

Women at Warp Episode 104: “Retrospect”

INTRO MUSIC

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 bi weekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. Today with us we have Sue.

Sue: Hi everybody.

Jarrah: And resident expert on the Satanic Panic, Grace.

Grace: Hell yeah.

Laughter

Jarrah: Before we get into our main topic 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 per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, up to silly watch along commentaries. Visit <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp>. You can also support us by leaving a writing or review on Apple podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts. We have another couple of items of housekeeping. The first one is the fan sets giveaway, Sue, do you want to talk about that?

Sue: Absolutely. So we... thanks to our friends at fans sets, we have five sets of four enamel pins to give away. Each set includes two Discovery pins and two Original Series pins, and to enter the giveaway, just email crew@womenatwarp.com, with the subject line “Pins” and tell us what you hope to see from Star Trek in the coming year. That could be anything from a plotline on Discovery, to an idea for an episode of the new animated series, or Picard series, or just announced, Michelle Yeoh Section 31 series.

Grace Squees

Sue: Although there is no timetable on that yet, but every entry will be put into a randomizer, so we're not picking our favorites for the winners, we are just using that for your entry and then five winners will be chosen. The deadline to enter for the giveaway will be February 10th, 2019.

Jarrah: Awesome. We also have a book club episode coming up, which means you still have a little bit of time to read our next book club selection and contribute to the discussion. The book is “Letters to Star Trek” which is a book that's compiled by Susan Sackett who was a secretary to Gene Roddenberry, of fan mail that the show received and responses that Gene wrote in the Original Series and early syndication. And we will be recording that episode mid-February, so, if you want to be part of that conversation look up women work on the Goodreads group tab.

<https://www.goodreads.com/group/show/161753-women-at-warp-book-club> and join in over there.

So, today we are going to be doing actually one of our most requested topics since we've started this show, which is that we're going to be analyzing the Star Trek Voyager episode "Retrospect" [Voyager, Season 4, Episode 17]. And, before we get into it we have to do a content warning because this is an episode that has themes of sexual assault, and we will be talking about that, and you know it addresses for instance some of the difficulties that assault victims have experienced when reporting. And so, if that is a content that is upsetting or triggering for you you can absolutely feel free to skip this episode. Also, if this episode brings up something for you and you need support, we wanted to let you know that you can go, if you're in the United States you can visit Rainn, which is <https://www.rainn.org/> phone 1-800-656-HOPE, 1-800-656-4673 if you need support to talk to someone about a sexual assault. They're a great organization, and operate nationwide in the United States. If you're outside the United States, unfortunately most I know Canada we don't have a national helpline like that but really I would urge you to... you can go on Google and look up your jurisdiction and sexual assault support line or sexual assault support and get the help and the information that you need. So, I will repeat that again at the end of the show, but just a bit of a heads up before we get into the discussion.

Okay. So, in "Retrospect"

Grace: That's a fun start. That's how you know we're gonna have an upbeat conversation here.

Jarrah: For sure. I mean, I don't think there's a lot that we're gonna, you know, laugh uproariously in this one, but it's an important topic and definitely is one that I had a lot of people also request when I was starting writing Trekkie Feminist [<http://www.trekkiefeminist.com/>] reviews, and I had not remembered this episode at all and someone mentioned it to me as should be a contender for a Star Trek's most sexist episode, and I did not remember it and I watched it and I went, "Ooooh wow".

Grace: Definitely a contender for most poorly handled.

Sue: I mean that's kind of the boat that I was in this week, when I went to re watch it. I kind of remembered it, but not clearly. And even in the first five minutes like before we have Seven remember her assault, I was like already this guy is over the line.

Jarrah: Totally, right? I'm not the only one, right?

Grace: No, this dude is like just cartoonishly creepy.

Sue: Well, we didn't have the word then but he's mansplaining her own ship to her. He is like right on top of her shoulder as she's working, and then physically puts his hands on her to move her out of his way.

Jarrah: Yeah, definitely.

Grace: All of those are no-nos.

Jarrah: Already, no. So, before we get into this show we just for anyone who doesn't remember this episode like us, and doesn't intend to re watch it because it is, I find, not the most fun to watch, and we had a lot of people write in saying I just skip this one whenever I re watch Voyager. This is the one where Kovin, this alien arms dealer is trying to sell them weapons and during the their interactions with him Seven starts behaving, what some people consider oddly, and she punches him at one point when he touches her arm. Then later, she flinches during a medical exam and the Doctor becomes convinced she's repressed memories, and when he induces like a sort of hypnotic or relaxed state, she recalls and flashes back to Kovin assaulting her and removing Borg Nanoprobes, stealing Borg Nanoprobes, to develop weapons without her consent. And, I think that's probably enough of a summary for now because I'm sure we will cover the rest of it but, yeah right off the bat...

Grace: I think we can summarize the rest of the episode with "oooooh boy".

