

Women at Warp Episode 74: “Blood Oath”

Terry Farrell: Hi this is Terry Farrell and you are listening to Women at Warp.

[WAW intro plays]

Grace: 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 Grace and thanks for tuning in. With me this week is Sue.

Sue: Hi everybody!

Grace: And Jarrah!

Jarrah: AKA the person you once knew as Curzon Hodge

[Sue laughs]

Grace: That was lifetimes ago Jarrah. Are you still on that high horse?

Jarrah: Yes. You can't get me off it. I made an oath.

Grace: It's true if. I had a horse that high I'd be on it all the time, personally.

Sue: Curzon on my old friend. [Jarrah laughs] Jarrah my old friend.

Jarrah: Sue. I'm the Godmother [Sue laughs] of your son. [laughter] And by your son I mean your cat.

Grace: And I'm The Albino living at a Frank Lloyd Wright house in the woods. [laughter] Before we get into our episode today, just a little bit of housekeeping. We want to remind you our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become patron you can do so for as little as one dollar a month and get awesome rewards. From, say, thanks on social media, up to silly watch along commentaries, which I love that we get to do very much. You can visit us at www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever else you get your podcasts. Now, this week, in case you haven't guessed, our topic is the Deep Space Nine episode “Blood Oath.” Can anyone give us a summary of the episode or just want to tell us a little bit about it?

Jarrah: Sure, I can. So, in this episode three of our favorite Original Series Klingons, Kang, Koloth, and Kor, come to Deep Space Nine because they made a blood oath with Curzon Dax to avenge the death of their sons by killing a Klingon called The Albino. And there is an issue over whether Jadzia can and should continue Curzon's blood oath. But she decides it's really important her to do so and goes off and fights with them. That's the Coles Notes.

Grace: It's a pretty fun episode, gotta tell ya. Watching Dax Klingon-it-up with these three Original Series Klingons. It's just a good time.

Sue: So, I have a question for the panel. When you first saw this episode, did you realize that these were the same Klingons as TOS?

Grace: I had no idea.

Sue: I definitely did not.

Grace: I didn't. Honestly, after a few minutes into it I was like, "Oh, these guys seem fun!" I don't know whether it's how the characters are presented, or how the episode was written, or the fact that these dudes were really comfortable in their roles, but I just kind of liked them and it wasn't until after I'd finished the entire season and was watching the special features on the DVD that I was like, "Oh my god it's those guys!"

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, I mean, I first saw this episode before I had really watched much Original Series at all. I kind of started with Next Generation--

Sue: Yeah, me too.

Jarrah: And then watched DS9 as it was airing. I'm pretty sure at the time I didn't really recognize them. I think it's kind of a strength that DS9 doesn't beat you over the head with it, that the story, I think, still stands on its own without knowing who they are. But I know that when I re-watched it, sort of, more recently, the one I found hardest to recognize was Koloth, who's best known from "The Trouble with Tribbles" which is played by William Campbell. I found that they all look, obviously, quite a bit different because of the more modernized Klingon makeup and age. But I think that his character was also not as easy to recognize because there isn't as much depth to the character in "The Trouble with Tribbles" as there is to Kang and Kor in "Errand of Mercy" and "Day of the Dove."

Grace: "The Trouble with Tribbles" has very little going for it, depth wise. Aside from the literal depth of the pile of tribbles that you see someone get buried in. So, they could only add on, really. Not to disparage it.

Sue: I really wish that Andy were able to join us for this episode because I think she's the only one of us who had watched all of TOS before watching Deep Space Nine and watched both fully as an adult. You know, not like I'm 14 and watching Deep Space Nine, you know? [laughs]

Grace: She does also have a fine appreciation for a lady with a blade.

Sue: Yes.

Grace: Which, we do get a fair amount of which is, again, pretty awesome.

Jarrah: There's so much great about this episode. As someone who cherishes every scene where Dax and Kira get friend moments, they have a really lovely moment where Dax is feeling torn because she feels this loyalty to join the Klingons based on her blood oath, but also fear that killing someone would change her. So, she asks Kira about Kira's experience and Kira sort of realizes, "Something's wrong. You might actually be thinking about killing someone." And I just thought that that was a really well-done scene that showed Dax's internal struggle, but also the connection between those characters.

Sue: There were several people on our Facebook page who mentioned that scene as their favorite of the episode and that so much of the depth of it really comes from Kira. Eryn said "Kira's reaction of 'when you take a life, you lose part of yours, and you can never get it back' is, I think, the real moral of the story. Kira knows exactly what it means to be a killer. A murderer. And she shows it sincerely, and massive props to Nana Visitor for not overplaying it. ... The concern on Kira's face when she realized that Dax is serious is telling and needs real attention."

Grace: Absolutely. I think that's part of the importance of Kira's role in this episode as a foil to Dax. The fact that we don't see her go into it like, "Yeah! Sure! Just go! Knock 'em out! Have a good time there, champ!"

Because I think a lesser writer would have expected that from Kira, given her past, but to have it be something that Kira actually talks over with Dax brings so much more to both the conversation and the episode, in general.

