords. But then Quark decides he's going to, under the influence of Liquidator or former Liquidator or whatever at that point Brunt.

Grace: Jeffrey Combs again.

Sue: Quark decides he's going to break up this relationship and convinces Zek that she has this evil plan to take over the Ferengi government.

Grace: She's a member of the feminist Illuminati!

Sue: Exactly. So that the females take over.

Grace: That sounds familiar. But this right here is a really good example of why I love Ishka so much as a character that they have to resort to that kind of ridiculous mudslinging to bring her down. And it just really makes you appreciate that of this entire species and culture, there is one really great Machiavellian. And it's this middle-aged woman. And that just makes me so happy because think of your concept of a Machiavellian character and how often you get to see that be a woman, much less an older woman and just getting that variety. And the character of Ishka herself. It compounds to make me so happy.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's pretty great. I kind of wish - it's cool at the end. Quark basically starts having to act as his financial adviser and he's just doing a terrible job at it and realizes he really needs Ishka and brings Ishka back and explains that she's still been giving all this good advice and Ishka says, you know, that, "I do believe in equality for females and someday I hope you will too. But I never would do anything to hurt you. So I'm not going to overthrow your government." So I felt that was interesting. And it kind of makes me question the directions things go after this. But I like where she's going. In a way I think she is conniving, but she also, you know, deeply cares about Quark, Rom, and Zek all in kind of different ways.

Grace: Yeah. You can be pulling strings without pulling them maliciously.

Sue: But then the next time we see her is in "The Magnificent Ferengi."

Grace: I love that episode!

Sue: It doesn't have a lot to do with this, but it's a really fun episode.

Jarrah: It is a really fun episode. I just think it's kind of disappointing. It disappoints me the same way that the *Deep Space Nine* Lwaxana Troi episodes do where you had this woman who was incredibly tough and then you put her in a position where she's kind of a victim who needs to be saved by men.

Grace: Yeah, that's my only real caveat with the episode. We have to see this awesome character just get completely damsel-fied. But there's one thing that you've got to love about Ishka and that's the fact that even when she's being held captive by the Jem'Hadar, she is still trying to work some business into it. Like she's talking, "So feel my skin. Feel this great moisturizer I use. You will love it." She's doing the whole Mary Kay thing while she's being held captive. And that's pretty impressive.

Sue: That is true. Though I wish that in the end they hadn't just left a re-animated corpse bumping into a wall. I assume until it decays.

Jarrah: I'm assuming that it was an allusion to *The Magnificent Seven*. The hanging body.

Sue: Well yeah.

Grace: But the curse of Combs - you can't do anything without making a *Re-Animator* reference.

Jarrah: I also have mixed feelings about the reason they have to go rescue Ishka, which is that basically she got special dispensation to go get a lobe lift. And so I think it's cool because it shows that your feminist identity isn't dependent on your personal appearance. You can care about your appearance and still be a feminist. But it does, I think, not really sound great that this whole a crew of Ferengi men have to put their lives in danger to save a woman who got kidnapped going for plastic surgery.

Grace: It's not the most dignified way to get captured, definitely. It would be like way cool if she was doing like an underground deal or something that went awry. But no, this is what we get.

Jarrah: I think the really funny part in that episode that she gets to do though is because when they're going to pick her up. Like, "How do we know you aren't really a Changeling?" and Nog takes a knife and cuts her hand. And then when they let her go she just smacks Nog, and it's great. And pinches his lobes, and he's screaming.

Sue: That's fantastic.

Jarrah: And then she's like, "Are you a Changeling? How do we know you're not a Changeling?"

Sue: That's not an effective way to tell.

Grace: Just as only Andrea Martin can Andrea Martin, only Ishka can Ishka.

Sue: We move on to the elephant in the recording?

Grace: Might as well.

Sue: The next time we see Ishka and Zek, for that matter, is in "Profits and Lace."

Grace: You can all just mentally insert that sad trombone sound right now.

