

Women at Warp Episdoe 149: Beverly Crushin' It

SUE:

Hi and welcome to Women at Warp: a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me today are crew member, Andi.

ANDI:

Hello!

SUE:

And two guests, Nick.

NICK:

Hello.

SUE:

and Jenny.

JENNY:

Hello.

SUE:

Before we get into our main topic today, as usual, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as \$1 per month and get awesome rewards from things on social media, too silly watch along commentaries, or bonus non-Trek content. To find out more, visit patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. And we're still promoting our relatively new Tee public store with designs based on our updated banner art, plus our logos and some other non-podcast specific Trek designs that we've curated from across the platform. And Grace has added some new designs just recently. And you can show off whether you are Team Janeway or Team Tuvix. So you can check that out at [Teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp](https://teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp). You can also find a link from womenatwarp.com if that URL is too long. So that is *it* in terms of housekeeping for today. So we have two guests with us today to talk about Dr. Beverly Crusher. And I'm going to ask you both to introduce yourselves and to tell our listeners a little bit about you and your history with Star Trek. Why don't we start with Nick?

NICK:

Hi, my name is Nick Manchester. I am an intersex individual who does a lot of advocacy, and I guess you would say internet hunting of trolls, *laughs* and I'm very against the gender binary. And I also do a lot of Native advocacy, and tying the treatment of intersex people with the mistreatment of Natives, and how it ties into white supremacy. And my history with Star Trek is that we did not have television when I was growing up, mostly because we didn't have electricity

most of the time. And one of my friends would have me over to her house to do homework. And it was always on Star Trek night. And so of course we would rush through homework, watch Star Trek, and then go home. And that was the beginning of my love of Star Trek with TNG. And I have loved Dr. Beverly Crusher since the beginning.

SUE:

Awesome. And Jenny?

JENNY:

Thanks guys for having me. My name is Jenny Beck-Esmay . I'm an emergency physician and a big Star Trek fan. And I feel like Dr. Crusher has been a huge influence on my life, my work as a doctor, and also my work in equity and gender equity issues within the medical field. So I run a website called FeminEM, which stands for Females in Emergency Medicine. And it's designed to support the needs and the professional development of women working in emergency medicine. So I feel like a lot of things that Dr. Crusher might appreciate. I don't really even remember when I first started loving and liking Star Trek. When I was a child, I *did* have a television but we weren't really allowed to watch it a whole lot. We were only ever allowed to watch PBS, a little bit of PBS during the day. And then the whole family watched Star Trek. My dad is a *huge* sci-fi fan. My parents organize their books by genre and so there's a whole room in my parents' house that's just science fiction novels. And so we just grew up on Star Trek. It was a family event and I really don't even remember Star Trek never being a part of my life. I think it's always been there. And Dr. Crusher, huge *huge* influence.

SUE:

Awesome. So why don't we get into this? I usually, when we have character episodes, like to start with the character creation before we ever see them on screen.

ANDI:

Believe me, some of the casting calls are choices.

SUE:

The initial casting call that went out for Beverly Crusher was only a couple of sentences and it was rough. **Andi laughs** Even before that decision was made, the initial idea for Beverly Crusher was not that she would be the ship's doctor, that she would be the ship's *school teacher*, because they really wanted to have this kid around and this kid needed a mom. So we got to let the mom do something. And somebody had the idea "Let's kill two birds with one stone and make the mom the doctor."

JENNY:

I'm actually really happy they made that choice. Cause it went *outside* of some traditional gender norms, right? Taking her out of the classroom and putting her in the sickbay.

SUE:

Yeah. That's a story that David Gerald has told in *The 50 Year Mission*, so you can find that story. But the initial casting call that goes out, it's when Wesley was still Leslie and it's "Leslie's 35-year-old mother. She serves as the chief medical officer on the Enterprise. If it were not for her intelligence, personality, beauty, and the fact that she has a natural walk of a striptease queen, captain Picard might not have agreed to her request that Leslie observe bridge activities, therefore letting her daughter's intelligence carry events further."

JENNY:

Interesting casting call. *laughs*

ANDI:

One of the more memorable ones.

SUE:

Basically "She's hot", right? *laughs* That's their casting call.

ANDI:

"She's so hot that Picard forgot he hates kids."

JENNY:

laughs She *is* intelligent and does have a good personality, but it's really that walk of a striptease queen that gets him.*all laugh*

NICK:

That is entirely it. You don't need to create fanfiction just around the fact that the Picard, you know, knew Wesley growing up to be able to tolerate the kid.

JENNY:

And what an interesting description to then, as an actor, have to go in and try and portray. You know, *laughs* you're trying to be intelligent and personable and then continue to, of course, always walk like a striptease queen.

ANDI:

There's a British sketch starring Catherine Tate, where it's like a joke of casting the leading lady. And they have like this stable of really great British actresses come in. Every single time that they audition they're like, "Okay, but you need to be a little bit more like this. And you need to be a little more like that. And actually, can you be *sexier*? But not *too sexy*. Like you have to be just right."

JENNY:

"And smile more." I think there's a little smile more in there too. Right? *laughs* And the actors are like, "I thought that this was a really dramatic, terrible scene. You want me to smile more?"

ANDI:

Yeah. And in the end, they're like "You know what? We're going to go with Tom Hiddleston."
Jenny laughs I feel like these casting calls are like that. Where it's like, "Oh, you have to be the perfect woman, but you can't be *too* perfect because you have to be likable to, you know, everybody and you have to be sexy. Sexy enough that the men want to bang you, but not too sexy that the women resent you." So like it's an impossible standard *Jenny laughs* that no one actually meets, and it's frustrating.

