

Women at Warp Episode 173: “The Outcast”

Voiceover: You're listening to a Roddenberry Podcast.

Grace: 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. We have a lovely show planned for you today. With us today are Andi.

Andi: Hello.

Grace: And our special guest Blue.

Blue: Hi there.

Grace: And before we get into further introductions, just a little bit of housekeeping. Before we get into our main topic, our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to join us there and check out some of our amazing exclusive rewards, content, polls, visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. And a huge thanks to all of you who already support us on Patreon, you are the warp in our core, the wind beneath our wings. You make all of this happen and we couldn't do it without you. Also, for those of you who haven't checked out our Teepublic store, check it out. We've gotten new designs based on our banner art, plus our logos, and all kinds of non podcast specific Trek artwork. We're constantly looking for new stuff and adding it in. Check us out at teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp. Now, today I've mentioned our special guest, Blue. Blue, would you like to give us a few words about yourself and your relationship with Star Trek?

Blue: Yeah, sure. My name is Blue Delliquanti. I am a comic artist by trade. I worked on a comic from 2012 to 2020 called O Human Star. My next book is coming out next spring from Random House Graphic called Across The Field Of Starlight. I've been describing it as "post scarcity societies for teenagers." Basically, Star Trek was something that I did not grow up with, but I really got attached to in

adulthood. I think, especially during quarantine, I doubled down on getting into Deep Space Nine, especially. I think that's like my Primo Trek.

Grace: Excellent choice.

Blue: *laughs* It is, yeah. It's very interesting coming to it without that nostalgia factor. But I've been genuinely pleased with how well it holds up. And I like coming back to it again and again. So yeah, that's my personal Trek. But I love a good Data episode.

Grace: Data is my jam. So I was really excited for this episode also. Speaking of this episode, Andi, do we want to give a quick synopsis of the episode for those who may not remember it fully?

Andi: Sure. So today we're going to be talking about The Offspring, which is a very interesting and cool episode in my opinion. And, it's hard to forget, but in case you just need some reminding, this is the one where a Data goes to a conference and comes back and is like, "You know what? I can build a child. Let's do that." And he does. And you know, there are shenanigans and it's heartfelt-

Grace: As there are. Yes.

Andi: Yeah. I mean, the Enterprise is just chock full of shenanigans at all times. I think we can all agree with this. You know, it kind of brings up a lot of the personhood issues that we saw before in The Measure of a Man. And throughout the episode we get to know Lal, Data's child. And her learning about herself and the world. And then sadly at the end of the episode, she is unable to survive. And so, you know, if you want to end your day crying, I mean, this is a good one to throw on.

Grace: Because sometimes they just- the writers say, "You know what? Data's not allowed to have nice things."

Andi: "And neither are you" No I'm kidding. *laughs*

Grace: Neither are us as fans of Data allowed to leave happy. It just isn't allowed. A little information about the show before we get into it. It originally aired on March 12th of 1990. It was written by René Echevarria, and it was his scripting

debut, and was directed by Jonathan Frakes as his directorial debut. So there's a lot of firsts in this episode.

Andi: Dang, Frakes. Frakes did a good job considering it's his first episode.

Grace: I know.

Blue: I feel like I can tell a lot of his, like directorial tells. Like, watching this again recently I was like, "Oh, man loves his crane shot." *Andi laughs*

Grace: It does make you wonder what Gates McFadden's directing tells would have been if she'd gotten to direct more than one though, doesn't it?

