

## Women at Warp Episode 72: Sexual Assault in Star Trek, Part I

[Intro music plays]

Jarrah: 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's Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. Today with us we have crew member Andi.

Andi: Hello.

Jarrah: And we have special guest returning to the show Lucia Lorenzi.

Lucia: Hey.

Andi: Yay! [clapping]

Jarrah: Yay! So Lucia, if you remember, joined us last time for our episode on Barclay. Today we are going to be talking about sexual assault in *Star Trek* which is a heavy topic and honestly one that we put off for quite a while because it is difficult to rewatch these episodes for some of us and to talk about this topic. But given all of the recent events around #MeToo, and various people's stories that were being shared, we felt it was time that we tried to tackle this issue. So we wanted to put it up front that this could be a triggering episode, so if you need to skip it that's totally cool, and if you don't that's great. It's an important discussion.

So before we get into that we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch long commentaries. Visit [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp). You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

So as I've said, today we're going to talk about sexual assault in *Star Trek*, and we're not going to be able to cover it all because I think you can say, unfortunately, there are actually a lot of examples. Like so many examples. And I even went to Memory Alpha and I looked at their list of instances of sexual assault, and then we solicited listener comments, and there were so many more suggestions that weren't in that article. I think we have more than twenty just in Original Series and TNG. So we decided to limit it to Original Series and TNG for today, and as well as the movies from those eras.

And the other decision that we made is that because there are so many examples, and because they're treated really differently in *Star Trek* and in society, we're going to talk about sexual assault against men in a separate episode so that we can do it justice because it is a real legit issue. Men who experience sexual assault have a whole range of other pressures on them, and

it is a serious thing we need to talk about. Just like I said, in *Star Trek* it gets treated very differently, and there are so many more examples of sexual assault against women that we wanted to try and limit the scope of our discussion a bit for today. Anything to add to the context piece or the background?

Andi: I'm just going to be real real with y'all. I usually try and go into our episodes like, "We're going to have fun. We're going to talk about *Star Trek*. Let's make jokes and laugh." I don't know if I'm going to be able to do that for this episode. This stuff makes me really upset and really, really angry. So just be aware that this might not be light and fluffy like some maybe of our other topics. But it's also something I care really deeply about, so hopefully we'll get some good discussion going even if it's not something that you'll laugh on the bus about.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. I would say that the best thing so far about doing this is that there were so many awesome listener comments when we solicited them on Facebook, and so we're going to put in a lot of them into this discussion. I think there are maybe more than twenty cases that we could possibly discuss in TOS and TNG, so we're not going to be able to go super in depth in all of them, but there's a lot of great comments, so looking forward to sharing some of those with you. All right. So before we get started we should probably just set some basic definitions. So does anyone want to chime in with what we mean by sexual assault when we're talking about that?

Lucia: Sure. I think that one of the interesting things about talking about sexual assault in sci-fi and *Star Trek* in particular is that there are so many incidents of violation. People's bodies get taken over. But within that I think that we need to be specific about sexual assault as sort of related to but different, and I guess the most basic definition that I would give is any sexual contact without explicit consent. And that contact can be in any number of matters. But, yeah, for me it's the issue of consent.

Jarrah: Yeah, so sexual contact without consent and because we're talking sci-fi, that's also going to include sexual psychic assault in a lot of these cases, but it's very clearly used as comparable to sexual assault in the way that we would understand it in our world. So why is this important to talk about?

Andi: I think the biggest reason is because our society as a whole does not deal well with it.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: And we've got a lot of really damaging ideas around sexual assault which are reflected in various art, including *Star Trek*, and until we start managing to change the dialogue around sexual assault, we're never going to make the world better for assault victims or just make the world a better place in general so we don't have so many assault victims. And I think it's super important that our storytelling is really careful about the way that we present these stories because people are influenced by stuff like this, and they're influenced by the the ways that it's

explored. So I want to make sure *Star Trek* is being as thoughtful as possible when it comes to this stuff so the viewers and the fans and the creators can have a good dialogue about it. And unfortunately I don't think *Star Trek* does a good job with this topic, and I want them to do better in the future.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. I think that as we go through we're going to be discussing some common rape myths that we see in our society and how *Star Trek* has unfortunately at times perpetuated them. And it's been I think heartening to see a lot of people come forward in recent weeks but also really discouraging to see the backlash. And it feels like a good time to look at our media and think about how the messages that people get from these shows - not just *Star Trek*, but I remember in my undergrad I did a paper on violence against women in *Law and Order: SVU*, and that the messages that people get from that show, given the number of viewers, is going to be way more pervasive than any kind of access to consent based sex ed in school. So it's important to look at what types of things are being taught.

Andi: The other thing is that a lot of the stories that are coming out right now are against high-level people in media and Hollywood. So we're talking about storytellers. We're talking about the people who shape and create the mythology of our modern lives, you know? We're talking Harvey Weinstein. Like there is no way to express how much influence he's had over modern storytelling, and then a lot of the news producers and such that have been accused of such things. Like that kind of access to the way we shape these narratives is being handled by predators in some cases. So it's something that we really have to fight back on strongly.

Lucia: Yeah, I think for me the issue of fandom and rape culture, it's just been - I feel like it's a conversation we've been having a lot. Like I know *Game of Thrones* is maybe one of the better examples where people are like, "Well was this historically accurate? We need to show how violent things were." Even though it's an imagined world. This idea that, well you want to have sci-fi that's about a utopian future and certainly we wouldn't be doing this kind of stuff in the future. But really it comes back to we need to deal with it in the present, and a lot of people in fandoms suck around this issue. I think that's one of the most disheartening things is to see people within the fandom, in the community who are just like, "Do you watch the show? Do you understand? Are you making those connections between what's going on now and what could happen if we don't get it together?"