Sue: Yeah, we know some of what Kira has done.

Grace: We have an inkling.

Sue: Yeah, but there's no like, "Yeah, I killed this many and I did this!" She knew that she was, in the end, fighting for what was right, but she still was changed each time she had to take a life.

Grace: She's under no illusions that she has got completely clean hands, but at the same time there's a moral compass at work.

Jarrah: It was interesting though, the point you raise Sue, about not realizing they were the TOS Klingons. Because, re-watching this, it struck me. The opening credits come in and the only thing that's happened to that point is that Odo has put Kor, who's super drunk, in a holding cell and Koloth comes and tries to get him out. And Kor refuses to go with him and Odo, kind of, sighs and then it's opening credits, which normally you want there to be a bigger moment of excitement or a hook, at that point. And I wondered if it was really that big of a hook if you didn't know that like, "Oh, it's Kor and Koloth!"

Grace: It was a pretty dull stinger if you weren't aware of it.

Sue: I don't know. I think the "Klingon afternoon" was pretty funny and there were some epic Odo eye rolls in there.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, but the talk of the "Klingon afternoon" didn't happen until after the credits.

Sue: Yeah, that's true.

Grace: I'm just imagining "Klingon day afternoon" now and it sounds amazing.

Sue: I just want to make that part of my vocabulary like, "How's your day going? Oh, I had a 'Klingon afternoon.'"

Jarrah: Yeah, I do love when Dax realizes that Kor is in the cell and busts him out and he just gives her the biggest hug when he realizes she's Curzon.

Grace: [happily and drawn out] Yeah!

Jarrah: It's so cute. I want a Kor hug!

Sue: It's pretty fantastic though. I mean, I know it is not at all intentional to be super trans-inclusive, but it kind of is.

Grace: Oh yeah, absolutely!

Sue: [Quoting Kor] "Oh you're Curzon." "Oh, I'm Jadzia now." "Oh, you're Jadzia!" just without missing a beat. He's like, "Oh yeah, you're still you. No problem."

Grace: From that perspective that really makes this a pretty great episode.

Sue: I think there's even a line where he says, "The person didn't change," or, "The soul didn't change," later in the episode.

Jarrah: So, he does try to kiss her, and note that she's basically a beautiful woman now, but I feel like all of their objections to thinking that she shouldn't go on the mission, none of them is, "because you're a woman."

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Even Koloth who thinks, you know, "You can't possibly be as good of a fighter as Curzon is." He isn't saying out there, "because you're a woman, now."

Sue: Right. That felt much more like, "because you're 25."

Jarrah & Grace: Yeah

Jarrah: It might be subtext and if so I think that that's okay. Because I think that it's super powerful to see this young woman be underestimated by three older warriors, and manage to overcome all of those barriers and lead their mission, basically.

Grace: That and seeing Dax just kind of slide into the role of being one of the guys with these freakin' Klingons, man! It's great!

Jarrah: So, we've got Kor, who's accepting, but he maybe seems to have fallen a bit from his previous power. We've got Koloth, who's kind of cranky. And you've got Kang, who I think is a really powerfully written character in this episode as this man who's grappling with, you know, not just a concern about her abilities, but this feeling that, "Well, you know, if you're not Curzon I can't let you die for us."

Grace: That's part of the beauty of a long spanning franchise like Star Trek. When you can take someone, who is just kind of a bit player in an episode for just the big bar room brawl scene, and then 20 or 30 years later revisit that character and totally flesh them out like that. That is so cool that you can do it!

Sue: It also gives us a little bit more information about the lifespan of Klingons, as well.

Jarrah & Grace: Yeah.

Sue: But we also get the little tidbit of information where they say that a new host of a symbiont is not required to fulfill the commitments of any of the previous hosts. Where was that information in the episode "Dax?"

[Grace and Jarrah both laugh]

Jarrah: Well, maybe they're like, "Given that court president."

Grace: That's also part of the problem with a long spanning franchise like Star Trek. There's a lot of making it up as you go along, yeah.

Sue: "We just decided this a few months ago."

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, I think that that makes more sense than the episode "Dax" which was, I think, not the best episode. I realized that there are a couple of mentions of Dax's gender, but Kor is consistently the awesome-est. Because, you know, Kang is saying, basically, "You're not the same Dax." And Dax says, "I hope

one day you will embrace me as a brother again.” And Koloth goes, “Brother? Ha!” [Grace laughing] And Kar goes, “Brother, sister, what’s the difference? We’re here, now.”

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: [happily and drawn out] Yeah!

Jarrah: And you're like, “Aww, Kor!”

Grace: Bros! Bros! Bros! Bros! And they've got some specific roles that all three of them were in there to fill, aside from the throwback to The Original Series, correct?

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, the episode was originally written to just be some random Klingons and you can sort of see there's some similarities to “The Magnificent Seven” in there. It was written to be one of those types of stories, but then they had the idea, “Well, let’s, you know, retrieve some of the most popular Klingons from The Original Series.” So, they do have carved out roles. I think, more distinctly than their roles in The Original Series, at least for Kang and Koloth. And their roles have changed because they the aged and they underwent this loss of their sons due to the Albino’s weird, dishonorable, genetic virus.

