

Women at Warp Episode 62: Star/Trek Face/Off (“Face of the Enemy” and “Second Skin”)

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. 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 thanks for tuning in. Today I have with me crewmembers Grace.

Grace: Hey everybody.

Sue: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: Except for Jarrah, but not actually a human, because I have been surgically altered to appear like a Slitheen from Doctor Who.

Grace: Wow. Wait. That's real commitment. I mean you got a bunch of life altering surgery done just for this episode?

Jarrah: No I just woke up like this.

Grace: Oh.

Sue: Aren't the Slitheen the farting aliens?

Grace: Yes, they were. Yes, they were the farting aliens.

Jarrah: I believe they are the farting aliens. That is the only part of my identity that is not in crisis right now.

Grace: Oh dang, we're going to have to do a lot of sound editing on Jarrah's end, aren't we?

Jarrah: Just kidding. I'm a regular human with regular digestion today.

Sue: Today.

Grace: Regularity is good.

Jarrah: Prune juice. It's a warrior's drink. Wow, this is the most toilet-humory episode we ever started. OK, sorry.

Sue: Two minutes in and we're already off the rails. Well today we are eventually going to be talking about the episodes “Face of the Enemy” from TNG and “Second Skin” from DS9. But first...

Grace: Oh my God, you also made a butt joke? Really taking down the class levels here, guys.

Jarrah: This is what happens when we record after 9 p.m.

Grace: I'm shocked it wasn't me who did it though.

Sue: So Women at Warp, we are completely supported and funded by our listeners. And over at Patreon you can help us out by giving as little as a dollar a month. And it gets you access to some special patron-only content and all of that support goes into hosting fees, convention fees, having things printed for material distribution, et cetera, et cetera, and that allows us to keep the show up and running.

Grace: You will also receive our special patron love that we only give to patrons.

Jarrah: It's just a tiny notch up from regular love.

Grace: But it's better, you know it's better.

Sue: And if you have a few spare minutes, we also ask that you review us, rate and review us on iTunes, or apparently as it's called now, Apple Podcasts. Both Jarrah and Grace will be at Star Trek Las Vegas coming up at the beginning of August.

Grace: Damn right.

Jarrah: Yeah it's going to be great. We'll be putting more details out on our Facebook page. But at the moment it looks like we're probably going to be sharing a table with Priority One, the other, one of the other two fabulous Roddenberry podcasts, so we'll have a space in the vendor's room to talk to listeners about the show. So that's pretty exciting.

Sue: Awesome. And I will be at Dragon Con Labor Day weekend and it's looking like New York Comic-Con in October. So that is the convention schedule as of right now. Do we have any other announcements?

Jarrah: Well in a couple of weeks, I guess a month from the time you are listening to this podcast, we will be putting out our next book club episode. So it's not too late if you want to cram the book. It's not the longest read ever; It's the world of Deep Space Nine volume one with a story on Cardassia and a story on Andor, just post Deep Space Nine. So if you want to join our book club for that you can grab a copy of that book and head over to Goodreads and search for Women at Warp, and you'll find our book club to join the discussion.

Grace: And you'll find our good reads. Where the reads are good. But where the reading's not so great, really.

Jarrah: Excellent. I think that all the announcements we have.

Sue: All right. So let's jump right in.

Grace: OK so we're, you know, crawling out of our our space beds. We're kind of groggy, we're wandering over to the bathroom maybe to throw a little water in our faces and... mirrors! What do we see in them?

Jarrah: Yes. Both of these episodes start off, well almost start off, with the woman character looking in a mirror and getting kind of shocked to realize they look like a totally different alien.

Grace: I feel like a totally different alien every time I see my reflection first thing in the morning, too, to be fair. But with this it's like a legit thing. Like, they've both been surgically altered to look like a different species.

Jarrah: Yeah, so we've talked, I think, about "Face of the Enemy" a couple of times a little bit in the past. We talked about in our TNG episode and our Romulan women episode. And I, so like, do you want to start with "Second Skin"?

Grace: Sure, let's go for it.

Jarrah: We'll take a little bit deeper look. So this was, this is the episode where Kira basically gets a shocking transmission from Bajor that says you are actually in this Cardassian prison camp, and she says, "I don't know what you're talking about." And then on her way to Bajor to investigate, she's abducted. She wakes up on Cardassia, and it seems like she might actually be Cardassian. She's told that she was basically put in like a

deep undercover mission, brainwashed to make herself think that she was Bajoran, and that she's going to be given treatment to recover her memories. That she's actually a Cardassian agent and then used to basically spill all the information she's gained as Kira since then to rat on the Federation. So that's the that's basically the plot there.

Grace: She was in deep, deep, deep cover.

Jarrah: Yes.

Grace: At what point does it stop being deep cover though and just start being ridiculous? That's one thing I always get, start wondering every time I'm involved in reading some kind of spy based media. It's like, how many double crosses too many?