Andi: It's funny that you bring up *Game of Thrones* because actually at one point at Dragon Con I was on a *Game of Thrones* panel, and I was the only woman. And I ended up having to be the only one that wanted to discuss how the show frames rape, and it turned into a really uncomfortable hour for me. And at one point this guy next to me was just going on and on about historical accuracy, and I was like, "Okay. Where were the dragons?"

Jarrah: Yes. Exactly.

Andi: "In the War of the Roses, where were the dragons?" And the whole room laughed at him, and if looks could kill I would not be here today. So it's funny that you bring that up. But genre fiction has always been in a really weird place for this because a lot of times, especially with sci-fi, we're looking forward into a future. With *Star Trek*, we're looking forward into a better future or at least we're supposed to be. So it's the same reason why we want to talk about how race is present in the future and gender is, because these are the ideals we're supposed to be striving for, so we need to make them ideals that we want. The values that we want should be reflected.

Jarrah: Yeah. I was also at a *Game of Thrones* panel at GeekGirlCon - not on it - a few years ago, and both the people on the panel were passionately arguing that it was okay the level of sexual assault in the show and the books because it's showing an amoral society and the downfall and degradation of society and how that's associated with sexual assault. And again I think that's kind of a cop out. Authors make choices. They're not just handcuffed by history or some objective idea of what society should have looked like in a certain time. But there are a couple of times that *Star Trek* does that sort of rape as a symbol of a barbaric society situation. The TOS episode "A Private Little War" sort of occurs to me. We had a great email from Katherine who talked about there being an attempted gang rape in that episode and how it really triggered her friend that she was watching with, and she just didn't remember that scene. There's also "The Return of the Archons" where Tula's raped during the festival, and the discussion about Yar's home planet. Does anyone have any thoughts on that sort of connection of rape is a symbol of backward society?

Andi: I think it's just a really lazy storytelling device. It's a shorthand for, "These are bad people." But it's never really explored in any meaningful way. So it becomes meaningless, like the fact that you could watch "A Private Little War" and then forget that. It just takes all of the teeth out of the issue, if that makes sense.

Lucia: Yeah, and I guess one of the issues for me is that barbaric becomes a stand-in often for racialized folks and people who are economically disadvantaged. And so I'm trying to think about that maybe in *Star Trek* a little bit more. I might have to go watch the episodes again. But I think that there always is a little bit of an element of the presumed backwardness of societies that have often been systematically oppressed and then what comes out in those societies.

Jarrah: Yeah. Like "Code of Honor." There's a lot of examples of episodes that aren't directly connected to sexual assault, but are connected to sort of a possession of women idea.

Andi: You could even make a case for the Ferengi in that.

Jarrah: Yep. Well, I feel like we should talk about Rand for sure because she's one of the first and most visible case in *Star Trek*. Particularly I'm thinking about "The Enemy Within," which I know we've brought up at one point in the show before at least, but definitely warrants a more thorough discussion of. Does anyone want to remind people what this episode was about?

Andi: Sure. So “The Enemy Within” is a transporter accident episode where Kirk gets pulled into what is kind of described as his good or positive traits and negative traits to two different people. So you've got good Kirk and evil Kirk, and he runs amok on the ship. You know, shenanigans ensue. And one of those shenanigans is evil Kirk trying to rape Rand, which gives us a very upsetting rape scene, or attempted rape scene, and then the aftermath. We get to see how well Starfleet deals with sexual assault on their ships. [sarcastically] So well.

Jarrah: Yeah. Lucia, I know you watched this episode recently. Did you have any thoughts on it?

Lucia: Yeah, I actually watched it for the first time because my TOS viewing has been pretty spotty. I think one of the things that horrified me is that Rand's response was so visceral. It was so horrifying, like the closeups on her face and the amount of distress that she was in. So it was clear that, you know, people on the set and maybe in the writers room were talking about how somebody might respond to going through this. But then to have that framed by the rest of the episode, which was so dismissive of it, was really jarring for me because I felt like I just - maybe I haven't seen that kind of emotional rawness in any of the other episodes that I'm thinking of.

Andi: Yeah. I said this before when we were talking about it that Grace Lee Whitney's performance is both a huge pro and a huge con of this episode, and that it's incredible and very well-acted, but then that also makes it more upsetting to watch. The other thing is behind the scenes she was having trouble getting to that place, so Shatner hit her across the face without warning. And she talks about that story as a good thing like a fun anecdote of how he helped her get a good performance. And at no point does she think, “Hey, maybe it's not okay for my coworker to hit me across the face without my consent.” So the whole episode, in reading about the episode and behind the scenes of the episode, and then also the way Grace Lee Whitney was treated on set, all makes for a very upsetting morass of crap. I don't know a better way to say it. Because Grace Lee Whitney has also said that she was sexually assaulted by a *Star Trek* producer. So it just makes the whole thing very upsetting.

For me, the most upsetting part is similar to Lucia's reaction to the way that it's so dismissive. Not just in Spock's infamous/famous last line to her where he implies that she must have enjoyed it in some way, but especially since apparently their standard operating procedure is to put the victim of an assault in a room with her attacker directly after the assault. So say Kirk - because in this scene afterwards is good Kirk so he doesn't know what she's talking about. But they still put him in a room with her while she's trying to tell her story, and you can see she's acting it really well where she can't look at him. She's turning away, like she's visibly re-traumatized by her proximity to her attacker. They don't seem to see any problem with it. The first thing you should do is keep them away from each other, for a million different reasons. And so it's just really upsetting because you would think that Starfleet would have a better -

Jarrah: Protocol?

Andi: Yeah, exactly. And I realize it was the '60s, and I get all that. It's just frustrating because I would like to think that if this is something that would happen this far into the future that humanity would have its shit together enough that they would know some really basic procedures on how to deal with this stuff. Yeah. So that's my feeling on it.

Lucia: Yeah, it wasn't even in that scene when she's basically being gaslighted into like, "Oh, did it really happen? He doesn't have scratches on his face. Blah blah blah." But it's like she's sitting in this chair, and all these men are standing around her just staring at her. Even the staging of the scene made me absolutely cringe.