Grace: With the connection to “The Magnificent Seven” the story really does work as a very good western pastiche, but in space. I mean, you see that so strongly just in the opening scene of, “Grizzled, old, warrior finds another grizzled, old, warrior locked up and a third grizzled, old, warrior’s gotta bust him out, for revenge!”

Sue: Yeah, Peter Alan Fields, the writer of the episode, and according to the Deep Space Nine companion, said that Koloth was modeled after the character Britt and Kang after Yul Brynner's character. And then Kor was based on Shakespeare's Falstaff.

Grace: [Amused] Because there's always got to be a Falstaff.

Sue: Well, I mean, yeah.

Grace: Yeah, man.

Sue: Falstaff is the best. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, well, and John—is it Call-ih-cos? [referring to John Colicos] How do you say his last name? Who played Kor?

Sue: That would be...

[Jarrah continues various pronunciations]

Grace: He’s a calico?

[Sue and Jarrah chuckle]

Jarrah: [amused] Uh, okay, we're going to go with John—

Sue: Call, call-ih-cos.

Jarrah: Call-ih-cos? So, John Calicos.

Grace: Cole-ih coast guard.

Jarrah: [laughs] Oh, dear. He was concerned because he read the initial scenes and he's like, "What? Kor's not a buffoon. This guy just seems like a drunk. This isn't like Kor at all. If you want me to play Kor I should play Kor." And they said, "But, you know, you start out like that but you're more like a Falstaff and at the end of the day you're going to end up being more of a hero character." Yeah. And he had, I think, the most input into this script and the ending.

Grace: Well, that kind of gives the character a bigger arc then, doesn't it? Going from, you know, young Klingon in his prime to a guy who's just kind of like, "Eh it is what it is. Let's get drunk," to a guy who is the big hero at the end. Not a lot of people get that big of an arc in full seasons, much less in two episodes.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: And if I can bring it back really quickly to that "Magnificent Seven" thing again; the story also works on another level, then, as a throwback to the old samurai honor-based concepts that get pulled into the Klingons a lot, and the basis of "Magnificent Seven" being the "Seven Samurai." It works on multiple levels as a Klingon story, a Western story, and an old school samurai revenge story. I mean, even them coming at the end to attack this outsider and his big, scary house/fortress in the middle of nowhere, that feels so very Kurasawa.

Jarrah: Which, actually, also it's a Frank Lloyd Wright house, which is kind of funny.

Grace: I know, right?!

Jarrah: [laughing] You're like The Albino, which, by the way, I hate that.

Grace: Yeah, that's messed up.

Jarrah: That's not cool. It's not cool that people are all like, "Yeah, we all just call him The Albino," and "this has been centuries and no one ever thought to find out his name and it was just totally cool to refer to him by his skin color."

Sue: So, two things.

Jarrah: Yeah?

Sue: Is he intended to be Klingon?

Jarrah: I thought so.

Grace: [unsure] Yeah.

Sue: I thought that the bone structure, if you can even say that, in the makeup made him look different.

Grace: I just kind of assumed, you know, if you've got a bunch of Klingons going after you with a massive vendetta usually you're another Klingon. I mean, there's a vendetta from Klingons and then there's Klingon on Klingon vendetta levels.

Sue: But there's also, apparently, a fan theory that Voq is The Albino.

Grace: I love that theory.

Jarrah: Yeah!

Grace: Or somehow, you know, one is a descendent of the other. Again, more fun you could have in an expanded universe! [Sue giggles]

Jarrah: So, yeah. I mean, I always assumed he was a Klingon because he has bumps on his head, but I'm reading that the script just described him as, "an all-white humanoid, in good physical shape for a man of 100."

Grace: Well, in that case, we don't know if he's an albino. He could just be real pale.

Sue: But we do know he's 100.

Grace: He's real old and real pale! [Sue laughs]

Jarrah: He calls Klingons filth and scum in the episode.

Grace: Okay, so, he's old and a racist. So, not a great guy.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah and, I mean, it would seem weird, and certainly dishonorable, for a Klingon to kill the way that he killed these guys' sons.

Sue: Well, also, they were mad at him in the first place because he attacked Klingon outposts. So, it seems, I assumed, not Klingon.

Grace: I can't believe he's not a Klingon. We've got Klingon-light.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, literally.

[Grace and Sue both laugh]

Jarrah: I mean, there are real stereotypes and stigma about albinism.

Grace: Absolutely.

Jarrah: And to make this shady villain called The Albino or, I guess, no non-shady villain called The Albino and for everyone to just be calling him that the whole time [trails off and then groans] I'm sure he has a name. In my review I started just calling him Steve because I was really uncomfortable with it.

