

Women at Warp Episode 88: B'Elanna Torres - B'Lovin It!

[WAW intro plays]

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Sue. Thanks for tuning in. With me today are crew members Jarrah--

Jarrah: Hello!

Sue: --and Grace.

Grace: Hello!

Sue: And our special guest, Anika, is back.

Anika: Hi there!

Sue: So, Anika was last on the show with us back on Episode 48: Star Trek for Girls, and has been on a few previous times. But do you want to remind everyone about who you are and what you do?

Grace: Yeah, tell us your deal!

[Sue laughs]

Anika: Okay, I guess I am Anika Dane and I photo-cap Voyager, which means I make funny captions on screen captures of episodes and post them to Tumblr and I enjoy it a lot. [laughs]

Sue: You also are a prolific writer.

Anika: That's true, I am a prolific writer and I write for a few different blogs: Women at Warp and Geek Mom and What the Fan Girl and a few others here and there. [laughs] And I do panels, lots of panels.

Sue: Yes! All right. So, before we get into our main topic today, which is B'Elanna Torres, 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 \$1 a month and get awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watch-along commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts, Facebook, or wherever you get your podcasts. And as this episode is released we're just about two months away from Star Trek Las Vegas.

Grace: Oh, that's right! Yeah!

Sue: And I will be there, and Grace is planning to be there, and Anika will be there.

Anika: Yay!

Sue: So, come say hi to all of us. All right, so, let's talk B'Elanna, shall we?

Jarrah: Yeah, because we did, recently, a Klingon women episode and we ran out of time before we could even get to B'Elanna and realized she definitely needed her own episode, anyway. So, I'm glad we are getting to this discussion.

Grace: That definitely speaks for how much we had to say in that episode.

[laughter]

Jarrah: And looking through the episodes that B'Elanna is featured in, I was really struck by how many are just really good episodes. You know, that doesn't always happen when you think of like, say, Chakotay-centric episodes.

[laughter]

Grace: [sarcastically] It's almost as though B'Elanna is an interesting character with lots of story potential.

[laughter]

Anika: She's my favorite character.

Grace: You have a good favorite. She's a great character to have as your favorite.

Sue: So, the interesting thing that we get, when we get to Voyager, right—at least this is how I see it a lot of the time—is that our main stories tend to revolve around captains, science officers, and engineers. And up until now those have mostly been men.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: The exception being, technically, Jadzia/Dax is your science officer on DS9. When we get to Voyager—

Jarrah: Although, Sarah MacDougal, the single-episode chief engineer of the Enterprise D.

[scattered laughter]

Sue: Yes, not a main cast member, but thank you. [laughs] But when we get to Voyager, our captain and our chief engineer are both women.

Grace: Yup.

Sue: Therefore, suddenly, we have more episodes than we ever have before, focused on the women on the ship.

Grace: [sarcastically] What??

Sue: And that's astounding to me.

Jarrah: So many episodes that pass the Bechdel/Wallace Test!

Sue: Yes!

Anika: And they're always solving problems.

Jarrah: [whispers dramatically] With science!

Sue: I tried to make a top ten list of Beverly Crusher episodes and there aren't even ten episodes.

Jarrah: Yeah. Uh, there's more than ten B'Elanna episodes! We're probably just going to have to, you know, pick some of our favorites, highlights and lowlights, and go through, sort of, the most memorable moments.

Sue: It just goes to show that when you choose to focus on your women characters, that they're more than one dimensional.

Jarrah: For sure.

Sue: I think B'Elanna is one of the most real and most well-rounded characters on Voyager.

Anika: Yes, yes.

Grace: Oh, without a doubt.

Jarrah: I would totally agree.

Anika: And it's almost like they did it purposefully. I mean, obviously they did do it purposefully, but there's a pattern. Every third episode of the season is a B'Elanna episode.

Sue: How great is that, right?

Anika: It's like they were trying to actually have an arc and, you know, bring her up over and over again in the same kind of—it's like, "Check in with B'Elanna!"

Grace: And that's definitely not something we get to see (often). For example: we don't see that happen a lot with our women characters on, say, TNG. We don't have them having a continuous arc over even a single season quite like that, do we?

Jarrah: Although, it did, sort of start to happen near the end and so, that makes sense that that carried into Voyager, because pretty much the whole team that was working on writing The Next Generation, near the end of the series, moved over to Voyager and you have Jerry Taylor as executive producer. And so, it makes sense that she was someone who pushed Troy and Crusher episodes at the end, the last couple seasons of TNG that you would have this sort of, "Let's keep checking in with the main characters," kind of in a rotation in Voyager. And, I mean, when they were developing the show, she said, "This is a character with a lot of self-exploration to do. She is the character that many people might identify with. She has some aspects of herself she wishes she didn't have...And what she will come to wrestle with, as all of us like that must do, is to accept herself for what she is and go on, rather than wishing she could purge herself of something that she doesn't find comfortable." So, that was part of where they were coming from with creating this character.