SUE:

So Gates McFadden has told the story multiple times that she didn't really know much about Star Trek and it was her agent who was pushing her to go audition for this part. And she shows up and she says, "Give me the *funniest* role." And they give her the scene with Picard in The Naked Now. And that was her audition scene. So after that, she thought that she was getting the comedic role on the ship. But like, in her words "Didn't have another funny scene for seven years." *laughs*

NICK:

She really didn't, because she was being too busy being the voice of reason when everybody else was, you know, off in stupid land. *all laugh*

SUE:

Yeah. I think that's one of the key things about this character and the show, is that she really is their moral compass in a lot of these episodes.

JENNY:

And the smarts in a lot of them, the one who figures things out. Even things that aren't necessarily medical, but fall into broader realms of science. She's the one kind of figuring those things out sometimes. I'm always struck by when Data ends up in medical Bay and she's, you know, doing something, making sure Data's okay. It's like, "Wait, what?" *laughs*

ANDI:

The scene that I always think of, when I think of her being both logical and the moral center, the episode I always think of is I Borg because not only does she flawlessly point out the like flaws in the strategy, but she also points out the moral flaws in the strategy. And she basically changes the entire way that the Borg war goes in this episode. And like, think about the impact that has had on the Star Trek universe as like this one turning point. And she was the one that basically charted their course, because she was the one that was like "Hey, maybe this is not right."

SUE:

Yeah. The one I usually think of first is the Perfect Mate, because she seems to be the only person on the ship who has *any problem* with the idea that a woman is being given as a gift slash bride to someone that she has never met before, who she will then *change* herself for and be bonded to for the rest of her life. And that she's the only one who questions that.

NICK:

That always struck me as so bizarre because I would have thought that Deanna Troi would have picked up on that? And I guess that is when I lost a lot of *pause* I don't want to say respect for that character, but a lot of the *pause* *dazzle* of Deanna Troi. And I appreciated Beverly Crusher more, because without having any empathy she was able to be like "Wait a minute, this woman doesn't even know who she is, and you're doing this to her. And you're being a part of this?" And that was definitely a standout thing.

ANDI:

I think that kind of goes to the flaws in how these writers were writing women characters, or even just like some of the supporting characters, is like if you really think about it there's no way Troi would have been down with that. None. But they didn't want to explore it. So they just had *someone* be the mouthpiece and that someone was Crusher and they left Troi out of the equation entirely. And say how much stronger of a character could Troi have been if they had kept her characterization more consistent over the episodes and over the years.

JENNY:

I think it speaks a little bit to the difficulty of writing for the future in the now. I mean probably, I would suspect, I don't know the details of the gender makeup of the writing staff of the show, but if I had to guess, I would think it's *not* more than 50% female. And they're writing about a show that is supposed to take place in a kind of post-gender world. There's an episode where, where Beverly Crusher talks about that, that you know, the genders *used* to be more unequal in the past, but it hasn't been that way in a long time. Nobody thinks that way. So in *reality*, in this episode, I can't imagine that anybody onship wouldn't have had an issue with this male, female, or otherwise. But it's almost impossible in the now, or in the then, you know, 20 years ago when this was written. But even probably in the now to envision what that reaction of the staff would be- what the crew would be to the situation when we can't imagine a post-gender equity world.

ANDI:

It's like, you can't write past the limits of your own imagination. So if you, as a writer, are still steeped in the biases of the society that you're living in, it's really hard to open your brain and think of what would that actually be like and have none of your biases show in the writing. And I mean, you're pointing out that Beverly talks about gender in that way. I believe you're thinking of The Outcast. And in- even within that episode, the gender politics in that episode are completely messed up. So like I mean, it's right there. Like in her speech even, she's like "Oh, that never happened before", but like also I believe she talks about how women use makeup to attract men? And yeah-

JENNY:

Right right right!

ANDI:

So it's like within the *same speech* that she's saying that gender no longer matters, she's like "Except for, you know, these ways." *Sue laughs* So it just kind of shows that tension and that

conflict between “Oh, I’m a writer writing about this future that I can’t actually conceptualize fully because I’m so steeped in the problems of my current society”, which is an interesting part of sci-fi in general.

NICK:

You have to remember the whole poker game where they’re sitting around and discussing, you know, their discomfort with somebody outside of the two genders. So *laughs* that’s kind of comical in that whole thing. And still, even in that conversation, she was the only one to say “Well, why is this a problem?”

ANDI:

Yeah. It’s funny because like, this is supposed to be what, hundreds of years in the future? I don’t even- I *never* pay attention to *any* of the dates. So all you Star Trek nerds *Sue laughs* out there, like *goofy voice* “Stardate blah blah blah.” That is white noise to me.

SUE:

Approximately 400 years from now.

ANDI:

Right? So 400 years in the future they’re like “Gender, what is it?” Whereas 20 years in the future here we are sitting here being like, “Hmm. Like it’s dated *now*, *laughs* and it’s supposed to be portraying 400 years in the future.”

SUE:

I mean, we’re still asking “Gender, what is it?” But in a different way. *laughs*

ANDI:

Yeah. We also can sit around- the four of us alone could sit around and have a poker game and have like none of that gender binary nonsense. So it’s unbelievable that a group of people 400 years from now would have the same hangups. *If* we’re saying that we *got* to a place where gender and race and all of these things don’t matter, then it wouldn’t make sense. But *sci-fi!* *clicks tongue*

SUE:

laughs Well, whenever I think about that line, where Gates McFadden as Beverly Crusher has to say, you know “Women haven’t been treated as inferior for such a long time.” I can’t help but come back to the second season of TNG, where that is the reason she was fired. *all laugh uncomfortably* So in our character episodes, we don’t *always* necessarily talk about behind the scenes stuff, but I think this one is unavoidable? In that like, the official paramount line over the years has been “They wanted to go a different direction with the character.” The *truth* of the matter is that there were specific issues with one of the writers. I think he might’ve been a head writer, Maurice Hurley, who you know, disliked her acting, disliked her hair, this huge litany of things. And supposedly at the end of season one made a stand and basically said “It’s her or me.” And Gates was fired. And after Hurley left at the end of season two, there was a letter-writing campaign, which you know, Star Trek fans are good at. *laughs* And as well as

encouragement from Patrick Stewart that convinced her to return for season three. And then, of course, they made her say that sexism is over. But there is a somewhat recent quote from an interview with Gates where she was asked about this and said "I think that totally contributed to me being let go second season. But I was from a background where you were encouraged to speak up. It wasn't about criticizing something. You're passionate about it. But I left in awareness about how it could come off. It could be threatening to someone." So yeah, she has also told stories about trying to pitch ideas or trying to offer suggestions. And instead of being seen as, you know, helpful and contributing she was seen by the men running the show, literally, as threatening.