Jarrah: Yeah. Well I mean OK. So I really, I had not seen this episode for a really long time, possibly since the first time it aired, and I really enjoyed it. And I think, so you know, Kira is told that she is Iliana Ghemor, who's the daughter of this Legate, and the Legate himself really believes that she's his daughter. And if you were watching this through the first time, at least I felt like I would have not been sure what was happening. I wouldn't have been sure if she really was.

Grace: That'd be a very entertaining way to do this, to have this be the first episode of Deep Space Nine that someone else watches and then they have to watch through all the Kira arcs and be kind of like, "How much of this is real?"

Sue: Now even if it's not the first episode, I mean, this is early on.

Grace: Yeah. Early enough. Yeah.

Sue: I don't know if I would have believed that at that time Star Trek would make such a drastic change to one of its main characters. Because that's a huge shift for that one character from being, you know, a resistance fighter slash terrorist to being the one of the race that she would fight against.

Jarrah: *cough* Seska *cough*

Sue: Well, yeah.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: But she wasn't a principal.

Sue: This was also significantly earlier.

Grace: Well this could have been sweeps week for all we know. And as we know, sweeps week makes fools of us all.

Sue: But like this is still in the era of TV where like, for the most part, you know that your main characters are going to be back to normal by the end of the episode.

Grace: More or less, yeah.

Jarrah: Well we did have a comment from Lydia on Facebook who said, "'Second Skin' is an incredible episode. I remember the first time I watched it, I kept thinking, 'But what if it's true?'" And to see Kira struggle

with the dread and uncertainty surrounding her identity was really gripping. And for her to find some common ground with Ghemor was a nice and unexpected turn of events. This is still one of my favorite episodes.” And then she says that she also really wondered what actually happened to Iliana Ghemor, which, good question. And says she didn't want to spoil it but she plays a major role in a long arc in the relaunch novels, so that's exciting and I look forward to discovering that when I get to it.

Sue: It's another Star Trek discovery for us to look forward to.

Jarrah: Yes. Yet again one of those things where you're like, “I wish this had happened. Oh it did in the novels. Good. Something.”

Sue: I just love, this episode is just so, so good. I enjoy it so much both in the aspect that we really do get to see Nana Visitor get to sort of stretch her chops doing a wide emotional range, but also, it's kind of our Star Trek equivalent of *The Manchurian Candidate*. And I just really liked that in concept alone. And again, it's just very well done, in the sense that you're walked through so much the episode with that, it could really be real. You're, it's not too outlandish considering the other things we've seen in Star Trek, and it's just a very interesting “what if?” that we get just from the concept of this episode.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean one thing, one way that this one differs from “Face of the Enemy” is that there's definitely this kind of gaslighting aspect which someone else brought up on Facebook

Sue: Oh definitely.

Jarrah: Where they're trying to convince her of something that she knows is in her heart is not true, and you can see how difficult it is for her to maintain, given all this overwhelming evidence that the Obsidian Order has manufactured to try to change her mind. So this whole idea of someone trying to convince you that you're crazy for believing what you know to be true.

Grace: Which is a scary concept in and of itself to see play out on screen.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I think it's really effective and you have you know Tekeny Ghemor who's her dad, you know, or fake dad, and the Obsidian Order is trying to get to him because, by playing off his loyalty to his country to his loyalty to his daughter. And even though he ends up being wrong they, you know, he is protecting her because he can see something like his daughter in her.

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: And then through him she gets to realize another way that not all Cardassians are alike, because he's another figure who's a dissident and wants things to be better on Cardassia and doesn't believe that the occupation was the right thing.

Grace: Which is very cool that we get through this story that turn around for both the character that we have really established and whose characters are really firmly set. And we get to still see this mini arc for this character that's being introduced. It's cool that we get to see that double arc-age.

Sue: Well and in both of these episodes, we have the, our main character being used as a piece in a larger scheme, right? The main difference here is that, you know, they're still, they're trying to trick Kira and convince her of something that is false. And that's how they want to get her to play along because they're not trying, because they're trying to manipulate the people around her. With Troi, she gets the full story right off the bat. This is what we're trying to do. This is why we needed you. And they're both trying to further a cause. But in

"Face of the Enemy" we are seeing the, I guess resistance, I don't remember if they call it the resistance, but you know faction within the Romulan culture or government that is pushing for reunification.

Jarrah: Yeah, the dissident movement.

Sue: Right. There you go.

Jarrah: I think they actually call them dissidents in both because I watched them right after each other and I remember being sort of struck by that they used the actual same language for Ghemor's people who believed that the Obsidian Order and stuff had too much power, or the military had too much power. The Obsidian Order, I think. And Spock's people who believe in the Vulcan-Romulan reunification.

Sue: So, I mean, in "Face of the Enemy" our main character is being used to further the agenda of the group that Star Trek would have us believe is correct, whereas in Deep Space Nine it's the opposite.

Jarrah: Well and Kira certainly has a lot less of an active role to play. Like her role in the episode is really just resisting this sort of attempted gaslighting.

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: She, you know, she's very dependent for her ultimate rescue on Tekeny Ghemor having faith in her as his daughter, or even just a good person, and also in the actions of a bunch of dudes who are lovely, and it's a fun subplot. But just to, you know, comment on the situation that it's basically Sisko and Garack and O'Brien? Bashir? It's O'Brien. I just watched this thing, you'd think I'd remember this.