Grace: I like how we kind of get to see that literally at one point, don't we?

Anika: Yes.

Sue: I like that they had this plan and they stuck to it.

Grace: Yeah!

Sue: You know, because so many times we hear the plans for a character and they were never followed through on.

Grace: Or we get that whole, "Well, we wanted to maybe do something interesting, but it just didn't happen."

Sue: But we see B'Elanna deal with depression and self-hatred and self-harm and it doesn't go away at the end of the episode. This is something we see this character struggling with over three, four, five seasons and we see her grow and learn to accept herself. And it's really a phenomenal arc.

Jarrah: Mm hmm.

Grace: It's amazing how we have a lot of alien characters throughout the Star Trek franchise, but I think that B'Elanna really is the one that, despite the outsider status of being an alien, definitely has the most going on that you can empathize with as a character. Both in the sense that she's troubled, but in the sense that she's coming from a place of some very human struggles that we don't always feel that comfortable talking about in media.

Sue: [thoughtfully] Hmm.

Jarrah: So, Anika, why is she your favorite character?

Anika: So, what I say is that one of my favorite character archetypes, or character arcs that someone could have, is the coming of age as an adult storyline, because I think it's sort of ridiculous [laughs] that people come of age when they're like 13 or 14, because no one knows who they are when they're 14. And that's the point of coming of age, but you don't figure it out in one year. And so, B'Elanna is someone who, she's clearly an adult and she thinks she should have it all together, but she's been struggling with trying to figure out how she fits into the universe her whole life. And she just keeps coming back to that and how she feels like she doesn't belong anywhere. And by the end of the series she's, sort of, built this community and family so that she absolutely belongs on Voyager. And that's where she is and where she can be comfortable. And what's so amazing about it is that Voyager is a journey. So, she doesn't belong any one place, she just belongs with these people and with this this idea of going home and looking for home.

Grace: That's really good. I really like that idea of coming of age stories for adults, because isn't that part of being a full-dimensional character, constantly growing and changing?

Anika: Exactly. You never stop, really. You're always going to, you know, keep looking for more of yourself.

Grace: That's a really good take on her. [laughs]

Sue: So, there's a quote from Roxann Dawson from the Voyager wrap party in 2001, where she described B'Elanna as an unruly teenager who grew into a woman over the course of seven years.

Anika: See?

Sue: And it's just such a beautiful and concise character description.

Grace: B'Elanna and Roxann both know what's up.

Sue: So, I would like to take you back in my time machine to 1995.

Grace: Oh!

Sue: Insert harp strings.

Grace: [makes a memory flashback sound effect] And then it slowly transitions into MC Hammer slide music [Sue laughs] to show the audience it's the 90s.

Sue: [amused] Or, you know, whenever you first watched Voyager. Do you remember what your first impressions of B'Elanna were? Anika?

[laughter]

Anika: Honestly, I don't remember [laughs] what my first impressions of B'Elanna were. I mean, I will say that she's not really much of a character in *Caretaker*. Her entire characterization is: I hate being Klingon. And she doesn't have much to go on. It's not until the third episode, which I really considered sort of like the third part of the pilot, mainly because it sets out where everyone's going to end up. And then B'Elanna, you know, it's her episode. But, and I actually wrote this on your blog, she sort of crept up on me. She wasn't my first favorite character. I wasn't like a huge Klingon fan so, I was sort of like, "Eh, really? We have to have more Klingons?" [laughing] But as the series went on I realized that I related to her the most because of this whole, "I don't know how I fit in here and I really want to have a connection to people, but at the same time I'm sort of terrified of having that connection people." So, it crept up on me and it wasn't until like, you know, the fourth season that I was like, "Oh, actually she's my favorite character."

Jarrah: Yeah, she didn't strike me as my favorite. I mean, Janeway was instantly my favorite, but that was also (because of) the age that I was and I was looking for role models and I didn't really see B'Elanna so much as a role model. She was more, you know, like someone else who was growing up.

Sue: A contemporary.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, more someone to identify with as someone to go through struggles with than someone to aspire to be, at that time. But really the first moment where I was like, "Okay. I like her," is in *Parallax* when she punches Carey in the nose.

[laughter]

Sue: Agreed! Agreed.

Grace: Iconic!

Jarrah: Yeah. And I just love that episode. That is the third episode. I love that one so much. It's all just Janeway and B'Elanna science-ing things, and B'Elanna, sort of explaining more about why she dropped out of the academy, and Janeway letting her know that, you know, people thought better of her than she had actually believed. And it's just such a great Janeway/B'Elanna episode.

Sue: Yeah, that scene in the ready room where the two of them are figuring out the problem together, stuck with me since I first saw it, you know, however long ago that was. [laughs] It's something that I think about a lot now, when I'm reading or thinking about girls in STEM fields, is that episode in particular. But not only does it set up for us who B'Elanna is, who we're starting out with, but it sets up who Janeway is.

Jarrah: Mm hmm.