Andi: I really was about Gates when you said this. Cause I was like, "Are you kidding me? They gave Frakes this episode. And then they gave Gates fricking Troi frog as her first episode?" *Blue makes incredulous noise*

Grace: Yeah, it was her one episode she got to direct and she was the one cast member that actually had previous directing experience before coming on the show. So, I know. So you can see there was really different priorities given to "our lady actress wants to direct," and "our dude actor wants to direct." Funny how that works. So, our guest star is Hallie Todd playing Lal. And I always love to point out the fact that a lot of the people I know who have kind of a, "She kind of looks familiar" thing will then kind of have their minds blown when it's like, "Oh yeah, that was the mom on Lizzie McGuire. Somewhere out there, Lal exists with a precocious preteen daughter." We see this episode featured on so many best of lists for Star Trek discussion, which is really fair cause it's a pretty incredible episode. It is such a fan favorite for anyone who's a big Data fan. And for anyone who loves talking about the ethics and personhood of robotics, which surprisingly comes up a bunch in Star Trek. I mean, You'd think that would have been a one-off wouldn't you, but no, they just keep coming back to it.

Andi: *laughs* And we talked about this one a little bit when we talked about transness in Trek. So if folks are interested, they can check out that episode. It's episode 125.

Grace: Cause like we said, it's a good episode and we reference it a bunch. But one thing that I found while doing my research into this is I found the spec script page

written by René Echevarria. The spec script was very different from the episode that we actually get. And I wanted to just read a little bit from that to you guys now so that our listeners get the full width and breadth of the editing process *laughs* here, so that if you ever feel bad about a first draft, you can know that yes, things can change for the better. And sometimes you are better off killing your darlings, but not your Lals. Cause that was just sad. *Andi laughs* So the original page reads "Data gets himself a quote unquote "daughter" who quote unquote, "dies" foiling a computer virus that has taken over Enterprise."

Blue: Great start.

Grace: I know. So promising. All the quote unquotes there. "Enterprise has just completed a computer refit at STARBASE 201. Data has been at work on a private project down in lab three. He proudly presents Lal, a blank faced, hairless, androgynous, Android, his creation after interfacing with the computer mainframe." So we've already got some new concept there that I'm not sure I'm totally comfortable with.

Andi: Yeah. I was like, "Wait a second, are you saying Data banged the computer and had Lal?" Like, is that what the inference is there? Am I-

Blue: "Interface" is doing a lot of work in that sentence. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Yeah. Interface is such a loaded term when it comes to people talking about robots. It really is. *laughter* But yeah, already we've got like a multi parent thing, which I feel like- do you guys feel like that would add or detract from this story if they had kept that in? Because I felt like there was a real power in seeing Data kind of as a single parent with this situation

Blue: I'm not opposed to it. But I feel like it would complicate it in a way that there's just not enough room for. I like when they do do things with the computer of the Enterprise, like, you know, with the voice and everything. Like, I like when it becomes- or she becomes like a bit of an adversary or something you have to work around. But like, they're just wouldn't have been room. Like, I don't think it could have worked in the way I would want to see it.

Andi: Yeah. It just really brings up a lot of issues about the sentience of the Enterprise computer that probably we did not have time for.

Grace: Yeah. And then we probably would have made the jump to being like, hang on are we going to tie this into the sentience of the characters on the holodeck and turn it into a whole- "Oh no! The danger room is alive!" situation, because that never goes well.

Andi: The sentience of various beings on Enterprise has always been a little bit murky. I feel like we've got enough on our plate *laughter* theme-wise.

Grace: Okay. So progressing in this initial writeup, "The kids in school are frightened of Lal, who needs many lessons in socialization and who asks quote unquote "father" Data a lot of difficult questions. Lal decides to be female, goes the full route in the ship's beauty parlor, and gets lessons in flirtation from 10 Forward waitress, Val. Data and Enterprise computer are furious when they, as parents learn of Lal's decision to be a waitress in 10 Forward. They deem this an inappropriate position for someone possessing the sum total of human knowledge."

Blue: So there's a lot happening here. First off- first of all, I do like when we get to see the Enterprise's barbershop, with that Bolian barber guy. I cannot imagine this scene happening without like, Girls Just Want to Have Fun sound going.

Grace: Yes, very much a *singsong voice* "Traditional feminine roles montage."