Jarrah: The only part of this I feel like, I love this part was when B'Elanna like, "I wouldn't say he did nothing, he raised his voice and he touched her arm" and clearly B'Elanna was like I would have punched him.

Sue: There is one good Janeway moment. It's literally one minute before she gets terrible again.

Jarrah: Oh yeah.

Sue: But in the ready room after like Kovin has been, accused I guess, he says are you willing to risk the arms deal over this. And she says yes. Just flat out yes. That's the one good moment she has.

Jarrah: But I would agree that was the other part that I was like, "Oh " when you mentioned that, I was like yes this is obviously the one good Janeway scene. Yeah, she's just like I have to do this, I have to believe my crew, at least at that point.

Sue: Just for these five minutes.

Grace: Inconsistent Janway writing, in my Voyager, what?? *sarcasm*

Jarrah: Maybe, should we start out by talking about this context of the 90s and what this episode was, like, meant to be talking about before we get into why it's more problematic than this?

Grace: Absolutely, yes.

Jarrah: All right I'm going to throw it over to Grace, our Satanic Panic expert.

Sue: It's your new official title.

Jarrah: And I'll just shout out our commenter Michael who raised this point in quite a bit of detail on our Facebook and there have been some other reviews that have sort of gone into this, but it is just an interesting look at some of the things that were happening in the news around the time this episode was written and what the episode was sort of meant to be exploring thematically.

Grace: Okay, well, for starters we had in the 80s and the 90s a big upswing in awareness and conversation about this idea of repressed memories. You see it coming up a lot in pop culture, it started getting talked about on a national media scale, a lot especially in the Satanic Panic. Which for those of you who aren't familiar with, that was the really weird upswing and suddenly the police being really worried that kids were getting into Satanism and that DND was gonna make kids murder each other. And that Metallica was you know telling kids to sacrifice babies. It's a very odd, but very specific cultural phenomenon that I'm a little bit obsessed with just for its "out of touch-ness" for one thing with what was actually going on, and just for the pervasiveness.

And one of the big pieces of conversation that came up from this and is also one of my favorite absolute cases of, "Really, you expect us to believe this is an actual autobiography" is a book that was written called "Michelle Remembers" by a Canadian psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder, and his and apparent victim Michelle Smith, who leads through this apparent autobiography which according to her therapist helped her unlock the memories of pretty much her being sold off to a clan of Satanists by her mother, who rape, abuse, and throw her into pits full of dismembered babies, and just some of the most ridiculous over the top bat shit like, "No.. I believe that there are many forms of abuse, but this is a little bit much" kind of stories. I think at one point near the end she claims to have had horns implanted on her and was given a tail and then claims she was she was murdered by the Satanist and then an angel brought her back. And now she is remembering all of this with the help of her wonderful, wonderful therapist who she is completely coincidentally going to marry and has a book deal with now.

So, basically we... and the sad thing is, this story wasn't even just a kind of weird "paperbacks from hell flotsam", this book was actually genuinely used and cited in a lot of the ritualistic and Satanism based police investigations. And people thought this book was something to be taken seriously in terms of researching a very real threat that just was not real at all. And it was the basis for many a lawsuit from her family as I understand. They, multiple parties sued for libel

over it. None of the allegations could be backed up even in the most remote sense. But, one of the aspects of this book is we really were at that point in being like, "Oh but what if you can be so traumatized that you can completely hide something in the back of your mind?" and there is a psychological school of thought behind that. There are actually a lot of UFO-ologists and UFO abductee victims, the common idea is that something so traumatic happened to them that they planted this idea of this outlandish thing happening to them to sort of emotionally white wash a very real trauma they felt in order to cope with it. And, one of the big problems we had with psychology at this time, and still kind of do have, is that we had these two main schools of thought. One saying yes the mind is this incredibly powerful tool that can hide things away as need be to cope. And, then there was a half of psychology saying, "No, this is bullshit and this is hack psychiatrists and psychologists trying to make a quick buck off of people who are saying they're victims who are honestly making it harder to believe real victims."

Jarrah: And this was explored at least twice on Law and Order, the first one was actually this wasn't a sexual assault case but it was a child abuse case where a daughter remembers her father murdering her school friend, and actually, I mean it was actually an assault, because I think her father had been molesting the boy. And in that case actually, the psychologist helps her and like her memories are used to convict the father. But, then this was revisited again on SVU where of course the person was just imagining things. So, I mean this would not be the first time.

Grace: SVU why do you play us like this?

Jarrah: Yeah. And so like it just like plays into these sort of misplaced male fears that like any one day like one of these crazy women they're going to like come out and accuse me of something and then my life's gonna be ruined.