Grace: It's hard to remember the parts without Kira.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: It does feel very damsel in distress though especially at the end.

Jarrah: No it didn't. No I don't feel like it felt like she was waiting for a man to rescue her. But it just is a comment on, you know, the other week we did an episode on sexual agency. This would just be straight character agency that's not sexual per se, but it's just about how much ability does she have to act in this plot. And she isn't really like a main person driving the action.

Sue: So that's why I feel like she is a damsel in distress, or she's not, she's not necessarily waiting to be rescued, but she's not doing anything to further her own departure. And then the guys show up and rescue her.

Jarrah: Uh-huh.

Grace: Also with both these episodes there is such a sense of violation right off the bat, outside of agency. Just that both these women are kidnapped, essentially, and are physically altered, like surgically, without their permission, is really freakin' scary. I mean that's one thing that I can never really get over with either of these episodes. They're just kind of like, "Oh, I've been surgically altered into another species. That's an inconvenience." And I would be losing my mind. I mean. Body dysmorphia looks scary as hell, and that's just kind of like, "Well, this is happening now. I guess I'll get over it." And that's one thing that always bothers me in a lot of media, and this is going way back to my early anime days, anytime you saw like a body swap anime, people were like, "Oh no! Aw, this is just downright inconvenient for me!" It's like, no that's horrifying. Why are you not just shrieking constantly? What the? Oh my gosh, it's just weird how it's, how the body horror aspect of this is so underplayed.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. Can you maybe explain a bit more for our listeners about what body dysmorphia is for people who aren't familiar with the term?

Grace: There are different types of body dysmorphia. One of the more common forms is gender dysmorphia I think is the term for it, where you are in, the body you were born with does not feel like the body you are supposed to have. It's kind of common with the trans folk and it's, it's constant pain and discomfort kind of, from looking at your body and from knowing you don't have the body that you believe is yours. There are also cases in the psychological and mental health community where there are people who will fixate on parts of their body that just don't feel right to them. It's considered, in some circles anorexia is considered a form of body dysphoria. There are also extreme cases where people will feel like they have an alien limb or a body part that it's just there but doesn't belong to them. And looking into it, and like I said it's scary stuff and it's stuff that happens to real people, and again it never just really sits all that right every time I see it. Just kind of like, "Different body, different day!" It chaps the ass a bit there.

Jarrah: Yeah. We had another Facebook comment that I know is like from Becky who is, you know, being funny but also pointing out something creepy, I think intentionally, which is, "Not to be too indelicate here, but has she had plastic surgery all over, or do Cardassians and Bajorans have the same things in their pants? And that she and Troi can be returned to looking precisely as they did before with ease boggles the mind, too. If plastic surgery is this easy in the future, people would be doing it as casually as they change their hair color in our times."

Grace: Well, this and the episode with, that involves going undercover as Klingons just raises the question of, oh is it that easy? You can just kind of... swap?

Jarrah: Well at least they got to choose when they were undercover as Klingons.

Grace: Yeah, definitely a better case there, but I'm just wondering can you swap species superficially like that and if so, does that mean we've got like a bunch of Vulcan Rachel Dolezals out in space, like talking about how, "We're just so in tune with the Vulcan way. You know?"

Jarrah: Well you have like that one blonde Romulan.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Not Sela, but the other guy.

Grace: Maybe that was his deal. Who knows? He just kind of showed up, is like, "No this feels like my place. You know, I grew up in a house without a replicator. I don't have an understanding of these people the same way humans do. I'm just a part of this at heart."

Jarrah: Yeah I feel like certainly Troi and Kira would have had to go to the bathroom at least once, and it is hard to believe that, yeah.

Grace: This isn't my crotch! No!

Jarrah: And it's hard to believe that you would look exactly the same. Just like, below the neck.

Sue: So I just really quickly want to clarify the difference between body dysmorphia and gender dysphoria because they're slightly different. So gender dysphoria is what you were talking about at the very beginning of feeling that your body is quote unquote "wrong" for the gender that you actually are.

Jarrah: Yeah. And body dysmorphia is feeling like you're, there's a part of your body that needs to be fixed in some way.

Sue: Body dysmorphia is actually categorized as an anxiety disorder that really is what causes the attention or the focus on a specific area of the body.

Jarrah: And it's supposed to be like perceiving your body to be different than it actually is, correct?

Sue: That's part of it.

Jarrah: That's like where people perceive themselves to be heavier than they are, or skinnier than they are, or wrong in a certain way. Anyway it is, it's fascinating and this, you know, this issue, not only is it kind of creepy to think about that, you know, it would be violating to have that happen to you, but it's interesting to think of this idea that Becky raised about if plastic surgery is so easy, what would that do to our culture? Because already you know since the, you know, 1980s there's been a really dramatic shift in the acceptance of plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures. And there are certainly some medical reasons that people get procedures that would be considered plastic surgery. But there are a lot of non-medical reasons, and there's been a lot of concern among different feminist groups for different reasons around, like are we, you know, are women having dangerous things performed on themselves to basically just make themselves unnaturally appealing or try to, you know, adhere to this unnatural beauty ideal.

