

Women at Warp Episode 107: You Will Now Give Birth

JARRAH:

Hi and welcome to Women At Warp: A Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. Today with us I have crew member Sue.

SUE:

Hi everybody.

JARRAH:

And we have a special guest, Anne Theriault.

ANNE:

Hi.

JARRAH:

And we'll let Anne introduce yourself in a little bit more in a second, but before we get into that we have a bit of housekeeping to do. Our show is entirely supported by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch along commentaries. Visit Patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. All right. So moving on to our main topic for today, which is pregnancy and childbirth in Trek. And thanks again to Anne for joining us. Before we get into the topic Anne, do you want to tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into Star Trek?

ANNE:

Well first, thank you so much for having me. I am a writer. I am based in Toronto. I mostly write about *laughs* feminism, and history, and mental health are my kind of topics. I am the mom to an eight-year-old so I feel like I am very qualified on the topic of motherhood. And I got into Star Trek when I was 12 and I was having a really hard lonely year, that year. I was having a really socially awkward. And all my friends at school kind of dumped me, and I made friends with this girl Arlene Thomas, bless her, at our performing arts camp together. And she and her dad were hardcore Trekkies and I just got into it. And I was very into it for like, most of my teens and I'm still into it but not in like- like I was like writing a lot of fan fiction to it I guess. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Excellent *laughs* cool. Well, it is great to have you on. And yeah, definitely pregnancy and childbirth you're more qualified than either of us. So *laughs* but we have lots of opinions anyway. And I'm looking forward to some of these examples. Man, where do we even start with this? Because there's a lot of examples and a couple of sort of themes that emerged. But maybe like- OK can you even think of- like is there a really good example?

ANNE:

I feel like Keikos' first birth is like, a good example of a birth under terrible circumstances.
laughs

JARRAH:

Sure, let's start with Disaster. I think that's one that a lot of people are familiar with. The like *Worf voice* "You are now fully dilated, you may give birth." *all laugh* Yeah. And I mean Keiko even- I don't feel like we see a ton of her being pregnant. But it's clearer in that episode childbirth is a pretty important focus. How do you think Worf does as a midwife?

ANNE:

I think, surprisingly well. Like, I feel like he kind of does what any of us would do which is like look up a youtube tutorial and be like, "All right well, you know this is fine. People have done this for a very long time." Like, I mean not- obviously he also panics. But I think I don't know he's- I definitely feel like there are way worse OBs out there than Worf.

JARRAH:

One thing I like about this one is one of the themes that comes up, and it's a pretty common trope in media, is this theme of being imperiled in childbirth or imperiled in pregnancy. And it's often tied in with the sort of like damsel in distress ideas. Or like somehow sort of like raising the stakes of a damsel in distress because she's pregnant. So "Oh my gosh like how awful is this bad guy?" or you know, something like that. But with this one even though there is a degree of danger, they don't push it to, you know, for shock value. Like, it still seems like it's fairly straightforward and I like that Keiko is asserting herself with Worf. *laughs* And it's more kind of comedic, if anything.

ANNE:

Yeah. Like, you're never worried that like "Oh my god, the baby is going to die!" Which is often kind of like a trope in these types of things. Like, you know probably everything's gonna be fine. It's more just like a fish out of water scenario.

JARRAH:

Well, should we segue then to Keikos' second pregnancy? Yeah that one's- I mean, it starts out as Keikos' and then becomes Kiras. And that also has the peril issue, because she's imperiled and that's why the baby has to be moved into Kira's body. But yeah how do we feel about this whole thing?

SUE:

Well, this is very much- it's very interesting to me because in you know the real world, out of universe, the production team had to deal with Nana Visitors pregnancy right? That's why this storyline exists. So they built this in, which is the opposite of what they did when Gates McFadden was pregnant, which was just to hide her behind things and weirdly give her a

romantic story while very very pregnant. That would be The Host. So it's just, I wonder if they were like "Well it didn't work very well last time."

JARRAH:

But then they did it with Roxanne Dawson. They hid her as well. Mm-hmm. B'Elannas pregnancy was different, they hid her like in an engineering coat a whole bunch during the actress's pregnancy. And Nana Visitor actually said, when we interviewed her a while back, that one thing that she thinks is sort of changed a little bit for the better in Hollywood today is that it's a little bit easier to assert your rights over being pregnant on set. Just because, at the time she said she never stood up for herself and she felt like she had to work twice as hard so that no one thought she wasn't pulling her weight when she was pregnant. She would never like, take a seat if someone offered her a seat, and that it's not *totally* better now. But that it's hopefully a bit of an improvement.

ANNE:

I also kind of wonder how much of it is a little bit of like lazy character development? Like in the sense that like, *sighs* it feels like part of the reason why they wrote it the way they did, as you know, it's supposed to be this trope of like "Oh, she was like a tough strong woman who always thought she was never going to have a child and didn't want children, but then she has this like 'Come to Jesus' moment where she wonders if maybe she wants a child." And like we don't- you know with Beverly she has a kid. We know she likes her kid, I guess. *Sue laughs* And I *laughs* presumably that she finds fulfillment somehow, in motherhood. But there's, you know, there's such that weird idea that that cis women need motherhood to fulfill them more. Or don't understand what fulfillment is until they experience something adjacent to it. And there is like a weird whiff of that, with this storyline.

SUE:

For sure. It definitely felt like they were trying to soften Kira a bit with this storyline.