Sue: I wish it had developed more, but they're giving us Janeway the mentor, right? And she is going to give this troubled young woman, because she's supposed to be like 22, a chance to prove herself. And she's going to believe in her and support her and collaborate with her. And that was a relationship that in 1995 we did not see often between women on television and it was just really important.

Grace: Well, part of what's cool about them keeping B'Elanna so consistently active in season one, is that she serves as a really great foil character for establishing what all these other characters are about. She brings out something different in a lot of the people around her, like different between Chakotay and Janeway, just as a really hard-headed lady with a chip on her shoulder. Everyone's going to interact with that differently and I think that really helps with establishing the entire crew.

Jarrah: Totally. We get a bit of a B'Elanna's relationship with Chakotay in *Caretaker*, but that also continues here where he is trying to sort of coach her into being a better version of herself. And that was interesting. I remember, the first few seasons, not really being sure where they were going with that.

Grace: Yeah, I kind of feared the worst.

Jarrah: I'm really glad they didn't go a romantic route because—

Grace: Oh, thank god, right?

Jarrah: —Chakotay definitely seems like more of a father figure.

Grace: Yeah that would've been so uncomfortable.

Jarrah: But I think that they have some nice moments in this episode and some other ones. Some less-good ones as well, which we can get into later.

[laughter]

Jarrah: What about you, Grace?

Grace: Well, honestly, I think I've gone over this before, but the first time actually saw any episodes of *Voyager* I was a very small child in grade school, and that was just because it was kind of on. So, my little kid mind just read B'Elanna as, "ANGRY WOMAN." "Angry woman" until I went back and watched it, I think, in middle school, early high school. And then I just kind of dug the fact that B'Elanna was an angry woman. I'm going to say this again until I'm blue in the face: I really appreciate that with B'Elanna and we get a character that is allowed to have that chip on her shoulder and how that isn't painted as her great character flaw. As a woman, you so often don't get to see complicated emotions or people who just are abrasive, if they're women. We have this level of needing to see them nice-ified, to see them always be approachable. There are so many things that we just don't, as an audience, consider acceptable behavior with women, that we don't even really think about. See: our unlikable women characters episode!

[Sue laughs]

Anika: Yeah, I mean, there are actually multiple episodes where, you know, the Klingon episode, where they're trying to say that angry, passionate side of her is actually a strength. And so, not only is it not bad, but you should embrace that and learn from it.

Grace: And God knows that middle school and early high school Grace needed that. [laughter] Someone who's getting angry and having people around her being like, "Okay, you do you. You be angry." Without people

being like, "Hey! You need to be making this easier on the people around you. You're not allowed to have these feelings that are inconvenient for us. How dare you."

Sue: I mean, it might be a little on the nose, [Grace laughs] but in *Faces*, her human side literally says to her Klingon side, "I can't do this without you."

Jarraah: Yeah.

Grace: [beyond amused] Literally on the nose.

Sue: In *Faces*!

Jarraah: *Faces* is such a good episode too, I mean, for a season one. I think it's maybe my favorite Voyager season one episode.

Anika: It's one of my favorite episodes of all the seasons.

Grace: [whispers] Yes.

Jarraah: The concept of *Enemy Within*, but so much better [everyone laughing and reacting] in so many ways.

Grace: I'm sorry I'm forgetting here, is that the one where we get the, "OH GOD!" reveal at one point? Or is that a different one with B'Elanna?

Jarraah: The one where the creepy Vidiian takes the guy's face, reveal?

[laughter]

Grace: [laughing] That's the one! That's the one!

Jarraah: Durst! Poor Durst.

Anika: Poor Durst.

Sue: Look, I was fascinated by the Vidiians. [laughing] I loved that storyline.

Jarraah: Yeah.

Grace: But did you love the whole, "OH GOD!! WHY?" part of that?

Sue: [laughing] I mean, kind of.

[Grace and Anika laughing hard]

Grace: [smugly] Talk about cutting off the nose to spite the face.

[Jarrah groans and laughs at Grace's terrible pun]

Grace: I'm here all night.

Jarrah: It also sets her up for the episode *Lifesigns*, where she's having issues with helping save Danara Pel's life. So, even that early on in this series, they were starting to lay some groundwork for longer term development of her character.

Grace: Yeah and rad that they knew they had a bunch of stuff they wanted to do with this character long-term from the get go. And weren't just going to kind of be like, "Ehh, we'll play it by ear," like they did it with some characters.

Sue: They also didn't, you know, do this episode and then check it off.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: You know, this has continued throughout her arc.

Anika: I call it: The Introduction of B'Elanna's Anxiety Disorder.

[resigned agreement all around]

Grace: Accurate.

Jarrah: It is also the introduction of a potential romantic relationship.

Grace: [sarcastically] Whaaat?

[laughter]

Jarrah: Any thoughts on that, Anika?

Anika: The relationship or in this particular episode?

Jarrah: In this particular episode, at this point.