Grace: And if so, and if that's within our capabilities in the future, how are the impossible beauty ideals going to expand? How are they going to get even less believable?

Sue: My brain goes in so many different directions because the first thing that came to mind was the idea of well if everybody has it, then nobody has it, right? Maybe it becomes so available that it's just not a thing anymore. Or maybe in this vision of the future we have moved past these beauty standards.

Grace: Yeah but it's hard to argue that we moved, that we're showing a future where we've moved past beauty standards. But everyone that we see on screen is at least a seven or higher.

Sue: Well and there's also a salon that we see our women characters in more than once.

Jarrah: Well, and Dabo girls, and Riker sex kittens created by Q, and holodeck babes, and holodeck babes who are men as well, so like they're certainly, Star Trek has its, has its fair share of reinforcing the same beauty standard because it's a show made in our time. So it's kind of hard to say, but it's interesting to think about. And I think that's, you know, I like that way of thinking about it. Maybe if everyone could do it then it would lose some of the exciting class novelty.

Sue: But I mean, in-universe it's reasonable to believe that this technology exists. If we just look at our medical technology, you know, you can heal burns and cuts and scrapes immediately. That's basically reconstructive surgery, right? So it's reasonable to believe that the technology exists in universe. Maybe we never hear anybody say it. Maybe it's banned in the, among the Federation, and they're not supposed to do it.

Grace: That would be strange wouldn't it, though, to ban cosmetic surgery but to consider yourself like a bastion of freedom of choice and societal expression? But to choose to limit that would be very strange because there are...

Jarrah: Well they ban genetic engineering so maybe they saw it as a slippery slope.

Grace: Now that would be really strange, wouldn't it?

Sue: Or maybe it's an ethics discussion debate. Who knows?

Jarrah: Like does the risk justify the decision? Or like a medical, like a medical ethics side of things or a social ethics side of things. Man, we could have a whole podcast on this discussion. Maybe we should have one probably on like beauty standards of the 24th century.

Grace: And the hot new incoming trends.

Jarrah: Three-breasted cat women. Meow.

Grace: Are you hot enough for the look?

Jarrah: I mean, so you know, even just stepping away from the beauty standards side of things, we had another Facebook comment from Mark about the science. So I'm going to read a bit of this and then maybe throw it over to Sue's Science Corner.

Sue: Wait, wait, wait, can we can we quickly do one more thing about beauty standards?

Jarrah: Yes. Yes. Beauty standard it up.

Sue: I think my favorite part of "Face of the Enemy," and by favorite I mean most ridiculous, is at the very end when they're in sick bay, and where it's implied that Crusher just finished the reconstructive surgery on Deanna to give her her own face back, she has a full face of makeup.

Grace: Maybe that's just Troi's face at this point.

Sue: She had it tattooed on.

Jarrah: It's a medical laser, or what do you call it? A dermal regenerator slash makeup applicator.

Grace: Handy! You can just burn the blush right into your face.

Jarrah: Yeah. That is pretty great. I also, I mean it's handy that both of them had basically built on to them, but I also don't know how they got Troi's hair all back.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Well it's interesting too that...

Grace: If they can have a dermal regenerator, they can have a hair regenerator.

Sue: A hair grower?

Jarrah: Yeah, that's like that Barbie or that doll from the early 90s that you would just crank its arm and its ponytail would grow.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: So when Kira is a Cardassian, in the little, I guess indent in the forehead, hers is like blue.

Grace: Yeah the women's are blue.

Jarrah: Yeah you see that with a lot of the women. I think it might actually just be a Cardassian women thing.

Sue: But is it biological or is that makeup? I would be really curious to know if Cardassian women like put color there, as like, instead of eyeshadow.

Grace: I just remember hearing that they had it as like a visual marker for male and female Cardassians for the females they've got, the spoon is blue and one or two of the ridges on the neck are blue.

Jarrah: I had no, ok, yeah. That's a great question because I don't know. If anyone knows you should write us an e-mail and tell us or post it on our Facebook. I always assumed that it was a biological thing and not supposed to be makeup but I could be wrong. It could be like a style.

Grace: I like the idea that in-world being just a thing that's accentuated with makeup, like the way you darken your lips even though they're naturally pink or red. Something like that.

Sue: I just want to see a bunch of Cardassian women in a Sephora, like trying on different shades.

Grace: Oh, you guys, Space Sephora! Oh my God. Sepho'rah.

Jarrah: That's the one on Kronos, right?

Grace: That's where you can paint your lips with the blood of your enemies. Although, store bought is fine.

Jarrah: That's amazing. So stepping back from the beauty standards aspect, there is another part of the cosmetic surgery thing we need to talk about, which is the science, which was brought up by Mark on Facebook. And then we'll throw it over to Sue's Science Corner. Which, so Mark says, "It still boggles me how deep cover agents are supposed to pass as different species. Blood chemistry, organ placement, body temperature, metabolism. It's a kind of adjustment that TV writers don't think about. But if you think about it in terms of how would a monitor lizard masquerade as a raccoon, that puts it in a slightly more accurate context."