Grace: These broads They just emerged from caves, and swarms like bats, ruining the lives of poor hard working men. This is fun shit, because we had a doctor named Dr. Susan Clancy who was trying to investigate into the middle ground, and then ended up becoming kind of the "le falte terrible" of the psychology world by suggesting, what if it's possible that there are certain types of people who are just more easily suggested into inferring trauma from their pasts just based on the questions you ask them. And that at start, is already kind of, "Whoa hey that's not great". But, then she ended up also putting out a book, I think it's titled "The Trauma Myth" about how... theory that she posits is that we don't feel trauma as deeply when it happens to us as a child, it's only when we're older as adults that we totally get the gist of what's happening to us. That when we are traumatized, and there there's probably something to be said there about not understanding what is happening to you at times of trauma, but at the same time, she's basically become painted in the psychological community as this woman who said, "Well, there are some people who are just not trustworthy, and there are some people who just concoct ideas in their memory", and also a lot of people have because of that book she put out kind of come to see her as the person said well trauma is not that bad, if you're a kid.

So, basically it is a very sticky situation of hard science meeting fuzzy conceptual science, and no one being totally sure where the hard line is between the two. There's a lot to go with there, and again you know looking into just about any form of media in the 90s, I mean I'm personally a big Unsolved Mysteries fan, but you can really see the point where they're suddenly deciding no Satanist... Satanism is on is our hot lead here. This is what's getting people interested in it, "It's real we tells ya!" Yeah and kind of fire and brimstone scaring the audience at home, who as far as they're concerned because they're being told by the police visiting their kids' schools and by these people on TV, "Yeah, there are totally Satanists out there and they're gonna give your kids drugs and make them LARP, and it'll be horrible!" So, as far as a lot of people were concerned this was real even though they never actually saw any actual evidence of it. This in and of itself was the case of inference making the panic, which is pretty ironic... and also really sad when you think about it.

laughter

Sue: If I remember correctly the DND link happened actually in the 70s where there was a disappearance at a college campus that the police had a hunch was linked to DND, which led to...

Grace: All they could really find out about his social life was that he was in a Dungeons and Dragons group, and then years later after the Tom Hanks TV movie about how Dungeons and Dragons will drive you out of your gourd came out, that guy was like, "Oh this was about me? No, I just switched schools!"

Sue: But like because the police had a hunch that it was linked to DND there was this massive movement to ban a game from college campuses. Yet, we have all of these issues with violence and sexual violence on college campuses. Where's the giant movement from parents?

Grace: Look if it's something that scares the middle aged white guy cops then it's a threat!

Sue: My parents were terrified of DND when I was a kid, terrified.

Jarrah: I think that there's sort of like two threads that are going on simultaneously and colliding in pop culture in the media this time.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: One is this like hysteria around like Satanistic rituals. Yeah, this idea that like children are repressing trauma, that you can get them to first of all that like you can unequivocally believe what they say, but then also that like there are shady psychologists and psychiatrists who are like using hypnosis to manipulate victims into remembering trauma that never actually happened.

Grace: Or, planting traumatic ideas in their head and this is something that you hear come up a lot and quite horribly with the Mia Farrow/Woody Allen situation with their daughter. Him saying that a psychiatrist and Mia Farrow planted these traumatic ideas in her head and her saying no this happened to me I just didn't want to talk about it for a long time until adulthood.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah, and then there was the McMartin Preschool trial, which also sort of combined both those elements where you have the kids accusing the preschool owners of this stuff and going on for like years and years with adults buying into what is being said and like goading kids and like planting ideas in their heads that they would repeat for authorities.

Grace: Even going back to the Middle Ages you have the story of the Easter witches and a group of kids just saying, "Yeah we saw what they told us about in Sunday school being acted out by these weird ladies who lived in the woods," and every kid saying the exact same thing and then being like, well, it's got to be true. And so I guess we've got to kill these ladies even though it was just some kids being like, "Aah, totally, I'm five years old. I can honestly say as a 5 year old I am an authority on these matters and I do not make things up at all." It gets fuzzy because there is very much a reality in which, for a lot of cases of assaults, domestic, sexual, at all levels sometimes the only remaining part or evidence of it is memory, and memory is in and of itself really, really complicated.

Sue: Well and that's... to bring it back to this episode, right, it's part of what they're doing to Seven here is infantilizing her, right, because she hasn't been a human for very long, you know she's still like learning how to not be a Borg, and the doctor says, "Your neural pathways are still a mystery to me," and she doesn't have her social graces.

Grace: The whole episode just does her as a character and as such, a disservice in that sense and this whole idea of the guy here who kind of knows you is going to tell you what actually happened to you, and that is what happened unquestionably because he says so.

Sue: But not only can she not be trusted because she's a woman, she can't be trusted because they put this like juvenile immature thing on her.

Grace: Yes. And, which has got so many issues with it. Both and the fact that as we've said already there is a lot of this idea that even though sometimes as a child you're not a reliable witness or not a reliable source, there are a lot of people and children who aren't believed because they're children, or will try to report what is happening to them in any situation and will be told that they're not a trustworthy source because they're a child.