Andi: Yes. It's really hard to watch. I've seen it twice. I don't think I can ever watch it again. It's that upsetting. Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think that part is super upsetting. The part that bothers me the most, that really gets under my skin, was actually outlined pretty well in a listener comment from Em on Facebook, and Em said, "The part of 'The Enemy Within' that seems to rarely be criticized is how the part of Kirk that assaults Rand is called Imposter Kirk, as if he isn't actually Kirk. The good Kirk half is framed as the real Kirk, which basically makes Kirk not responsible for what his beastly side did." Even though they acknowledge that and like argue that - sorry this is now not her comment. Sorry. So that once again, "Captain Kirk isn't responsible for what his beastly side did while separated. There is zero accountability. and Rand is expected to be just fine working under someone who assaulted her even to that aspect of him 'interesting.'" And in addition to that point that Em made is that the beastly side of him is reinforced as essential to his leadership. That the "good Kirk" is basically unable to function as captain of the ship because he doesn't have the rapist side incorporated with him. So that's a super messed up message that the same side that assaults Rand is the side of him that's necessary for leadership. And then once the two are incorporated that side of him doesn't have accountability for his actions.

Andi: Also, it seems like they feel like because it wasn't really Kirk or whatever, and here I'm using air quotes, that she should just go back to work as if she didn't experience trauma. She experienced the trauma, it just was, I don't know, weird. She still was attacked. She still had to go through that fear. She still had someone she trusted turn on her and try and rape her. And she's just supposed to, I don't know, brush that off?

Jarrah: Yup.

Lucia: I thought it was really weird how in the second half of the episode where good Kirk is so - like he's bonding with evil Kirk and is at his bedside and is showing all of this tenderness and care, and there's zero tenderness and care towards Rand. And even in the last scene he's like, "Oh, whatever. Like it's okay. Like you don't have to apologize. Thanks," and like totally cuts her off. It's like, "Well, thank goodness I'm better." And then she just kind of curls up into herself, and Spock's being a jerk. And that's the end.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Lucia: And Spock's really creepy. For such a logical dude, the creepy glance, like super lecherous. I'm like, "What the heck is going on?"

Andi: Yeah. It's, I think, the low point of the Spock character. For me, this is his worst moment, or at least one of them.

Jarrah: Absolutely. Another related incident involving both Kirk and Rand was brought up by Briony about "Charlie X." When Charlie slaps Rand on the butt, and she's basically like, "You can't do that. I don't know why. Just ask Captain Kirk. He'll tell you." And Briony said that, "I liked she didn't stand for the slap on the backside but hated the explanation Kirk gave for why it was wrong." And I had to go look it up again because it's been a while since I watched, but Kirk basically says, "Well, um, er, there are things you can do with a lady, er, Charlie, that you er. There's no right way to hit a woman. I mean, man to man is one thing, but, er, man and woman, er, it's, er, it's, er. Well it's, er, another thing. Do you understand?" Do you guys understand?

Andi: Yeah. I guess you could give them some credit for at least trying to discuss consent. But I feel like it's one of those moments where I want to pull out that Bart Simpson gif where he has the cake that says "At least you tried," and then he throws it in the trash.

Jarrah: Well, they aren't discussing consent because he says there's no right way to hit a woman. He's not saying, "If you and your partner are in a loving, committed, respectful, communicative relationship, and you guys want to spank each other, as long as you talked it out, that's cool." But he's like, "There's no right way to hit a woman," and therefore it means apparently it's okay to slap men on the butt.

Andi: Yeah, but here's the thing is in that episode he does have a discussion about consent with Charlie X.

Jarrah: Yes, that's true. Yeah. Just that one line. It's not really a part of it, but yeah. Anyway, so that was a weird one but I think at least not as horrific an episode as "The Enemy Within."

Andi: [sarcastically] Yay!

Jarrah: Yay!

Lucia: The bar is so low.

Jarrah: I guess before we get too much further into it, we did have a Facebook comment from Chris who said, "I presume the reason there are so many dodgy episodes is that it's an easy

trope for lazy writers to pull drama out of. If so, are there other episodes that draw on the same type of drama, but get it right, without making it dodgy?” So not in this set of episodes for The Original Series and TNG, unfortunately. We sort of talked about before the show, but I guess it is important to say that I don't think the argument we're making is that you should never show sexual assault in media. That's not what we're saying. There are ways to do it better, and we'll talk about some of those. And if you listen to our episode on the Enterprise episodes “Fusion” and “Stigma,” we talk about the ways that “Fusion” did quite a bit better than some other episodes in addressing this issue. Unfortunately, TOS and TNG really seemed to miss the mark, I think, pretty often. Andi, do you want to talk about “Plato's Stepchildren” a bit?

Andi: Sure. I've always been kind of a weird apologist for this episode because a lot of people really, really hate it, and I actually think it's really interesting. Not necessarily good, but interesting. And one of the things that I find interesting about it is that “Plato's Stepchildren” is the one with the infamous Uhura/Kirk interracial kiss. And I had been looking forward to it because the mythology that has sprung up around this kiss, rightly or wrongly, is very much that it was progressive, that it was a huge step forward, a huge milestone, and Trekkies are very proud of it in a lot of ways, which I understand. But then when you actually watch it, it's a nonconsensual kiss, and I find that really odd and kind of strange that they have this vaunted first kiss, interracial kiss, and it's not consensual, and then it's immediately followed by Kirk beating Uhura. And there are so many issues here that I find really interesting, especially Uhura being a black woman, and Kirk being a white man, and the racial politics, not just like, oh it's interracial, but the structures of power. And I also think it's very interesting that Uhura is put in the position where she is comforting Kirk during her own assault. And yes. Thoughts on that? I just I find it really fascinating. I've watched that scene like a million times, and every time I watch it, I feel like I pull new meaning out of it. Because one of the worst things about sexual assault is that it takes what's supposed to be an act of love and twists it into something horrific. And so I think it's also interesting in that episode that we have Chapel and Spock. Chapel would crawl over broken glass to make out with Spock. She doesn't want to do it this way. And so it takes something that she really wanted and twists it into something she hates. And I have always found that fascinating. Okay. Go! Thoughts?