ANNE:

Yeah.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Another thing that happens, actually before even *that piece* though, is in the episode Accession I just remember where Keiko announces to Miles that she's pregnant. And basically the subtext for this whole beginning scene is he's hanging out with Bashir, Keikos been away, and therefore he has not cleaned their quarters the entire time because they have sitcom stereotype relationship. And basically he's excited because Keiko is coming back and they're going to bone, but then Molly says "Mommy's pregnant" and you can just see his face fall and the implication is like "No sex for you Miles. No more fun with your friends" and it's just kind of really annoying *laughs* to the point that like, he's really reluctantly doing all this stuff to support her. But like moping so much that she makes this elaborate pretense to make him feel okay

about hanging out with Dr. Bashir, and just really kind of an unfortunate attempt at comedy but so dependent on stereotypes.

SUE:

Doesn't he also go through a "Who's the father?" phase?

JARRAH:

I don't remember that. Oh! Really briefly, I think-

SUE:

Because she's been on Bajor.

JARRAH:

Yeah yeah. Really *really* briefly. But I don't think it goes anywhere super serious. But he does have some definitely weird issues with like defensiveness about the relationship, and feeling possessive.

ANNE:

So weird. *laughs*

JARRAH:

I don't know that he actually thinks someone else is the father, but he definitely is like "Oh you certainly talk about your male co-worker a lot." Yeah so, then in *The Begotten* is Kiras childbirth, and also some other fun stuff. We learn that Bajorans mostly give birth with the accompaniment of a midwife and some percussion instruments.

ANNE:

laughs And no pain!

JARRAH:

I kind of like that part. I like that you have to be super relaxed. I mean 'cause if you're gonna make an alien pregnancy it should be like, *semi* different. And it's kind of nice because it's often so associated with like trauma in media, that you have like *this* pregnancy that you just give birth by being super relaxed and you're flooded with endorphins. Like when I eat fries, that's what I'm imagining.

ANNE:

So it's funny, because I have the opposite reaction where I was like "Ugh, I hate this." *laughs* Not because I love pain and trauma but because it seemed like such- it's exactly the arguments they make in the natural birth community. That you can like have an orgasmic birth that you know *Sue laughs* seriously! It's a thing! That "you experience like a two-hour orgasm while giving birth or whatever, and that it's just because like evil modern Western medicine has *taught us* that childbirth is supposed to be bad, but if we just like rely on our bodies" and that's like very

weird and like shaming of anyone who hasn't like *laughs* managed to have an orgasmic natural birth.

JARRAH:

That's true. And it's possible that that's reflective of the like late 90s period that this was written in. That *that* was sort of like a progressive take on childbirth at the time. But yeah, definitely some problematic shaming elements in it. But then you had some other thoughts on *The Begotten* as well right Anne?

ANNE:

Yeah well, I really liked Odo's storyline, because I found like it was very kind of reflective of a lot of people's experiences of parenthood. That they go into it feeling like "I'm going to spare this kid from like all the trauma and bad things that ever happened to me. I'm going to be like such like, a gentle parent and such a different parent from how I was parented and this kid will exceed me and have so much more opportunity in life." And they're sad and kind of like the tension between that and then realizing that like some of the things that your parents did that you really hated or resented at the time, maybe were necessary for your growth. And also- but also everyone is usually doing the best that they can with the information at hand. And you know, we're not always our best selves or making the best decisions when we're parenting. Because you know, we're tired and we don't know what we're doing. And I thought it was just like a sweet reconciliation. And it sets up the ending of the episodes that is so sad.

JARRAH:

Oh yes. Yeah. Very much. Another thing that I just forgot on Kira for a second is, going back to the whole imperiled and pregnancy thing. In *The Darkness and The Light*, where she is kidnapped after this guy kills a whole bunch of her friends and then she's like tied to a big table or something, and the guy is basically talking about how he's ready to kill her as soon as he can surgically deliver the baby. Because the baby's innocent but she's really guilty because of things she did in the resistance. That's really hard to watch. I mean, the one thing that I do kind of appreciate about it though is that, I mean, it's hard to see anyone go through that, but they almost kind of treat it like the pregnancy is not necessarily the most important thing about it. So they aren't like "Oh your friends are all dying and it must be so much worse because you're pregnant." It's just kind of like "This is just really bad. *Period.*" And then I like that she rescues herself. That's pretty cool. It's just kind of a, you know, a couple of weird moments of sort of body horror or like fetishization or something. Like being kidnapped by an evil guy who's gonna cut the baby out of you is like super creepy.

ANNE:

Yes. And it's another like moment where- I love how like aliens "We don't know how alien bodies work" is just like such like a kind of great cop-out that they use so often. That she's like "I'll ask for a sedative because it won't work on me because I've been taking these Bajoran herbs during my pregnancy" and it's just like, that's nonsensical but sure! Yeah. Who knows how Bajoran bodies work?

JARRAH:

Exactly. She sneezed it out of herself. *all laugh* Sue did you have an example you wanted to talk about particularly?

SUE:

I mean when I think of childbirth on Star Trek the very first thing that always comes to mind is Kes in that like *pause* I guess weird alternate thing?

JARRAH:

Before and After.

SUE:

Before and After. Yes, where she's giving birth like hanging from a bar. And I don't know why but for some reason when I first saw that, that has just stuck in my brain for the last twenty-five years. *Jarrah laughs* That is like "That is what childbirth on Star Trek is to me now."