ANDI:
Difficult.

SUE:
Yeah.

ANDI:
Well, that's frustrating.

SUE:
There's another one from an interview two years ago in Third Coast Review where she said "I've definitely been a feminist all my life and I've paid the price of that by being fired from things when I've spoken up." So I mean, that- that sums it up.

JENNY:
And she's talking about a pretty universal female experience over the years, I'm pretty sure. She's not the only one in Hollywood to have a similar story, I would bet.

SUE:
But when you look at her character, when you look at Beverly Crusher, this is a character who speaks up. Right? We were just talking about her being the moral center. She's also one of the ones that can push back against Picard when she thinks he's doing something wrong. And a lot of that, at least in my shipper brain, *laughs* is because of whatever relationship they have. And I don't necessarily mean a romantic relationship, but they- these are two characters that we've been given the backstory that they've been friends for a long time, that they trust each other. So when there is something going on, I think unlike Deanna or even Riker in some cases, she feels that she can go to her commanding officer who is also her friend and say "Hey man, this is messed up. Let's talk about it."

ANDI:
Oh, no no Sue. It's because of her walk like a striptease queen. *all laugh*

JENNY:

I think it's certainly because of their backstory in their relationship, but I think there's also some element to her rank and role within the ship that gives her some dynamic that's different. She's the chief officer in a realm that is separate from command. So while she's not the same rank as Picard, she's as high as you can get in *that realm*. And in some ways he has to defer to her because of that. So she's not equal to him, but she's about as equal as you can get on the ship. Which allows them, I think, to have a little bit more parallel relationship than even he and Riker can have.

NICK:

That's very true. She's the one person that can pull rank on him.

JENNY:

Yeah, exactly. She can put him in sick Bay if she has to. *giggles* The writer's let that play out in a lot of subtle ways too. She's the one who calls him most often by his first name. Right? They have a lot more casual relationship, peer to peer relationship. Which you'll see doctors, you know in the medical field, doctors call each other by their first name more often than they call each other "Dr. So-and-so" but other members of the team will usually still refer to the doctor as the more formal title. So you kind of see some of that, what we see in medicine, playing out in their ranks as well.

ANDI:

I'd like to kind of go to something that is annoying and also endearing, like many things, in that one of the added kind of roles that they have to each other, specifically Crusher and Picard, is like mom and dad to Wesley. Picard is Wesley's surrogate dad, which I think is super cute in some ways. And then in the other ways is like, does Wesley need another parent? When he's got one that's perfectly capable of taking care of him? And how many of- storylines where Wesley is being like led and mentored by all the *dudes* and not by his own *mom*? Which is frustrating.

SUE:

Yeah. We rarely get to see her actually parent this genius kid that she raised by herself.

JENNY:

Yeah, that's strange. It's like they made her character to serve the plot of having him there, but then didn't really use their relationship in that way at all.

ANDI:

Well, I think that's because people, or rather writers- dude writers, are much more interested in father son relationships. They're unpacking all their own daddy issues. And they're like "Well, this is much more interesting than son mom issues, or even daughter mom issues." Like how many episodes did we get where it's like some sort of paternal mentorship? Whereas the number of times we got *maternal* mentorship is basically Dark Page?

SUE:

Yeah. The only time, that's true, that we see the Lwuxana not just being annoying is when she's mourning. At least in Next Gen.

ANDI:

It's just there's not as many female mentor relationships. Maybe Crusher and Ogawa a little bit, but not nearly to the level of Geordi and Wesley, and Data and Wesley, Picard and Wesley, Riker and Wesley. *laughs*

JENNY:

Yeah, he had a million father figures on that ship.

NICK:

I think that goes to the whole social thing though of the commentary that boys have to have a man in their life in order to be strong. And, you know, it's such crap. Because if the guy isn't strong, and they were trying to like portray all of the men in Next Gen as extremely strong. However, when he has an extremely strong mother their figure, he doesn't have to have like some kind of, you know, superhero step in *laughs* and be his dad cause he has a mom that is doing just fine. And obviously did just fine to get him to the point where he is, but that still goes back to the "Boys have to have the dads."

JENNY:

But it has been that she was an absentee working mother, just too busy to do the parenting. *Andi laughs*

SUE:

I pulled out a timeline just because I was curious. Because I mean, the timeline has been written in fanfiction so many times I can't keep the real one straight in my head. But Wes was born towards the end of 2348. And Beverly did not finish medical school until 2350 while her husband was supposedly away on missions on the Stargazer. So she was a single mom in medical school, in the last two years of medical school, with her husband away and just like raising a genius child.

JENNY:

That's impressive. *laughs* I can't imagine medical school is easier in the 2050s than it is in the early two-thousands. So think of how much more you have to know in the 2050s. Different species, science is more advanced. Lordy.

SUE:

I want to just mention that, as far as this parenting thing goes, the one that always gets me and like riles me up is The First Duty. You know? Because even at the beginning of the episode the Admiral is calling, not Wess's mom, not Dr. Crusher. She, the Admiral, calls captain Picard. And throughout the entire episode Wesley goes to Picard the entire time. And it's just like, imagine if

that had been an episode about her parenting her son, instead of standing by watching while Picard parents her son?