Grace: That works. I have the same issue with "The Princess Bride" especially considering there are still, supposedly, large amounts of cultures where there is massive stigma, and your safety is in jeopardy, from being born albino. And to say nothing of the social stigma and all of the bullshit that you probably have to put up with even being an albino here in the U.S.

Sue: And not to mention "The DaVinci Code."

Grace [frustrated agreement] Oh my gosh.

Sue: Which, there are multiple problems with "The Da Vinci Code."

Jarrah: Yeah!

Sue: One of which, is yet another villain with albinism.

Grace: Guys, can we just put the kibosh on people who look different being automatically evil, or that being some kind of horrifying indicator of their malevolence? It's really old guys.

Sue: Yeah, that'd be good.

Grace: It's messed up and uncreative. So, we've got this deep-space racist living in a Frank Lloyd Wright house that a bunch of Klingons, one of whom is Falstaff, are coming after. [Jarrah chuckles] That just gives you so much to work with.

Jarrah: Well, and I want to jump back, briefly, to another scene that I love, which is the scene where Dax spars with Koloth on the holodeck.

Grace: [gasps] Oh, yes!

Jarrah: That's also just great.

Grace: This is also one of the first times we get to see it established that Dax is really into Klingon culture and this is a really big part of Dax's personal, I want to say, belief system, but that's not quite right. It's kind of Dax's adopted culture, outside of being a Trill.

[Sue and Jarrah agree]

Jarrah: It's super impressive the way that she uses physical and emotional and psychological skills to convince these three grizzled Klingons to let her come on the mission.

Grace: Well, that's part of what makes you believe that that's how it would work: is Dax's Trillness. The fact that she's got lifetime's worth of experience. She has all of her HP up for coercing and for brawling, as needed.

Sue: Well, and you can see how she treats each one of them differently.

Grace: Yeah!

Sue: She knows exactly what she has to do to gain their trust. And it's different for each one of them.

Jarrah: I particularly like the message that when she finally convinces Kang she says, "You dishonor yourself, Kang, by placing your own honor above mine." Because, basically, you know, she's saying it's dishonoring me to not let me come and fulfill this oath and he's like, "Well, it dishonors me to put you at risk." But her message is, basically, "If you fail to see others as equals then it dishonors you," which I love.

Grace: Yeah, you shut yourself off by refusing to take the input of someone else.

Jarrah: But Sisko doesn't so much agree.

Grace: [sarcastic chiding] Sisko, Sisko, Sisko! His stance in this episode is one where I feel like if it had been a different writer we would have gotten a completely different response from Sisko. It just kind of seemed unusual, to me. Did anyone else get that?

Jarrah: So, actually the only reason I found it unusual is that it's much laxer than Picard's response to Worf when he's like, "I want to go off and fight Klingon civil war!" And he's just like, "Yeah, sure sounds good."

Grace: "Go nuts, donuts!"

Jarrah: But, I mean, I find that a lot more unbelievable than Sisko not wanting Dax to go. I mean, he knows she's going on a dangerous mission. It's not really super officially sanctioned. She might die. She may get other people killed. He doesn't believe in the Trill thing, that she should have to carry on that, but she's just like, "You know what? I've had enough of explaining myself to dudes today."

Grace: Yep. "I am all mansplained out. I'm going to space." Although, she's technically already in space, isn't she? She's going to another part of space.

Jarrah: Yes.

Grace: Spacin' out.

Jarrah: Frank Lloyd Wright house space.

Grace: Yeah, the Frank Lloyd space.

Jarrah: So, I mean, it's around this time that they sort of find out that Kang has been kind of lying and he knows that this is kind of a death mission for them. And he actually kind of made a deal with The Albino for them to all come to his house and possibly have fair combat, but likely not because Steve, The Albino Steve, can't be trusted.

Grace: Steve Whiteburg!

[Sue and Jarrah laugh]

Jarrah: Yeah!

Sue: [laughing] I don't know if that's better.

Jarrah: And that was, I don't know, I felt that was like really, kind of, haunting and a bit sad. But it was cool how Dax lectures him like, "You might get these other guys to go along with you out of loyalty. But I'm not that stupid and you can make a better plan than this. Or maybe I can make a better plan than this."

Grace: It's also really interesting to go back and watch the earlier points of the episode where Dax is trying to convince him to let her come along and they're pushing back knowing that at least one of them has an idea that there's no coming back from this.

Sue: I think it's an interesting aspect of Klingon culture, in a way, because we know, from what we know about Klingons, that the only honorable death is dying in battle. Right? So, you've got these three Klingons, who are all great friends, and they swore this blood oath together, and they're all getting up there in age. We don't know how long Klingons would live naturally, but they're clearly older and it's almost like a suicide pact, in a way, now

that he's made this deal with The Albino. He's like, "Alright, so that we die honorable deaths, let's go and take care of this thing we said we were gonna do, and then we're fulfilling everything we need to before we die."

Grace: It kind of makes me wonder if that's a standard practice in Klingon culture, just sending grandpa out into the wilderness when it's wild boar season, versus letting him die in a convalescent home or something; if that's how they culturally decide to do it. Makes you wonder.