JARRAH:

Yeah. I just watched that one yesterday, and we see her give birth, and she's shifting through time and ending up in progressively further in the past and each time she has no memory of what's happening except for from the future. So she basically like, shifts into her body giving birth, which would probably be terrifying, *all laugh* but she's like "What's going on?" and Paris is like "You're giving birth" and he's trying to take the baby out of her back and she's hanging from a bar in the shuttle I think? But then we also see her mom give birth to her hanging from a bar or guess like grabbing onto a bar. She's standing up. Yeah. I don't know I didn't have any particular issues with that one. I thought it was kind of like a neat way to translate it, but still be like alien but recognizable. One thing though really weird to me about that episode is that she goes back and so her daughter with Paris has married Kim and had their own baby. And you're like "How do you-" like the Neelix Kes thing was weird enough, but then how do you marry someone you saw be born when you were an adult?

ANNE:

That's like Twilight. *Jarrah laughs*

SUE:

sarcastic It's because of their super short lifespans. It makes it totally OK.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So weird. OK.

SUE:

But I do think they did a really good job with the Ocampo of making the pregnancy and childbirth situation alien. Like, I feel like it's the most alien we have encountered it.

JARRAH:

Yeah, we see in Elogium that in order to get pregnant you get this like yellow stuff on your hands and then you have to like bond with your partner, and stay like locked to them for a week. I think? And you only go through that *once*. Pretty big deal, and interesting and alien for sure.

ANNE:

And presumably then just like everyone knows what you're doing, because you can't just like disappear for a week and not have anyone like ask questions.

JARRAH:

Well yeah right.

SUE:

Yeah. But I know we have a whole episode on Elogium, and that a lot of the discussion was around how this is like an analog for puberty but at the same time it's kind of for menopause as well. 'Cause it's "This is my one and *only* chance."

JARRAH:

And also an analogy for teen pregnancy. So this idea about like, "You should really think this through. Just because you can, doesn't mean you have to." *all laugh* Although they've done better than that, I think. Another Voyager example I wanted to touch on briefly is Samantha Wildman giving birth to Naomi. Mostly because this also happens in like a split universe situation, and in one of the Universes the baby dies, and in the other universe they save it via transporter C-section or I mean- it's not a C-section, but they transport the baby out of her and it's another *dangerous* situation. But I was curious what the thought is on transporting fetuses out of women?

SUE:

If that were possible wouldn't it be way easier?

JARRAH:

To just do that for everyone?

SUE:

Yeah!

ANNE:

I feel like- I mean, I guess you could say that- one of the things with C-sections, why it's not ideal, is that as the baby goes through the vaginal canal it squishes the amniotic fluid out of their lungs and gets them ready for breathing. So- but I guess you could just transport the baby without the amniotic fluid in the lungs? I don't- I don't know how-

JARRAH:

It seems very specific when given that like sometimes they can't even transport people successfully on the ship without *Anne laughs* a comm badge on them. So must be some really sensitive transporter.

ANNE:

They do seem very stuck on like vaginal childbirth for people who like definitely don't *have* to have vaginal childbirth. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Also then they're just like "OK. And this ship is going to be destroyed by it. Let's take the baby and Kim over to the other ship" and then everyone just has to be like "We're totally pretending that you were always just *Sue laughs* here replacing your dead duplicates."

ANNE:

"Just gonna forget about that."

JARRAH:

OK well, let's maybe take a bit of a segue into a particularly notable example of cis male pregnancy, where a crew member who does not really have the biological capability to get pregnant gets pregnant in Enterprise, which is the episode unexpected. Any thoughts on Unexpected?

SUE:

Any thoughts on Unexpected? I mean, they tend to give Trip all of the weird difficult to talk about stuff in Enterprise, don't they?

JARRAH:

Yeah. This is only like episode three or four of the first season. So it's right off the bat. It's kind of Star Trek's Junior. *all laugh* Except for that he doesn't know what's happening. So it's sort of- a darker interpretation is it's kind of making light of assault and also being like "Oh it is so hilarious! The idea that a man could get pregnant!" even though, as we know, gender is not that stable. And so it's unfortunate that it seems like, you know, even a couple of hundred years from now people are just going to find it so hilarious and emasculating that you could have a pregnant man. To the point that they- he has to like pull up his shirt and show the Klingons the like sack where the baby fetus is. And the Klingons are all just like pointing and laughing at him, and he's super humiliated, and I'm just going "Really? I don't know. I mean can we just be like even a little bit more mature than today."

SUE:

Well, they also go through the very trope-y ranks of "he's hormonal when down in engineering, and he's upset about this, and he's mad about that because-"

JARRAH:

"He's concerned for everyone's safety, his maternal instincts-"

SUE:

"His feminine brain" You know?

JARRAH:

Yeah. That happens also with Quark in Profit and Lace. But like both- like not a pregnancy issue but with sort of transphobic issues. And a.. just depictions of that devalue femininity and stereotype what it means to be pregnant. The only other reference we get of someone who's not a cis woman having a baby in Star Trek that's notable is in DS9. Bashir talks about a character named Villix'pran who is part of a species where the males carry young and then give birth through a process called Budding. So seems like maybe sort of like a hydra? And at least that's treated as just kind of like "Oh how is Villix'pran?" "Oh, he's great!" *all laugh* and you know no one is making it like the center of a hilarious story. It's kind of like a fact of something that's happening.

SUE:

Well we got off it quick, but really quickly at the end of that Enterprise episode T'Pol tells Trip that he is, according to her research, the first human male ever becoming pregnant. And I'm just like "No."

JARRAH:

I know it was 2001 you guys, but this was still a thing even then.