Lucia: I think for me, it reminded me of the ways that I grew up sort of not knowing what to look for in terms of consent. I'm thinking about that really famous photograph of the sailor who's kissing - I think she's a nurse - in Times Square, and that poster was everywhere. Like I've seen it so many times, and people are like, “It's so romantic.” In that one, when you when you look at their bodies and sort of the body language, you can clearly see that she's like, “Um, nope.” But I think that the kiss between Uhura and Kirk is very much sort of - It's read completely out of context. But also that people think that that's super romantic. I feel like that's a trope.

Andi: Yeah.



Lucia: In cinema even today, maybe not as much as sort of like fifty years ago or whatever, but that's the pinnacle of the romantic plotline is when this guy just swoops this woman into his arms and forcibly kisses her without warning.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: Yeah. And to be fair, in this situation Kirk is also not consenting. So it's something that's happening to both of them. But I agree with you. It's like - I want to use the name of this trope but it's not super safe for work. In fanfiction, there's a trope called Fuck or Die in which - and actually we could probably talk about this trope when we get to our male assault episodes. Anyways, there's a trope where you must, you're forced into a sexual situation. And the way it's used in fanfic is also pretty disturbing in that it's usually used as two characters that want to get together but for whatever reason always find reasons to not be together until the story forces them together. And it's usually framed as like, this is a way that you can get with the person that you've always wanted to get with without having to deal with your fear. And it's portrayed as romantic, and I feel like this is an example of that whereas it's framed as like, do they really want a kiss? Is this romance? Is this the beginning of Kirk/Uhura? Is this sexual tension, or is it just something horrible that's happening to them both and they're just trying to make it through? Because I read it the second way, but a lot of people read it the first way, I think.

Jarrah: Yeah, and I think that it's telling - there's a lot of accounts of the filming of this episode and the censorship that followed, and how Shatner particularly pushed for the kiss to be kept in, and Roddenberry pushed for it. But all throughout there's sort of this like, "Oh well, it's okay that you had an interracial cast because Kirk didn't really want to."

Andi: Yeah. When they're talking about the NBC signing off on it, they ended up signing off on it because it was nonconsensual.

Jarrah: Yeah, and that's messed up. It's the same thing as how until really recently you could only have same-sex relationships in *Star Trek* if they were in the Mirror Universe or put into a different host's body. So it's sort of this covering for progressivism by using sci-fi elements to explain that it's not really a big deal. So yeah. It's super uncomfortable. Was there anything else on "Plato's Stepchildren"?

Andi: No, although some day I would like to do a whole episode on "Plato's Stepchildren," because as I said, I find it fascinating.

Jarrah: Oh yeah, there's lots of other interesting aspects of it for sure.

Andi: Yeah. Not good, but Vulcan eyebrow "fascinating."

Jarrah: I mean, they do wear some pretty hilarious outfits.

Andi: Oh my god, and the singing!

Jarrah: Yeah. And the eye makeup. Yeah. I like the part where Kirk has to act like a horse or something.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: It's a highly gif-worthy episode.

Andi: Yes.

Jarrah: So maybe I'll just quickly run through the list of the other TOS. examples that were suggested either by listeners or Memory Alpha or our own memories. And if you want to jump in on any of them, great, although I think that they're all like a little bit more sort of passing things, they're not like the focus of the story. So I mentioned "The Return Of The Archons" where you have Tula, who is - you're basically sort of told the festival is a time when everyone kind of abandons all rules, and she's kind of dragged off by her hair by this guy, and it's implied heavily that she's assaulted, and she's really upset. Later, there's "Shore Leave" where you have fictional Don Juan attempts to rape a yeoman. There is Lars attempting to rape Uhura in "The Gamesters of Triskelion," and Chekov threatening to rape Mara in "Day of the Dove." So those were the other TOS examples. I think that maybe none of them is like super, super remarkable on its own, but they are remarkable for again showing how it's a way to sort of get drama out of a story without really doing any due diligence on the topic. And in the case of Chekov threatening to rape Mara, there's this thing where they're sort of like being reduced to a more barbaric state. So it kind of goes back to that again. But also that this influence that they're under is making them more racist. So there is the possibility to have an interesting discussion about the idea of rape as a weapon of war, so you have the Klingons and the Federation that are enemies in this situation and the more they're able to dehumanize the other side, the easier it is for them to use rape as a weapon, basically. I think that it sort of is the tip of the iceberg of that issue. That one scene. So the other thing that was brought up by a listener is the *Star Trek VI* scene of Spock's mind meld with Valeris, which is not explicitly sexual, but certainly the reaction of the actress seems very much like it is echoing a type of sexual violation.

Andi: Yep

Jarrah: It's definitely a violation. We don't know exactly - like we know he's probing for truth about the case, but she's actually like saying "no" when she's clearly in pain. So it's still a pretty disturbing scene to watch.

Andi: For me it's the low point of *Star Trek VI*.

Jarrah: For sure. Which I otherwise love.

Andi: Yeah, me too.

Lucia: Yeah, I think the idea of violation and mind meld, and maybe this will lead us into TNG and "Violations." But I feel like a lot of people look at sexual violence as purely physical, but we look at all of the violence that people face online, the kind of nonconsensual imagery that we see and that kind of stuff. So I feel like the sci-fi universe provides a really, really interesting way to look at how sexual violence and violation can come in so many different forms.