Anika: Okay, so, first of all, early Tom Paris has some problems.

[all laughing in agreement]

Grace: Every version of Tom Paris has some problems, let's just establish that right off the bat.

Anika: He does, sort of, eventually grow. [laughs]

Sue: He evolves.

Anika: In the first season he's really kind of terrible and it's sort of interesting, because even then the way Robert Duncan McNeill plays him is not as skeevy and slimy as he's written. [all agree] And it's really weird. [laughs] It's just strange. But, in this particular episode, she says that she was so embarrassed of her forehead ridges when she was young child, that she would try to cover it up with hats and scarves and, you know, grow her hair out. And he's like, "Oh yeah, you know my dad made me get this terrible haircut once a year it was worst."

[laughter]

Grace: I love how that's the closest he can come to empathize. "I had a shitty haircut once. I know exactly how you feel."

Anika: And it's just like wow. That is—

Jarrah: Oh gosh.

Anika: So, I mean, it's kind of a great analogy of reality.

Grace: It's kind of like going up to a homeless guy and going, "I know what you mean. I had to skip lunch once in college. Sucks, right? I know exactly how you feel."

Anika: Especially because, you know, he's the most privileged. He came from this amazing dynasty of Starfleet families and he was given every opportunity. Even when he accidentally killed people. [Grace laughing] He still wasn't in trouble for a long time!

Grace: [sarcastically] Oh my god, guys, does Tom Paris have affluenza?

[laughter]

Jarrah: He got demoted and then re-promoted and Kim never even got promoted but once!

Sue: [laughing] He was literally let out of jail to go on this mission.

Grace: And then he's a deadbeat dad!

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah, that's what you meant when you said he evolved, right, Sue?

[all laughing]

Grace: I am ashamed that I didn't make that terrible joke.

Jarrah: [laughing] Sorry, that's not a B'Elanna episode we can just...

Grace: Pretend it never happened. Those poor lizard babies.

Jarrah: We'll come back to the Tom and B'Elanna stuff because I quite like it later on. Just at this point, you know, it's sort of like Bashir telling Kira he understands the frontier.

[laughter]

Grace: Can you imagine if Bashir had tried to empathize with Kira by telling her he had a shitty haircut as a kid?

[Anika laughing]

Sue: So, [laughs] because we started talking about this particular journey for B'Elanna, I guess let's jump ahead a little bit chronologically and talk about what is, apparently, called the Torres Trilogy. I had not heard that before today, but that is: *Day of Honor*, *Extreme Risk* and *Barge of the Dead*.

Grace: I assumed it was going to be a line of comfortable SUV's. A Taurus Trilogy.

Sue: I don't think Ford picked up on that.

Jarrah: Interesting. Oh, because they're all the third episodes of the seasons?

Sue: Well, I think because they sort of go together too.

Grace: Oh!

Jarrah: Yeah, kind of. I mean, certainly *Day of Honor* and *Barge of the Dead* have a lot in common with each other.

Sue: I re-watched *Barge of the Dead* again today and I was just really struck by the scene, towards the end, where she is surrounded by everyone she knows. And you know Tuvok throws the bat'leth at her and says, "Defend yourself." And the first thought that comes to mind is, I remember *Lower Decks* when Worf says that to Sito, "Defend Yourself!" in the mok'bara challenge.

Grace: Does that mean he's (Tuvok) her (B'Elanna) Worf?

Sue: Well, a little bit.

Grace: It may be a stretch.

Sue: But then they all just start accusing her of things and repeating to her the stuff that she thinks about herself and saying, "Defend yourself," so it's not about physical defense. It's about what she does to herself, that she feels like she has to constantly be on the defensive, and then she admits that she's tired of fighting these things. And the bat'leth flies away and the dawning that she doesn't have to defend herself. She doesn't have to defend herself to anyone. And it's just—I really like it. I think it's a really, really, well done scene.

Grace: Also, just a pretty cool concept for an episode. I am really glad that we get to see so much of B'Elanna's arc; her arc and her struggle, especially in a show that has, kind of a premise from day one of get from point A to point B. For B'Elanna, it's all the emotional journey. It's all about not getting from point A to point B physically, it's about her growing and going forward and moving on from crap that's happened to her in the past. That's pretty incredible! The show *Voyager* is about an internal and external voyage, in that way.

Anika: And she starts out, you know, not really needing to get back to the Alpha Quadrant, she doesn't really care because she doesn't have anyone there.

Grace: She doesn't really have anything back there.

Anika: But by the end she's reconnected. She's found connections, not only the people on the ship, but also to people back home; like with this episode with her mother and her Klingon heritage. And then later on in the seventh season she starts talking to her father again. And it's like by going through this internal journey on *Voyager*, she's also reconnecting to her past.

Sue: Anika, you also wrote about her dealing with depression for our blog. The first post, actually. Do you want to talk a little bit about *Extreme Risk*?

