

## Women at Warp Episode 127: What I Like About Hugh

JARRAH:

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

ANDI:

Hello.

JARRAH:

And Sue

SUE:

Hi there.

JARRAH:

Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping. Our show is entirely supported by your 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. Like, thanks on social media to silly watchalong commentaries. So visit [Patreon.com/WomenAtWarp](https://Patreon.com/WomenAtWarp). You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. And sadly Grace could not be with us because she is currently at Geek Girl Con paneling it up. But we are going to talk about the episode I Borg and the character of Hugh, as sort of a, you know, prep for the new Picard series. You know a lot of people have been sharing lists of like "must watch episodes" before the new series happens, and this seemed like as good a one as any. So let's take a look at this episode. Sue do you want to give a little bit of the background of the creation of this episode?

SUE:

Yes. So being one of, I would venture to say, the more popular episodes of Star Trek The Next Generation we tended to know more about the creation of it then than others. The idea we know originated from a retreat that the writing staff took in fall of 1991. And the creative team, specifically I believe Rick Berman, wanted to bring the Borg back but knew they had to do it in a different way. Because if you continue to bring back and beat the quote unbeatable enemy-

JARRAH:

Then you have Star Trek Voyager.

SUE:

Well yeah, that too. \*laughs\*

JARRAH:

It lowers the stakes.

SUE:

Yes absolutely. So this is the way that they chose to do it, by dealing with a single Borg who was detached from the collective. Interestingly enough the Next Gen novel *Vendetta* by Peter David, which was published I believe about a year before this episode aired, had a similar storyline in the sense that Geordi was at that point also dealing with another Borg who had been disconnected from the collective. So I think that maybe the ideas just converged on this concept of what happens when we take someone away from everything they've known when that's all that they've known.

ANDI:

There is also something super Star Trek about the idea of taking an enemy that they have set up as like completely not relatable in any way. Like, some faceless enemy and then put a face on them. And Star Trek has a long history of doing this. I mean we start all the way with the Romulans, and you get like that first Romulan episode with Mark Leonard in it.

JARRAH:

Oh, Balance Of Terror?

ANDI:

Yeah, I think that's it. Turning someone that was previously an unknowable faceless enemy. And like exploring why they're making the choices that they're making is super common. They even do that and Deep Space Nine with the Jem'Hadar like, these like shock troops and then you have people on Deep Space Nine trying to relate to them. And in that case, it doesn't work nearly as well. But like the *attempt* is important I think.

JARRAH:

Yeah definitely. So yeah, this is the one where, as we've already alluded to, they find a Borg who is damaged and are able to fully sever him from the collective. And the original plan is "We're going to engineer him with a virus to take back to the Borg Collective and destroy the Borg collective from within." And you know one of those classic Starfleet "destroyed the computer with an impossible problem" viruses. \*laughs\* And so they are going to do that. But through the process of working with this individual Borg, who Geordi terms as Hugh because he is an individual like you and not like you plural, they start to feel ethically wrong about this and that he actually is like a being with emotions and thoughts of his own and \*perkily\* that it may be wrong to use him as an instrument of genocide. \*Sue laughs\*

ANDI:

Maybe.

JARRAH:

So at the end they offer him the choice to return to the collective- or that they can leave him on the planet because the Borg are chasing him, Enterprise is in danger. They can leave him on the planet and hopefully if he gets re-assimilated his spark of individuality and that experience will permeate the collective and maybe lead to some Borg revolution. And Hugh agrees to do that, knowing that if he doesn't then the Borg will find and destroy the Enterprise. So that's how it ends.

ANDI:

There's something really funny about how their original plan and their final plan are basically the same in a lot of ways.

JARRAH:

Except for like less effective and he has the choice.

ANDI:

Yeah like that but they are using Hugh to attack the Borg. But in a different way. And I find that interesting that they start with this idea and discard it. But then like come up with a softened more moral version of that same idea.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Okay, because we're on this topic like, I love this episode. But as I was watching it this time I was wondering like "Is that really ethical like at this point in his development?" Because it feels like maybe this whole thing takes like a couple of weeks.

ANDI:

Oh, see I saw it as a couple days.