Jarrah: For sure. Yeah, so that is a good segue into TNG. Do you want to skip ahead to "Violations"? We don't have to go in any order, but "Violations" I think would be probably the most memorable TNG psychic assault episode. This is the one where you have sort of that family of telepathic people on the ship, and Troi starts experiencing assaults, like a vision that Riker assaults her, and the impact, the trauma of this experience, basically knocks her into a coma. And at the end of the episode they start to suspect that - first of all she's in a coma, so they can't ask her what happened - but then they start to suspect that there has been a psychic attack, and they suspect the father of the negotiators but Troi is able to sort of unmask him and reveal that it's actually the son who has been using Riker's image to sort of get her to drop her defenses because she's into Riker and assault her. So yeah. And actually in that episode they do at the very end, the people say like, "You know, it's been a long time since our people have experienced this form of rape." So they do call it a rape.

Lucia: Thoughts on this episode?

Andi: Bleugh.

Lucia: Yeah. It's super gross, and it's really like - from the first scene in Ten Forward, the dad practices really bad consent because he's constantly badgering people to let him probe their memories, and he doesn't seem to take no for an answer very well. He's like, "Oh, I'm sure that you'll enjoy it. It will be fun." And everyone's like, "I'm good. Thanks." So it's kind of surprising for me that by the end, Tarmin I think is his name, ends up being like, "Oh I'm just so disappointed in my son, and this hasn't happened for 300 years on my planet." Well, you're also not that great at respecting people's boundaries.

Andi: This is something that I always tell people that they need to watch out for is watching out for people who will not respect your "No"s about anything. And I'm talking small stuff. If they take your no as a reason to tell you all the reasons why your no is wrong and convince you that you should be saying yes - and I'm talking about like, "I don't want you to hold the door for me." "Oh, no, no. It's fine, it's fine." "I don't want you to carry my groceries for me." "Oh, no, I will. It's fine. I'll take it from you." That is all a really huge red flag. It means they don't respect your boundaries. And that's a huge, huge, huge issue that can escalate. So always be really wary of that. But I think it's a good example of how we incorporate this into our everyday lives without it being assault. So like forcing kids to hug their aunts when they don't want to be touched, stuff like that. It's like small things where because we're kind of trying to be polite, we're forced into

allowing people to do things that we don't want them to do. And then also shaming people who want to say no clearly and pushing when people say no. So be careful if you're either noticing that behavior in another person or if you start noticing yourself doing that, because it's really easy, especially since men are socialized to push. Like we have taught you to do that, our society has. So just be careful. No means no in all contexts, not just sexual.

Jarrah: Yeah, there are some seriously irritating lines in this episode. One of them that bugs me is - so at first when they think it's the dad, and they're basically ready to prosecute him, and then Picard says, "I'm not sure we have any legal basis for such prosecution. Memory invasion is simply not a crime we've ever had to contend with." And I'm like, "I do not buy that." I also think that if your memory invasion has a physical effect - I get that it's difficult to measure psychic effects, even though clearly in this case they're real, and people have reactions, like you said, beyond the physical. I do not buy that you couldn't prosecute someone who memory-invaded someone else into a coma. So there's one. It's also super creepy. So then like Jev the son comes to Troi after they think they're going to arrest the father, and he basically tries to assault her again, and he's like, "You're so beautiful. So fragile." And I'm like, "Ahhhh!" It is super gross and undermining of Troi being awesome as usual. It's really kind of damsel in distress-y. So I like that she slaps him. I also kind of like - so Picard at the end gives this pontificating speech where, you know, that, "Basically Earth was once a violent planet too. But just like you, we evolved, and we found better ways to handle our conflicts." And you're kind of rolling your eyes a little. I mean, I hope so, but but then he says like, "I think no one can deny that the seed of violence remains within each of us. We must recognize that because it's capable of consuming each of us." And even though I think that is important because there's often this myth too about sexual assault and bad apples versus recognizing that assault and harassment on a similar continuum are so prevalent that it really isn't just bad seeds, that it's really easy to sort of treat people who commit assault as like dark shadowy beings and minimize that people are more likely to be assaulted by people they know and trust, which is depressing. But it's important to put some responsibility on everyone to examine their own behavior and ensure that they're respecting other people's boundaries and seeking out consent.

Lucia: Absolutely. One of the things I was just thinking about is how when Troi - when they're in her quarters, and they're trying to get her to remember, and she grabs her hairbrush. She's the only one sitting down, and everyone is standing around her, just like in "The Enemy Within." And she's clinging onto her hairbrush and clearly terrified, but there's no real sense of, I don't know, genuine concern or a recognition that she's not just providing information, she's reliving profoundly traumatic things. And then at the end Tarkin's like, "Oh, our doctors, you know, are in touch with you to tell you how to get over it" or whatever.

Andi: Yeah. That's a re-occurring issue, I think. The lack of concern.

Jarrah: Yeah. And that was certainly raised by commenters as well about how one of the biggest problems *Star Trek* has, especially because it was until recently so episodic, is that it doesn't ever follow up on what it means to experience assault and the support from other

characters and the healing process. In this one they're basically just like, "We're sending doctors to heal you all." and they're like, "Great. Thanks." So yeah, that was a comment that was specifically mentioned by Ashira on Facebook that there's no mention of how a character was impacted in the long run or the long term effects on their professional and personal relationships. It goes on like nothing happened.

Andi: The only time I can think of them actually tackling this is Picard.

Jarrah: Yeah. So another Troi one where you have sort of a similar sleazy semi-telepathic dude is "The Price." It's a little bit different. I would say his main goal isn't to sexually assault her. It's to push his negative feelings onto her, but because he's also seducing her at the same time and he's not being honest about who he is and his abilities, it's deceptive and not informed consent happening. She is basically duped by Devinoni Ral, and she's just like, "I don't know why I'm so drawn to you. I'm constantly thinking of you." And turns out he's a -

Andi: Creep.

Jarrah: Total creep, and just trying to make himself more successful in negotiations.