Grace: Oh my God that'd be amazing though.

Jarrah: "The drama is top-notch and effective, and both episodes are excellently acted, but they both rely on cross-species surgical disguise and that's where it defies belief for me."

Grace: What if they did it again but got into like The Thing territory, where like, "Ok we've got to do a blood test here." And like, "No I am absolutely Craig the human. Very, very human indeed am I. Baseball, root beer, America."

Sue: But I think the analogy he gives is actually a really good one, because we know both the Romulans and the Cardassians to be, like, a little bit lizard-based. I mean, moreso the Cardassians. But they're both, like it's implied that they're both like a little bit cold blooded, that they both prefer a warmer climate. Especially the Cardassians with like how Deep Space Nine was supposed to be all muggy and hot, and nobody could handle it.

Grace: Also wouldn't that mean they'd just be able to like, do a scan of Kira's internals to be like, "Oh, yep. These are human intestines not Cardassian." Unless they can do plastic surgery on that, too.

Sue: Right. They didn't alter her DNA, which they say in the episode.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, but like all it would have taken is for one of them to get cut, and you'd see that Kira doesn't have green blood.

Grace: The internals would probably be different, yeah.

Jarrah: Or sorry brown blood, Cardassians have brown blood and presumably the Romulans have green blood as well.

Grace: They always struck me as a little blue blooded personally.

Jarrah: I thought that they were like the Vulcans in that.

Sue: I would assume so.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: So, I mean, either way it would be pretty easy to tell if just like someone accidentally, you know, slipped and cut their finger on something.

Grace: That would have been a great reveal for Kira like, "Oh well let me just pass to you this. Oops, I cut my hand! Look, red!"

Sue: And neither of them are inconvenienced or reacting to their surroundings.

Grace: Not really, no.

Jarrah: It's like heat, yeah.

Sue: Like, it's presumably hotter and stuffier. And Troi has no issues adjusting to that big bulky shoulder pad uniform.

Grace: She's pretty much wearing a couch cover.

Jarrah: I mean Kira's used to hanging out in a Cardassian space station, but you'd think that she would have been less bothered by the climate on Deep Space Nine, and things, if she had just secretly been a Cardassian all along.

Sue: Right.

Grace: Ooh, that would have been good.

Jarrah: But yeah, it's really weird that no one thinks to just pick up a tricorder, because, I mean, we know that tricorders can be like, "Lifesigns. They're Kazon." So it would be pretty easy to just secretly scan someone or have the computer scan them.

Sue: But, there's not a huge reason to have anybody do that in either of these episodes.

Jarrah: Yeah. Well certainly not the second episode.

Grace: No, but it wouldn't be hard to do, either.

Sue: But there's also no reason. Other than the commander being distrusting, there's no reason for her to believe that Rakal is not an agent of the Tal Shiar.

Grace: That would be pretty great though if that one commander was just distrusting everyone like, "That doesn't sound like Romulan talk. Test him for Romulan blood!" Like that's just their go-to of distrust.

Sue: But if this is so easy you'd expect them to test more people honestly, like there could be spies anywhere all the time.

Jarrah: And the best they have is like Commander Toreth being like, "What's the secret password?"

Grace: The password is swordfish. The password is always swordfish.

Jarrah: Yeah, so "Second Skin" was originally supposed to be about O'Brien, and we were going to learn that he'd actually been a Cardassian since we first met him at the beginning of Next Generation.

Grace: That would have been amazing!

Sue: Wait, so they were going to keep him Cardassian?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: That would have been incredible, especially since he's so racist against Cardassians.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean and I guess, Kira is too, but for very different reasons, I would say. Like she, I would really say O'Brien is almost more like, well they both are pretty overtly racist at the beginning against Cardassians. But Kira is very much operating of a place of actually having experienced very much oppression for, you know, many years, instead of, you know, having been in a war, which is also bad but slightly different. O'Brien was still working for, you know, a group of people that were not in the same position and had more choices than Kira's people did. But apparently they scrapped that idea because they couldn't explain how he would have had a human baby.

Grace: That would've been a fun reveal, though, wouldn't it?

Sue: That's how they find out.

Jarrah: I feel like people would have felt maybe almost as bad as they did with the Captain America Nazi subplot. I feel like there would have been some pretty angry Trekkies.

Sue: I'm not sure. I mean I don't, I think that there's a lot of definite, there are definitely a lot of World War Two analogies done with Deep Space Nine, especially with the Bajorans and the Cardassians. But, somehow it feels a little bit less like it would be a complete and total fist in the face as the Captain America thing was. Just for the sense that it was also created, Captain America was created by a Jew as a way to talk about his frustration with anti-Semitism, and that it's been a symbol for a long time of this thing. And, I don't think it would be all that the same. It would be similar but not on the same scale.

Jarrah: Yeah for sure. Well I don't know, how you would, like how would you have felt after watching O'Brien on The Next Generation and then suddenly, would you just been like, "Awesome"?