JARRAH:

I was going *max* a couple weeks. Does he- can he choose? Like, Can he actually understand what that choice means by that point in that development? So that was one thing I wasn't really sure about. 'Cause It seems like the one thing that makes this ethical is that they let him choose it.

ANDI:

The other thing too is, you notice that his choice is not what he wants for himself it's what he thinks is best for them.

JARRAH:

Yeah, that's true.

ANDI:

Which really puts both a very touching aspect to it, but also like a worrying aspect of it. Is he just like imprinted on them and trying to please them? And so does he make this choice based on "what is best for me" or does he make this choice based on "I want Geordi to be happy"?

SUE:

And what will happen to the rest of the collective doesn't really play a part in that decision making at all.

JARRAH:

No.

ANDI:

It's a little Stockholm Syndrome-y.

JARRAH:

Mm-hmm yeah. So that just struck me this time as sort of like, I think this is worth considering further this explanation or this way that they reconcile their unease.

SUE:

I think they also reconcile it a little bit in that what he is going back with is the individuality that he developed himself. Sure they *helped* him, but it came from his own experiences. It's not something that they have created and written and literally uploaded to his brain to act as a computer virus to infect the collective. And you can argue of whether there are enough differences there. But I think the fact that there was not a, you know, malicious program uploaded to Hugh I think allows them to take the pressure off themselves a little bit.

JARRAH:

Yeah, that's true. It did make me wonder though like, how come when they assimilate individuals the rest of the time does that not happen?

ANDI:

Well, don't they wipe them before they assimilate them? Like, I don't really understand how that works.

JARRAH:

Well because people bring their memories in when they're assimilated, like we've seen Borg in other shows like retain memories of their time before assimilation. But I think they're told that, or like you know the predominant prevailing messages are like, this is belonging, this is perfection. And that just kind of overrides things and like their knowledge of humans and or like of their humanity is like just more useful as data. Like in, slight spoilers for Voyager, in like Seven of Nine we see several times we'll be like species- oh I guess that's the reverse. That's bringing her knowledge as a Borg back to when she's a human.

SUE:

Well, when they're describing this virus though, it's not really that at all. It is \*pauses\* a shape that can't exist in three-dimensional space. Right? So and they're saying that, you know, when Hugh reconnects to the collective the whole collective will get this image and they'll all try to process it. And because they can't, it will shut them down. It's not about- and it wouldn't necessarily spark the notice of anything being wrong quote unquote with Hugh when he returns. The *individuality* they said might do that, might make them reset him. And I guess that would mean wipe his marked memory. So it's not a foregone conclusion that Hugh will have his memory wiped upon returning to the collective. It's only if the Borg deem it necessary. As for assimilating individuals I think that's more of a, you know, "We take your memories and add it to our memory banks and I guess assimilate it, process it into our database of all of the species of the universe."

JARRAH:

Yes, that is more articulately sort of what I was trying to get at. \*all laugh\*

ANDI:

I think there are definitely still moral questions about what they end up doing. But I think one of the strengths of this episode, and one of the things I love most about it, is because one of the major themes is that trauma causes people to perpetuate trauma. So the two arguably more compassionate members of this crew are the two that are pushing most strongly for Hugh to be used as a genocidal tool, and that is fully due to the trauma they have suffered by the Borg. And that's Guinan and Picard. And TNG, in general, doesn't do a great job of revisiting trauma. But this is one major exception in that you see very clearly that both Picard and Guinan are damaged by their experiences with the Borg and they haven't fully healed from them. And then that wound pushes them to make decisions they would never make against any other race. If you're telling me that Picard would be like "Yeah let's totally commit genocide woop woop!" on any other species I would be like "Ha, never." But this makes sense. Makes sense because of their trauma. And that's what I- one of the things that I just truly love about this episode, is that they finally let lingering trauma show episodes later how that can impact that.

JARRAH:

Yeah, it's sort of like O'Brien's old boss who shows up in that one episode and- except for like this is a way of telling that story that interweaves *multiple* characters from the main cast. And that has like, a positive message about how it's possible for us to reflect on where our prejudices are coming from and to make better choices and to not perpetuate that if like if friends intervene and if we can have this conversation and like actually look in at where our feelings are coming from we can make better choices.