SUE:

Yeah. And of course he had some tongue in cheek response of like "Just how I always wanted to get in the history books." So yes unfortunate.

JARRAH:

Should we go back to TNG maybe for a bit?

ANNE:

Yes.

JARRAH:

We have a couple of other examples, one is The Child which- did do a whole episode on the child? Yes, we did. Yes. Because I had a song. I will not re-sing it. *crew laughs* It was great and you should go listen to that episode. But I would say like pretty similar to how Trip gets pregnant, in that he doesn't know that someone's trying to impregnate him. And yeah, she wakes up and she's pregnant. And how do we feel about The Child, briefly? And since you weren't on our episode do you do your thoughts about it?

ANNE:

Oh yeah. It's like not a very good episode. I mean, it's obviously like it's a depiction of assault. You know, Troi doesn't know that she is being *pauses* *probed* by this alien. I don't even know how we describe it. She doesn't know how she becomes pregnant, but she is like very rapidly accepting of the fact that- she's like "Yeah I know, this is my baby, and I'm gonna have this baby, and I love my baby, and I'll-" Speaking of like formative birth scenes, this one for me like I was like "Wow, you can give birth on a stool? that's wild!" I don't know that. *all laugh* That one stuck with me for some reason. I must've- I can't remember how old I was at that time. But it must've been like, my early teens and I was like "Oh what the-"*Jarrah laughs* And yeah- and this is also the first episode with Pulaski and I just feel like it's all a mess. And everyone's like, rude to Worf, even though he like, rightfully, points out that it's a security threat. And he's not wrong!

JARRAH:

Yeah, it is weird to have a conference over what happens with your fetus though. *laughs* Yeah well, definitely people should take a listen to our episode on that because it is *thorough* and we go through *Sue laughs* all the problematic aspects.

SUE:

There is if you jump into the novels, I do this a lot. There is another instance of Troi being pregnant. And it is a like *incredibly* difficult pregnancy. And at the same time in these shared continuity books Crusher is also pregnant and she is like nearly 60, has no complications, and legit, is leading a like rescue away mission on Pacifica like the third trimester. I want to say seven or eight months pregnant. And I remember, I believe it was at a panel, that people were like "What how?" And that the answer was that they, the authors, specifically decided to make Crushers pregnancy so problem-free to further give examples of how Troi's was difficult. And they weren't even in the same books. Yeah.

JARRAH:

Yeah. They're barely- Like they barely overlap in The Destinies series, but that's also- I mean they excuse *so much* stuff with future medicine that you think they could have just been like "Future medicine."

SUE:

Right.

JARRAH:

"They're both humans. Nothing's complicated anymore." But like in- yeah the Troi one is awful. So because of her genetic issues with Riker she, first of all, has a miscarriage. That's really very devastating. But because like they sort of expected it to maybe happen once no one really investigates the fetal tissue. And then she gets pregnant *again* and they detect a fetal abnormality that's very significant and that the baby won't survive. And she basically like freaks out because of her hormones, and I mean also would be a very devastating situation. But she

refuses even after the baby dies inside her to let them take the fetus out. And they sort of warn the- or it's not- I guess it's not dead but it won't fully develop, and it's growing, and it's imperiling her health. And even though they say "You know, we have a certain amount of time before this fetus kills you." She refuses flat out and everyone kind of reluctantly agrees. And then she goes on an away mission where she ends up stranded on a planet with the doctor from Titan who has like- is sort of a reptilian type creature with giant fangs and claws. And he's able to stabilize her by biting her stomach and injecting venom into her. *laughs* And then the magic people whose planet they're on, I think, save the pregnancy? But it's so much devastation to go to and the whole way through it's like not very empathetic to her? So even though you can understand how awful that would be, you can't help just being like "Wow this is really dumb" because it just seems so incredibly stupid that you put yourself in that much risk. And then the episode after, the doctor goes through some weird hormonal thing of his own, and kidnaps Troi to save the baby and is like sort of holding her captive, and it's super weird. And finally finally she has the baby and they name it Tasha. *Anne laughs* The end. Now you don't have to read that.

SUE:

It's... it's astounding. *laughs*

ANNE:

Which is such- and that's also such like a common anti-choice argument I feel, or kind of one of those stories that you hear that like "You know, the doctor said the baby was going to die but like I had faith in God and I refused to terminate the pregnancy and in the end I was right and that just shows you that like Doctors just want to like kill fetuses." You know what I mean? I hear that *a lot*.

JARRAH:

Yeah it's definitely- it cuts different ways, because either way like you don't really- you're not led to empathize with her choice really. Like, you just more are supposed to see her as she's someone who's like grief-stricken and hormonal and can't really make a sound decision and then it turns out that she was right anyway because miracle aliens. *Sue laughs*

ANNE:

Right. But she never really gets shown as having full autonomy like she is-

SUE:

No no no no.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So poor Troi. Le sigh.

ANNE:

It's funny because like Troi is such, I feel, like an interesting character when it comes to kids? Because you feel like so first of all- it's all kind of weird to me that like not a lot of people on Star

Trek have kids on most of the series. Which, I guess birth control is like great in the future. But Troi's funny that she's really kind of ambivalent on it. Like she seems sometimes like she would love to have a kid if the right time and right person could ever come up. But then she obviously chooses not to have a kid in the series and the movies, because she *could* presumably if she wanted to. So I just find it- so it's interesting because you don't often see like women who are kind of like just ambivalent about motherhood, could cut either way like depending on how things fall.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And it's interesting. That's why it kind of surprise me that they had both of them have babies in the novels, because that was something I just didn't even think was necessarily necessary for either of them. Which is not to say that it's wrong, although weird how they did it. So birth control. Yes, really good in the 21st century unless you're Cassidy Yates. And we talked about this a bit in our Sisko episode, but this is the one really weird thing where there's a remark that's like "Well someone forgot to get their shots or their injections this month." That implies that either Sisko is solely responsible for the birth control and for getting like inoculated against getting someone pregnant, or that they *both* have to get the shots which would be even dumber.