Sue: Yeah, but you know one of the good things that came out of all of this is a better way to speak to victims, right, because that was one of the big issues with the preschool trial is that

they were... even if the psychologist or psychiatrist had the best of intentions they were leading the children, maybe, unintentionally. And now there are ways to attempt any way to avoid that.

Grace: If I can take a second here because I was talking about Satanic abuse and how it is completely and totally overblown in this situation, but what should really steal your nanites about this one is that there are people that do have to suffer at the hands of religious abuse and if you are in a situation where you would like someone to talk to about that with there is the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233, because religious violence is very much a thing that does happen, and just because we're saying that the Satanic Panic was overblown does not mean that if you are suffering from that in any way shape or form you should not seek help.

Jarrah: Yes for sure. Before we get into more of the sexual assault aspect of this, we definitely had a few commenters who talked in addition to the context about you know seeing this as sort of what it was largely intended to be, and largely I will say, because you know always when we're analyzing these, context is important but it's not the only thing. But, we did see the comment a couple times, you know, that I saw this more as an episode about repressed memory and bad psychology or bad psychiatry, than an episode about sexual assault. That was definitely the most prominent theme and certainly Bryan Fuller and Lisa Klink who co-wrote the teleplay for this, so, they weren't the ones who came up with the idea. So a little bit of... I will cut them a tiny bit of slack. But Bryan Fuller said that the doctor is dragging Seven into her frustration and essentially filling the role of the psychologist who's manipulating the patient, not with malevolence but because he sincerely thinks that something happened, but he goes about solving the mystery in such a haphazard way that only chaos can ensue, and says that they had this theme of false memories for this episode, and how this was you know something that they were hearing a lot about how well-respected and accredited doctors have been completely dethroned, how teachers and parents have been humiliated. So, clearly referring to these things and that was like the strongest I guess like theme in this episode. Which doesn't necessarily make it like unproblematic.

Grace: No...

Jarrah: And, one thing I thought was like really clear upon re watching it is, if the Doctor is supposed to be her psychologist, he's put in a really clear conflict of interest right off the bat.

Grace: Oh yeah.

Jarrah: Like he's basically told, okay, treat your patient so he's treating the patient, he basically gets Janeway's sign off to explore hypnosis with Seven, and she's like I didn't know you were a psychologist, he's like yeah, I totally installed a program and she's like great.

Grace: Oh boy, someone who's kind of familiar with a really, really questionable subject.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: I mean hypnosis, obviously not psychology.

Jarrah: And then like right off the bat the first thing he's tasked to do when he reports this is investigate for evidence. So, he's like put in the task of supposed to be an investigator, like a medical investigator, but also her psychologist. And this conflict persists through the entire episode, to the point that he basically, I mean I would argue, betrays her at the end, or at least like that she would see that as a betrayal, is I think pretty clear, because it's not the job of a psychologist to tell their patient that has just remembered a trauma, "Are you really sure that happened?"

Grace: And even as I was saying earlier about "Michelle Remembers" sometimes when you're hearing about something very intense, you kind of want to disbelieve immediately, to be fair.

Sue: Well, the Doctor believes Seven right from the start.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And he's right there and he's telling her she has every right to feel the way she feels, and that it's understandable that she's upset, and that she's angry because she was violated. And you know forty three minutes later he's saying, well we all make mistakes.

Jarrah: And it's not like she's remembering this stuff with his help, other than he helped her relax. As soon as he helps her relax, she starts having these flashbacks and I think a lot of people raise this is one of the hardest things that we as the audience live through the flashbacks with her, and then we're told it's not real.

Sue: Well it's not even just helped her relax, right, he says she has something blocking part of her brain that wasn't there before.

Grace: She's come down with a McGuffin.

Sue: Right, so something physical has changed and he removes that block, and that's what she remembers. So, between exams in his office, someone or something has blocked part of her memory.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's not like he's "Like what happened was it Kevin? Did he assault you?" Like, it's hard to believe that she would just pull that out of... especially because it's a pretty recent memory, just pull that out of thin air. And I mean they sort of say later, oh well you were maybe just confused because you do have a lot of other trauma and maybe this trauma is all just like blurring together in your head, and that's almost kind of like worse they're just, "Oh who can really say..."

Grace: "You've had a rough couple of years... just just go sit down wrap yourself in a blanket and let the grown ups handle this."

Sue: You know, it reminded me very much of watching the Cavanaugh hearings.

Grace: Oh good lord...

Sue: And it's all... for anyone who watched it, especially anyone in the US it might be very fresh in your memory, but there was even an entire section of the hearings where the panel was asking Dr. Ford like how are you sure you remember this. And she's a scientist and she said because I understand how memory works and victims are much more likely to remember details of an assault or a trauma than to forget them. Which who knows what we knew in the 90s for sure, because we're good you know 30 years on, right, twenty years on something...

Grace: Good lord has it been that long already?