Andi: One thing that I'd like to point out is - Troi has always been the number one go to for these stories, and I've always wondered why that is. And I can't come up with a better reason than the fact that she is kind of the avatar for traditional femininity on this ship. And if anybody else has some answers - maybe just they didn't know what else to do with her. But to me it seems like she's being almost punished for being hyper-feminine in this context.

Jarrah: Yes. And also sorry, just a little correction. I briefly was mixing this up with "Man of the People." So this isn't the one where the negotiator's dumping his negative feelings on her. He's just trying to read her thoughts and get an edge in the negotiations.

Andi: Yeah, he's just shady.

Jarrah: Yeah. Sleazy.

Andi: Her favorite kind of dude.

Jarrah: Yeah. But you're totally right. There's this thing where she often - as a kid I romanticized her because she reminded me sort of the princess in the castle who needed to be saved all the time. And definitely we see in some episodes she has the skills to save herself. but a lot of the time she ends up just falling for these dumb dudes that exploit her. And even Marina Sirtis in '93 said in an interview, "It didn't make any sense to me that Troi would fall for this guy so heavily that she wouldn't be able to see what a sleaze he was. It made Troi look un insightful, which is not the case. She's too aware, in general, to have been taken in by this guy."

Lucia: Troi often gets used as sort of like - Picard always uses her to sense out danger. Like, "Come to the bridge. There's this ship. Do you sense anything?" And so he actively uses her to sort of sense out danger but doesn't end up protecting her or having any sort of mechanisms in place to keep her safe or even be concerned about her safety. So she ends up just being used as sort of bait for a lot of sketchy people that they need.

Jarrah: Yep. Should we talk about *Nemesis* at this point as well?

Andi: I mean, we're on the Troi kick. Might as well.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Lucia: Ohhh.

Andi: #NeverWatchNemesis.

Jarrah: Yeah, if you're a Patron of ours you may have listened to our watch-along, which was Andi's first time watching *Nemesis*, and I think was a very difficult experience, as it was for many of us the first time watching *Nemesis*.

Andi: Yeah, if you ever want to hear what it sounds like when someone is actually triggered that is very interesting. Like it's kind of interesting that we've got that on tape, I guess you could call it, my unvarnished reaction from going from having a fun night with my friends to trying not to cry throughout the next hour, being very upset.

Jarrah: Yeah. So in *Nemesis*, you have the Viceroy, who is the Reman dude, and he's helping Picard's clone Shinzon psychically assault Troi, again by using Riker's image. Basically they just got married, and they're going to have a sexy night, but then it's not actually Riker. It's actually Shinzon on who's having sex with her in her brain, and it's freaking terrifying.

Andi: Yes.

Jarrah: Yeah. And that's another thing where it's like how would you even go back to, especially after that happens twice where you think you're sleeping with Riker. How would you ever be able to sleep with Riker again? Like good guy, but like that is a super traumatizing experience that you're just supposed to get over?

Andi: To me yet again it's kind of like the Rand thing where they're like there's no -

Jarrah: Yeah, she's in Sick Bay, and they're all standing around her, and she's crying sort of, and she's saying. "It was a violation." She can't really bring herself to say - she's kind of euphemizing it. And Riker wants to go punch someone because he's a man's man. And then she asks for time off, and Picard says no. And I really hate that.

Andi: Yeah. I think that's the part that might hurt me the most because it's a moment where Picard is our hero.

Jarrah: Yep. And he's like, "I know what's best for you."

Andi: Not only is he super patronizing, but he doesn't seem to care about her well-being at all, and that's just so anti-Picard to me. It makes me so angry.

Jarrah: Yeah, he's basically like, "I need you too much on the bridge." And I think that we're supposed to read that as like, he knows what's best for her. She doesn't actually need the time off. She just feels maybe ashamed or guilty and that actually what she probably needs is just to get back to work, and it's like so good of Picard to continue to trust her. That's what I sensed like the message we were supposed to get from that, but the message I got is someone who's just been attacked asked for a bit of time off, and you said no because you didn't trust that she really needed it.

Lucia: Yeah for me that really reinforced the militarized structure of Starfleet where it's very much like, things happen in the line of duty and when you're done with your tour, that's when you're allowed to fall apart and be completely traumatized. And she's a counselor. Like not only personally is she trying to articulate her experience and what she needs, but professionally. Like she knows this. She's more than aware of what happens to people when they experience violence, and can she have a day off?

Jarrah: Yeah. And I know that some people appreciate this movie because at the end of the day she uses her abilities to get revenge. She's asked or she sort of comes up with the idea, but then, you know, Riker's like, "Are you sure?" and she's like, "Yes, I'm sure." That she can basically find the ship and direct their torpedo psychically, and she has - it's a pretty powerful moment where they actually use very similar TOS lighting where they just like light her eyes. And she's very upset, and she basically focuses in and fires the torpedo and says some message about like basically "Remember me," I think or something like that. This is, you know, basically, "Got you back." And that is powerful. I just wish it hadn't happened in the first place after she'd already been assaulted like eighteen times. And maybe there was a more sensitive way of having the whole thing done that still resulted in her taking agency back because the rest of it was not super strong.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Poor Troi. The other Troi episode which is a totally different theme, but we've done a whole episode on it, is "The Child." So we probably won't go too much into this, but does anyone want to talk about "The Child"? Any thoughts on that before we move on to the other TNG stuff?

Lucia: I think for me, the biggest thing that pisses me off about that episode is that it's like, "I just wanted a learning experience, and I thought that I would get it through your body." Women's bodies are not sites for -

Andi: Tourism.

Lucia: - alien creatures or, exactly, tourism. And I think that's the thing that really, really pissed me off that it was like, "I'm just here to learn some stuff. Thanks!" And then left her not only violated but emotionally devastated over this loss.

Jarrah: Yeah. Andi did you want to read the comment from Katie?