Blue: She needs to like come out with different hairstyles and everyone in the bridge crew is like shaking their head, like "Mm-mm." And then she comes out with another one they're like, "Uh-huh!" *Andi laughs*

Grace: They all hold up their scorecards.

Blue: Also, they're definitely like leaning into the like Enterprise computer being the second parent here in a way that's also very strange.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: I also feel like it doesn't really need to be said, but we should probably say it, that having your lady character being introduced with an extended montage of her learning how to be pretty, and then also learning how to flirt with, I assume dudes, is **pauses** a wee bit regressive.

Blue: A little bit.

Grace: Super regressive. Which is really great in comparison to what we end up getting, which we will touch on further along. And also, the idea of them shaming her for being a waitress? That's just weirdly classist and messed up.

Blue: Yeah. I like the way it's subverted in the episode that we do get, and yeah, they just don't take it very far in this initial pitch. Like, it's very curious that that is what got passed to the final version, but the implication of it is completely different now.

Grace: Yeah. Plus I just can't imagine Data being a "No daughter of mine will be a waitress" kind of guy. **all laugh** He just seems too chill for that and way too enlightened. So going forward, "Meanwhile, Geordi has found a small untitled file in the ship's computer. He's unable to open it. A seemingly minor mystery. Lal gets very good at simulating human behavior. And even," and this is underlined "stimulating human behavior."

Andi: Oh la la!

Grace: "Riker, thinking she's human falls for her. Data complains to Picard about the impropriety of the relationship, age differences, et cetera."

Andi: Yeah. That's the only problem. **laughs**

Grace: "And then takes umbrage when Riker agrees." So, can we all just take a minute and appreciate the concept of of Data going "You can't date my daughter" and then immediately having a "What? My daughter's not good enough for you?" **Blue laughs**

Andi: I love that like, the only problem they see with this is apparently age differences. When I feel like the age difference is like the least of your, *laughs* problems.

Blue: Yeah. I mean, how old is Data? Like I- maybe this is like me showing up too casual of a fan, but how old is Data? Is he like, he can't be like 30 something, whatever years old. How old is he?

Grace: They say he made it through the Starfleet academy in like record time. So yeah-

Blue: Is he like Seven? Like, what's happening there?

Grace: If he is, I feel like Wesley Crusher needs to like lean back a little bit on the child prodigy thing. Cause then Datas totally got his ass beat

Blue: Memory Alpha said he was born February 2nd, 2338. I don't remember when TNG takes place.

Grace: I don't know, but I feel like someone out there listening is going to put together his star chart based off of it. *all laugh*

Blue: Yeah. I'm trying to remember what astrological sign early February is

Andi: at the beginning of TNG says he was 28.

Grace: Oh, okay.

Blue: So they very comfortably sidestepped that quandary.

Grace: *laughs* "It's different when it's a male character."

Andi: I do feel like he's probably an Aquarius, he's aloof and intellectual, classic Aquarius traits.

Grace: Oh my gosh. We're going to do star signs for the rest of the characters at some point now aren't we? *Andi laughs*

Blue: I don't know why I didn't realize this, but of course they would have birthdays. And he is an Aquarius. That's fun. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Yeah, but does it- it doesn't not make sense. Going forward though, "Now a Ferengi vessel, Daimon commanding, hovers into hailing range and activates the mysterious file. A computer virus somehow smuggled in during the refit. This is no time to speculate on security breaches at the Star Base." So, they just put it in here in the write-up a "don't ask too many questions about it. We got a plot to go through." "The Ferengi quickly have total control of all of Enterprises systems. They're going to sell her. Data interfaces with the computer and locates the virus, but it's too much for him. He's disabled and quote unquote dying when Lal shows up. Quote unquote genetically related to the computer, she destroys the virus. But" again, another quote unquote "dies in the doing. Riker and Data hold one, another rocking in grief." *Andi laughs* And there you have it: the original outline for this episode.

Blue: There's a lot to unpack here.