ANNE:

Like, it's like how do you guys not have- it's the 21st century. Like this should just be so easy right now. *all laugh* How are there unplanned pregnancies?

JARRAH:

Yeah. How is it worse than in 2019?

SUE:

laughs They needed it for *the story*, come on. It's just- I don't- I remember being a *kid* and reading fanfic where the authors talked about birth control implants, and like legit that it was in their arms, and now I see that the birth control implants that we actually do have. And I'm like "Yes! More of that, please." *all laugh* But it just- I don't know.

JARRAH:

I mean if Janeway would have got her injection would she still have had lizard babies though? *all laugh*

SUE:

Oh, the lizard babies.

JARRAH:

But I feel like we should talk a little bit about the original series, because we haven't at all, and specifically Friday's Child which we also have a full episode on. So just to touch on it briefly though, this is the one with Eelen who is the pregnant mother of the baby that could be the

leader of the country of Muppet-clad barbarians. *all laugh* How do you feel about Friday's child?

SUE:

You know, we obviously talked about this more, but it still annoys me that she's set up as a I guess antagonist is the best word to use, because she's a woman who's not interested in having that baby. And I know that's a very like 60s idea, and it's unfathomable that a woman could not want a baby. But it's just- it's so frustrating to watch. It's so frustrating that nobody listens to her. And then McCoy finally is able to quote "bring her under control" by assaulting her. The whole thing is just a mess.

SPEAKER: F1

The original thought was this character could be really revolutionary, because this idea of a woman not wanting to be pregnant, and not wanting the burden of being at the center of this power struggle. That could be really powerful and diversify the roles for women. But the way that it- and that was DC Fontana's idea of it, the way that it came out was just more that you know yeah, she was brought around by like male violence and then by having the baby it made her selfless.

ANNE:

laughs Yeah. Like I said, I feel like it's so often used as just like a lazy character development. Like, "How do we make a female character do something?" "I don't know. make her a mother or make her have a feeling about motherhood?" It's like there are lots of other ways. Like I kind of- like this is probably a very poor person but it's like the same way that I often feel like in a lot of fiction like sexual assault or trauma is used to just like imbue a woman with characteristics instead of you know what I mean? Or to like advance the plot or whatever.

JARRAH:

Yeah. I mean Troi is a good example of both.

ANNE:

Yes. Yes!

JARRAH:

But even like, also you know Jadzia trying to get pregnant is another example of that. Like "Oh, this will make it even sadder when we kill her." Same with Miramane. And then you add a miscegenation trope on top of that. Or like that it's such a punishment for miscegenation, that Miramane has to die. And also because Kirk couldn't be seen as abandoning his wife and child. So "Let's get her pregnant and then kill her off to double the emotional punch."

ANNE:

It's like This Is Us. But in space. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

Yup. Another one that I watched for this one was the DS9 episode The Quickening. Which was really interesting and I actually- I mean it was complicated. This is the one where Bashir realizes he's not God and can't just cure a plague on a planet in a week. And he's assisted by this pregnant woman Ekorja who has the plague, the blight, and wants to live for her child because her husband died and she hasn't felt hope since her husband died. But she will as soon as this baby is in the world? Even if she's dead. So that like is very- self-sacrificing mother figure is a very common trope, and is a little problematic that like you only live for the- in her case the men in her life. And it sucks that she does actually die, but she is still, I think, she has a lot of screen time, and she is a powerful advocate, and bears a lot of struggle, and goes against basically her whole community, and ends up being right that "You know, there could be a cure to this" and refuses to be kind of defeated.

ANNE:

I haven't seen that episode in so long. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Because of this, Bashir doesn't realize, because he's treating her but she's not getting better, and then when the baby's born he realizes it's because the fetus has been absorbing all the medicine and- that's sort of why he says like that you know "There is no drug in your system because it was all in the fetus" but it's weird that first was he wasn't sampling the fetal fluids, because he clearly had the ability to do that. And you think it would be kind of basic thing to even just check? Because you also don't want to poison it. And that he also seems to think that treating *her* is the same as treating *anyone*. So he doesn't seem to have any idea that maybe a pregnant woman's body could behave differently to other people's bodies when you give it medication. But then the baby's born, it has no lesions. So basically what he realizes is "I can't cure the adults but we can vaccinate the unborn children so we're gonna give all the pregnant women this shot and then all their babies won't have the blight" but everyone who's alive will still get the blight and die. So a little bit weird. I mean to their credit though, like he's really not satisfied with that, and they show the end of the episode he's still trying to work to cure all the people that are alive.

ANNE:

It's like- is it- like I said it's been a very long time since I've seen it. Is it a very like heavy-handed like AIDS orphan?

JARRAH:

You know, I didn't get that sense. I think there was definitely a- they were trying to have a bit of a conversation about assisted dying. Because there's sort of this figure who's like "There's no cure. I just help people with their final send-off" and he's giving them poison to help them go to the afterlife. And it's not totally condemning of him because as soon as they find a vaccine he's like "I will happily help give out this vaccine to everyone." It was more about hope. I think the vaccine thing, I don't think it was to do with AIDS but the thought did cross my mind.