SUE:

I think too we also get some of Troi's most accurate counseling work? \*laughs\*

JARRAH:

Yes!

ANDI:

I wish she was more and the rest of the episode. She really only gets that first scene with Picard, and I think she could have been really interesting, with Hugh specifically, but it's still lovely to see her take one look at Picard reacting to the Borg and be like "well time to go to work."

SUE:

Yeah. She- I have the the transcript up right now and just searched. She has seven whole lines in this episode, and four of them are in this little ready room scene with Picard. But she says right off the bat even when he's saying he's fine, he says "I've recovered from my experience" her response is "Sometimes even when a victim has dealt with his assault there are residual effects of the event that linger."

ANDI:

I love that she classifies it as an assault. I love that they explicitly say that what happened to Picard was a violation and an assault. Because I don't think that that's super clear before that. And I love that they spell it out as *that*, because that is what it was; they reached into his sense of self and destroyed it. Like, I cannot picture something more violating than that.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And I think like the way that that's phrased, as like "You know sometimes this happens to victims of assault" like and it's general. Like she's not saying "I can tell in your case this is what's happening." And that is cool in a way because it also speaks to the audience. So how about we look at some of the characters and their development in this episode? Maybe starting with I was going to suggest Dr. Crusher because she-

ANDI:

Is awesome?

JARRAH:

-one of the first on the scene, and one of the most consistent in like her principled stance. So thoughts on Bev?

ANDI:

She rocks. She, from the very beginning is down there doing her job as a doctor and pushing back on these decisions that people want to make immediately, like Worf wants to just kill it. *It*. We'll talk about that later I'm sure. And you know no matter what she is like "No this is very simple" and this is to me when doctors are at their best on Star Trek. Because some of early Bashir on Deep Space Nine had this going too, when I wasn't such a fan of his character he still had this, whereas like "No. There is someone in front of me that needs my help and I'm going to

help them. And I don't care about the politics and I don't care about anything else. This is very simple. I am a doctor. My job is to heal and there is someone who needs healing. The end." I love that.

SUE:

And this is far from the only time we've seen her do this.

ANDI:

Yeah, it's *very* in character.

SUE:

Yeah, it happens actually a lot. I mean if you can consider anything happening to a minor character who is a woman on the Next Generation happening *a lot* \*laughs\* that they are down on some kind of away mission and somebody needs medical attention they want to beam the away team back and Crusher refuses because she's busy doing her job. That is like the standard setup for this interaction. And you know Picard tells them to prepare to beam up and she just says no. And he stops. That changes his order every time. And I just love that *a lot*. \*laughs\*

ANDI:

Yeah, it's good. I would like to say that I would have liked to see Worf do more growing because he is the one that is the least sympathetic at the beginning and we don't really get a chance to see him move past that at all. He's not one of the characters that really interacts much with Hugh, and we don't see like anything past this really.

SUE:

He doesn't get much more with Hugh really at all throughout the episode. Crusher on the other hand continues to act in the best interest of her individual patient. So even when she is ordered to help develop this virus, this whatever they're going to do, she says "I'm here to help but I don't have to like it" when they talk about sending him back. She pushes back on this. She pushes back on wiping out an entire species. And actually Jarrah, when you were giving the summary I also checked the script and nobody in this episode utters the word "genocide." But that's what it is.

ANDI:

Yeah. There is this scene where she like, forces them to say out loud what they'd be doing. And she was like "I just think it's important that we say it." Like if we're gonna do it we need to confront it and what it means.

JARRAH:

What I love- another thing I love about this episode is that Dr. Crusher is so principled and makes that very clear and also forces everyone else to confront it and no one at any point is like "Ugh" rolls their eyes like, "Ugh Bev again. Oh my God she's not a team player. Whatever." Like

no one questions that she is speaking her mind because she thinks it's right, and she's not trying to like make everything harder for everyone else. It's like legitimately what she believes and the fact that people can voice that makes their team stronger. It's not seen as something that's like a threat to their team. And I think too often in our world today that that kind of like dialogue in workplaces and stuff is very much like, not encouraged or actively discouraged as like "you're a troublemaker". Any kind of pushback or questioning can often get you labeled as negative or difficult.