Grace: There's so much to unpack here! And I was really relieved when I was able to find the David Livingston memo to Rick Berman just going basically, "No. This is really- no." There are many nos here. *Blue laughs* And he misses some of the nuance, but he does get some of the important stuff. Like, why is Data so emotional when that's like the core of his character that emotion isn't the same for him? And also that there's some weird stuff going on of, "okay, how come Data is suddenly an Expert in this field?" And also my favorite note is "The C story with Riker is really weird. I didn't get it at all." And agreed, *laughs* agreed. I'm so glad that they kept that as small as they did in the episode that we get. For one thing, because it would probably would have been really rough for Frakes to direct and Star in the episode at the same time.

Andi: Don't worry. He's still got his kiss.

Grace: He's still got his kiss. Yeah. Cause, you gotta wonder if Frakes had that written into a contract or something. That this many episodes per season he needs to get macked on by some sort of space lady.

Blue: Can I please draw our attention to point number eight, which- can I read it? Is that okay?

Grace: Oh yes. Please do!

Blue: "Story smacks of chauvinism directed at waitresses, a real put down dealing in stereotypes. I thought we were past this." That's the funniest line-

Grace: I know! When even like, the producers of a mega TV show go "Guys, be cool." That says something *Blue laughs* really. And yeah, it is pretty messed up that the idea of learning to be- *overly fancy voice* to be female includes learning to be cute and flirtatious. Well, I don't even know where to begin unpacking that. And just the idea of that being integral to femininity as a concept is so weird.

Andi: I do like what we did get in the actual episode where- I mean, there were some things, but for the most part I like that Troi basically says like "the big difference is it will effect how people relate to you."

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Which I thought that was super interesting, because when we think of gender being like a social construct, like people don't seem to realize that that's not saying it's not real. Like, people are still going to react to it and treat you differently based upon it. So it's definitely still a real thing. It's just something that we have all collectively decided is a thing.

Grace: Or that the people in charge have decided is a thing. *Andi laughs* Either way.

Blue: I also like how like Troi- part of what she points out is when Lal is going through her gender choices, she points eout like, "Well, how many Andorian friends are you going to have on this ship?" you know, like, that being a factor of your choice gender, which is like very interesting. It's an interesting observation.

Grace: Troi makes for such a great aunt to Lal in this whole thing. Just being super supportive and chill about everything. And sitting through over a thousand

different, you know, preplanned concepts for gender and appearance that they just kind of go through, I guess.

Andi: I- can we talk about that scene a little bit too? Because I just, the jealousy I felt it just being able to be like-I don't know. Like, it's the same jealousy I felt when I first watched Clueless and Cher has that amazing outfit generator thing? *Blue laughs*

Grace: But it's for your body.

Andi: Yeah. But you actually get to like, choose not only your gender, but what you look like, like really? Like it's a character creator. That's what it is. It's a character creator, but for yourself. Like, I want to go to there.

Blue: *laughs* Yeah. And like, your like helpful female mentor figure behind you is just like, "Oh yeah. A friend for Worf. You can be a Klingon if you want." Like, that's great.

Grace: She's so unjudgemental about the whole thing. And that's what I really love about it. But also how cool is it of Data to just be like, "No, this is 100% your decision. And I want you to be able to fully make this informed decision."

Andi: Very cool.

Grace: It's just amazing.

Andi: I would say that no one should read Worf's parenting 101 book, but a lot of people could do with reading Data's parenting 101 book cover to cover.

Grace: Yeah. We should probably be grateful there isn't a lot of Worf in this episode. Because I feel like some of the very special issue episodes that have Worf in them get kind of weird.

Andi: They always use him as the mouthpiece of like, Shittiness. Which I don't think is fair to Worf at all. Like, in The Outcast he's the one who's like *Worf voice* "Actually women are weak." And it's like, okay.

Grace: And it's kinda like, "Since when, Worf?" *Andi laughs*

Blue: Have you met like any other Klingon female they've had on the show? Like, they're really not.