Sue: I can do math... from when this episode aired, but it's just... I kept having, I kept seeing parallels to this thing we just watched on national TV, not that long ago including like how angry and belligerent Kovin got. How every time you know any "evidence" was presented, it just made them angrier. And it brought back all of those feelings of discomfort and nausea and all of it.

Grace: Mmhmm. Yep.

Jarrah: And, you know, he's basically like, "In my society even being accused is like going to destroy my career" and you're like....

Grace: That's uncomfortably familiar.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean I do like at that point that Tuvok and Janeway are like okay, but we can't help that. Like that's your society's problem.

Sue: But can we address that, that is is BS in our society, too.

Jarrah: Yes, yes we 100 percent can.

Sue: Like how people who are victims can't return to their homes because of the death threats they've received, but you know somebody will be back on their comedy tour in the next couple weeks. Like, I just...

Grace: Bright future!

Sue: Making the statement, coming forward, is much more likely to harm the accuser than the one who is accused.

Grace: Yeah, that was one of the most outlandish things about all those women coming forward about Bill Cosby, just people being like well these women are just coming forward about this for their benefit, it's like... what benefits. What benefit could they possibly have other than catharsis here, it's not like they're going to be getting some sweet cash for their trauma.

Jarrah: For you know people out there who maybe didn't see the sexual assault under-theme, subtheme in this episode, a couple obvious evidence for like why, you know, we're sure this is what they're talking about as, or that they're combining this. First of all in the Star Trek: Voyager magazine Bryan Fuller said like, "We were trying to distinguish it from a TV movie about date rape. And so we removed the sexual elements." So first of all they did consider it could get conflated, but then she calls it a violation.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: And I think that's the strongest thing as well as the way that she reacts to the medical exam where she's like flinching, and she's also like the punch because she feels threatened when he touches her arm, like it's clearly meant to evoke that. And, it's also like this fascination with just the whole, that repressed memories could be used to... or false repressed memories, or just false memories, or false recollection could be used to incriminate an innocent man. Darren's review at the movie blog [<https://themovieblog.com/>] which I think is really good and thorough and goes into a lot of the other like other shows like X-Files and other movies that covered similar themes in the 90s, but he also says, "When the audience hears about women's false accusations against men it evokes the longstanding myth that men are frequent victims of falsified reports about sexual assaults that ruin lives. This was creepy and uncomfortable subtext which was obvious at the time of broadcast but has only become more pronounced in the years since. "Retrospect" would have been a very clumsy and ill judged allegory in the context of the mid to late 90s decades removed from that original context. It seems almost reprehensible."

Grace: It is definitely not a fun episode to watch. But, I also like this... if I could switch gears a little bit, this other quote we have here from Darren's review that you have listed here about another sort of pop culture trend we saw through the 90s is it alright if we get into that for a minute?

Jarrah: Mm hmm.

Grace: Well, from the blog, "An anxiety bled through the cinema of the late 90s and films like The Matrix, The Truman Show, Dark City, Existence, "The 13th Floor", and "Pleasantville". What if the world was not real, at least not in the way that people understood it to be real? What if all of the assumptions that people made about how their world works were incorrect? What if

people could not trust their senses or their memories?” So, that was just that I hadn't really thought about that in relation to this until I saw that quote, but yeah that did pop up a lot in the 90s, and I think there's something to be said for how that trope applies differently to male characters and female characters, in terms of the guy having you know some having something tangible that he has to fight back against and the girl being you know gaslit, it's definitely something there.

Sue: But the way that Seven's experience is presented to us, there is nothing in it to make the audience doubt it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Like it's being presented to us as fact.

Jarrah: Yeah, but they can't corroborate it, and that is treated as enough of just like the lack of physical corroborating evidence is enough to say well we should go apologize to this guy and at the end say while this was all a mistake and make everyone feel horrible about it. Yeah, it's just that it came up a lot in our listener comments, this connection like this who raised to Cavanaugh, but connections to me too and Elizabeth said that, “I've been watching Voyager with my teenage daughters and it's my first time going through the show. This episode left me horrified and I immediately had to have a talk with them about how they should never be afraid to talk to me about assault because I will always believe them. I'm sure this episode was uncomfortable when it first aired but to watch it now in the me too era was downright shocking.”

Grace: This is kind of like the polar opposite of making Big Bird's imaginary friend real because the idea of him having a character that only he could see that no one believed him about, they were worried too much that that was going to make kids think, oh if you tell a grown up about something important like if a person is hurting you you won't be believed. So that step forward here it's kind of taken back with this.