ANDI:

Especially for a woman.

JARRAH:

So just another bonus point for this episode.

ANDI:

And I really enjoy seeing Geordi and Crusher work together. I don't think we see that as often as I would like, this idea of coming at it from both the engineering and medical perspective. I super love that. Which kind of brings us to Geordi as kind of the linchpin of this whole transformation. And I just think it's so lovely, and I kind of get why they chose him to be this person. He is the one that has made the most strides with Data. And there's just something about his kind of calm practical empathy that works really well in this story.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Geordi ends up being Hugh's *friend* and introducing to Hugh the concept of friendship, which again I question whether he can really understand that after the length of time that they've spent. But it's obviously very touching and I believe that, you know, Geordi is sincere about it. And that's also interesting, just seeing how *they* interact with Hugh. That like no one's really like you know, other than the point where he says like "What will you do with me?" and they said like "Oh, well we'll send you home" and like they're telling him what they're gonna do at that point. But like they're pretty open about how they feel about the Borg, and assimilation, and they're answering his questions, and yeah geordi has some good scenes with him.

SUE:

But also they- I mean while they're being open with him about assimilation we see because he doesn't have that constant, Hugh, because he doesn't have that constant reinforcement of the collective behind him, he's thinking about things as an individual for the first time right? So he's "What do you mean you don't want to be assimilated? What do you mean this isn't something that's desirable for you?" So it's making him re-evaluate things from a new perspective as well. So while they're learning about him he's also, I don't know, developing empathy?

JARRAH:

Well, and certainly developing a sense of himself as a separate being, as an individual.



ANDI:

I would like to point out though, that if you're taking a species that is used to collective communication and cutting them off from the rest of their species that puts them in a really vulnerable and suggestible place as well. So while this episode definitely comes at it from the perspective of "this is a good thing." and I even agree to some point, there are ways in which this could be considered torture.

JARRAH:

Also, I think part of the reason they're so honest with him is that they don't even really necessarily believe him to be fully, you know, an independent being or like a sentient individual until later. Like Even Dr. Crusher says like "If I didn't know better I'd say he was scared." So like they don't even believe he's capable of feelings at first so they're not afraid of hurting him.

SUE:

Well, it just made me think of the stories you hear or sometimes read about people raised in these churches that are actually hate groups, and learn more about the rest of the world and leave them. And it's- I don't know. It just seems like there are some parallels there especially when we look at this story from Hugh's perspective.

JARRAH:

But yeah as you said Andi, like Guinans a really important- probably undergoes the biggest flip flop. Because even Picard is like less hard line on the situation than Guinan at the beginning. Like she's the one who's, you know, giving him sort of a lecture during fencing about like how "you aren't taking this danger seriously enough."

SUE:

But she has a point right? In that scene?

JARRAH:

Yeah literally and figuratively. \*all laugh\*

JARRAH:

But it's true, and it's an actual tactic of like playing on someone's compassion to beat them in the end.

JARRAH:

And it's kind of unlike Guinan, compared to other episodes. But we totally understand where it's coming from and that's why it's really cool. And then she ends up being the one to like, persuade Picard. "You actually have to talk to him before you go through with this."

ANDI:

Well, she's the only one that can speak to their shared trauma. Like nobody else truly understands the way that she understands why Picard feels this way, because she lost her

whole race to this. That's why I think the scene between her and Hugh is so lovely where they have just like the whole when he looks at her and says "You are lonely. I'm lonely too." Holy crap guys, right in the feels. Like being able to have a shared experience in that way. But it's interesting to me because on the one hand you have a victim of genocide, and then on the other hand you have a perpetrator of it. Because I mean as easy as it is to forget when Hugh is right in front of you and super cute, and he's young, and he's trying, the Borg *have* decimated species. Like there's no way that you can just like dismiss that. And so it becomes really interesting to think about like, how much do you owe them? How much understanding do you owe them? If they're not actively trying to atone?

JARRAH:

Yeah but with him, he's separate, so and then it's like this whole question of like "Does that make him not Borg anymore?"

ANDI:

And also does the fact that he probably personally did not do anything to Guinan, does he still share culpability into what happened to her? Because he is part of the race that did it? like how much do we assign responsibility to him? But because he's part of this collective?