Grace: Worf, what would K'Ehlyer think if she heard that and how hard would she beat your ass right now?

Blue: Seriously. I would be very interested to see what that alternative episode would be like if Lal decided to be a Klingon male, and decided to pal around with Worf. Like, I'm very curious what that would be like.

Grace: Oh my God. It would have been like, Worf trying to not raise like a full sentient human being, but just a weird caricature of what he thinks Klingon masculinity is.

Andi: Amazing.

Grace: That would be like a whole other level of a Frankenstein plot right there. Because we've established that Worf is a born-again Klingon.

Andi: I feel like this could be remade in 1 million different ways, where Lal chooses who she is or who they are over and over and over again. And each time choosing something different, and it impacting the episode and like how people relate to her and, you know, I feel like that would be freaking cool. I would love to see that

Grace: That should have been our makeover montage, just Lal trying out different genders and appearances over the course of episodes, and people being like *cheesy voice* "Way to go!" Or "Not cool." *Andi laughs* Also how goofy is that Andorian costume? *laughs*

Andi: Yeah, it was really weird looking.

Grace: I feel like in 55 years of Star Trek, that is the goofiest looking Andorian we've ever gotten. And that includes the original series where they had the little pipe-cleaner antennas.

Blue: I don't remember many Andorians in TNG. Like, I feel like they didn't really pop up much until Enterprise. When we had my man Jeffrey Combs.

Grace: Hell yeah. My boy Shran. *Blue laughs*

Andi: Actually now that we're talking about the Andorian, that's something that I thought about while I was watching this. I was like, okay- it kind of made me think about one, how human centric everything is, which you know, makes sense. Like, I understand why it happens that way, but like, Data's always trying to be human specifically. And I don't know if- is that just because his creator was human? Did he just think humans are the best? Like I- that's kind of confusing to me. Like, I don't know the answer to that. And then secondly, like if Lal chooses to be an Andorian or a Klingon, do we think that she'd really be an Andorian or Klingon?

Grace: Ooooh! Or is it like appropriative?

Andi: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Like, I had never thought about it that way, but I was really like, "Why is her appropriating a human body feel correct?" Whereas the idea of her as a Klingon seems kind of sketchy. And I don't know, I don't really know how to unpack that, but I had never thought about that before. And it was something I was thinking about. I was like, "But you're not really a Klingon." Like, there's no Klingon culture. Like, it's not like she would have grown up Klingon. So it really just would be like her in a Klingon body. But that's equally as true as her being human. So-

Blue: Right. And also like, if she did end up going the Klingon route, she would end up with Worf who also has like limited formative experience with fellow Klingons. So that's like also kind of a- like interesting. I dunno, I guess I never really thought about that before.

Grace: Here's what's really going to bake your rigatoni: what would have happened if they'd decided on Andorian and then had to go the route of trying to suss out and figure out Andorian genders, because they work differently than human genders?

Blue: Well yeah, they got like four or something.

Grace: Yeah!

Blue: Oh, I don't know. Yeah, this is all very- I am very curious what drew her to like the Andorian one, and only that one.

Grace: Maybe she just liked the color blue?

Blue: Maybe. Yeah.

Grace: Probably they just want it to be like "Isn't the holodeck neat?"

Blue: *laughs* Yeah. I would be very curious to find out her thought process for choosing the two main human genders and then two random ones from like two other completely different species.

Grace: Yeah. You'd think if it was a character creator, she would have hit the randomize button a few times.

Andi: You know, one thing that's also funny about that scene? Is Troi being like, about the human dude, like "Yeah! Very attractive." And I was like, "What are you doing?" *laughs* I mean, I don't think she was- she wasn't like shady about it, but she was just like, "Yeah, he's very attractive." and I was like, "Okay."

Blue: She's just going for any compliments. Wasn't the thing she said when Lal picks the human female, she's just like, "I like her."