Sue: It's the season six episode towards the end of the season, and it actually doesn't start off that bad, right? Zek and Ishka show up, and they are telling Quark and Rom about all of the changes that have been made on Ferenginar. Women are wearing clothes in public. They are working. They are buying. But on the other hand that has led to Zek being deposed.

Grace: Oh no.

Jarrah: So in order to help him regain the whatever the Nagus throne is called - the latinum throne?

Grace: The Nagus-ery? I don't know.

Sue: The Tower of Commerce?

Grace: The lobe bean bag chair?

Jarrah: So they have to win over Nilva. Isn't that what his name is, Nilva? The chairman of Slugo-o-Cola.

Grace: And they have to repeatedly sing that tune.

Sue: [singing] Slimiest cola in the galaxy!

Jarrah: Well, it's just adorable when you know everyone's sitting at the table and they say Slug-o-Cola, and they all spontaneously sing [singing] "Slug-o-Cola!" It's pretty cute. And so their plan is to show that Ishka has this amazing business sense so that he'll support these reforms and people will start to see them in a different light. But then Quark yells at his mom until she has a heart attack.

Grace: This is how you treat your mother. He's never going to live that down. And you know what I'm kind of glad that she has that to lord over him forever.

Sue: And actually Quark is pretty extra terrible in the beginning of this episode because he's talking to one of his, I guess, waitresses? She's not a dabo girl. And he's essentially saying, "You're so nice, and you're so great. But it would be better if you did me sexual favors." It is straight up sexual harassment which even if that's allowed in Ferengi culture -

Grace: Is so ick.

Sue: You're not on a Ferengi space station. You're on a Federation space station, and I'm pretty sure that that's going to be against the rules.

Jarrah: Yes, so then basically they have to still prove that a woman can do business. So they give Quark sex reassignment surgery.

Grace: Rather than try and track down a competent woman.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. Like, I don't know, call up Pel.

Sue: Well, they claim that there's not enough time to get another woman there.

Grace: Are they saying that it's faster to perform a sex change than it is to find an actual woman?

Sue: In the 24th century.

Grace: There was Pel. There was Pel at the beginning of *Deep Space Nine*. What happened to Pel? Couldn't they have found Pel?

Sue: This would have been a great place for Pel to come back.

Jarrah: Instead what happens is that Quark saves the day while Ishka is out in sick bay. She starts out sort of the main character in her story and then she ends up having to get her ass saved by Quark all the time.

Sue: And Quark saves the day but not without being super sexist.

Jarrah: Ew. My gosh.

Sue: There are all these jokes because he's now a woman quote unquote that "oh he's tired" and "he has to go to bed early" and "he's just too dumb to understand it." And overly emotional and all of these really offensive stereotypes.

Jarrah: He takes hormones for two days, and he is sobbing to Odo at the end of it. And he also discovers empathy, because empathy just gets switched on with estrogen. It's an incredible oversimplification of biological and socialization processes that basically just plays to the negative stereotypes about women and treating trans people as jokes.

Grace: Well, he also gets assaulted at one point almost doesn't he?

Jarrah: Yeah, it's pretty gross.

Grace: Yeah, and that's played off as being funny too.

Sue: Not just assault but attempted rape.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: There are lots of problems with this episode. So many problems.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean treating sexual assault against men as a joke is very common, and it's really not cool. And then at the end he sort of is like, "Oh, I discovered empathy from being a woman. You know, waitress, maybe I don't actually care about the sexual favors." And then she's like, "Are you sure? Because oo-mox looks really fun." And then he's like, "I'm sure. You deserve more than that." And then he rethinks it and kind of chases after her. But it's like, seriously?

Grace: There is just a lot of things that are played off as a joke that make it really uncomfortable to watch. And I also just feel sorry for Alexander Siddig who held out for a spot to direct on *Deep Space Nine*, and this was what he got.