JARRAH:

Yeah well we've already forgiven Picard for Wolf 359. Unless you're Sisko.

SUE:

And as Riker says "There are no civilians among the borg." So he's certainly culpable while he's connected to the collective, but when he's *not*. I mean they share thoughts but they're also controlling him. So is he no longer culpable, but as an individual?

ANDI:

Yeah. And it's all super interesting and a really fascinating look at like this kind of idea of "where does personal responsibility factor in here?" And I can't help but think about Deep Space Nine, again, in that this is another area where Star Trek explores that like \*pauses\* racial culpability? I'm talking about the Cardassian versus the Bajorans. How much of moving forward is just letting go of all of the bad things that happened? Thinking here of Duet. So I just find it to be a very deep, rich kind of area for exploration and I think the Borg are an interesting species to explore it with because they have so many extra elements of who is responsible.

JARRAH:

Well and not to a get like too in the weeds here, but you know at this point in Star Trek history we haven't been introduced to like the Queen. We don't actually know where the Borg came from. And there's a question about, you know, at what point were so many people linked together in a collective that their individual good ethics were outweighed by their collective bad ethics? Like is there no culpability because they're being controlled? But they're being controlled by a collective of other individuals. So like at some point if all of their memories and their

principles were being interjected into this computer system is there a failing of all of them collectively as individuals? \*laughs\* Does that make any sense? Like, is it just because like now they feel anonymous and like there's enough of them that want to destroy other beings or assimilate other beings that now they're not culpable?

ANDI:

The other thing is, you could almost look at the Borg as all victims because they were all at one point individuals that were then assimilated. And like is it basically like the original person is murdered and then their corpse is like forced to do horrible things? Like, I don't know. I don't know the answers to those questions.

SUE:

I think if we go back and look at where the idea of the Borg started, which was with the Cybermen in Doctor Who, it's this case of technology and the desire for advancement sort of run amok. Right? So even if it started with the best of intentions things can get out of hand quickly. And that's assuming that it started with a person. You know? I thought, mild spoilers for Discovery season 2, I thought that we were going to get a Borg origin story in discovery season 2 with Control. And that starts with technology, with an artificial intelligence running amok. Either way it's, I think, an allegory for letting things go unchecked because that seems to be the commonality there.

JARRAH:

Yeah like it doesn't even have to be technology. It can just be like mob mentality with like technology overlay.

ANDI:

They definitely pulled on a lot of core elements like zombies and also the Invasion Of The Body Snatchers. This idea that you can be infected or lose yourself, and then be forced to do things that you would never do normally with no sense of individuality. It's definitely a very scary thing for humans because we prize individuality so much.

JARRAH:

Yeah, but I also feel like at some point on the show we should try to look a little bit more at technological prosthetics and the Borg again, and in the context of cyborg theory because something that like Donna Haraway points out talking about cyborg theory is that technology can be uniquely liberating from like gender constraints. And from possibly other types of constraints, but particularly anything that is perceived as tied to the body. So it doesn't- like the scary view of what it means to be a cyborg is only like one way of looking at it. And Star Trek does tease into some of the other ways. Usually, we just would like individual prosthetics like the visor. But maybe something to explore a little bit at a further point when I've actually had a chance to reread some of that stuff.

SUE:

Yeah, but we got far away from where we started which was \*laughs\* the character growth. Andi, you referred to Geordi as the linchpin in all of this. And I am seeing this- the changes happening through these characters is more of a cascade right? We start with Crusher who is on Hughs side from the very beginning, and then she gets Geordi, and then Geordi gets Guinan, and then Guinan gets Picard.

ANDI:

Yeah, I was actually thinking about that too because I was thinking about how it parallels what they're planning on doing to Hugh. Like having one person, in their case, infect but also convince. Like you could see that as that. I think the reason that I saw Geordi as more of the linchpin is because he's also the one that seems to get through to Hugh. So it goes both ways with him. Where, you see later that it's the threat to Geordi that pushes Hugh past a lot of this. So like when we have a really terrific scene between Locutus, I'm doing my air quotes, that nobody can see. Between Locutus and Hugh, the moment that he really starts to resist is when he is like "There's a threat to Geordi." And that's also what drives his decision making at the very end. "Is there a threat to Geordi?"