Anika: Sure. So, that was the episode that really struck me and became this sort of, "Oh, this character is actually me and now I understand what I should be paying attention to in this entire series." And so, when I did start a re-watch a couple years ago, I actually started it thinking that I would focus on B'Elanna in each episode and see how she fits into that entire patchwork of the series. And it's because of *Extreme Risks*, in which they find out that all of the Maquis have been killed back in the Alpha Quadrant and no one she knows back there is alive or well and the fight has been lost, basically, and she can't handle the emotions that it stirs in her. So, she starts trying to hurt herself in the holodeck by turning off the safeties and just allowing them to beat her up. And it's a version of self-harm. But she is, you know, really smart. I consider her to be the smartest person on the ship. Janeway is the only person who even gets the possibility (of being smarter). And she also has so many friends. She's already with Tom Paris at this point. She has Janeway and Chakotay as mentors. And she really has a good relationship with everybody, even Tuvok. And yet she feels completely alone and needs to work it out in some way. She can't ask for help. And that was just—it was very powerful to me. And to see everybody sort of come together and try to pull her out of it and have it not be over at the end, have her still be struggling. She does save the day and solve the problem and she starts working with people again, but the episode ends with her being very introspective by herself in the mess hall and sort of acknowledging that it's an ongoing struggle, that she's going to have to continue dealing with this depression. Because it doesn't go away the end of a 45-minute episode.

Grace: And what a wonderful thing to see come from a franchise that originally was based really so much on that episodic idea of, "Okay, here's our problem. We will solve it in 40 minutes or less. Then we will never really talk about it again," to have someone being depressed, someone who's wanting to hurt themselves and then saying at the end, "Yeah, this is sometimes something you're just going to have to live with and work through. You don't get a happy ending unless you work towards it over time." It's a struggle and the acknowledgement of it as a struggle is so important.

Sue: Yeah, they directly acknowledge that she is dealing with depression.

Jarrah: Yeah, and I think this is actually one of Star Trek's best explorations of mental health ever.

Grace: Mm hmm.

Jarrah: I mean, the bar was not very high [laughter], but it's a very good episode. But I have to take issue with Chakotay's approach to this situation—

Grace: Oh, Chuckles.

Jarrah: —because this is the only part of this episode that, really, I find really difficult to watch is when Chakotay decides that basically she needs to be snapped out of it through an intervention where he confronts her with the holodeck program she's created of the people that they knew dying. And I get that it's an episode, that there's time limits, and that, you know, it's probably not as exciting TV to watch someone gently support someone out of it, or towards recovery.

Grace: Which is unfortunate because that's what's usually needed.

Sue: Mm hmm.

Jarrah: Yeah, because that kind of approach could be seriously counterproductive if you were to apply it to a real-world situation; to, basically angrily confront them with traumatic images.

Grace: And that's just no way to be able to trust someone after they've been like, "Nope we're going to snap you out of this. This will all be over and we can go back to the status quo." If you're in it deep, how are you supposed to respond to that?

Jarrah: Totally. I think it is, sort of saved by the fact that she doesn't, you know, "snap out of it." She does, like you were saying, need time and it's acknowledged it's going to be a process.

Anika: And she even tells him that.

Jarrah: Don't try this at home. Don't do what Chakotay did, people.

Anika: Well, I think it's fair to say, "Don't be Chakotay." Good advice.

Sue: Exposure therapy is not ideal for depression and anxiety. [laughs]

Grace: And also: deciding that you can just, kind of, fix your friend. Noooo.

Jarrah: I also get the sense that he takes it personally, which is not helpful. It's not about you, Chakotay. [Sue agrees] It's really not. But overall, it's a really good episode. The only reason I wouldn't necessarily put it in a trilogy with those other two episodes, is the other two are very focused on the discontent with being Klingon, or part Klingon.

Anika: That's not the trilogy that I have. I have my own B'Elanna trilogy which is: *Faces*, *Extreme Risk* and *Lineage*.

[various curious and intrigued responses all around]

Anika: That makes more of an arc to me.

Jarrah: Cool. Do you want to talk about *Lineage* a bit?

Anika: I love *Lineage*.

Grace: Yeah!

Anika: So, this is when B'Elanna finds out that she's pregnant and she realizes that the baby is going to have little Klingon ridges on its head just like she does. And she is thrown right back into that same anxiety and depression that she has in *Faces* and *Extreme Risk* where she remembers how horrible she felt as a child because she didn't look like everyone else and they considered it ugly. So, she remembers growing up and how she thought that being a Klingon is why her father left. She blames the breakup of her parents' marriage, and her family, on the fact that she had forehead ridges and so, if the baby has forehead ridges then they are going to be too Klingon and Tom is going to leave and everything is going to fall apart. And so, she actually tries to redesign her baby to not be at all Klingon, which is a bad solution. [laughs nervously] It's not a good idea. Luckily, they intervene and this is where I love Tom Paris, because he comes in at the end and he's like, "I'm not at all afraid of who you are and your Klingon-ness and I love that about you and I'm going to love our baby because it's *our baby*. And I'm not going to leave and if I ever feel like I want to, we'll talk about it. I'm not just gonna disappear on you."