Jarrah: Yeah. Michelle Erica Green who has also another excellent and devastating review of this episode at TrekToday [<https://www.trektoday.com/content/>], and we'll link to all these in the show notes, says, “Seven ends up like a kid who gets molested by a neighbor and is told by her mother that it never happened. Her abuser's life is given more value than her own. Once again in her great charge to 'compassion' Janeway trampled all over a crew member who genuinely needed her guidance.” She says basically, if we can take one good thing from this episode it's that it helps people understand what it would feel like to be in Seven's shoes and to be traumatized and then be not believed, because we are taken through all of those flashbacks and you know led to feel like that is... like justice is pursuing this accusation and then we're told no actually we don't really believe you and probably didn't happen.

Sue: Oh I'm so mad.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: So, I don't know if I should talk about this. There is a real life current fandom example of this happening right now and it's happening in the Star Wars fandom, forgive me, but a lot of the costuming groups are going and amending their charters to make sexual harassment of any kind, and of course anything more serious any kind of assault, a bannable offence, and in most of the groups there is always a few people, so far always men, who come back and say, "So what's the punishment if somebody falsely accuses someone?" And, like number one, when you ask that question it makes me say...

Grace: It's very transparent for one thing.

Sue: It makes me say, "What did you do?", right, it just makes me look suspiciously on the person asking it. But number two, false accusations as we talked about before, aren't a thing, right, they're just the number... women don't make false accusations, because as we discussed before coming forward can be much more harmful for the woman, than for the man she accuses. And, I realize I'm speaking very heteronormatively, and that men are assaulted and that same sex assaults happen, but you know in the overwhelming number of cases that is the distribution I guess. Am I making any sense?

Grace: Absolutely yeah.

Jarrah: Totally. And, I mean okay, so obviously you know, and we hear this stuff about false allegations we all go, "ugh" because we know people who have either come forward with real allegations and deeply, deeply regretted it because they were treated so horribly. We all know people who have not come forward, and we also know the research, and I'll share some links in our show notes but, one commonly held figure that you'll hear repeated that's a bit of a myth is that like 5 percent of rape allegations are found to be false. But there was an interesting article with criminologist Sandra Belknap who says that is a really incomplete picture because that figure comes from studies that are done on college students, an estimated ninety five percent of whom do not report assaults to police.

So, they're saying basically that 5 percent of the 5 percent that were filed are found to be false, but then also what can make something considered to be false includes if a woman takes back her statement, which doesn't necessarily mean that she lied, but maybe she decides that the consequences are too great and decides not to pursue a criminal charge. There's also like she said also if basically just police deem the person not to be credible for whatever reason and Belknap recounted one incident where a report was deemed false because a woman had allowed her eventual rapist to remove her ski boots for her after skiing. So, things like oh well you went out with him and you didn't call anyone right afterwards and say anything, or you know you were wearing super tight jeans so how could he have gotten them off you, former Italian presidents who famously said that basically you couldn't be raped if you were wearing tight jeans. So there's like you just get a police officer who doesn't believe the person for whatever

reason, could be total personal bias, and then that like gets into that statistic potentially. So, it means that we're looking like, even if we consider all of those five, we're looking at like more like closer to point five percent.

Sue: And there are lots of reasons that somebody would not report their sexual assault. Plenty.

Grace: There are many many reasons.

Sue: And I think some one of the biggest is opinion, for me, I don't have research to back this up, but women are so socialized to believe that any kind of attention, wanted or unwanted, is their own fault or doing.

Grace: Yes.

Sue: Right, so, whether we're told it or not, but many women are told that when they go to report an assault, when it happens, if it happens we feel like it's our fault. And there is this overwhelming sense of shame. So, you feel like if you are going to go and report this, that you'll be blamed, that people will be upset with you, that you might not have support of family and friends, because you did this to yourself. And it's not easier, but I guess it's safer to just try and bury it, and to ignore it, and to not report it.

Jarrah: Or, to pursue it with a counselor, but not pursue criminal charges. Like, there are many people who will get help as an individual, but will not report it because of the process that you're forced to go through that is so shaming and just really can destroy your whole life. And you know even though you know we're largely talking about sexual assaults of women by men, in this case obviously if you're looking for example at same sex relationships there are some additional factors for not reporting, one of which is like the stigma about same sex relationships, or other sort of unconventional relationships, that can make you worry that you're not going to be believed, or also that you're going to be seen as betraying your community by reporting. And saying with other minority communities you can end up feeling like I can't report this person in my community to the police that are seen as outsiders because I'll be seen as betraying my community.

Sue: There is a trans woman and drag queen, her drag name is Jiggly Caliente...

laughter

Sue: And her real name is Bianca Castro, but she told a story recently in a roundtable that was put up on YouTube, about how you know for a time she was a prostitute, and one night working she was assaulted and went to the police and asked for a rape kit, and they told her, "Well, this is the work you're doing, so you did this to yourself. You weren't raped."

Jarrah: Yep.

Sue: That's the kind of thing that can happen to anyone.

Grace: Yeah especially with Jiggly, I'm just imagining her sweet little face and being like how could you say that to her.

Jarrah: Yeah. And obviously with men who are assaulted too you get the idea that it's impossible to assault men which is obviously untrue.