Jarrah: Apparently he directed it actually a lot darker, and they made him redo a bunch of it because they wanted to be funnier. And him and Armin Shimerman just didn't think it was funny.

Grace: And it wasn't, except for the Slug-o-Cola.

Sue: It was just uncomfortable.

Jarrah: Also the way that Quark as Lumba markets Slug-o-Cola to women - is it kind of challenges the idea that capitalism can work in favor of women's rights because basically they argue that, well, you have to reach out to women because women don't like slimy things. So what you need to do is just say, "Slug-o-Cola keeps your teeth that lovely shade of green" so that women are image obsessed. Again, it's just like you have to market differently to women based on gender stereotypes as a way of proving that women can be better at business.

Grace: So this whole episode is pretty much just saying, "Broads, dames, bitches. They're not so bad, right?"

Jarrah: "Women, men can do it better." So does it get better after that?

Sue: Kind of.

Jarrah: Does it not get worse after that at least?

Sue: It certainly does not get worse. I don't think you can get worse than that episode really.

Grace: That's a low right there.

Sue: The last time that we see Ishka is in the second to last if you count the finale as one episode - the two parter - episode of DS9 called "The Dogs of War," and we hear from Zek because he and Ishka have decided to retire. They're going to go live on Risa, and he is coming to Deep Space Nine to name his successor to the Grand Nagus chair, Tower of Commerce.

Grace: I'm just imagining an Iron Throne made out of dollar signs.

Sue: The Nagus is still sort of - there's a lot of static on the transmission and we know his memory is not that great. So he thinks he's talking to Rom and says, "I'm naming you my successor." And Quark thinks it's him and then begins to find out about all of the continued reform on Ferenginar and is, just like before, not that happy about it. And these are things like the introduction of taxes which are used to fund social programs.

Grace: I just love that these are all like really obviously good and progressive things that he's objecting to because god forbid you have the character actually start to evolve by the time your show ends.

Sue: It's just interesting. The things they name specifically are subsidies for the poor, retirement benefits for the elderly, health care, you know. Bribes are tax deductible. You get a receipt for a bribe which is hilarious. And the Grand Nagus too does not have unilateral power. There is a Congress of Economic Advisors. So in a very short time, you know, between the beginning of DS9 and the last season - in seven years the culture has almost completely changed or is at least starting to.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean actually you could say even really within only three or four years since Ishka hooked up with Zek because before that they weren't really changing much. Like Ishka was really just doing stuff by herself.

Sue: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think of it in terms of if we see Pel who is disguising herself as a man to go and earn profit, there must be other women on Ferenginar doing the same thing. Just like we know about a certain number of women who went and fought in the the wars in America when women weren't allowed to fight but because we have a certain number that are confirmed we can suspect there were X amount more, you know.

Jarrah: I'm not really sure how I feel about basically it turning from just sort of women can earn profit into a full scale sort of social democratic revolution. Well, first of all I don't buy it could happen that quickly. The Ferengi were so attached to their profit in every aspect of their lives, to like buying towels when someone comes into their house to wipe off the rain, that it's basically also the religion that I don't actually buy that there wouldn't have been bloodshed over those kinds of changes.

Sue: Absolutely, and they make it seem like the Congress of Economic Advisors is totally on board with this progressive attitude.

Grace: Well, imagine what kind of people they would have instated into that level of power with Ishka's level of Machiavellianism.

Sue: True.

Grace: You know that that Congress was planted.

Sue: But like when when Quark says, "I'm going to change this and I'm going to change this," Brunt's like, "You're going to have a hard time changing it because you have to go through these people now." So it's suddenly that Quark is the one who is behind the times.

Jarrah: Yeah, and there's also a species protection act and like environmental law. And it fits with that overall idea of, you know, the Ferengi are supposed to be us in the 20th, 21st century and here's where we hope they're going to get. So it fits with that. But I didn't buy it based on where Ishka and Pel were going which is just, you know, we kind of want to be as good as the men at doing, at being what it is to be a Ferengi which is to earn profit. I mean, I have my own views on - I think that the amount that you could liberate women in a capitalist society is always going to be somewhat limited. But I just didn't buy it. You would actually go from just like letting women open businesses to having a full scale democratic socialist revolution.