Sue: That's what I mean by "evolved."

[laughter]

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yes.

Anika: So, I see the line from *Faces* through *Extreme Risk* into *Lineage*, for both of them. And it's another example of her issues don't go away. They keep cropping up and keep sort of gripping her, but she learns how to deal with them and how to address them and how to talk about them with other people.

Grace: And this episode's also a prime example of what I was talking about earlier, with so much of B'Elanna's story being so incredibly relatable and human based. And I think anyone who has come from a family where things kind of fell apart, and the parents weren't speaking to each other anymore, who had to deal with this thing of, "You're being just like your mother," or, "You're being just like your dad," at any degree can tell you how much that can hurt, to have someone referring to something that is intrinsically a part of you, that you do not get to just remove. And how sometimes you wish you could remove that. And I think anyone who's come from, especially a culturally-mixed or mixed-race family where that was the case, where you were showing behavior similar to a family member who was different than another one, and that was kind of used as the catalyst for someone's anger, that can be horrible. It can be terrible. And I think this is one of, kind of the only times I've seen that addressed on TV, actually. Another case where stories about aliens are the only way people are comfortable talking about a thing that a lot of people just, kind of have to live with it. It's horrible and uncomfortable and sometimes you do wish you could just edit yourself so that it is one or the other, but that might just be personal experience talking.

Anika: No, I'm sure everybody has that experience at some point. And she is middle school aged in those flashbacks. And so—

Grace: Nothing is good in middle school.

[laughter]

Anika: Speaking as the parent of a middle schooler.

Jarrah: I think by this point in the series, when I first watched it, I was quite impatient for her to get to what I wanted, again, this aspirational role model figure to be. And I was frustrated that *Lineage*, to me, felt like a setback for her, because she's going through these same things again. But I realize now that that is pretty realistic. At first, I sort of felt like, "Oh, I want a different story." But I do really like how Tom approaches the situation and I think it is totally believable that, you know, that going through something really life changing, like getting pregnant and then being able see your baby, would, you know, cause that type of response from her.

Grace: Does anyone else just love the bit immediately at the beginning where they find out that B'Elanna is pregnant and Icheb just has this look on his face like, "Oh, god! I got her pregnant by staring at her too long!" [laughter] You know, like a 14-year-old boy does.

Sue: [sighs in amusement] So, any other favorite episodes or scenes we want to discuss?

Jarrah: Okay, I want to talk about *Blood Fever*.

[Anika laughing]

Grace: Oh, my god.

Sue: I have so much to talk about in *Blood Fever*.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's more that it's bubbling up in me and we can't not talk about it.

[Anika continues laughing]

Grace: It's our public service need.

Sue: Is it a biological urge to talk about it? [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, it comes up every seven years. And if I don't return home to my podcast to talk about this episode being problematic, then I get really unpleasant [Sue and Anika continue laughing] and throw soup at nurses.

Grace: Are you comparing recording our podcast to Pon Farr? Jarrah, I knew you liked doing this but damn.

Jarrah: [Laughs and then sighs] Keeps me logical.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Okay, so, there actually are some elements of *Blood Fever* that work quite well, I think, in terms of the way that Tom handles the issue of consent. So, start with a positive note. You know, basically, B'Elanna is going through Pon Farr and Tuvok is like, "Tom, I'm going to order you to have sex with her. It's for her own good." Tom is not super comfortable with this. That is good.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: And then, even when she says she wants it, he is like, "This is not how I want this to happen," because she is, clearly, under the influence of Pon Farr, which they know would be the equivalent of being massively high, stoned, but also murderous and sexy?

[laughter]

Grace: Murder stoned?

Sue: [through bursts of laughter] Ah, murder stoned!

Anika: Well, she gets to punch Vorik.

[laughter]

Grace: Well, who wouldn't want to do that?

Jarrah: That is also good. [laughter] That is great. I mean, I do love that she basically gets herself out of the situation. All of the dudes are trying to figure out these work arounds. The doctors made a holographic sex Vulcan for Vorik. And Tuvok and Tom have this plan, but at the end of the day, it's her punching Vorik that gets her back.

[Anika cracking up]

Grace: I love how when they try this for Tuvok he's like, "This isn't quite like my wife. This is not going to work for me. Not quite right." But Vorik is just like, "I'm in!!"

Grace: [sarcastically] And if we learned anything from *Amok Time*, it's that violence and sex are the same thing.

Grace: [Through laughter] Does that mean they go to the bedroom and start playing [begins vocalizing music from the fight scene between Spock and Kirk from *Amok Time*].

Sue: [Amused] I think you should.