Grace: Absolutely complete bullshit.

Jarrah: Or, well you must have wanted it. And I mean you got that with women too but with men it's like this idea that boys will be boys and again this idea that it's impossible to assault men and it must be funny like it's. Right. So there's it's difficulty for everyone reporting and it is not something that we can just like look lightly on like there's one ideal way for a victim to behave and if they go along with the system everything will be okay, because that's just not how it works right now.

Grace: And yet we have people constantly saying well if you've gone about doing it the right way.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. Clearly this case with Seven is I mean like Bryan Fuller said like some more similar to date rape which is another you know many reasons around like date rapes involving alcohol, involving the fact that you were out on a date with them in the first place, that people don't report because they feel shame or they feel like they won't be believed.

Sue: I'm reminded, well as we're having this conversation, of a tweet and I don't have it in front of me, so I'm going to paraphrase it and I don't know who sent it, but essentially said that the prevalence of assault and sexual assault is so high among women that you definitely know a woman who has been assaulted, and if you don't think any of your woman friends have been assaulted then they just don't trust you enough to tell you about it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: And if you make a rape joke in front of them they are probably never going to trust you enough to tell you.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm hmm. And Jackie on our Facebook said like, "False memories or women making up assault is so rare that really the focus should be on the assault and trusting Seven. The most cringeworthy moment is near the end when Seven goes to see the Doctor and he treats her so

disrespectfully, basically blaming her for his death.” And that’s true because until that point one of our commenters I think it was Brandon raised that he thought it was interesting because you couldn’t necessarily tell whether he did it or not. And despite what we’ve been saying about the difficulty reporting and why it’s important to believe people who come forward, you could theoretically still have that uncertainty until the very end where everyone seems to have decided there was no point in investigating further because we know it was a mistake by this point.

Sue: Well once his ship blows up...

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: And I still really don't know why that happened, but once his ship blows up...

Grace: I don’t know why so much of this episode happened.

Sue: But that look that Janeway gives to Seven, like blaming her for someone's death because she decided that Seven was misremembering. It's infuriating... it's infuriating.

Jarrah: Yeah and then like the Doctor tells her that her discomfort is remorse over Kovic’s death and she talks about how she doesn’t like that feeling and it’s even worse than the anger. So, the idea is like well you should just forgive people because it’ll be better...

Grace: Because it's easier on them?

Sue: I wrote it down because I was so disgusted. The doctor says, “It's called remorse. It comes into play when you make a mistake and you feel guilty about what you've done.” It just... oh man...

Jarrah: Yeah, and then, I think it's actually made worse by the very end of the episode the Doctor’s remorse is still the most important thing and how the Doctor feels about this...

Grace: Stop making it about you Doctor.

Jarrah: Yeah, he goes to Janeway and he's like this is my fault. I thought I could be a psychologist but really it was like hubris because I wanted to be more more than my programming....

Grace: Don’t make this about him...

Jarrah: And Janeway’s like, that’s totally okay Doctor, that’s okay, we all learn from these things.

Sue: But she tells him we all make mistakes but his mistakes okay but Seven’s isn’t even though it wasn’t a mistake.

Jarrah: Uuuuughhhhh..... Oh my God, no one goes to Seven and is like okay regardless like what you're feeling is real, and then where is she going to get help processing that, like, cause the Doctor clearly is a terrible counsellor.

Grace: Where's Troi when you need her?

Jarrah: Maybe they have a Troi hologram like an emergency medical counselor

Sue: But there are so many, I know we've been talking about really heavy stuff, but there are so many little things that we've glossed over in this episode that I jotted down like, how right after Seven originally punches Kovin in the face, the other women in the room are telling her that she needs to be able to control her reactions.

Jarrah: Oh yeah...

Sue: How the Doctor tells her, "When you get irritated, just try to be tolerant." The Doctor tells her that.

Jarrah: He's like I just make a quip.

Sue: Yeah, but also like in order to try and get proof that she was violated they decided that they're going to harm her again to see what happens.

Grace: Nuuuuuhhhhh

Jarrah: Oh gosh that is, yeah, basically they're like, "Well what we need to do is subject her arm to the same trauma that happened before and it's okay because it won't hurt we're not really gonna fire a gun at her" but it's like basically let's experiment on her and she isn't the one who suggests that she isn't like, "I will do whatever you want to prove this is correct. Please do whatever you'd like." Like, it's like forcing a rape kit on someone. Yeah it is not cool. And it's interesting that given they have another tool to explore memory which is called the resident Vulcan.

Grace: Yeah I don't know, we've already got some issues with him.

Jarrah: Yeah I mean we obviously don't want to do that without consent but it's like okay so if we can't really trust what she thinks because her brain is mysterious...

Sue: What about that lie detector back from "Wolf In The Fold" [TOS Season 2, Episode 7], what happened to that thing?

Grace: Oh man...