NICK:

It would've been so incredibly powerful. And instead they were so focused on their own daddy issues that they miss a serious serious opportunity. Because single mothers everywhere are in, I mean maybe not quite the same you know, "My son just wrecked a spaceship" *Sue laughs* the same kind of, you know, serious situation with your children.

SUE:

Yeah. We got a lot of social media comments about seeing a single mom on TV and how unfortunate it was that she didn't get to do a lot of parenting. But one that really stuck out to me was from Justin on Facebook, who said "As a child of a single mother, I thought it was really great to see one portrayed positively on TV. While she had struggles as a parent, she was never presented as a charity case or pitied by her colleagues." Which, you know I guess, compared to contemporary TV shows in the late eighties, early nineties, that was a very rare thing.

ANDI:

We had talked more about some of her episodes because I feel like we've touched on a couple, but my favorite Crusher episode is Remember Me. "If there's nothing wrong with me, there must be something wrong with the universe." I just really love that episode because her faith in herself is what pushes her through that episode. And I love that. Because most of the time we're taught to doubt ourselves. And I appreciate her. And I appreciate that episode. That's one of my favorite episodes.

NICK:

I love that she figured it out all on her own. Like, she was sitting there talking to the problem and going to Picard and talking about it. But then when he wouldn't listen, she took the time to figure it out on her own. And I love that, you know, it was just like the light bulb clicked and there it was.

JENNY:

Side note: This is the one where she is stuck in the warp bubble?

SUE:

Yes.

JENNY:

Yeah. I also love about that one the ending where she's reasoning it through on her own, she's talking out loud to herself. The computer tries to chime in and she's like "I'm not talking to you." And she's just talking to herself. She doesn't even like want the computer to help her. But then I

also love that we get to see her kind of physically fit, and she's running through the hallways later, and you see kind of all aspects of her in one episode. She's so smart. She's so decisive. And she's also, you know, a physically fit soldier on the spaceship. So I love that one.

NICK:

I love that she let herself be frustrated by telling the computer off. *Sue laughs* She wasn't trying to be perfect. Like, she was like literally "Just shut up." *laughs* And I love that.

SUE:

In terms of her focus episodes, by my count there are really only *pause* six. Right? You've got the High Ground, where she's taken hostage by terrorists. You've got Remember Me, you've got The Host, which is her first real love story, but she was- Gates was super pregnant during filming. *laughs* Suspicions, Attached, and Sub-rosa. And I think a lot of the moments that make me love Beverly Crusher are just that there are moments in other episodes where she comes in and she has a great scene or is the key to solving the mystery or just has an insight that no one else has brought up before.

ANDI:

Well, I think the High Ground is a good episode for her because it basically highlights everything that's great about her character. The moral certitude, and also just her bravery, and how like she sticks to her guns. I mean, we were talking earlier about her pushing back onto Picard. That episode is a great example of that.

SUE:

Oh. I love that little exchange where he wants to beam her back up and then Riker looks at him and says "I don't want to meet her in the transporter room." *all laugh*

JENNY:

It's great. I think one of my favorite episodes of hers- it's kind of a her story. It's kind of a Worf story. It's kind of a- both their stories, is Ethics. Where Worf is paralyzed and she has confrontational issues with this other doctor who's coming on to practice medicine or research in the less than ethical way. I love, again, that you could see her moral certitude in that episode, but I also love how much doctoring you're seeing her do there. You're seeing her out-doctor the other doctor. And so you really see how she rose the ranks as a physician in Starfleet as well in that episode.

ANDI:

I really love any episode that allows the women crew members to do their dang job.

JENNY:

Yeah, totally. And she's doing it so well in a variety of ways in that episode. You see her running a triage bay in the shuttle bay. Hand hygiene leaves something to be desired in that scene, but

and then you see her in the like the surgical setting and kind of doing this resuscitation, which is really *really* fun to watch.

ANDI:

I've always found that one common thread among all of our Star Trek doctors is their commitment to the health of their patient, no matter who their patient is. And I always feel like that's the moment where they become a Star Trek doctor to me. Because I remember when I was first watching DS9, and Bashir was driving me absolutely bananas because he's horrible in that first season. Or at least, I didn't like him in that first season. And then there was a moment where he was like "No! No, I'm going to take care of my patient. And you know, everything else is superfluous to the fact that I am a doctor and I need to take care of this person." And I was like "Oh, there he is! He's a Star Trek doctor." Whereas I feel like Crusher is like that from the beginning. And she has that all throughout all seven seasons. She's such a good example of that, what in my mind is like that Star Trek doctor thing. And there was never like that one moment where I was like "Oh, there's the doctor." Cause she's always been the doctor. You know what I mean?

JENNY:

I think the role of a Star Trek doctor would be really hard, because I think part of why we think of Dr. Crusher as the moral center of the crew so often is because she's the one who ends up questioning the prime directive often. And I think that's because occasionally, not always, but occasionally her ethical commitment as a physician is in direct conflict with the prime directive. More so than an engineer, or a security officer, or something that once somebody is identified as her patient she wants to do everything that she has to do for the benefit of her patient to relieve their suffering, to promote their health. And that's not always in keeping with what the prime directive asks.

ANDI:

I feel like this is a template that was kind of started with Dr. McCoy and something that they should continue doing across all series. Because you can have different personalities, and you can have different characters with different ideas, but like *that* fundamentally should never change. And that their primary thought is always to the well-being of their patient.

SUE:

Yeah. I would say throughout Next Gen, the argument about the prime directive almost became a trope for that series. But, at least in my view, it didn't really continue on for the doctors in DS9 and Voyager and Enterprise. I mean, there was no prime directive yet in Enterprise, but still.
laughs

JENNY:

But they didn't use that as the kind of-

SUE:

It wasn't a point of conflict.

JENNY:

Yeah. It wasn't the point of conflict between the doctor and the rest of the crew nearly as much as it was for Dr. Crusher.