Sue: And let me make Rom the Grand Nagus.

Grace: Yeah. I was going to say much less with Rom in charge.

Sue: I think though - it's really funny to me as having watched all of these episodes we're talking about in a condensed time period. Back in "Rules of Acquisition," back in season two, Rom's the one who's totally offended that Pel is a woman, right? He's the one freaking out and wants to report everyone to everything, and Quark is okay with it. He's not happy about it, but he's like, "Oh, you do know what you're doing. Go and do your thing, just don't do it here." Right? But by the end, Quark has almost regressed in his way of thinking. And Rom is the progressive one, right? He's just like, "Well whatever makes Leeta happy and whatever my son wants to do. If he wants to join Starfleet, and I'm all for everyone being happy with what they're doing."

Grace: So Rom is the character that learns, and Quark gets to be the crotchety old guy who's afraid of change.

Sue: Yeah, pretty much.

Jarrah: Well, yeah. I mean Rom and Nog both go through a dramatic change that kind of happens a bit inexplicably, but I think for the better. And they're both really cool characters in showing that you know between the three of them with Quark it shows for three very different models of Ferengi masculinity, which is very cool. But Rom has never, with all of his strengths that he has, he's never shown himself to be decisive.

Grace: Except when it comes to root beer.

Jarrah: Like in "Ferengi Love Songs," O'Brien just says something off-handedly, and suddenly he's asking Leeta for a prenup. And then I forget who else says something off-handedly and then he realizes he's made a horrible mistake. So he's very easily swayed by other people and I don't see him - I think he would probably get assassinated within the month.

Sue: And O'Brien is the last person you want to take marital advice from.

Jarrah: Pretty much!

Sue: Let's be real.

Grace: I think the only way that Rom would survive being in charge is if he was just constantly being fed information by Ishka, which would probably be the way she would want to retire, I think. Not really retiring.

Sue: He has his council of advisors, and they said in one of the many episodes that I watched this weekend that only one Nagus has ever been assassinated. And I think that was when the market crashed or something. Some some kind of economic upheaval.

Grace: Well, all the other ones could probably afford to pay off their assassins.

Sue: Right. I guess. But it seems, anyway, that the culture is already moving in that direction that Rom would make kind of sense. But Rom has never really had a ton of common sense at least what they've shown us, even if he's apparently a brilliant engineer. So it's going to be - it would be odd. It would be very odd.

Grace: It's just one of those kind of - it's a time of change. We just need a nice, kind of oblivious guy in charge. He's the Jimmy Carter of the Ferengi. Nice but kind of oblivious.

Jarrah: My personal choice - I think Pel would have been a great Grand Nagus.

Grace: Yeah. Definitely.

Sue: Yeah, but then Ishka couldn't have had her line about a woman ascending the forty flights of stairs to the Tower of Commerce.

Jarrah: Yeah, because Ishka dreams about a woman one day being Grand Nagus. And it would make a lot more sense to me for it to be a business-minded woman than man who has no lobes for business as even Ishka says on numerous occasions. And from her previous conversations with Quark, it's like she acknowledges Rom isn't very good at this.

Grace: Again that makes the whole thing make more sense if you think that Rom is probably going to be a political puppet.

Jarrah: Yeah. It's too bad! I like Rom. That's also another episode where Quark has sort of a thing for a dabo girl. So it shows that Quark doesn't always go for the more independent women. But I think the ones he has more meaningful attachments to he certainly does, but he still also sees women in his employment as sex objects, I think..

Grace: Yeah. Which is ick. It would've been nice to see him grow a little more.