Andi: Katie says, "The episodes where Troi is mind raped have always been hard to watch. So hard to watch that I have never analyzed them. But I just realized that in the episode 'The Child' they never even acknowledge the assault and they act like Riker has more to be hurt about than Troi." Accurate.

Jarrah: Yep. So if you want to hear more about "The Child," including the ridiculously bad song that I wrote to the tune of "What Child Is This," you can listen to our episode all about "The Child," and we'll link to it in the show notes. And then you can hear us complain in much more detail about that and all the weirdness about it. So there are a few more examples - okay, just a really quick Troi example before we are done with Troi is "Ménage à Troi" where the Ferengi take away the Troi women's clothing. That's just a quick example. You know, it's hilarious because they're the Ferengi.

Andi: [sarcastic laughter] It's sucks too because the episode is so horrible, and then you've got that scene of Picard doing Shakespeare that's so amazing that it almost makes that episode worth it. But if that episode had just been Picard doing Shakespeare, it would have been a good one.

Jarrah: Yes. As a long-time Riker/Troi shipper, I watch the very first scene where they kiss in the garden on Risa, and I just fast forward right to the end where he's doing Shakespeare.

Andi: I like it.

Jarrah: It's a very short but awesome episode. So another example that I wanted to talk about is "A Matter of Perspective" which is TNG's sort of attempt to do *Rashomon* and is super weird. This is the one where Riker is accused of assault and murdering a scientist, and they tell the story of the crime from the three different perspectives. And in this case, it is kind of problematic. Does anyone else want to talk about this one before I dive into my rant?



Andi: Just that it really perpetuates a lot of stereotypes about false reporting. That's my main takeaway from it. And also the idea that because Riker is a good guy to everybody else, it doesn't mean that he couldn't possibly have done this.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's just like Scotty in "Wolf in the Fold."

Andi: Exactly. I'm not saying that you need to immediately go obviously Riker's guilty, but him being nice to you does not make him innocent. So keep that in mind.

Jarrah: Yeah. So in this episode, the scientist's wife, Manua, accuses him of assaulting her. And there's this pretty, I think, important point where Troi says, "I don't sense any deception from her." So you know that she's convinced she's right. She's convinced she was assaulted. But then Riker's basically like, "I didn't do it." And Troi's like, "I also know you're telling the truth." And also we know because Riker's a good guy, and Riker is the star of the show, that he didn't do it. So it reinforces this myth that women lie about being raped in order to deflect shame and suspicion from themselves. And it implies that a woman could be objectively lying about being raped even if she 100% believes that she was assaulted, which is super super super problematic because then there is like literally no way to win. There is literally no way to prove - even if you took all the lie detector tests in the universe, you could still be lying. And it's just like when there's already so much suspicion thrown on women who report assault, to add to it that you don't even have to know you're lying, you could still be lying is really harmful.

Andi: Yes.

Lucia: Yeah. I find that one of the most disturbing episodes in a way, just because Riker is not great with women and boundaries a lot of the time. But in the way that Manua recalls it, he openly threatens. You know, he's like, "Well who's going to believe you? Blah blah blah. Don't say anything about it." So her and her husband are like, "Well, what the hell do we do? Our project is going to be defunded if we talk about it. But yeah, I mean, I do think that it was really sketchy that you know Riker's like, "I wouldn't do anything," and Troi reaches over and is like, "I know you wouldn't, Will." It's like, you don't know shit. Maybe he's your Imzadi, but maybe he's also not so great when he's not around you.

Jarrah: Yeah. There's also this thing where Manua 100% believes that she was assaulted, and at the end of the episode, because they've proven Riker's - they have ostensibly shown Riker didn't do it. No one cares that she might actually still have trauma to process. So that's messed up. We had a good comment from Mathias via Facebook that says, "Considering the episode title, they probably didn't intend to imply that either one lied, but rather to show that people perceive things differently. The problem is that the two accounts would've had to be way more alike, with subtle differences, for that to work" So basically he says that it "could've been used to explore how a situation can feel threatening to one person but not the other." Like for example, the way that there's, I think, a lack of understanding about how a lot of women can feel threatened when being asked out and feeling, like you were saying Andi, but having to be nice

and to try to deflect or defuse that threat. So it could have explored that type of disconnect versus the, you know, getting into this sort of like “he said, she said” and, really, it could be anyone's guess what really happened. But we know it wasn't Riker. So yeah. So they could have explored actually healthy consent and understanding socialization and threat. But nope.

Lucia: And it was bizarre because I guess the whole case hinged on whether or not Riker murdered somebody. But he could have been innocent of that and also still assaulted someone. There are two things going on, but they just chose to completely not address the second potential crime.

Jarrah: So the time that Crusher experiences assault is a little harder to discuss because it's “Sub Rosa.”

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: But this can be seen as rape by deception. First of all, she's asleep when Ronin, ghost candle, first comes to her. And he claims to be a spirit who only wants to become one with her. But then we learned that he's really an energy being who needs her as an “organic host to maintain molecular cohesion.”

Andi: See the problem with this episode is it so over-the-top ridiculous, it's hard to take the assault seriously.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: So I 100% agree that there are definite consent issues here. But also she's orgasming to a candle while green light and fog and roses and Scottish bagpipes are happening, and your senses are overwhelmed.

Jarrah: Yeah, I think everyone should have just learned, [Scottish accent] “Dinna go into the house.”

Andi: [Scottish accent] “Dinna go into the house.”

Jarrah: Yeah, I agree. Just to be clear, it is assault. I agree with you. It's like the most ridiculous premise ever, so I don't see this one as - I don't think it's a good representation of assault, but it's also not the most harmful one in the history of *Star Trek*.

Lucia: But it's also like intergenerational assault.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's super weird.

Lucia: When I stop to think about it, that's really a problem.

Andi: I would just really love to read Grandma's sex diary. Because that's hilarious.

Jarrah: Apparently you can forget she's your grandma when you're reading it.