ANDI:

I do think that there's going to be a lot of more ethical considerations when it comes to the doctors, because they're dealing with life. And not just life, but the wellbeing of people, and that can directly conflict ethically in more complicated ways than pretty much any other area.

JENNY:

Yeah. There was another episode where she's in conflict with this, which is Symbiosis where she's dealing with the two races who- one is addicted to the narcotic and the other supplying it. And she gets kind of lectured at, by captain Picard about the prime directive. And she says something along the lines of "It's really hard to think philosophically or to think on this, you know, a high level of the prime directive when you're faced with such immense suffering." And she is in favor of kind of going against the prime directive to relieve the suffering of this people because she's a doctor.

NICK:

I think that's what has always gotten me about Dr. Crusher, is just that she always looks at the ethical rather than the legal. She's really the only reason I even stayed watching Star Trek because after the episode of The Outcast I was *done*. Like, I was never going to watch another episode of Star Trek, like *ever again*. I was so irritated. My friend was like, "No, really you should come back and we'll watch it again." And that was just like "No. Cause like as an intersex person, there is literally no room for me on even the Enterprise." And I was just, I was done. It was one of my friends who were like "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, come back and just watch it again." So I went over to her house again to do homework the next week, because it was really hard to explain to your parents why you're not going to go do homework on homework night. *Jenny laughs* So I went over and watched it again. And the very next episode, I forget even what episode it was, but I was just like "Okay, Star Trek kind of redeemed itself there." But yeah.

ANDI:

I've had episodes like that too, where just- it upsets you so viscerally that you're like "Oh, do I want to give up?" But the nice thing about Star Trek is that it's so vast, that the lows may be very low, but the highs are also very high. So it contains multitudes. *all laugh*

NICK:

Right?

SUE:

One thing about Crushers doctoring, that I have read and heard quite often from the internet, is that she is the Star Trek doctor that relies the most on her technology. Which is always a

criticism that sort of makes me cock my head and say "What?" Cause one of my favorite bits is even a season one episode- in The Arsenal of Freedom she falls down this hole-trap that she has just thrown her med kid into because, um, season one. *All laugh* And she's going into shock and is still able to hold it together enough to like, instruct Picard what to look for, what medicinal herbs or things that can be used to treat her while she is losing consciousness.

ANDI:

Well, I also just think that that's not a very *pause* *resonant* position for me, just because like, are we expecting heart surgeons not to use their tools? Like, *laughs*

SUE:

Why wouldn't you use everything you have available to you?

ANDI:

There's new technology and science that will allow you to more efficiently care for your patients? Oh no! How dare you use those tools! Like that just doesn't seem to make sense to me. I get not wanting them to be dependent on it. So like if it breaks or if you're in a terrible situation in which you don't have access to those, you still want your baseline medical knowledge. But I don't think there's any indication that shows that she doesn't have that. So I just don't find it a very compelling complaint, I guess.

NICK:

Oh, but don't you know? Cause all these other doctors are men, so therefore it is completely compelling for her because she's *not a man*.

SUE:

Well, all the other doctors too, the writers seem to find some reason for them to go along on these missions and be on the adventure. I've noticed this, especially with- cause I'm rewatching DS9 right now. And I'm noticing this especially with Bashir, right? There's constantly a mission. I'm like "Why is he even there? Oh, cause he needs something to do. *Imagine* if Dr. Crusher were just randomly there."

ANDI:

I just feel like, maybe not the chief medical officer, but it seems like a no-brainer that you'd want someone from security, engineering, and medical on every-

JENNY:

Agreed. I think it doesn't ever make sense for the chief medical officer to go, just like it doesn't usually make sense for the captain to go on an away mission.

SUE:

Doesn't make sense for *any* senior officer to go out on an away mission. *laughs*

JENNY:

There's clearly more than one doctor, on these ships and on these space stations. So the one that we get to know is the head one. But you would think that you'd be sending a medic at least, or something, somebody like that on these missions.

ANDI:

This is where TV logic and real logic *Jenny laughs* collide, because you wouldn't actually want to send your chief medical officer on an away mission. But at the same time, if you're sending your chief engineer and your *Picard voice* number one, then you definitely would *also want* your doctor there. So it doesn't make sense, in general.

JENNY:

You can't always apply real life logic to TV land. *laughs*

ANDI:

Imagine if they were just like, "Yeah. Captain Kirk and Spock and McCoy are not ever going to go on any of these away missions."

JENNY:

laughs Right. "They have to stay in, run the ship and they're going to send their underlings to do the missions", which is what would happen in reality.

ANDI:

In reality, yes. But not fun to watch on TV. So we get Spock McCoy and Kirk going on all their adventures, which is fine with me. I am so fine with that. Always err on the side of a better story when you're telling a story. But yeah, your doctor would be there. She should be on those away missions, if we're using that same logic.

JENNY:

I mean, could you imagine any kind of mission on planet earth, here and now, where they wouldn't send a medic? Of course not. That's crazy.

SUE:

Does anybody have any other favorite episodes or moments?

ANDI:

I want to talk about Sub-rosa because- *Sue groans* okay, so I have such complicated feelings about Sub-rosa in that I f**king love it. *Sue laughs* Okay? And the reason is because like, I find it really really really funny, and I enjoy watching it. And I love to make fun of it. And it's one of those kind of like awesomely bad episodes to me. Like, the inexplicable Scottish accents, and the green light, and like zombie grandma coming up from her grave and like, it's so good! It's so good! But at the same time, it's so bad! And-

JENNY:

It's *so bad*. *laughs*

ANDI:

It's so bad for Crusher! It's such a bad episode for her because on the one hand, Gates acted the shit out of it, and I love her in it. But also, you poor woman! Can you imagine getting that script?