SUE:

I did remember that theory from the like the late 90s as well. So.

JARRAH:

Oh, maybe.

SUE:

That's interesting.

JARRAH:

Yeah it's possible like someone read a news article and it influenced it, but it's a bit different because, you know, it's not like they stopped treating adults who had AIDS. But it's just that we can drastically reduce it if we can prevent it being carried to children.

ANNE:

Yeah it's why I always find Star Trek is so funny, because it also I feel loves to mix metaphors. *all laugh* Like "It's *this* thing in real life. But also *this* thing." But OK, also can we talk about the moment in The Begotten when Miles and Shakaar have a fight over who gets to see Kiras vagina? *laughs*

JARRAH:

Yeah. That's hilarious. What did you think about it?

ANNE:

Well it was like- I mean it's funny- I guess not *funny*, but what seemed very real to me was Kira was like "I don't care. I just want you two to stop fighting." Like, "I do not care who sees anything right now. I just want this baby to be born." And I definitely remember having a feeling like I had lost all shame by the time my kid was born. I was like, you know, I had a C-section. Like everybody has seen everything. So many strangers have like *laughs* seen everything, that like who cares at this point? *laughs* But also like, yeah that weird possessiveness of like "I can't let another man see my lady's beautiful flower-" *all laugh*

JARRAH:

Even if *his* baby is coming out of it. *all laugh*

ANNE:

"I would be so emasculated."

JARRAH:

Yeah that's like "It's *my* baby, it's *my* girlfriend."

ANNE:

Like, "None of you get to see anything unless she says it's OK."

JARRAH:

Yeah. Oh man, they're the worst in that episode. I just- I got no time for that.

ANNE:

With their little matching scarves. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Oh yes! Hilarious. So there's one other one that's sort of, I think, it's important to mention is Seska in Maneuvers. Because this is a totally different example of the representation where it's like a woman being evil and *stealing a man's semen* *Anne laughs* so that she can have his baby because she, you know, crazy ex-girlfriend. And it is, I think, pretty unfortunate.

ANNE:

Yeah well you know, women are always like trying to trick men into having babies for their own fun and profit.

SUE:

To get them to *stay*.

JARRAH:

Yeah or come back, or for dominion over the Delta Quadrant. Whatever.

ANNE:

Many reasons.

JARRAH:

Yeah. That's *super* weird. And Seska goes- yeah it just kind of sucks that they had her be this super villain that I think had a fair amount of potential. But then it's like "Let's hook up with the dumbest guy in the Delta Quadrant and carry off these like cartoon villain schemes" and the fact that you know Chakotay is chasing after her by himself because his masculinity is so injured by feeling like, well you know, because he has a sense of responsibility over the kid, but also like he can't put anyone else in danger because it's his fault, because he should have known better and he is a big man, and should have controlled the situation. *groans/all laugh*

SUE:

We've been doing that a lot this episode. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

So what would we want to see for a twenty-fourth century pregnancy?

SUE:

I liked how the Q got pregnant.

JARRAH:

Oh yeah.

SUE:

Or maybe it's just reproduced? I don't know if she was ever actually pregnant.

JARRAH:

Well I mean, they're gone for a while. But we- I mean don't really know how the pregnancy happened. We just know how the mating happened right? Like touch fingers and a light ball happens, and then your pregnant. *Sue laughs* And also just quickly to mention, that the only time that we actually see anything that could be termed as abortion on the show, is in the Up The Long Ladder episode of Next Generation. Where Pulaski and Riker phaser the pods where the clones are growing from their DNA. And that was supposed to be, or at least was interpreted as an abortion allegory by some people, so just an interesting fact.

SUE:

They did also consider blowing up the Xandi hatchery.

JARRAH:

Oh right right. Yeah. Oh and also we should not finish this episode before we talk about B'Elanna and the idea of genetically engineering your fetus. Any thoughts on that? The whole- I mean it was definitely a timely story. I guess it's still a subject of debate about engineering your fetus, In her case to look less Klingon, fearing that it would have the same experiences that she had that made her very ashamed to be part Klingon.

ANNE:

Yeah. Definitely like, a very tricky issue.*laughs*

SUE:

Well like, genetic counselors have existed for a long time. Way before we were ever able to *change* anything. So it's more for, you know, avoiding hereditary diseases rather than "Will my child have a bumpy forehead?" *laughs*

ANNE:

Right. But that, I think, it's also so interesting that there *pause* the more we know about genetics the more obviously there starts to be some dicey territories about what we consider to be like genetic disorders. Does that make sense?

SUE:

For sure. Yeah.

JARRAH:

Yeah, well I mean there's even like two examples in Next Generation where Geordi points out that like in Romulan culture he wouldn't be allowed to live. And then also in Masterpiece Society that they wouldn't have let him be born. And then it's like *his* unique abilities that saved the day. So that's definitely one of the territories where it gets really fraught to start talking about engineering a fetus. They sort of stayed away from that by making it purely cosmetic.

ANNE:

Yeah. So I think like, that's for sure a different argument than talking about disabilities.

JARRAH:

But I still don't- like they obviously weren't in favor of her doing it. I mean that it wasn't like "Well it's relatively benign, so sure. Why don't you give her a different color hair?" And I mean I really like Tom in this episode of how he says you know like "I'm not leaving you, I'm not leaving our baby." And- but it I guess if it plays into anything it plays into the idea that, again, like pregnant women are overly emotional and prone to making these types of decisions. It's a touchy topic and I feel like they didn't do a *terrible* job handling it. They just, you know, obviously couldn't really *thoroughly* handle it either.