Grace: Well I would have known that on Deep Space Nine they would have actually followed through with it and tried to have some explanation and actually made the character grow or expand somehow because of it. And not inevitably play the whole, oh no it's just a dream or whatever that you just know they're going to do with Secret Empire. And then they'll be like, "Ha, ha, none of this was our fault now. You can't hold us accountable." No. You, you, you still. Ugh. The whole making Magneto a Nazi thing, that really stung. God. I am so sore over this right now.

Jarrah: Ugh. Yeah. I mean, you're right that it would have depended a lot on the handling. Certainly, you know, it would have been interesting to see how the rest of the crew would grapple with getting to know O'Brien again as a Cardassian, and could have challenged these, you know, ideas that we see reinforced in Star Trek that, you know, race gives you innate character traits.

Grace: That would have been really interesting to see explored also.

Jarrah: Yeah. So then after they changed it to be about Kira, the writer Robert Hewitt Wolfe, who was very inspired by Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* when he was writing this episode. He wanted it at the end to be ambiguous whether Kira was actually a Cardassian or not, and wanted that to emphasize a message that our identity is based on experiences versus actual origins. And his quote was, "She has been Kira Nerys, she may be the real Kira Nerys, she may be a replacement, but she's Kira Nerys now and it doesn't really matter. Your identity is who you are. It doesn't matter how you got there. It doesn't matter whether it's true or a lie. If you've lived it long enough, it's true."

Sue: That's a phenomenal message. I really like that. But it makes no practical sense.

Jarrah: No exactly. For the reasons outlined previously.

Sue: Not, the message makes no practical sense. The outcome of, she could be either.

Jarrah: Yeah, the science makes no sense. That you wouldn't be able to tell whether she was Bajoran or Cardassian. Unless they had been arguing there was some form of like genetic therapy or something.

Grace: It would be pretty great though if they reached this resolution of, "No I'm Kira Nerys. I can go home happy." She just walks into Bashir's it's like, "Oh gosh we didn't notice that, sorry!"

Sue: However if they wanted to do that with a character at some point and have that message, it would have made sense. You know hypothetical episode. If it were, you know, we can't tell if this person is Romulan or Vulcan because the the dissidents or the resistance movement or the reunification people have broke off and intermarried and et cetera, et cetera. So this person is both, you know.

Jarrah: Yeah and you could run into problems too with that as well, of just being like a little too...

Sue: On the nose?

Jarrah: I guess again like we're saying, well I was going to say again, like too pat and easily, that things are too easily resolved and happy. Like well, I'm just a Bajoran because I've lived as a Bajoran long enough. Or like to go back to Grace's earlier example about space quote "trans-racism" which is a gross like, or trans-racial identity which is a you know kind of mis-term, but the idea that makes that problematic is that living a racial identity isn't just, it's not just about like feeling a kinship with the culture, it's about experiencing daily

oppression. So in that sense it's correct to say that, like as if you lived it long enough it's true, like if you've lived that oppression for long enough. But if you were in a situation where it was like just suddenly a relatively privileged Bajoran wakes up and is like, "Yeah actually, like I've, you know it turns out that I'm secretly feel like this other. You know I'm secretly Klingon, I kind of just feel like a Klingon." Then Klingons would probably have a right to question that.

Grace: Yeah, and I can't say I blame them, too.

Jarrah: Sorry if that was not the most articulate example ever, but...

Sue: You were being very careful.

Jarrah: Yeah, so anyway. I mean there's a lot of interesting questions to be explored for sure. And it would have been neat to try to break down the nature nurture stuff a bit better than Star Trek usually does, because Star Trek does usually go the route of saying, well like, yeah we know human race doesn't mean anything anymore but alien race definitely does. And it would have been neat to see that challenged a little bit. So similarly to in "Second Skin," "Face of the Enemy" was actually supposed to be about Crusher to begin with. But then it was changed because they felt that they could fit in Troi's empathic abilities a bit better. Which, I mean the story kind of hinges on her knowing that that freighter captain's lying, so that makes sense.

Grace: And also we just really were kind of wanting to get to see Troi do more, so.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean, certainly they both could have stood to do more, but it was good to see Troi actually like have a practical use for that, the lie detector thing. That we didn't, we all didn't know the guy was lying, and it caused the whole plan to have to change. Plus, you know, her ability to gauge what kinds of reactions she's getting from acting very differently from her comfort zone. She has to be threatening and say actually really awful things of what she's going to do to everyone's families if they disobey her, and presumably she's getting a gut check on that by being able to read people's emotions.

Sue: And Crusher gets "Chain of Command" later this season.

Grace: That's true, yeah.

Sue: Ever since I found out about that, I have been wondering how that episode would've been different.

Grace: So you want to see this episode with Crusher and I want to see the Deep Space Nine one with O'Brien, just for funsies.

Sue: I want to hop over to that alternate universe for like just two hours.

Grace: Fan fiction writers! Make it so!

Jarrah: It especially boggles belief that O'Brien could have secretly been a Cardassian all along when he's been the transporter chief and has been like in charge of bio filters.