NICK:

"Raped by a candle"

ANDI:

Yes. 100%. There's the consent issues, that are *myriad*. It doesn't make any sense. It makes Crusher look like the silliest of people. Her decisions in that episode make no sense. And so yes, bad. But then also I love it. So, complicated. Yeah.

SUE:

And also for her, when she's not being controlled by an anaphasic life form, is given no time to grieve for the person who raised her. Right? Because she lost her parents as a kid. And she's gone right from grieving, from a funeral, to being controlled by a ghost, to "Got to get back on the Enterprise!"

ANDI:

And in between, zombie grandma.

JENNY:

And isn't grief for the person who raised you, an interesting story and thing to watch unfold anyway? So that could have been a really cool moment to give us for her, but instead we got Sub-rosa.

NICK:

Yeah. And this is completely off topic, but have you guys ever turned off the volume and then just hit play only for Crusher scene and played Samurai Theater to that episode? *all laugh* You really need to do it sometime! *all laugh*

ANDI:

Oh, can I please tell you my favorite? Well, my *two* favorite scenes in that episode? The first one is when she's packed up her little bag *all laugh* and she's standing on the transporter-

SUE:

Her *cylinder* of belongings.

ANDI:

Yes! And she's just like **dramatically** "Jean-Luc. I'm so sorry. I must go!" And Picard's just like **whispering** "What the f**k?" **all laugh intensely** It's like "What is happening? Why is my chief medical officer slash love interest slash best friend taking off to be with a ghost candle?" **laughs** Like, the whole thing is amazing. The other is, we actually get some decent Troi Crusher in this episode, which I wish we got more of, besides doing the awesome aerobics in iconic outfits. I would have loved to see more of their friendship. I love the scene where she's like explaining everything to Troi, and Troi is just like "Yup. Okay. Um, lots to unpack here." **all laugh** And you know that if it were real, Troi would have been like "Girl, no." **all laugh** Like real friends, but instead she's just like "Oh, sounds sexy." And the whole thing is- **laughs**

JENNY:

laughs It's just ludicrous.

ANDI:

I love Sub-rosa. So much. It's so inexplicable that it just becomes very funny. I just wish- like, it's just unfortunate, because I feel like Gates really got shafted in a lot of ways. Because she wanted to do more, and she wanted to do like serious sci-fi explorations. And they were like, "Instead, we're going to have you pretend to orgasm for like 20 minutes and-"

SUE:

"And then have your best friend walk in on you."

ANDI:

Yeah. So weird. And then she wants to direct, and they're like "Here, have Genesis" which is *a/so* an awesomely bad episode in that it's completely messed up and it's one of my favorites, Troi frog alone.

SUE:

laughs To my knowledge, anyway, Gates was one of the only cast members coming into the start of Next Gen that had experience directing. And she had worked with Jim Henson, and she had, you know, was choreographer of puppet movement on Labyrinth.

JENNY:

What?!

SUE:

And she worked- yeah. And she worked on Muppets Take Manhattan. And I don't know how early on, but I do know it was early on, that she expressed interest in directing. And it took of course until Genesis in season seven for her to be given that chance. But a couple of years ago in Star Trek, Las Vegas somebody asked the Next Gen cast about like those who had also directed. And as usual, for those of us who pay attention to these kinds of questions, Jonathan goes off about how they were so great to him, and they took him under their wing, and he went

to Paramount university, and they were so supportive and he just talks about how great his experience was. And when he's done Gates just says into her microphone, I think she said "It wasn't the same for the women." And that's all she would say about it. But, you know, based on what we *do know* about what happened before season two, I would not be surprised by that. I would love to hear her tell more stories, but you know, there is still- when you still have to deal with CBS in some ways, I'm sure there are still studio politics to navigate.

ANDI:

It just sucks because Frakes is a good director. I don't think anybody is going to go "Oh, no Frakes. Bad director." But like he was also nurtured. You know? And mentored, and given opportunities. And instead for Gates they were like "Here's this absolutely bonkers episode that no one could actually direct to make good, see what you can do with it." And then afterwards they're like "Well, the episode was bad. So I guess that means you're not very good at directing." You know what I mean? Like, "Give you an opportunity and set you up to fail" is not the same thing as, "Oh, Hey. Go to paramount university", whatever that is "and learn how to learn your craft. And then direct movies!"

JENNY:

Lack of proper mentorship and development of women is one of the main things that keeps women from reaching the same level of success in any field. So theater, television, movies, my field in medicine. It's the exact same thing where if the women at the lower rungs of the hierarchy aren't given the proper support and development along the way, they'll never reach it to the top. Which is why we see far fewer women at the high levels of Deans of medical schools, and CEOs of hospital organizations, because they're not being brought up the proper way.

SUE:

But it's also absolutely true that Gates was always fighting for her character. Over the years like, we have that in the quotes that we've gotten throughout, you know, Star Trek reporting. But over the years Gates has also sold a lot of her shooting scripts that still have her notes in them. And if you can get your hands on a few of them, some of them have been scanned in. Some of them are now for sale at conventions. There's just, flipping through, there are notes with things circled. Like, I think I saw the one from Attached where she is- maybe it wasn't Attached, and she's telling Troi about- Oh no, it's The Host. She's telling Troi about the boy that she wanted to marry when she was a kid. She was like "He was a soccer player, and he became a great artist." And the shooting script has a line in there that's something like "and I *kept house* for him" or something. And it's circled with a note that says "Why? This is the 24th century." And as you flip through more, there are lots of circles with like "BS" or "please cut", *all laugh* and sometimes suggestions about like, "Shouldn't it be this?" And it's just interesting to see that, you know, even that there was so much care put into it. That she wanted the best for this character.

JENNY:

I didn't know I could love Dr. Crusher more *Sue laughs* until having this conversation with you three.