Jarrah: I mean, they even say, "You know it's too bad that Curzon didn't die an admirable death, or an honorable death, because he was in the hospital when he died."

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: But, you know, speaking of Curzon, it becomes pretty clear pretty quick that Dax is more than just Curzon 2.0.

Grace: Well, we as the audience knew that too.

Jarrah: Yeah, but the plan would have been a suicide mission for everyone had it been Curzon.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: But because Jadzia has all this science experience she can science her way out of it. So.

Grace: [whispers dramatically] Science!

[Sue bursts out laughing]

Grace: That is, again, the beauty of Dax as a character getting to have all those different layers of being an individual, but also all that past experience, which definitely makes this a top Dax episode, for me at least.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, then we're at Steve's compound.

Grace: Steve's high concept compound!

Jarrah: Yes, which, Jadzia has, you know, got all the sentries to have their phasers not working, and set off the bomb that Steve set for them as a trap.

Grace: [Jokingly] Did he really, though? Or is he just at a point where he's 100 years old, really racist, and just has booby traps all over his yard?

[Jarrah laughs]

Sue: Also, possible.

Grace: I'm just saying.

Jarrah: Well, I mean, just back to the age thing again, you could assume that the Klingons are about the same age as Steve.

Sue: Right.

Grace: [laughing] This whole episode is just an old man fight.

Jarrah: Yeah, but so much more! It's not just—what were those movies with Helen Mirren and...?

Grace: “Red” yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah!

Grace: [laughing] Red Klingons!

Sue: It also kind of reminds me of the “Discworld” character Cohen the Barbarian.

Grace: [laughing] Oh my gosh, yes!

Sue: Not Conan, Cohen. [Grace continues laughing] And they get the horde together and go on this one final mission.

[Jarrah laughs]

Grace: You, guys. You, guys. I'm going to pitch an idea to you here.

Jarrah: Yeah?

Grace: “Klingon Expendables” [Sue and Jarrah laugh] Yes?

Jarrah: I mean, that's kind of what this was only way more poignant.

Grace: But could we get Randy Couture in Klingon makeup, is my question.

Jarrah: Hmm.

Grace: [Attempting to persuade] Hmm?

Jarrah: I think that they should make one when there are more of the TNG era Klingons that are of that age.

Grace: Oh yeah!

Jarrah: And so that we could also have the Duras sisters, which, I know, they're technically dead, but let's un-kill them.

Grace: Does anyone actually believe they're dead?

Sue: [extremely amused] You, guys. You, guys. Duras sisters “Golden Girls.”

[Grace screams in delight]

Jarrah: Yes!

Grace: [Sings in a guttural Klingon voice] “Thank you for being a comrade!”

[Sue and Jarrah laughing]

Jarrah: Maybe, if we have to have four of them, we throw in, what, Grilka and...

Sue: K'Ehleyr. Bring back K'Ehleyr!

Grace: Just bring back K'Ehleyr!

Sue: As long as we're "un-deading" people, bring them all back.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: [Sings in a guttural Klingon voice] "If you threw a hunting party!"

Jarrah: [laughs] So much sass there would be [Sue laughs] between K'Ehleyr and the Duras sisters and Grilka. That, yeah, it would be perfect, really.

Sue: I feel like K'Ehleyr would be Sophia.

Grace: No, no, she would be Dorothy because then we could have Worf show up as her Stan. Just constantly showing up like, "K'Ehleyr take me back!"

Jarrah: [laughs] I think it's between Dorothy and Lursa, who has the best eyebrow raise.

Sue: Oh, yeah.

Grace: [laughing] Guys, we could just do an entire episode on this forever and I'd be happy.

[Sue laughs]

Jarrah: We don't have a Rose, though. [Sue laughs] That just doesn't exist in Klingon.

Grace: I feel like we could make it happen.

Jarrah: Any who! So, Koloth dies. It's sad.

Grace: It's all, you know, dramatic and pivotal and shows his full arc and all that.

Jarrah: And there is much fun battle scenes and Dax kicking butt with the bat'leth

Sue: Can I talk about the bat'leth for a second--

Grace: Absolutely.

Jarrah: Yep.

Sue: --and the fight in the holosuite and how you really shouldn't attempt to spin a bat'leth like it's a staff because it just looks ridiculous?

Jarrah: It does and why would you use your energy doing that if you're in the middle of a battle? Like, "Let's step back and twirl our bat'leths for a bit."

Grace: Are we really going to question how overdramatic and ridiculous Klingons are being?

Sue: No, but stage combat with the staff, which is a thing I do, you can do spins that look really great and actually don't take up that much effort because of the momentum of the staff.

Grace: Maybe it's like the kilt: they're trying to blind their enemy with doofiness.

Sue: Well, the bat'leth is curved away from you and your grips are separate, so you can't slide your hands along it. So, you can't really spin it and then they try and spin it around themselves, without changing their hands and it's just like—you see this one section where Jadzia is just swaying with the bat'leth and it looks ridiculous.