Grace: *enthused voice* "She seems fun. Those are some great bangs." Again, just positive great aunt who you would absolutely want to be the one to take you like shopping for bras in middle school or something.

Blue: Cis-gender aunt.

Grace: Yeah. *Blue laughs* She would've probably let her play dress up in her closet too. Awww.

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Andi: An introverts dream.

Grace: It really is.

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Blue: I feel like, as far as Data episodes are concerned, he's quite expressive in this one.

Grace: Oh totally.

Blue: He has a lot of like very- Brent Spiner makes a lot of very interesting face journeys in this episode.

Andi: This is a good episode to kind of really hit on something that has always annoyed me, is that Data clearly feels feelings. Data clearly feels feelings. And the fact that he like, he says repeatedly, "I can't feel feelings." And then like demonstrably feels feelings has always kind of made me laugh. I think it's less that he doesn't feel feelings and more that the way he experiences them and reacts to them is different than your general neuro-typical human that we see on TNG. So in that way, he becomes a super interesting. And I mean, Grace and I talked about this a lot when we talked about our autism in Trek episode, but this is just a really good example of "He shows emotion" in this episode. And not only that, but like other characters see him and remark on him showing emotion. Like he says to Troi, like, "Oh, I can give Lal attention, but I can't give her love." And Troi's like, "BS". *laughter* He leaves and she's like immediately like, "No. Not buying that, not buying what you're selling there. Mr. Android, man."

Grace: Mr. Android Man, a lesser known Bob Dylan song right there. *Andi laughs*

Blue: Yeah. He shows some very, very complicated facial expressions that really struck me. And I was trying to remember the exact scene when this happened. I think like, he was showing Lal how to like eat at a table or something. And she like remembers all the steps and he does this very complicated face where he's just kind of like impressed in a subdued way. He's just kind of looking off to the side all "Hmmm." like she- like, it's just a very very deliberately complicated expression. I was like, "Wow. Data really spent some time studying and replicating this one."

Grace: It'd be really interesting to watch this, like back to back with Encounter at Farpoint to say, "Oh, like, has Data just learned so much more about facial expression?" But also I'm always going to bring it back to this with Data conversation, talking more about being an analogy for someone who's non neuro-typical. There is definitely a level of- at least in my personal experience on the spectrum, the monkey see monkey do thing. Where people, when I bring it up, will be like, "Oh, you don't act like it." Then they are always like, when I say, "Well, how do I not let act like it?" They go *confused noise*. And I think part of that is the ability to mimic and the ability to do facial expression is a learned behavior. And it's something that requires a lot of work put into it. And it could be one of those things where he's- I'm probably overthinking this for this episode,

but you might be overdoing it a little bit to be like, "See Lal? This is how we react to these things."

Blue: I could see that, for sure.

Grace: Yeah. Which I've known the parents of- I've seen parents of autistic children do something similar.

Andi: Well, yeah. I think part of the thing with autism is like, there are so many unspoken unwritten rules of behavior that nobody- like and if you sat down a neuro-typical person, ask them to explain them, like they wouldn't be able to, but they will be able to tell you if you're breaking them. And they won't be able to articulate why, but with a lot of autistic people, they're very much like, "No, what are the rules? So I can follow them." Except for they're not written down. And so *laughs* it makes learning those things very difficult. Whereas most people who are neuro-typical learn them subconsciously. And so that means that it's hard to teach.

Grace: Definitely is, but that's part of what makes the dynamic between Data teaching Lal specifically based on his background and knowledge interesting. And I can't help but wonder if that could be kind of an analogy for non neuro-typical or other forms of parenting when you are raising someone who has a similar condition to you, and are knowing they need special accommodation.

Blue: That's a good point. I feel like that's not something I have seen very much myself, is that dynamic between like a non neuro-typical parent and child, and how they would best communicate things to each other. Like, that would be pretty interesting. I do really like the dynamic between Data and Lal and how they communicate information to each other. Like, that's very very interesting. Especially if he's not absent of feeling at all. Like, it very much is.