Jarrah: But, I mean, I do love the whole like, "I am not your mate!" [all agree] She starts basically saying, "Tom doesn't get to beat you up. I get to beat you up." It feels, at this point, like it needs to happen, in some way, because at the beginning of this episode, which is the part that really, really bothers me, Vorik is starting to undergo Pon Farr and is so creepy to B'Elanna and assaults her. And she hits him really hard and he ends up in sick bay. And no one's like, "Are you okay, B'Elanna?" Everyone's like, "Oh, poor Vorik! Vorik is not okay. Vorik got punched."

Grace: [Sarcastically] Oh no, his face got in the way of your swinging fist.

Sue: Well, it also reinforces the idea of, "Oh, he's just he's so horny he can't control it."

Jarrah: Totally! He's basically grabbing her face and talking about, "I have superior physical strength," which would be necessary to compliment Klingon mating practices. [Grace makes a noise of disgust] And at that point she is grabbing his arms and punching him to get him off her, but there is no acknowledgement that this is actually a pretty realistic prelude to sexual and domestic violence that is not uncommon.

Sue: Mm hmm. And the—oh, I hate to use the word— "excuse" that you hear from terrible people is like, "Well, you put a steak in front of a wolf." [disgusted groans] You know what? You're a person. You're not a wolf and women are not pieces of meat.

Jarrah: "I am not your steak!"

[Grace giggles]

Sue: There really is so much in this episode. I mean, it's not great, but there is a lot to talk about, that I do want to do a full episode on *Blood Fever* at some point.

Jarrah: For sure.

Grace: We're going to have to title it *Blood Fever Fever*, though.

[Jarrah laughs]

Jarrah: Another B'Elanna episode that I really love, that really stuck in my head from the very first time I watched it, is *Dreadnaught*, which is a lot of B'Elanna arguing with a ship that she built. And I think it's a testimony to Roxann Dawson's acting ability, that she can carry those scenes, and it is a super tense episode given that it's basically her arguing with a ship, but it's a, you know, killer robot ship story.

Anika: Another reoccurring theme for B'Elanna.

Jarrah: Yeah, killer robots. Yeah. I also love *Prototype*, but I think in *Dreadnaught*, you know, she's grappling with the fact that she created this thing and it has her voice, too, which is additionally [Grace and Jarrah speaking simultaneously] creepy. Yeah, I love that episode. Any other people want to throw moments or episodes in?

Grace: I just appreciate B'Elanna's arcs so much, that we get to see someone go through that growth and change. And she grows, not through vindication, but through learning and emotionally growing. And I know I was joking about this earlier, I do really love that we get to see her, kind of, engineering mentoring Icheb, because you know she just would have stood for none of that shit in season one. She would have just stuck him in the airlock and been like, "Nope. Not my problem." But by the end she's like, "Yeah, okay, I guess. I guess I'll teach you stuff. I guess I'll deal with you being a teenager."

[Jarrah chuckles]

Anika: I have a moment that's not in a B'Elanna episode.

Jarrah: Yeah!

Anika: The second season episode, *Resistance*, which is really random. Where Janeway is on a planet with [Anika and Jarrah both] Joel Gray.

Grace: Oh, yeah! Great Joel Gray episode.

Anika: B'Elanna and Tuvok are in prison together.

Jarrah: Oh, yeah!

Anika: And she, you know, just wants to punch her way out of there and she's like, "We can take the guards. And I'm just going to hit the wall." And she just really is this active, sulky, you know, "I just wanted to beat something up!" And Tuvok is just sitting there, you know, being Vulcan. And he's just like, "If you just don't say anything and observe them, we're gonna figure it out this way."

Grace: Guys! Tuvok is the Sapphire to her Ruby. [Anika and Sue laugh] That's your Steven Universe reference for the episode.

[Jarrah chuckles]

Anika: But by the end, when they do escape it's like they learned. Tuvok is punching people [laughter] and B'Elanna is working the problem and fixing the lights. I don't know, she's doing some kind of engineering thing.

Jarrah: Mm hmm.

Anika: So, it's like they switched. I just love that they, in this really small, you know, it's not it's not even a third plot in the episode, but they tacked it on.

Grace: D plot.

Anika: But they just sort of connect and switch over. They have very few scenes together but I really love that dynamic.

Grace: I also love Janeway's "lady of the evening" outfit. It's just a scarf. [all laughing] She's wearing a sexy scarf, you see. Lady of the evening.

Jarrah: Oh, *Resistance*.

Grace: Also, what's the one where we get to see B'Elanna wearing awesome Klingon maternity gear? [laughter] The episode itself, I felt, was kind of middle of the road, but I just really appreciated that, for some reason.

Anika: Was it the one where her baby is some kind of Klingon Jesus figure?

Grace: Yeah. [laughs]

Jarrah: Oh, yeah.

Grace: Okay!

[laughter]

Jarrah: Just roll with it.

Grace: But again, yeah, just, okay!