Jarrah: Yeah, I definitely notice that in the holodeck section, it looks a little awkward. The fact that you have to swing it around and you have to use two hands to do all of this stuff, why would you be making your grip less sure, at a moment when your opponent could come at you?

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: Do you think there's a point in the history of Klingon martial arts where there was a guy who realized, "Hey, guys! I found a way we can do this that won't be totally dangerous and totally doofy!" And they'll just slap the bat'leth out of his hands like, "No! This is how we do it. This is the Klingon way. Twirl!"

Sue: I mean, it's a great weapon. It's, basically, a giant serrated knife.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: But there's got to be a better way to fight with it.

Grace: [In a guttural Klingon voice] Twirl on all your enemies! [normal speaking voice] I'm yelling a lot this episode.

Jarrah: Yeah, well, you know, you kind of got to. You're carrying the Klingon torch for all of us here.

Grace: Qapla'.

Jarrah: Kor is slightly wounded. And then Steve and Kang, which clearly, this is the ultimate confrontation because Kang's son was Dax's godson named Dax.

Grace: Aww.

Jarrah: Lil Dax Jr. [Grace laughs] And Steve mortally wounds Kang. And he's, basically, standing over him gloating, like all good evil villains—

Grace: Like you do.

Jarrah: —when Jadzia disarms him and holds her bat'leth to his throat and then he's basically like [in a high-pitched mocking tone], "Who's this little girl? You're a little girl." [normal voice] Not exactly, but that's the subtext. Like [in same mocking tone], "You couldn't possibly kill me, my dear."

Grace: I like how he's turning into a wicked witch here, also.

Jarrah: "Muah ha ha ha ha ha!"

Grace: [In a high pitched witchy voice] "My pretty, you've come to my house in the woods! I'm Steve Whiteman"

[Sue and Jarrah laugh]

Jarrah: [In same witchy voice] "You're far too young and lovely to sport such a deadly weapon."

Grace: Dax is like, "Not today, punk!"

Jarrah: Yeah, except for it's a really neat, poetic closure that she's totally ready to kill him, but Kang is the one who stabs him through the abdomen and from behind while he's preoccupied with Dax. And so, Kang, you know, says, "Thank you for saving the deathblow for me. You have honored me one last time, Godfather to my son," which is awesome.

Sue: See, I read it as she's not totally ready to kill him.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, sorry what I meant was she, I think, she hesitates, momentarily.

Sue: For sure.

Jarrah: And in that hesitation Kang acts and so when Kang thanks her, I think, that that is him sort of being nice.

Sue: He's saving her honor.

Jarrah: Yeah. And she didn't have to kill. Well, I don't know if she didn't kill anyone during that whole thing, but she didn't kill Steve.

Grace: Also, this way she can go back to Deep Space Nine and Sisko can be like, "You didn't kill anyone, did you?" and she can be like, "Nope!"

Jarrah: But I think she would have.

Grace: Oh, totally!

Jarrah: I think if Kang hadn't stabbed him through the stomach she would have done it.

Sue: She's definitely an accessory.

Grace: Oh, totally.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: But can you blame her?

Sue: Yes!

Jarrah: And then instead of the Klingon death scream we have some Kor singing, which is very sweet. It's no [lets out a Klingon death scream and Sue laughs]

Grace: You know, I think I preferred this to the off-kilter screaming.

Jarrah: Are you sure?

[Jarrah and Grace Klingon death screaming together]

Grace: Can you scream more rhythmically?

Jarrah: No. [laughs]

Grace: Then, no.

Jarrah: Uh, yeah, I'm not ready to be a Klingon, either, singer or a screamer.

Grace: They're kind of interchangeable, in a way.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's true.

Grace: I can imagine.

Jarrah: I mean, our local Klingon club is always trying to get us to learn the Klingon drinking song and I just kind mumble it. I'm like [starts singing poorly garbled and inaccurate Klingon].

Grace: It sounds like you're eating Weetabix. [laughs]

[Sue and Jarrah laugh]

Jarrah: Yeah. So, that's the closest I can get to Klingon and apologies to all of the Klingon fans who do a way better job than me.

Grace: I am disappointed every time I hear Klingon singing that isn't thrash metal.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, like the band Stovokor?

Grace: Exactly! That is my jam.

Jarrah: Nice. And then Dax goes back to the station and gets some meaningful looks, but nothing else. No one talks to her, which is kind of nice. It's just all about her.

Grace: Pretty sure when you have a friend who's like, "Hey I got to go on this vengeance mission." And then they come back, even if you want to say something there has got to be someone in the group to be like, "No, give them a minute. Give her a minute. Let them decompress post-vengeance mission."

Sue: I think the Sisko "disapproving look" says more than his words ever could.

Jarrah: That's true. And Kira is kind of like a mix of concerned about her and wanting to know what happened.

Grace: This episode, with what little it does, does so much with the relationships between a bunch of the crew and with Dax. Again, one of my top Dax episodes because of that.

Jarrah: I think it's one of my top DS9 episodes. It's definitely one of my top Klingon episodes.

Sue: For sure.