Grace: Oh yeah.

Andi: I also really liked Data coming to terms with something that almost all parents come to terms with, which is your child is going to surprise you and do things and make decisions and ask questions you're not prepared for. And I think some parents react poorly to that. *laughs* Like, they very much are expecting a mini me *Grace laughs* that then will act like they are at all times. And when they

don't, they get like frustrated and confused by that. And it was cool to see, you could see Data reacting to Lal say asking a bunch of questions. And you could see him reacting to like, her doing things that surprised him. And for the most part, I feel like they did a good job of making it seem like he was supportive of her choices and not angry that she wasn't turning out to be just, you know, a clone of himself. Like learning who she was as a person and then reacting to that. In a positive way.

Grace: Yeah. Like, we get that point in the end when he's talking to the Admiral and he says he created her in hopes that someday she would also want to join up with Starfleet. And on one hand, okay. Yeah. That tracks. But on the other hand, thinking about in the earlier draft them being furious about her becoming a waitress. Those two just don't fully jive to me in terms of Data was doing this as an experiment to see if he could raise an independent person. And being angry at them making independent decisions, especially at such a young age, seemed really unreasonable. So yeah. That's why I so much more prefer him being like, "Oh yes, this will be a learning experience for you" and being cool about it rather than *Jimmy Stewart sounding old man voice* "No daughter of mine-" I don't know why I keep going into the Jimmy Stewart voice for that, but it just *Andi laughs* seems correct.

Andi: He also mentions that one of his reasoning behind deciding to make Lal was a desire to continue on past his death, which I think is a super common reason why people have kids. As like, a way for you to achieve some form of immortality. Like, you will die, but your kids will live and then their kids and so on and so forth. I think that's a super common like, thought among parents and about why they would want to have children.

Blue: That brings up a question though, in terms of like what we were talking about earlier with, you know, how much can Data actually feel. That kind of impulse to me like, personally feels like that comes from a kind of existential fear. Like a terror of you just ending and not being around anymore. So at least something will continue on with your kid. Like, I- it's hard for me to think of like a impulse to do that kind of thing if there wasn't some kind of feelings-based. Do you know what I mean? Like-

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. It's an emotional impulse, I think. Yeah, absolutely. I agree.

Grace: One thing that that really makes me think of also, is later on in the Times Arrow episode, when they're having the conversation about, "Oh, we found dead Data" and him being like, "You know what? I'm actually kind of- I'm okay. I'm at peace with this idea that I will end someday." And you've got to wonder if the situation with Lal, and the attempt to go on through progeny and that not working out, but him kind of living with it through the end, if that wasn't a thing that helped him kind of make peace with the concept.

Blue: Hmm. I like that idea a lot. Yeah.

Grace: *mysterious voice* Character evolution throughout the show. *Blue laughs*

Andi: It kind of ties into what he's saying earlier too, which I also thought was very interesting, which is that she asks him what their function is. Like, what is the reason for them being alive? And his answer is that their function and the reason for being is to impact the world in a positive way, or something like that. And I was like, "How I wish more people thought of that *laughs* as like their reason for living. But two, like, that is also to me an emotional impulse. Like, that's not- that to me comes from a place of emotion.

Blue: Yeah. Just like compassion or some kind of like kindness. Yeah. I think about that as someone who likes writing about robots. Like, I think about that a lot. About like how logical the act of compassion is or can be and how much of that goes beyond it. Like, I dunno. I love *laughs* I love exploring that kind of thing.

Grace: Yeah. I noticed that's kinda your jam.

Blue: Oh, it is super my jam. *both laugh* Yes. I go back to that well over and over and over again.

Andi: Well like, think about how this has been explored Trek numerous times. But the one that I'm thinking of right now, think about in The Motion Picture the contrast to V'ger. And that you have Spock taking this journey to try and purge himself of all emotion. And then when he comes to a creature that has no

emotion, he's immediately like, "Whoa, man. *laughter* That's not- I'm not feeling that."