Sue: Looking through some quotes from Roxann Dawson, it's wonderful, in a lot of ways to see how, I mean we talked about a little bit before, how the plans for this character really came to fruition. I mean in a 1995 Star Log interview she says, "B'Elanna is a character that you can look forward to watching as she grows and progresses. The more conflict, the better, as far as I'm concerned, as she tries to reconcile the two sides of herself. There's so much potential here, and I can see this being a very satisfying experience for the next several years." And then in 2011, talking to Trek Movie, she says, "If you look at her, from her first episode through all her transitions, internally, as a couple with Tom, as a member of the crew, it was great. She grew, she changed. She wasn't perfect. She failed and recovered. I never felt like they left her on the sidelines. I think she continued to change and grow through all seven seasons."

Grace: Yeah!

Jarrah: Yeah, and I like how in *Endgame*, B'Elanna and Miral, they're part of, you know, Janeway's loyal cohorts, kind of, and she's, you know, clearly never given up her connections to this family that she made on Voyager.

Grace: Which is great and it definitely is not something we would have seen from B'Elanna when we first met her.

Jarrah: Yeah. Another thing that I also wanted to mention, too, because it's significant, even though it wasn't significant in the stories, is that Roxann Dawson describes herself as of Latino descent and the last name Torres is meant to indicate that she's half Latino. And then when we do see her father and cousins that sort of reinforces that. But Roxann Dawson had a quote. She says, "I'm of Latino descent, but that's something that wasn't brought up in any way because it really doesn't make a difference. I love that the attention was brought to the fact that she's half human and half Klingon. I love that the conversation regarding Tuvok centered around the fact that he is Vulcan and that we don't discuss that he's a black Vulcan." So, I mean, that's a very Star Trek kind of thing, right? That we're at a better point in the future where race isn't an explicit issue and that's

also why people weren't always raising the fact like, "Hey, you have a woman captain. That's so weird in Starfleet. How does it feel to be a woman captain?"

[Anika laughing]

Grace: They told us that as a culture we're past it and they showed us that we're past it.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, I kind of think they probably could have pushed it a little bit further.

Grace: Oh, absolutely!

Jarrah: Because we're not really at that place in a society where we can be like, "Oh, I just don't see race."

Grace: If you say that you're probably a jerk.

Jarrah: Well, but Voyager was built out of TNG and carried on a lot more that world view than Deep Space Nine, which did try to more explicitly address race. But it's still significant.

Sue: Well, and it's not B'Elanna specifically, but worth noting, of course, that Roxann Dawson started directing while working on Voyager. [Grace and Jarrah react happily] And has been one of the few women to direct episodes of Star Trek and multiple, at that. And, of course, has now really become a fantastic and prolific director.

Grace: Mm hmm.

Jarrah: Yep!

Anika: She has a long list of credits. And she had a baby during the series.

Jarrah: Yes.

Grace: Yes, yes, she did.

Sue: But, not when B'Elanna had a baby. [laughs]

Anika: But not when B'Elanna had a baby.

Jarrah: No, more around *Year of Hell*. Or, not *Year of Hell*, *Killing Game*.

Grace: Yeah.

Anika: She started having contractions on set.

Grace: Oh, man!

Jarrah: Oh, wow.

Anika: And finished her scene and then went to the hospital.

Grace: What a pro.

Jarrah: You know, Nana Visitor said something very similar when I interviewed her about if she had to do it again she would be way more assertive about her needs as a pregnant woman, because the expectation at the time was just so like, "You are a problem if you're pregnant onset and you're expendable and could be gone any time. So, that basically you have to suck it up and be the least demanding that you can be to the powers that be, on set and the production."

Sue: I wonder if that was different on the Voyager set.

Jarrah: Yeah, but, I mean, she said she thinks that there is a better environment today and certainly more room to be able to advocate for yourself so, that's good.

Grace: Thank goodness.

Sue: All right. So, I think, unless anyone has any more final thoughts, that it is just about time to wrap things up.

Grace: We got to eat our blood pie before it gets too late.

Sue: [laughs] All right. So, Anika where can people find you on the interwebs?

Anika: You can go to manicpixiedust.com and find all my links to Twitter and Tumblr and Facebook and YouTube. It's @pixiedane in most places and @manicpixiedane on Twitter.

Sue: Awesome, Jarrah?

Jarrah: You can find me @jarrahpenguin on Twitter.

Sue: Grace?

Grace: You can find me @bonecrusherjenk on Twitter and also in the back of the gagh restaurant trying to scrounge up more blood pie.

Sue: [laughs] And I'm Sue and you can find me on Twitter @spaltor. And you can find Women at Warp on Twitter @womenatwarp, Instagram @womenatwarp, on Facebook at facebook.com/womenatwarp, womenatwarp.com or send us an email at crew@womenatwarp.com. I bet you noticed a pattern.

Grace: [amused at her terrible pun] It doesn't take a B'Elanna Torres to engineer that problem.

[simultaneously amused and disgusted responses]

Sue: And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network you can visit podcasts.rodtenberry.com. Thanks so much for joining us!

[WAW outro plays]

Voiceover: The Roddenberry Podcast Network, podcasts.rodtenberry.com.