ANNE:

Yeah. No, I thought- it's been again a long time since we've seen that episode. So I don't have a huge memory of it, but I remember thinking it was like handled pretty well, and it's definitely something I think that's going to become more and more of an issue as you know more and more people use IVF and, you know, you have these embryos that you can test for all kinds of things, not just genetic issues. But you can also test for sex, or even like presumably hair color, and eye color and then it is such an interesting minefield. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Yeah yeah. Because again, like you don't necessarily want to imply like "natural is always better" but at what point do you say "Well this intervention is OK, but this one is not"?

SUE:

Yeah, and I remember all these articles, again from around that time, of like "Designer babies. What's next?" You know, and so I'm sure that was part of the inspiration for that scene, but there's definitely a lot of really tricky area when you get into *pause* messing with DNA.

ANNE:

Yeah. I don't know. I find it so interesting, especially like I mentioned, like when it comes to sex selection which I know is not *laughs* what we're talking about. But like you know, most people would probably be thinking it was like morally OK to like "Oh you have five embryos, you already have a son. You want a daughter, you choose the embryo that you know has X X

chromosomes.” Which obviously doesn't say anything about gender, but you know whatever, we live in a society that is very links sex to gender. But then, you know, there is such a concern about sex-selective abortion. So it's- I don't know, I just find it super interesting. But yeah I don't know. It's interesting like, I know in Nova Scotia you're not even- they won't tell you the baby's sex during ultrasounds. You have to like pay for a private ultrasound if you want to find out.

JARRAH:

There's a lot of places like that.

ANNE:

Yeah.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And a lot of places in Canada, I'm assuming in the states as well, that at least they won't until a certain time because they're worried about sex selective abortions. But there's some really competing evidence about how common they actually are, and some really problematic racist narratives about them too. So like, not to say that it happening, because when it does happen is OK, but that people should do some reading and critical thinking before jumping on the bandwagon.

ANNE:

Oh for sure.

SUE:

I 100 percent don't really know much about what it's like in real life. I have never been pregnant, never intend to be. *laughs* But I have never heard about that, that you can't- that you're not told the sex of your baby.

JARRAH:

On demand? Yeah it might be more in Canada. Because it's like generally one health care system.

SUE:

Wow.

ANNE:

And then you can also pay privately, and a lot of people do. They'll like go to a private ultrasound clinic and get like a 3-D ultrasound or whatever.

JARRAH:

Yeah, and every once in a while we get these stories in our media about how there's you know, a rash of sex-selective abortions, and these ultrasound providers are doing a horrible service by telling people because it enables the disempowerment of women in certain immigrant

communities. But again like then there's usually a rebuttal that says "OK but look at the statistics, because we don't actually know that this is happening to this extent."

SUE:

I mean it makes complete sense. But I just- my mind is blown.

JARRAH:

I also had a friend actually, who's Indo Canadian, and went to the doctor and she said that like *because* of these stories too, that like racialized minority women, white doctors particularly just *assume* they're going to seek a sex-selective abortion. Because they've read these you know alarmist stories, and said that like when she was pregnant the doctor was like *preemptively*, a whole bunch of times, like "You know I can't tell you right? Because like your community gets these sex selective abortions." And she was like "I was not going to do that." *all make noises of discomfort*

ANNE:

Well, you know that there was like a whole thing in Toronto a few years ago where there was a report that certain hospitals that serve certain immigrant communities weren't telling the sex. But then like other hospitals were, and it was like this wild imbalance of like, yeah. Basically, as you said, like depending on the color of your skin you get told the sex of the baby or not.

JARRAH:

Yeah, that some people can be trusted with the information more than others. So I think, if we're going into the question I asked before, which was just like "What should a Star Trek birth look like in the United Federation of Planets in the 24th century?" Then yeah, one thing would be like similar access to information that you need to make the choices that are available to you, would be one thing. So a menu of information and choices.

ANNE:

Definitely. And you know, good access to choices about what level of duty you want to take on while you're pregnant. Whether you want to stay on very active duty, because some people want that, or whether you want to have like a modified duty roster or whatever. That would be a big thing for me.

SUE:

Or hopefully, they'd allow for leave.

ANNE:

Yeah. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Yeah. I believe in Voyager there's some discussion of- I forget, I feel like we talked about this in the B'Elanna episode so someone can go back and take a listen to that. But we talked about

how I think she goes back to work right away, but there's some discussion when she's pregnant about reducing hours.

SUE:

But I mean, both during the pregnancy and after the birth that there would be leave available, and a you know, reasonable amount to both parents. Or all parents-

JARRAH:

If you're an Anorian. All four of you. *Sue laughs* Right. Or just humans in unique relationships. I think- yeah we can have three parents on a birth certificate now. Is that across Canada?

ANNE:

I think so, yeah. At the very least like I've heard of it in B.C. and Ontario.

JARRAH:

Yeah. So *all* the parents get the parental leave. Yeah, I'm trying to think what else- I mean I guess you know regular *confidential* consultation with your health care provider? *Sue laughs* That's something in Star Trek they don't seem- no one cares about medical confidentiality. *all laugh* And I get that it's sort of quasi-military, so that like the doctor has sort of an onus to report some things to the captain when there's something wrong with you. Like they don't think that you can perform your duties. But there really needs to be some kind of like middle ground, where if this is not affecting your ability to perform your duties, or if you know you don't think it should be disclosed for whatever reason that there needs to be some sort of middle ground of confidentiality.