SUE:

Before we even get to that scene, we have Picard and Guinan. With Guinan saying "Well what did you think when you spoke to him?" And Picards like "it's not necessary to speak to the Borg. I don't need to speak to the Borg." And she's the one who convinces him to confront it face to face. He was perfectly content to say "I am doing what I know or what I feel to be morally correct but I don't have to like it and I'm going to try and stay uninvolved in it." And she sort of pushes him into the deep end as it were.

JARRAH:

Well, and Geordi is the one who pushes her there.

ANDI:

I'd also like to point out the pronoun usage in that scene, which is pretty striking in that you'll see that the people that are at least initially resistant to the idea of Hugh as an individual being will use "it." And then the people that have decided that he is a person use "he" and Guinan goes through that transformation herself. She starts out with "it" and ends with "he." And then over the course of that scene, you see Picard still using "it" and her using "he". And I just think that's interesting, and a good example of how something as simple as pronoun usage can really impact how people see themselves, and how they see others, and how dehumanizing it is to call someone "it."

SUE:

Picard literally yells "It's not a person dammit! It's a Borg."

ANDI:

Because for him to move forward that's what it has to be. Like, because he can't justify it otherwise. So he has to keep that distance or he can't justify it to himself. So he has to dehumanize Hugh, because that's the only way that he can move forward with his plan. That's why in like modern context why people get so worried and scared when you see, politicians especially, start using this dehumanizing language. Because it's the first step of making it OK to hurt people or kill them without guilt.

JARRAH:

And we see that Picard adopts that again in First Contact.

ANDI:

Yeah. Which is interesting. You could make the case that it's a step backwards for him, but you could also make the case that trauma is hard to move past.

JARRAH:

Well and also, I mean in that case we're dealing with *active* drones. And I mean certainly he does have some issues he has to grapple with in that movie. But it is like a bit of a different scenario. It's just interesting. Yeah, what else do we want to cover about I Borg?

ANDI:

Jonathan Del'Arco is a really good actor. \*Sue laughs\* He does a really really good job in this episode, because it all hinges on people feeling sympathy for Hugh. And I think he really does a great job in bringing it from the very beginning of the episode, where he's still in full Borg mode, to the end, where resistance is not futile. Right? It's really an important performance to make the whole thing work. And he does a really good job. So I'm very interested to see him come back.

JARRAH:

Yeah. Also, he's very charming on Instagram. \*all laugh\*

ANDI:

Yes, I've been very much enjoying him on Twitter.

SUE:

He was a TOS fan- or I guess I should just say a Star Trek fan growing up, and was one of the actors who was auditioning for the role of Wesley Crusher. And so when he did not get that role he apparently refused to watch Next Gen until he got a chance to guest star on it \*Andi laughs\* I'm pretty sure he landed in the right role.

ANDI:

It really is a great performance. And \*pauses\* I have mixed feelings about the character of Hugh coming back because I had mixed feelings about the character of Hugh coming back in TNG. Like this is such a, to me, perfect standalone story that him coming back was both exciting and

disappointing. Exciting because you want to know what happens to him, otherwise he just flies off into the stars and you don't know if what anybody did made any difference. But then also disappointing because how do you top that?

JARRAH:

Well, it's also a kind of it's a bit like Yesterday's Enterprise-ish, like followed by Selah. Maybe it's not quite that devastating. But I do want to talk about Descent just quickly. It doesn't, you know, take away from what is awesome about I Borg and there's some great things in Descent as well. I just feel like for completeness sake and because you know it's probably not an episode we're going to touch on a whole heck of a lot that we should maybe talk about some of the highlights and lowlights outside of sort of the primary Data Lore storyline. But for those who don't remember, Descent is a two-parter at the end of Season 6 and it is what happens when they find Hugh and a bunch of other Borg that basically it turns out his individuality did spark some of them to want to leave the collective, but they had no experience in like living and working together as individuals and kind of weren't able to make it work. So Lore monopolized, took over and gave them the authority and structure they craved. And tries to- he's like performing experiments on them and wants to get Data's help in that. So yes. So for me, it was a little bit like Yesterday's Enterprise where you had this like Noble kind of like powerful ending and then you find out like it all actually didn't work. \*all laugh\* Where like Sela comes back and you're like "Oh wait! But I thought this was Tasha's meaning."