Jarrah: Yeah. I was just reading this thing about Ishka, though. Going back to when they first wrote about her, and apparently the director David Livingston said he suggested Wallace Shawn in drag, which didn't go over real big.

Grace: No.

Jarrah: So that would've been so awful.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Awful. Anyway, just wanted to put that in because I know that's super not cool. It would've been like "Profit and Lace" times - like at least as bad.

Grace: Yeah. Ugh. Man, can you imagine?

Sue: I am, and I'm feeling ill.

Jarrah: Yeah. It just would have again made it a joke.

Sue: Well, as we sit here lamenting that Pel did not return, she does appear in a few places in - well it's not the expanded universe in Star Trek. I don't know what to call it - in the books in a novella called *Reservoir Ferengi* and e-book - get this - called *Lust's Latinum Lost and Found*.

Jarrah: Wow. Oh my God.

Grace: Is it a Ferengi bodice ripper? Because that's what it sounds like.

Sue: I read the summary, and she is helping them to publish like book number seven in a Ferengi bodice ripper series. Yeah.

Grace: Oh my gosh!

Jarrah: Wow!

Sue: Grace is going to go buy the book. Like right now.

Grace: I want that. That sounds insane. That is the weirdest thing I've heard. That is nearly purging my brain of the thought of Wallace Shawn in drag.

Sue: I'm weirded out by it. I don't even know how to feel.

Grace: I need to find this. Because now I'm imagining what this whole wider world of species specific smut fiction must be like out there. Is there a Harlequin romance novel equivalent for every species? And if so, how are they unique? What do they look like? How flowy is the dude's hair on the cover of the book?

Sue: With that, does anyone have anything else to add to this discussion?

Grace: I could really go for some Slug-o-Cola right now.

Jarrah: I spent a lot of time today - an embarrassing amount of time, actually - trying to think up feminist Rules of Acquisition for the Rom-ruled Ferengi society.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: But the only thing I could come up with was "a woman needs a man like a tube grab needs a tooth sharpener."

Sue: I love it!

Jarrah: So if readers have any other suggestions for Ferengi feminist Rules of Acquisition, I think you should send them to us because I want to read them.

Sue: And compile them and make a book.

Grace: Yeah. And how can they get in touch with us if they want us to read those?

Sue: Well, you can find us online at womenatwarp.com and now in the iTunes store - Yay! - by searching for Women at Warp. You can send us those feminist Rules of Acquisition to crew@womenatwarp.com. You can tweet them to us @WomenAtWarp, and you can follow us on Facebook. Join the discussion there [facebook.com/womenatwarp](https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp). And if you are enjoying the show, we would love for you to rate us and review the podcast on iTunes which will bump up our ranking and help other people find the show. That would be awesome. So, Grace, where can everybody find you?

Grace: Everyone can find me on Twitter @BonecrusherJenk. You can read my writing on the Mythcreants blog or listen to past episodes that I've done of All Things Trek on Trek Radio.

Jarrah: You can find me at trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com.

Sue: Awesome. I'm Sue and you can find more podcasts and blogs from me on anomaly podcast.com. Thanks for listening!

Grace: Spay and neuter your tribbles!

Sue: MOOGIE!

Jarrah: Spay and neuter your voles.

Audio clip from Star Trek: Deep Space Nine - Family Business (S3.23)

Rom: Moogie.

Ishka (Andrea Martin): It's good to see you, son. You look well.

Rom: And you look dressed.

Ishka: Oh, now, now.

Brunt (Jeffrey Combs): Your mother is wearing clothes.

Quark: Mother, get undressed this instant.

Ishka: Hello Quark. You haven't changed a bit.

Brunt: Perhaps I should leave.

Ishka: Perhaps you should.

Brunt: Was she addressing me?

Quark: No, no, no, not at all.

Ishka: Of course I was. This is my home and I'll speak to whomever I want .

Rom: But Moogie, he's a stranger and you're a female.

Ishka: It's all right, Rom. I know what I'm doing.