Jarrah: It's not my all-time favorite Deep Space Nine episode, but definitely my favorite Dax episode. One of my favorite Klingon episodes, for sure. I also didn't mention, when we were talking earlier, how John Colicos had input into the script. So, the input he had on the end was, basically, "Well, then, you know, I better be the Ishmael who lives to tell the story." And so that's why Kor got to be the one who lives.

Grace: Oh, god I just got it. The Albino is a white whale.

[All groan]

Grace: Aw, son of a—

Jarrah: [laughing] No!

Grace: You've got to be kidding!

Jarrah: Steve Whitewhale. Okay.

Grace: [laughing] Steve Whitewhale of the West Coast Whitewhales. He's a Cadillac salesman.

Jarrah: [sighs in defeat] Oh, Star Trek. Well, I mean, I feel like if it ends up being Voq, hopefully that will—I mean, I don't know what that would really mean.

Grace: If it ends up being Voq, that just means we have to have Curzon or an earlier iteration of Dax show up.

Jarrah: Yes. That, I am down with.

Grace: Just to run by in the background, slap him across the back of the head, and run right off.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. I would be totally down with that. That sounds awesome.

Grace: I will accept no less.

Sue: I feel like we discussed this the last time we talked about Trill, but when did they join The Federation?

Grace: That's a good question.

Jarrah: Uh. I can't remember what we said the last time. [laughs]

Grace: Do we have that established?

Sue: Because it would totally be feasible for an earlier host of Dax to show up in Discovery.

Grace: Well, we do establish that Dax was, again, an earlier host of Dax, hanging around The Federation at least for, you know, gymnastics competitions. And, you know, hooking up with McCoy.

Sue: [laughs] Right.

Jarrah: Well, I mean, Curzon was supposed to be a Federation diplomat, but I guess Emony was supposed to be before Curzon.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Because that was the one who was interested in McCoy? Or McCoy was interested in her? But, I mean, I don't know when Curzon became a diplomat, or how young he was when that happened.

Grace: The point is that the possibility is definitely there.

Jarrah: It's awesome. Yeah, I mean, I feel like to be a Federation diplomat you, maybe, had to be in the Federation for a little while, but I may be wrong.

Sue: Well, it goes: Layla, Tobin, Emony, Audrid, Torias, Joran, Curzon and then Jadzia.

Grace: And Sneezy.

Jarrah: Wow. There were a lot of hosts in between.

Sue: Yeah, I'm thinking that between Emony and well, Curzon.

Jarrah: Well, then it must have been later. Because, I mean, if it was Klingon-Federation peace talks then it must have been around, more like, Star Trek VI that Curzon was a diplomat.

Grace: Oh my gosh. Can you imagine that? Curzon just kind of showing up in Star Trek VI, again, just in the background, eating sandwich or something.

Jarrah: Yeah. Sounds good. This is such a great episode. I think it sends just a lot of really good messages, in terms of, you know, being a young woman, being able to not let other people crush you with low expectations, for not letting them underestimate you, and also just, you know, not aligning expectations with age or gender.

Grace: I know and that's part of what I love about the different layers in which this episode works, because then you get to see cool space opera battle, you get to see a cowboy story, samurai revenge story, and you get see all three of them with a woman at the forefront and that's awesome. And it's especially awesome if you're looking at it through the "Trill as a metaphor for being trans" lens, because then we get to have a trans woman at the front of all this and it's awesome.

Jarrah: I mean, it's powerful that Kang's last words is to basically reinforce, "You are the godfather of my son." Lydia did have a comment on Facebook saying, "The one thing I find frustrating in this era of television is the conflict being resolved by the end of the episode. I think this would have been a great episode to have consequences carry over. There could have been several plot points explored further, like PTSD and how Dax's choice to go through with it affected her close relationship with Sisko."

Grace: Oh, absolutely. That would have been really cool to see that play out further. But, again, that's the problem we have with Star Trek, kind of, over and over again being sold as episodic. We don't get to do that so much.

Jarrah: Yeah, I feel like I agree with that point fairly often when I'm re-watching these episodes, but I wouldn't say that this is an episode, I think, I would feel if we came out of this—it's not like a happy ending, but it feels like a resolved ending.

Grace: It's not a clean ending, but it's an ending.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't mind necessarily seeing how it changed her relationship with Sisko. And we see Sisko take the same approach to her in the episode "Dax" as well, where it's like basically, "Save yourself. Stop protecting Curzon."

Grace: Imagine how hard that must be, though, to have someone who you really care about tell you to just take an aspect of yourself and throw it under the bus.

Jarrah: I don't know how I would have felt about Dax having PTSD as a result of this. I mean, it's certainly absolutely 100% possible and I don't mean to minimize the possibility at all. I just I think that the episode was sending a message about, I don't know, I mean, I don't know how to say it really. I guess I just love how you can admire what Dax is doing, and maybe that's naive to think there wouldn't be longer term consequences, but it is a nice episode with a strong adventure story and a pretty clean ending. And I don't see it as being the most difficult thing that people went through on Deep Space Nine.