Grace: It would be ironic, wouldn't it?

Jarrah: Maybe he was programmed to sabotage the bio filters so it would never detect him.

Grace: They programmed it so he kind of sucked at his job and never realized it.

Sue: Aw, poor O'Brien.

Grace: He just can't catch a break in any dimension, can he?

Sue: Just standing around all day, waiting for somebody who needs to transport.

Grace: He's kind of like the toaster from Red Dwarf. "Do you want some toast? I could make you some toast." "Do you want to transport to the planet?" "No, we got a shuttlecraft." "Oh if you're sure, ok. I'll just be here. Waiting. Waiting. Alone."

Jarrah: Yeah, so other, other thoughts on "Face of the Enemy"?

Grace: "Face of the Enemy" is definitely, it's always going to be one of my top TNG episodes in the sense, again we get to see Troi do something. We get to see her get to, again in both these episodes, we get see the actresses show their chops so well. But this is one where you really get to see the potential of all the things that could've been done with Troi as not only a Betazoid, but also just as a character, had they made her, given her more of a proactive role. And it, and she does phenomenally! It's so cool to see her be, getting to be action counselor and have a battle of wits with the enemy. And it's, it feels so right and so good and I wish there was more of it.

Sue: I wish she'd gotten there faster. I feel like, I understand that she's distrusting of what's going on around her and very unsure. But like, I wish the timidity? Timidity? Something. Had dissipated faster and got, and she'd gotten to that forceful, like, Tal Shiar stronghold a little bit quicker.

Grace: Frankly after seeing Marina Sirtis speak in person and getting a feel for her personality, I don't believe it now any time I see Troi being timid.

Sue: Right?

Grace: It just doesn't feel right anymore.

Sue: But I mean I have a couple issues with just the logic behind the "Face of the Enemy."

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: In the sense of like...

Jarrah: Spock kind of messed this one up.

Sue: Right? Starfleet is presumably in communication with Spock at least some point, or his group of people. Why was Troi kidnapped and given surgery without consent and not told what was going on?

Grace: Yeah, did they think she would say no?

Sue: Why did nobody report her missing from this conference?

Grace: That's really horrible, too, the fact that she gets back. She's like, "Oh thank God, I'm ok." And they're like, "Oh, were you gone?"

Sue: The *Enterprise* just shows up, and they're just like, "Oh, I guess you're here now and not at your conference. OK." But like, they just as easily could have just ordered her on this mission. There's no reason for the kidnapping and the non-consensual surgery.

Grace: I guess they just wanted to do it and they could have that reveal opening scene.

Jarrah: Yeah they get to the reveal a lot faster than "Second Skin," which starts out with that, you know, Kira maybe isn't going to show up to hang out on the holosuites with Dax, and that's like, it's kind of a fun little exchange. It's good to see them doing friend stuff. But it takes a little longer for her to get abducted and find out that she might be Cardassian. I mean, I guess the only logical explanation is Troi wasn't really at a conference.

Sue: It was the secret mission all along!

Grace: Dun, Dun, DUN!

Jarrah: I was just thinking she was at something she didn't want to tell the Enterprise or the Federation about. So she like, it was like, it's like when you go to your friend's house for a sleepover. Or like, you say, you tell your parents you're going your friend's house for a sleepover, but then you actually go to your boyfriend's house.

Sue: Are you saying she was meeting up with Tom?

Jarrah: Maybe. Or maybe she was...

Grace: I like to think that she was, that's just the phrase she uses for a lot of things. "Excuse me, I got to go meet up with Tom for a minute."

Jarrah: Are you talking about Thomas Riker?

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: I thought we were, yeah.

Jarrah: Maybe the guy from "Haven" realized he actually wasn't meant to be with blonde lady from his dreams. And he has been seeing Troi on the side. No that's a, that would not make it any better.

Sue: I'm going to make "meeting with Tom" a euphemism now.

Jarrah: Well, yes. So yeah, and like yeah, it doesn't make any sense that they wouldn't just like take her aside at the conference. You know maybe they don't want the *Enterprise* to know for some reason because the mission is that top secret. So they take her aside at the conference they're like, "Hey we have a super top secret mission for you. How would you feel about being a Romulan for a week?" She would be like...

Grace: I think she would be like super down for that.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Well she says, "Why did you kidnap me?" And he says, "Well, you might have said no."

Jarrah: Yes. And she's like, "Yeah that's reasonable."

Grace: No, don't be OK with people being kidnap happy. Just don't take any of that.

Sue: That is never a good reason.

Grace: No.

Jarrah: Yes. Never a good reason. Man. Yeah. And then it really does all rely on her being able to tell whether or not the freighter captain is lying. Because then what were they going to, how were they going to get her back? If they just handed off the cargo to the freighter captain and then the freighter handed off the cargo to the *Enterprise*, then how were they going to get her back? And they never really explain that part.

Grace: Frankly I don't have a lot of faith in their plan. Or at least the planning that went into it. It was a pretty plan-low plan.

Jarrah: Luckily all the scenes with her and Toreth just make up for it.