Jarrah: Yeah, it's bad on many levels, and you're just I don't know, yeah it's frustrating. It shouldn't... I don't know if there's any way that they could have made an episode about... like okay so I'm thinking I was like what could have made this episode bearable. First of all it couldn't have been Seven, because I think even if they remove the sexual elements of the sexual assault like it is still clear if you have Seven who is in like me most form fitting catsuit with Kovin who's like a skeezy dude that that's what you're gonna be reading into it. But like just say you have, because you know we know that at least like that Star Trek universe of that time is very heteronormative, so just say you have like I don't know, Paris, Paris has fancy genes that this guy is going to steal to cure some weird or like weaponize Paris's car whispering genes. and so then that wouldn't work because...

Grace: *laughing* Car whispering genes?

Jarrah: Because you needed the person who was the most insecure and traumatized to undergo this.

Grace: Good Lord...

Jarrah: Yeah, and then I'm like okay and then it's like, makes me flashback to "Faces" [VOY Season 1, Episode 14] where you have B'Elanna in a really similar situation in terms of like being violated and having in that case her actual genes experimented on, and just like jeez writers get some new ideas for women. I mean "Faces" is an excellent episode, but like it just is too many times that we get women like kidnapped or fake kidnapped and restrained and violated.

Sue: I mean the majority of episodes especially Next Gen that are about the women characters are about them being violated in some way.

Jarrah: Yes. And someone commented on our Facebook that it was like it felt like the writers just traded Troi rape episodes for Seven rape episodes.

Grace: I'm uncomfortable with how accurate that feels right now.

Jarrah: Yeah because this is also like fairly early in Seven's arc, it's like midway through Season 4. So, you already had quite a bit of exploration of trauma, and I think Seven is an amazing character, and she gets a lot of depth later. I think she's tremendously acted, but it's a lot of trauma to give her right off the bat and then to like question her and and then like you should grow through being gaslit.

Grace: And you should be nicer to other people... really.

Sue: One of my favorite things about Seven was that she wasn't nice.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. I like, “Remove your hand or I will remove your arm” in that other episode because that’s when she’s allowed to be sort of mean to people who are being gross jerks.

Grace: Good.

Jarrah: But yeah. So, I know that this is probably not been the most uplifting episode, but I mean I would hope that I think like we’re even especially harder on it because it was in the 90s and because it is still being watched today and in this context is even less acceptable, and because it is such a personal issue for so many of us as well as a key social and political issue, that we’re living in.

Sue: Yeah

Jarrah: And that’s part of what we do, is we tackle these topics. And so thank you for everyone who requested this suggestion. I know there were many people, many names. Zoe was one of the most recent who requested us to talk about “Retrospect” and it is tough but hopefully we did it justice and maybe made you know gave some food for thought for people who weren’t really sure why it was upsetting to some people.

Grace: Hopefully this gave someone some new perspective.

Jarrah: Yeah and you know I would actually be like really curious if Bryan Fuller was at a convention to just you know I think that you know Lisa Klink as well, you know they were staff writers who also did some really good things on Voyager but I’d be curious to be like, “Hey looking back on that what are your thoughts?”

Sue: I was wondering the same thing of what what they would say today about that episode.

Jarrah: It would be interesting. All right. Well we’re getting close to our time. So are there any final thoughts before we sign off? Yeah. When you see something in an episode like this and you’re upset about it we’re probably upset about it too, so, we got your back and we will try to make sure it doesn’t happen again on Star Trek, please.

Grace: Go cuddle some puppies or something.

Jarrah: So, again if this episode raised experiences for you and you need help or support and you’re in the United States you can call Rainn at 1-800-656-HOPE that’s 1-800-656-4673 or go to <https://www.rainn.org/> and there’s a ton of really great resources on there no matter where you’re located if you’re outside the United States please find support in your community there are good resources out there, if you need support please seek it out.

Grace: Please know that there are people out there to help you.

Jarrah: Yes, and you are not alone and Grace do you want to also share the line again for the Domestic Violence Hotline?

Grace: Yeah the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233. They are also available in Espanol!

Jarrah: All right.

Sue: And these are U.S. numbers but you know if you are elsewhere in the world please you know Google is there for a reason and reach out.

Jarrah: Yeah absolutely. Grace where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet?

Grace: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk>

Jarrah: And Sue?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/spaltor>

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah and you can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin> or you can also find me at my website <http://www.trekkiefeminist.com/>. And if you would like to contact the show if you have any more thoughts on this episode you want to share or request for future topics or just any general feedback you can write to us at crew@womenatwarp.com you can also reach us through Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/womenatwarp/>, Twitter <https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp> or Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/womenatwarp/> and on our website <http://www.womenatwarp.com/>

Sue: And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network visit <http://podcasts.rodtenberry.com/>

Jarrah: And thanks so much for listening!

Grace: And take care of yourself!

OUTRO MUSIC

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