ANDI:

I do want to talk about The Host a little bit anyway, because I feel like it's one of the more disappointing decisions that Crusher made. And I feel like it's probably not really on the character and it's more on the writers. But that episode is really interesting to me from a queer and gender perspective. The Trill are very interesting to me from a queer and gender and trans perspective. And this was kind of like the genesis of that. And then having the end of that episode was so like, viscerally disappointing. But I don't feel like you can really blame either Gates or Crusher for that.

SUE:

I have come up with a bit of a headcanon to reconcile that final scene for myself. And that is to take the words that the character says literally, right? We know this is supposed to be a metaphor for like "Oh, maybe one day we won't be limited in our ability to love" is supposed to mean to the audience "Like maybe one day we won't hate gay people." Right? But what the character actually says is "I can't handle the constant change. What will happen next?" So I try to tell my brain, like "She's not rejecting Odon because Odon is now female bodied." Right? She's rejecting the constant change of who this host is going to be, because Trill continually change with each new host that they have. So it's sort of helped me *laughs* deal with the disappointment of that end of that episode.

ANDI:

And I definitely don't want to make it seem like I think that she should have been with a person if she wasn't comfortable with that, or if she wasn't attracted to Odon anymore. Or- all of those- like you have the right to make that choice. Especially personally, like in real life as people you have the right to make the choice of who you want to be with, regardless of anything else. But if you put it in an episode like this, you're saying something. So it's not real life, you're making a moral judgment. You're making a political judgment, and you're putting it out there in the world, and saying something. And what they said, I didn't enjoy.

JENNY:

Do you think they would have written it different today?

SUE:

I would hope.

ANDI:

uncertain I hope so? Maybe?

NICK:

Can I break it down that episode down from the perspective of an intersex and transgender person?

SUE:

Please!

ANDI:

I would love that.

NICK:

So, and this ties into all the issues with *The Outcast*. Now as an intersex person, I grew up heavily experimented on. Many of us are forced into intersex genital mutilation. And our parents are told that it's to make us socially acceptable, because our genitals, our bodies are not going to be accepted otherwise. Because I was left intact I was literally used as a lab rat. Like, I have memories of being tied to tables and experimented on. I have ongoing health issues from all of this. And so watching these episodes is incredibly painful for me as an intersex person. It's something like "Well, you're going to tell me all these centuries in the future, we're still stuck here?" And then as a transgender person, especially with Odon, it was painful to see that. Because *sighs* transitioning from female to male is, you know, and it's like- and I'm never going to fully transition because I'm intersex. I shouldn't *have* to transition. Just because my parents made an oops and labeled me female doesn't mean that I need to do anything to myself, no trans person should. And watching that rejection on screen of "I can't handle the change." That was very telling in my, you know, for my headcanon. And I love your headcanon by the way. I completely love that of "You know, this is the way I'm going to take this", that those provide a lot of comfort. But putting it out on screen the way they did, it was sending out the signal of "We cannot accept that people like you. We *still* cannot accept people like you." So *The Outcast* was rejection of me because I'm neither male nor female, and people like me, and *The Host* was a rejection of people like me who are also trans. But, you know, Gene he wanted to write, you know, Deanna Troi as a four-breasted hermaphrodite, which still gets talked about quite a lot *laughs* in intersex circles because we were just like "That mother wanted do *what* to us?" So, you know, breaking it all down that way it's like, it was very fetishizing, very very dehumanizing. And so those episodes are kind of ones where I'm just like "Oh, show." It depends on whether I need to cry, or whether I'm angry or what, is whether I watch them or not. If I'm in a really good mood, I will hit fast forward and go right through that sonovabitch. Thank you very much. *laughs*

ANDI:

And I think that makes sense. And that's kind of what I mean by "When you put it on screen, you're saying something", you know what I mean? And people are going to internalize that consciously or subconsciously. And what they were saying to you is that you should be rejected and that's fine. And that's why I- that's why I think I get to the end of that episode and I'm just like *shudder noise*, I just feel *gross* afterwards.

NICK:

Yeah.

ANDI:

So that's a low point for me and with her character.

NICK:

Having met Gates, know that she's completely not that way. It's like wonderful. You know? Cause she is so pro LGBTQIA. I mean, she's just fantastic. But yeah, those two episodes right there were such a misuse and so evil towards her character.

ANDI:

I agree. And it's kind of why I said at the beginning that I was like, "I don't feel like this- I feel like this is bad characterization on the part of the writers", because I don't feel like this is how Crusher would have handled this. I feel like it's out of character. But we can only go by what they put on screen, and what they put on screen was disappointing. So, yeah.

NICK:

Yep.

SUE:

Well, if I may take a turn. I want to- because we're getting close to the end of our time. I want to talk about commander Crusher or Captain, I guess, *Picard* technically. The few times we learned that Crusher does not need the rank of commander to hold her position as chief medical officer, but she has it anyway because in her words she "Wanted to challenge herself." Which- I've written about this for Star Trek quarterly, but that scene with Deanna at the beginning of *Thine Own Self* was like eye-opening for teenage me, of like "You did a professional thing, you took a challenge just because you wanted to", to see the two of them for once actually talking about their careers with one another was lovely to me. And then we see her in command in *Descent*. Where she, once again, disobeys orders cause she thinks she can save more people. And I just- I love her taking command. Taking leadership.

JENNY:

I love that scene where she's explaining that to Troi as well, because again, you're right. We're getting them having a conversation, a deeper conversation for once, in a real mentorship moment for Dr. Crusher to be mentoring someone junior in rank to her. And kind of explaining how she got and why she got where she did. And I love how unapologetic she is about "I just wanted to challenge myself, or stretch myself" or however it is that she puts it. She didn't need it for her career. For her *role* in her career, but she felt like it would give her more satisfaction. And I think that's great.

ANDI:

She's a good commander I think. She's decisive.

NICK:

I forget what episode it was in, but when she took them into basically the radius of the sun-

SUE:

Yeah, that's *Descent*.