SUE:

And they, well they kind of do it again in Descent in that once they get rid of Lore they say to Hugh you know like "You are the leader now, try and help these people function as individuals and work together as a group, it's all up to you." And I'm assuming that's who we're going to meet in the Picard show, but who knows? \*laughs\* I mean the parts that I care the most about in Descent are in part two and they take place on the bridge, again with my girl Dr. Crusher commanding the ship, shutting down some mansplainers, encouraging Ensign Tate to throw out her ideas, and to be confident in what she knows, and what she's doing. And I think there are some really great scenes on the bridge, some callbacks to some episodes that we don't always get, like Suspicions and that metaphasic shielding.

JARRAH:

There's also- Troi gets to go on an away mission. I was like "Whoa! Troi is on a planet." \*Sue laughs\* Like, in her not councilor uniform looking for Data. Like that was like a notable "Troi doing something" moment. But she also has a good counseling scene in part one, where they're trying to figure out why Data is experiencing anger. And she gives him the talk about how like emotions in themselves aren't negative, it's what you do with them. And actually like very important again like good advice from counselor Troi in I Borg and this one.

SUE:

And yet for the rest of the two-parter they go on to talk about negative emotions.

JARRAH:

Yeah but I mean they do kind of point out that it was like Lore was *feeding* him that stuff. So yeah I mean the TNG is not perfect on mental health and emotions, but I did like the Troi scenes. In terms of like, what it says about Hugh and the sort of independent Borg. I think it isn't, for me, nearly as bad as the situation with Sela. Because it's pretty fair actually to be like "Yeah, what would happen if you put together a group of people that had never dealt with working cooperatively as individuals?" And maybe it was like- I mean they were really just taking a shot in the dark. And you have that interesting stuff between Picard and Necheyev, questioning the decisions that they made in I Borg. And he's like "You know, we were like we're at war. Maybe this was the wrong decision" and Necheyev ain't got time for no morals. \*all laugh\* So I feel like there's like, a fair amount of interesting stuff in there. You know not my favorite two-parter in all of TNG, and certainly a lot of it is about just Data and Lore stuff. But there's also a callback to that, you know, Geordi as Hugh's friend and that Hugh ultimately changes his mind to help them because he wants to help Geordi.

ANDI:

I will say that one thing that I would have liked, and they don't really have time so this isn't a serious criticism, but I would have liked to see more Data Hugh interaction in I Borg because I feel like there are some parallels there. So it was interesting to see Data and Lore to somewhat some extent interacting with the Borg, because the way the Borg function and the way that Data and Lore function are kind of similar but kind of not. And it was kind of interesting to see those paralleled.

SUE:

Data is pretty absent from I Borg.

ANDI:

Yeah but overall I really think that It's some of the same criticism that I have about Descent, bringing Hugh back is the same criticism that comes with the Borg in general, because when you set up a villain to be so scary and merciless any more information you get about them blunts the impact. So I mean this is like the shark in Jaws basically, that you don't want to see it because what you're imagining is scarier than what actually exists. So the more information you get about it the more it blunts all of that. But at the same time exploring it more is interesting. So it's a pro and con situation, and I feel the same way about Hugh as a character in that if you could just like- if it was left up to your imagination.

SUE:

From storytelling perspective I think there's an argument to be made for "leave them wanting more." Right? Which they did not do with Yesterday's Enterprise, which they did not do with I Borg, but they did do in Lower Decks. Yeah. Which I if I recall correctly we all agreed that was the correct decision, because we know they had been discussing bringing Sito Jaxa back. Right? And I feel like there is a bigger risk in returning to a character or a story in a really well-received one-off episode than there is and just leaving it alone. However, I do think they

could have come back the next time they encountered some Borg and noticed some changes and had somebody trace it back to Hugh without him necessarily appearing in the episode. To see it have a larger impact on the collective as a whole and not just these drones. But that starts, you know, playing with the next what 15 years of Star Trek storytelling. \*laughs\*

ANDI:

So is there something you'd like to see in the Picard show re: Hugh? Like, is there something you're looking forward to or interested to see how they develop it?