Andi: To be fair, she's not my grandma. She's Crusher's grandma. So I can read about her shenanigans.

Jarrah: I'm sure if someone hasn't written the fanfic of the Felisa Howard sex diary, then they need to write that stat.

Andi: This is fanfic we're talking about. It's definitely been written.

Jarrah: Yes. So I didn't want to finish with that one because it's so ridiculous, so I think the last one we have to discuss is Yar. So we have the situation around rape gangs. We have the situation around Sela being the product of rape, and we have "The Naked Now."

Andi: "The Naked Now" is interesting because I feel like you can read that as dubious consent between both - on both the part of Yar and Data. It's Yar because she's under the influence, and then Data because does he really have the ability to consent? I don't know. That's questionable. That's something that you could discuss. I think that maybe he can, but he also doesn't really get a chance to. She kind of jumps him. So the whole thing just is super creepy to me on both sides.

Jarrah: Yeah, I would say Data probably has more ability than her. We had an interesting discussion on our Facebook page about this where some commenters were saying that at this point they thought he was already sick with the weird water virus, but I think it's implied he gets it from Yar. But clearly at the end of the day she really regrets it, and she didn't really have the ability to consent given the state that she was in. But it's not really clear what Data's agency is.

Andi: Yeah, and I also just don't like the way they dehumanize him. Like he's "fully functional." Basically they describe him like he's a human-sized dildo. I don't dig that at all. I mean, the whole point of Data's arc is is he human, and I think almost everyone falls on the side of if he's not human, he's close and he's a person. But the way they describe him in that is like super dehumanizing and gross.

Jarrah: Yep. Any other thoughts on Yar?

Andi: Every time the rape gangs come up I want to stab something.

Jarrah: Yeah. I forget. I know we talked about that, and we also talked about the Sela thing. Was that in our TNG women episode or the Romulan women episode, maybe? Because that's super disappointing. It just really sucks. I'm definitely in the camp of people who feel like it

reverses the success of "Yesterday's Enterprise" to an extent to be like, and then she was going to go get the death that she deserved as a hero and a Starfleet officer. Except for then she was kidnapped and raped, and her daughter joined the Romulans and ran away and attacked her family, like her *Star Trek* family -

Andi: - and was murdered.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. So in one timeline murdered by a goo monster, and the next timeline held as a prisoner, raped, and murdered. Yeah. Cool!

Jarrah: Not a fan.

Andi: [sarcastically] Way to go, *Star Trek*!

Jarrah: We do know that wasn't Denise Crosby's preferred storyline, that she wanted Sela to be her and Castillo's baby that was kidnapped and raised by the Romulans, which would have been really cool. Still support that idea. Yeah, and the rape gangs mention is super lazy. We were watching "Farpoint" recently, and it's kind of powerful to see Yar stand up and talk about how things were. You know, the Federation saved her from her planet, but it's just kind of thrown away as a throwaway mentioned so often, and just lazy.

Andi: Yeah. 100%.

Jarrah: Yep. All right. Well, that covers all the examples on our list. How are people feeling?

Andi: Does anybody else need a really relaxing bubble bath?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Lucia: Yes.

Jarrah: I was going to get both cats to snuggle-pile me. Yeah. So it is possible to do these stories well. Certainly in recent years there's been more independent media that has, I think, done a better job. Like documentary storytelling, even some more popular media -

Andi: *Mad Max*!

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: *Jessica Jones*.

Jarrah: Yep. Yep. So it's possible to do this well, and we'll get to some marginally better examples in our part two, which we'll do in a while from now. We're going to take a break because it would be too much to try and do all of, you know - this was kind of draining but hopefully also a little cathartic. Yeah. Any other thoughts on things we talked about or what *Star Trek* should have done better?

Andi: Take care of yourselves.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Lucia: Yes. Super important.

Jarrah: And thanks - Seriously thanks everyone for your comments. It helped a lot to have so much engagement on this topic and to know that people were interested and thinking about it and also concerned about some of the examples in the past. People also raised some examples about *Voyager* and *Enterprise*, so we'll get to those in a future episode, as well as, like we said, cases where men are the victim of assault in *Star Trek* because there are definitely a fair number of those. Not quite as many, but enough to show some sort of concerning patterns. So yeah. All right. Well, so Lucía. Thank you so much for joining us.

Lucia: Thank you. This was - great is a weird word.

Andi: Yeah, I was going to say usually it would be like, "This is so fun! Thanks!" But maybe not fun.

Lucia: It was interesting.

Andi: Fascinating.

Lucia: Fascinating. No, it was really good. I think that one of the things that I love about science fiction and fiction in general is that sometimes it gives us a safe place to talk about difficult issues and to be able to criticise things, and then we can move those critiques into what we're doing in our regular lives in our society. So yeah.

Jarrah: Yep.

Lucia: But I will be taking a bubble bath and eating chocolate very soon.

Jarrah: All right. Well, where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet, or what other work are you doing they want to tell people about? Any other final thoughts?

Lucia: You can find me on Twitter @empathywarrior, and I'm going to be launching a research blog soon about perpetrators of sexual assault and how they are represented in the media. So I will be doing that very shortly.

Jarrah: Cool. Well, if you send us a link we will tweet it out.

Lucia: Awesome!

Jarrah: And Andi, where can people find you?

Andi: Easiest place is on Twitter @FirstTimeTrek. I am live-tweeting my way through *Star Trek*.

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah, and you can find me @jarrahpenguin, or on Tumblr at [trekkiefeminst.tumblr.com](http://trekkiefeminst.tumblr.com). And if you'd like to contact our show, you can find us on Facebook. We're at [facebook.com/womenatwarp](https://facebook.com/womenatwarp). We are @womenatwarp on Twitter. We are at [womenatwarp.com](http://womenatwarp.com) for our website and blog, and you can also email us at [crew@womenatwarp.com](mailto:crew@womenatwarp.com). Thanks so much for listening.

[Outro music plays]