ANNE:

Agreed. And like doctors who actually have a pretty firm understanding in pregnancy, how pregnancy works like e.g. Bashir being confused about all the medicine going to the baby or whatever. Like it seems like- they seem still very mystified by it in the 24th century. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Mm-hmm. I'd be fine with transporter births. But you know again, choices. Like I think that people should be given the most accurate information and choices. So you don't *have* to have birth through a transporter, but you totally could. If you're down with that.

ANNE:

Although I don't know if I would trust Miles to *all laugh* carry it out.

JARRAH:

Otherwise your baby's totally gonna end up in a transporter stream, or your baby is gonna end up merged with Neelix. Worst ever.

ANNE:

You know what? There was an episode I wanted to talk about, the one where Data has Lal.

JARRAH:
Oh right!

ANNE:
which I feel like, is such like an interesting look at like becoming a parent intentionally and by choice and not being, you know, going through pregnancy that- I don't know. It's not really a surrogacy. I don't know what you'd call it.

JARRAH:
It's creation! He builds his child, but then also lets her determine her gender, and her appearance, and learn based on what she's interested in. But also give some instruction on what he thinks is valuable.

ANNE:
I feel like it's interesting that the two people that we kind of see be the most thoughtful parents *laughs* are Data and Odo. Who both have- because they had kind of like this trauma from their own youths, and they have these very kind of trauma-informed approaches to parenting I feel.

JARRAH:
Yeah, that is really interesting. And also yeah, they were both sort of- I mean not created but raised by scientists who were trying to study them.

ANNE:
And they both have this idea that they really don't want their child to be something that's studied. They want their child to have this kind of more organic experience of childhood, which is a bad word to use maybe when you're talking about an android but whatever.

JARRAH:
Yeah, and I mean it reminds me of a lot of the sort of scientific parenting movements of the like 50s and 60s? Where you had like the Dionne quintuplets, and these kids that were like supposed to be- like some kids basically raised in labs of nursing students, trying to like train the scientifically best way to raise a kid through their nutrition and physical activity and put on observation. And then kind of the more like Dr. Spock rebellion against some of those ideas, and against more of the like isolating tough love stuff to more like nurturing parenthood. And I think that's really exemplified in those kinds of episodes.

ANNE:
Also, have you ever heard of Skinner's baby box? Which is kind of like- not really- It turns out that cultural idea that we have isn't what it actually was. It wasn't just like a box that was

supposed to raise a baby on its own. But I find it very neat that his name for the baby box was an Heir Conditioner, spelled H E I R. *all laugh*

SUE:

That's fantastic.

JARRAH:

OK I have to admit when you said Skinners baby box, I immediately just thought I'm like "Oh God we're not talking?" Oh no no no. OK never mind. I got X-Files characters mixed up. *all laugh* Yes. *Also* some problematic representations of pregnancy! But luckily- *luckily* we didn't have quite as much of the like, sinister alien egg impregnation. Like I would- I prefer the problematically comical? *all laugh*

SUE:

Yeah, I'd rather laugh instead of cry. *laughs*

JARRAH:

Well, any final thoughts before we wrap it up?

ANNE:

I don't think so. I just wanna say I think Bev is a great mom.

JARRAH:

She's my mom role model *laughs*. Yeah. You know who would you want to be the attendant at your birth from Star Trek?

SUE:

Data.

ANNE:

Yeah.

JARRAH:

Oh yeah. Data in *The Child* is great actually.

SUE:

He did a really great job.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Also, he's obviously never gonna lose his cool, *Sue laughs* except for you know post *Generations* Data. I don't want *Generations* and *First Contact* Data, unless he can turn off the emotion chip.

SUE:
Season two Data.

JARRAH:
Yeah. *laughs*

ANNE:
And I did like the Bajoran lady at Kiras birth.

JARRAH:
Yeah, she was OK. She was very chill. I feel like Kes would be good. She was good with the Wildman birth. Also a Picard would be so awkward it would be hilarious. *Sue laughs* Probably more awkward than Worf.

ANNE:
He would use like, weird euphemisms, I feel.

SUE:
laughs He'd get very embarrassed.

ANNE:
And you'd spend most of your time trying to comfort *him* and be like "It's OK, we'll get past this in our relationship. You won't always think of this every time you see me I swear." *Sue laughs*

JARRAH:
Yeah, Dax probably would also be pretty good, being your birth attendant. Oh right. Well, thank you so much Anne for joining us. Where can people find you elsewhere on the Internet?

ANNE:
The best place to find me is on Twitter where I am @anne, A N N E underscore Thériault T H E R I A U L T. And right now I tweet a lot about Harry Potter because that's what I'm reading with my kid. But otherwise that's a good way.

JARRAH:
Yeah yeah. It's the best. Your Harry Potter analysis is on point. And Sue?

SUE:
you can find me on Twitter @spaltor. That's S P A L T O R.

JARRAH:
And you can find me on Twitter at J A R R A H -Penguin or Trekkiefeminist.com. If you'd like to contact our show, we love to hear from you. We know we didn't cover all the examples of

pregnancy and childbirth in Trek, so if you have other ones that we missed that you want us to highlight in a future episode give us a shout at crew@WomenAtWarp.Com or message us on Facebook, or tweet at us [@WomenAtWarp](https://twitter.com/WomenAtWarp). We're also on Instagram and you can also leave us a rating or review an Apple podcast or wherever you get your podcasts. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com.

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