JARRAH:

I mean I think it's less risky than- because it's been so many years since TNG that there's a lot of flexibility. I think what they are *not* going to do and what would be the worst-case scenario was if they pretended like things fundamentally hadn't changed since Descent. But you know I'm assuming that him, and if he has still a cohort of Borg crew, that they'll be much more developed and independent and have figured out a new way of working together. So it'll be interesting. I don't know.

SUE:

I don't know if he's necessarily on that Borg cube that we saw in the preview or not? But I mean, I don't think I'd mind seeing Hugh captaining a ship with some of his other individualized Borgs. And maybe some other misfits you know? Maybe he is like the captain Mal of the Star Trek universe.

ANDI:

\*chanting\* Found family! Found family! \*all laugh\* There's nothing I love more than found family y'all. One thing that I think might work better, is the idea that this is a longer period of time for changes to happen, whereas Descent happens so quickly after this one that it's kind of too soon almost? Like big societal changes in any society is going to take time to percolate and cook. So I think it makes more sense that we would be checking back in on this you know 15 years later 20 years later than the one year or so between the other episodes.

JARRAH:

I mean, I think that assuming that they've been kind of on their own for this entire time that we can expect them to be different than our federation cohorts. It's like, imagine if instead of Seven of Nine being like basically raised and like indoctrinated back into human society by her friends on the Starship Voyager, that like she was just stuck in a ship with like eight other people who were ex-Borg.

SUE:

And I think we can be pretty confident that Hugh at least did not return to the collective during the time span of either First Contact or Voyager. Who knows, maybe he did after that and he is on that Borg cube and he is somehow part of the collective or I don't know. There is a lot of things they could do. I would like to hope they would keep- seeing as it's only two episodes two



or three episodes worth of history involved I'd like to think they'd keep this in mind when creating the story for Picard. But we'll see.

JARRAH:

Cool. I think that to close us off, Well we usually do a rating for these episodes so we could do I Borg? I suggest we don't rate Descent. And I also feel like a good quote to end off with is the quote from Jonathan Del Arco about I Borg that he says "It holds up the chalice of that highest moral that I think Gene Roddenberry meant the show to do. Question question question every step of the way." So I like that.

ANDI:

Well he gets it clearly. I would like to say too that one thing that I like about this episode is that there is not very much action. It's all dialogue, pretty much. And that's something I miss from Discovery.

JARRAH:

It also is very much ensemble, like and Descent is too actually. Like almost everyone gets something to do.

SUE:

Yeah. And I also- I don't want to read the whole thing but just want to point out that the comments from both Rick Berman and Michael Piller on this episode both come back to specifically having Guinan and Picard confronting their own prejudices when dealing with the Borg. And I think that is something else that Star Trek is very good about.

JARRAH:

Cool. Well, do we want to give our ratings for I Borg? Start with you Andy.

ANDI:

I would like to give it nine out of ten dropped fencing foils. \*Jarrah giggles\*

JARRAH:

Sue?

SUE:

Oh I think I'd give this nine out of ten lionfish. \*Andi laughs\* Lionfish? Fishes?

JARRAH:

Fish.

SUE:

Fish. \*all laugh\*

JARRAH:

I will give this one nine out of 10 energy meals. Awesome. Well thanks for joining us this week. Andi, where can we find you elsewhere on the Internet?

ANDI:

Easiest place to find me is Twitter @firsttimetrek where I am very rarely live-tweeting my journey through Star Trek.

JARRAH:

And Sue how about you?

SUE:

You can find me on Twitter @spaltor, and that's S P A L T O R.

JARRAH:

And I'm Jarrah, you can find me on Twitter @J A R R A H-Penguin or at Trekkiefeminist.com. And for more ways to get in touch with our show you can email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or visit our Website, WomenAtWarp.Com. You can also find us on Instagram, and we're on Facebook, and we're on Twitter @WomenAtWarp. And we have a goodread Book Club-

ANDI:

We're everywhere!

JARRAH:

Basically, yeah. We love hearing from you. So thanks so much for listening to the show. For more from the Roddenberry podcast network you can visit podcasts.Roddenberry.com.