Grace: This episode has got some good, good, good

Jarrah: That dinner party.

Grace: Yeah. Yeah that's a spicy Romulan meatball.

Sue: I do love that she has no idea which dish the commander is talking about, and then just plays it off. It's so good.

Jarrah: Or like, what professor she had at the academy or whatever. And I also kind of like how Picard doesn't let her be really just like overly modest about the role that she played in it at the end, where she's just like all, it was all what's his name, buddy that died, who did it. And she's just like, he's just like, "Well you both did it."

Grace: You know I think we all want one of our misadventures to end with Patrick Stewart saying, "No you kicked some ass, there. It was rad as hell." That's all we really need at the end of some days.

Jarrah: Exactly. Yeah. We should just we should hire a Patrick Stewart impersonator, and just get him to say "You really kicked some ass today." And then you can just play it.

Grace: Am I not good enough for you?

Jarrah: Well we couldn't, OK we'll train you up and then you can do it.

Grace: OK I'm going to shave my head and go to Patrick Stewart school.

Jarrah: Nice. Well, you know, you're starting several years behind him so you can, you have some time to catch up.

Grace: I'll get there, I'll get there.

Jarrah: Yeah. One thing that I didn't mention about "Second Skin" is that, again, the writer, Robert Hewitt Wolfe, felt that the theme was basically, for that episode was "don't judge a book by its cover." And talks about how he tried to build in layers of different people wearing a second skin. So there's Kira, but then there's also Tekeny Ghemor who's supposedly supporting the government, but opposing the government at the same time.

There's the *Defiant* that's being camouflaged as a freighter. There's Garak that is more of a spy than people thought. There's Sisko. He's a, Sisko looks like a Kobheerian captain, and Odo looks like a bag.

Sue: Odo looks like a bag.

Grace: He's feeling glad. He's sunshine in a bag.

Jarrah: So I appreciate that. So I definitely see the episodes have different messages, because I don't think the message of "Face of the Enemy" is "don't judge a book by its cover."

Sue: No.

Jarrah: What is the message of "Face of the Enemy"?

Sue: Don't kidnap people?

Grace: It's really frickin' rude.

Jarrah: Fake it til you make it?

Grace: Let's go with that.

Jarrah: Empaths get shit done?

Grace: Yeah. Message was "follow your dreams."

Jarrah: Whatever it was, I liked it.

Grace: Yeah, it's good stuff.

Jarrah: Should we rate these episodes? Do we have any final thoughts before we move to rating?

Grace: Both very good. Both taking a different handle on pretty much the same plot, but going in different directions with it and both doing it well.

Sue: I think this is a standard sentiment. Whenever we talk about traumatic experiences for our women characters. I wish we had some kind of follow up.

Grace: Yeah, that would be nice.

Sue: At some point in the future, either of them mentioning, "Hey remember that time I was a Cardassian? That was messed up."

Grace: We do kind of get some, we get, the Legate comes back a few times in Deep Space Nine, doesn't he?

Jarrah: Yes, he definitely comes back

Sue: But we don't really get Kira or Troi reflecting on this experience.

Grace: Yeah

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: We don't see either of them really deal with the experience of being abducted and altered and thrown into the situation.

Grace: To be fair we don't see a lot of things followed up on in Star Trek.

Sue: Right. Well that's to my point before, we're still in the era of serialized TV. But Jarrah, do you have any final comments on these two episodes.

Jarrah: No not more than I've already said. But if we wanted to rate them, we could rate them.

Sue: Let's do it.

Grace: I give them six out of 10 powdered spoons and eight out of eight oversized shoulder pads.

Jarrah: Six out of six and eight out of eight?

Grace: Yes six out of six, eight out of eight.

Jarrah: Wow OK. Those are good ratings.

Grace: I really liked both episodes.

Jarrah: Yeah. I will give them nine out of 10 coworkers with whom one deserves to share credit equally. At least.

Grace: Oh, very nice. You deserve credit for that.

Sue: I would really love my rating to be non-consensual surgeries, but that's a bad thing.

Jarrah: It should be negative, negative 50?

Sue: Negative 10 non-consensual surgeries.

Jarrah: Yes. Oh dear. That might not be how math works.

Grace: Oh. That's horrifying.

Sue: It's how math works if I says it, if I say it is. That's not how grammar works.

Jarrah: Certainly none of us know any better. Well, not me or Grace.

Sue: Ok. So, I think that wraps it up for us tonight. Grace where can people find you on the Interwebs?

Grace: You can find me on Twitter of all places at @BonecrusherJenk.

Sue: And Jarrah?

Jarrah: You can find me on Twitter @jarrahpenguin or on tumblr at trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com.

Sue: And I am on Twitter @spaltor. If you want to reach us as a show as a whole, you can do so on Facebook, facebook.com/womenatwarp, or on Twitter @WomenatWarp. You can also send us an e-mail at crew@womenatwarp.com or visit our website and blog at womenatwarp.com. And finally for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, including the latest from Priority One and Mission Log, head over to podcasts.rodnenberry.com. Thanks for joining us.