NICK:

The Descent. Okay. I couldn't remember. And, you know, in the moment when she just let another crewman just *completely* light a fire under another *laughs* under another crewman.

Cause like he was basically like mansplaining something and then the other one snapped back like "That's *just* what I said." And I was like "Go!" I love that. Crusher just like nodded like, "Yo."

SUE:

And that's another brief bit where we see her as a mentor. Because that Ensign, I think Ensign Tate, if I'm not mistaken, is so nervous and like as a new transfer. And Crusher is just like "No, you got this, let's do it. What do you need? I got you." And she is clapping back by the end.

laughs

JENNY:

Andi, you mentioned how fun it is to see her in command because she's so decisive. I think the doctor in me likes to think that that's from her medical training to some degree. And one of the reasons you'll hear, particularly in this time of year, many doctors talking about how we need more doctors in politics, and she'd be making decisions for our country and our communities because she's trained to make decisions. She's trained to make hard decisions that aren't black and white and don't necessarily have a right or wrong answer. But she can think through them and commit to one. I think makes her an excellent commander but also one of the things that makes her an excellent physician.

ANDI:

Yeah. Life and death decisions.

JENNY:

Life and death. Yes. Life and death decisions that aren't black and white. There's not necessarily always right and wrong. We still have to make it.

SUE:

We got a similar comment from Peter on Facebook, who wrote "Her experience in medicine, needing to make tough calls without all the information, and running an efficient sickbay seem to be the foundation for so many acts of leadership."

JENNY:

Peter said that? Peter and I totally agree. *all laugh*

SUE:

Well, I get the feeling that all of us could probably keep going about Dr. Crusher.

JENNY:

Yeah. We haven't even talked about her dancing and acting skills.

SUE:
Right?

JENNY:
laughs She's so talented.

SUE:
Let me just tell you, y'all, I went- I had the great fortune of being at what I am assuming is the last in-person Star Trek event of 20-21. And I was on the cruise where Gates taught a tap class. And-

JENNY:
Aw, fun.

SUE:
Believe me when I tell you this was like a twenty-five year old dream that came true for me.
laughs

JENNY:
I would have *loved* every second of that. *laughs*

ANDI:
I do like that we brought this up though, because Crusher has like a whole other artistic creative side to her that is a really cool compliment to her scientific logical side. And I think it helps seeing that and like, I think that's where a lot of her empathy comes from.

JENNY:
It makes her so three-dimensional as a character to see her, not just as an analytical, rational scientist, but as an artist.

NICK:
I'm still curious though, how her dancing trophy made it into her service record.

SUE:
Right?! I even *laughs* so I texted a friend of mine who is former Navy and I said "Is this the type of thing that would end up in your service record?" And he said "No, not really." *all laugh*

ANDI:
Well, maybe it's the future where art is celebrated more than it is today? Because people consume art, but they don't celebrate it, usually.

SUE:

It was the Starfleet *Academy* dance team. *all laugh* Whatever. Yeah. Before we wrap up, is there any other favorite moment, any other insight, or thing about Dr. Crusher that anybody would like to share?

JENNY:

I think it would be nice to touch on the lack of merch. I noticed that because my husband- my husband's a huge Star Trek fan. And we also collect a lot of Funko pops, like hundreds of them probably. And when the Funko pops, TNG Funko pops, came out there is no Dr. Crusher in that set. And the only way to get a Dr. Crusher is to buy a custom made one, from what I can tell online, unless you guys know more information than I do. Which is really sad for my collection of TNG Pops.

ANDI:

We have done two episodes on merch and the issues with merch. If anybody wants to dig into this deeper, we have in the past. And one of the things that always comes up is, you know, it's not just Dr. Crusher. It's all of the women really.

SUE:

But it is, I mean, this is anecdotal for me and maybe a little bit personal. *laughs* But it is particularly bad for Dr. Crusher, because if they're making a six-figure line out of the seven main characters, she's the one that's going to get cut more often than not. So it is much more common to find a TNG line of something where there is a Troi, but not a Crusher.

JENNY:

Do you think that's because she's not the bridge crew? And so they're primarily giving us the bridge crew?

SUE:

Maybe?

JENNY:

You would think, just from a merch design standpoint, you would want a blue shirt character amongst them. Right? Just for the whole look of it. You're lacking that completely when you look at the cast merch without her. I think it's a real shame.

SUE:

My understanding of the licensing world though, is that they licensed the property rights, so they might license the Next Generation and then it is up to the manufacturer of which characters they're going to make.

JENNY:

And they're making that decision based on who they think they're going to sell, which is really sad because all of us would buy a Dr. Crusher Funko Pop.

NICK:

I'd go- and I've got all these TNG action figures and it is *hard* to find Beverly Crusher. I've even got Guinan action figures, and I cannot find Beverly Crusher. You know, it's just- at least not from the holodeck, cause I really want *laughs*

SUE:

Oh, The Big Goodbye?

NICK:

The Big Goodbye. I want that. And I cannot find it anywhere.

SUE:

Yeah. It's definitely a personal frustration of mine as well. Well, thank you everyone for being here to have this conversation with me about my favorite Star Trek character, my favorite character in all of media, probably. And Nick, if people want to follow you where can they find you on the internet?

NICK:

I am on Twitter as @Native_Orchid. That is capital N, Nick underscore capital O orchid.

SUE:

And Jenny?

JENNY:

I am also on Twitter @Jbeckesmay. It's J B E C K E S M A Y. And then my organization is on Twitter as @feminemtweets.

SUE:

Awesome. And Andi?

ANDI:

You can check me out, *not* live tweeting first time track @firsttimetrek on Twitter.

SUE:

And I'm Sue. You can find me on Twitter @spaltor. That's S P A L T O R. For more on our show or to contact us, you can visit womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. You can also email us at crew@womenatwarp.com. And for more from Roddenberry podcasts, visit podcasts.rodnenberry.com. Thanks so much for joining us. .