Grace: In the grand gamut of stuff that the characters have gone through, this isn't the farthest stop at the deep end.

Sue: But it might be at this point in the series.

Jarrah: Yeah, yeah. It's totally with the benefit of hindsight. [all laughing] But I think if you are being like, "Well, if we did it for this episode, then we would be doing this for that." I mean, it would have fundamentally changed the character of the entire series.

Grace: That would have been a lot of trauma by the end. [laughs]

Sue: I mean, you've got a lot in the story and the thing that's on the surface, this, sort of, adventure story. You've got this moral dilemma. You've got, you know, what obligations does Dax have, whether or not they're legal, but what obligations does she feel she has? Where does loyalty play into all of this, with this group of Klingons? What does it mean to seek revenge and is that something that she should be doing? Is that something that any of them should be doing? And does it actually matter that they come from different cultures? That the Klingons have one thing in their culture, that the Trill have something else in theirs, and that they're serving on a Federation station, which seems to just have human culture, in the grand scheme of things.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's difficult yeah. So, I definitely think that's a totally fair point from our listener. I think if DS9 had had a counselor pre Ezri, that that also could have been an opportunity to explore those things in a way that didn't, you know, become the overarching plot for a long arc of episodes. I don't know that it could have necessarily sustained that, but that you could have had moments seeing Dax grappling with these things, while you were still proceeding with the other story. But, you know, we've talked a bit about the issue of counselors on Star Trek before.

Grace: Yeah, there's some stuff to go through there.

Jarrah: Yeah, there's almost always more opportunity in Star Trek to explore a character's mental health, and almost every episode is a missed opportunity, so. In one way or another. But, yeah, I mean, overall yeah, I wouldn't say that this episode sends like the world's best message about violence, but it is, I think, a powerful episode in terms of its messages. Just about women's capability and sciencing!

Grace: It is a powerful episode and a rip roaring good time.

Jarrah: Yeah. Are we ready to rate it?

Grace: Absolutely. I give it four out of five Klingon bat'leth twirls.

[Sue laughs]

Jarrah: I want to give this five out of five Klingon Golden Girls. We'll have to find a fifth Klingon to stick into there to make there be five. But I'm sure we can dig one up like B'Elanna's mom or something.

Grace: I am next to positive we can make this happen.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Oh, my. Well, I guess I just have to go easy because all the good ones are taken. Nine out of 10 jugs of Bloodwine.

Jarrah: Nice.

Grace: That's good vengeance.

Sue: But as a quick side note, there is a novel called Forged in Fire that is somewhat of a prequel to this episode, which gives more insight into the background of Steve Whitewhale, who is actually, apparently, named Qagh. Q A G H.

Grace: It's Klingon for Steve.

Sue: [laughing] Yes, Klingon for Steve.

Grace: It's like Rachel and Raquel.

Sue: But it also, apparently, explores Curzon's relationship with the Klingons and, according to Keith Decandido in his review on Tor.com, it explains not only why these Original Series Klingons now have forehead ridges, but how all Klingons came to have forehead ridges again.

Jarrah: Ah, which may now be non-canon since Enterprise and possible further Discovery changes.

Sue: Right.

Jarrah: But we do not know. Yeah, I mean, that's super interesting and I know the actors were surprised that they were going to give them the forehead ridges but they were just like, "This is what Klingons look like now."

Sue: Yeah, apparently, somebody told them they like aged into it and it was part of what happens when Klingons get older. [laughing]

[Jarrah laughs]

Grace: I like that idea a lot, actually. That the longer you live, and the more you see, the more grizzled and gnarled and intensely battle-looking you look.

Jarrah: Yep. Craggy forehead.

Grace: Yeah! You earned that forehead.

Jarrah: Well, any final thoughts before we wrap up, folks?

Grace: [Sings in a guttural Klingon voice] "Thank you for being a petaQ!"

[Jarrah and Sue laughing]

Jarrah: Today is a good day to conclude a podcast...episode.

Grace: And a good day to make cheesecake.

Sue: Wow.

Grace: [gasps] The cheesecake is probably full of blood! Oh my gosh! [laughing]

Sue: You thought it was just strawberry sauce.

Grace: No!

Sue: [laughing] I don't even know what that means.

Grace: [laughing] I don't know but I think we can end it there. Where can people find you online, Sue?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter @spaltor.

Grace: And where can people find you, Jarrah?

Jarrah: You can find me @jarrahpenguin on Twitter.

Grace: And you can find me on Twitter @BonecrusherJenk.

Jarrah: And if you'd like to contact our show you can do so by emailing crew@womenatwarp.com. You can also leave a comment on our website, womenatwarp.com. Or our Facebook: facebook.com/womenatwarp. Or our Twitter @womenatwarp. And, again, if you can leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts, that is a great way for other people to find our show. So, thank you for taking a minute to do that. And thank you so much for listening.

Sue: And for more from the Rodenberry Podcast Network you can visit podcasts.rodenberry.com.

[WAW outro plays]

Grace: [whispers dramatically] Science.