Grace: He's like, "Whoa. Dial it back a little there."

Andi: And, you know, they have that scene where he grabs Kirk's hand and he says "This, this simple feeling" and to me, that movie is all about Spock realizing that emotions are good and that they're not contrary to logic. That they enhance it. And I feel like that's kind of how Data is for me. Like he's a very logical being, but a lot of his logic comes from an emotional impulse to care for other people.

Blue: Like, he tries to have compassion inform his logical choices in a way that I find very interesting.

Grace: And that's part of what makes him getting to be a parent, and by the looks of it being a really a really good one, *laughs* just so satisfying.

Andi: Definitely.

Grace: Yeah. I definitely walked away with some of those "I want to believe I could do that and not be terrible at it" feelings.

Andi: *laughs* Yeah. And then on the other side of the coin, we have a complete lack of compassion from a human person. This bad-miral that we've got in this episode. Who just like- ooh, I didn't like him.

Grace: I appreciate that they took like all- a bunch of the really negative stuff from the original outline and sort of combined it into this one character *laughs* for the final script. I thought that worked really well.

Blue: Yeah. The cocktail waitress thing got assigned to him in a way that wasn't like, it was nuanced at least. Like he kind of- you can kind of understand where his agenda is coming from. Like, I can see where he's coming from. But all of it's informed by, you know, this fear and this like, not really understanding. Like this lack of trust in Data. And that's where that cocktail waitress thing goes in in a way that I find very interesting. I also wrote down- I was really struck by a term he used, especially since like, I had a feeling we would talk about this in like a queer and trans kind of way. He uses the phrase "irreparable damage" when it comes to

using like- like, you know, the way like Lal was being brought up. And I was like, "Ooh! Oh, that's a phrase I've heard many a time." Homophobia and Terf-istry is just like that.

Andi: Oh my God. Terf-istry? I've never heard that before. That's beautiful. I love that. *Grace laughs*

Blue: Like if you- if you learn how to be a girl wrong, like you'll never fix it. It's just like- oh, I just thought that was a very interesting choice.

Grace: Or if you never had a proper male role model then you're ruined for life.

Blue: Exactly!

Andi: Or even, you know, going on puberty blockers or hormones, like you will irreparably damage your body and it will never go back to the way it's supposed to be.

Grace: Yeah. That's the point, man. *all laugh*

Andi: But the thing that kind of strikes me from that cocktail waitress moment, is his problem with it is not that she's a cocktail waitress, it's that he wants to use her for something else. And so like, the reason that they set her up to work in 10 Forward was for her. For her development. To help her understand humans and human interaction. It was- the goal was her self-actualization. His goal is to use her to do things as a tool. So to him, this is a waste of time. Like, she should be working for him and doing whatever BS math he wants her to do. I don't know. I mean, they didn't really get into what he expects from her, but it's super clear that he wants to use her on behalf of Starfleet. And so it's interesting because in the original outline, it was super classist. In this case, it's less classist and more just his priorities are different.

Grace: Also. How cool is it with Picard going to bat? Like "No, Guinan is a great person to have teach this person about the nuances of interpersonal relationships. Guinan has seen everything. I trust Guinan with my life."

Blue: Yeah. Picard's whole role in this is also very interesting too. Because he starts in a place where he has, I think like well-meaning misgivings about what

Data is trying to do. But over the course of like Guinan getting involved, and like being open-minded and listening to Data, he ends up like advocating for them in like a really like sincere way that I found very very interesting. And I really like how Picard can have that shift from one viewpoint to another and have it be plausible, like not just in this episode, but in a lot of others. Like, I thought he had a very interesting role to play in this episode.

Andi: Well, and one thing- like when I was rewatching it and the first, you know, five minutes, at first I was like, "Picard, come on, man. Be cool. Like, you're not passing the vibe check here." *Grace laughs* But then I realized- or at least I saw it differently once we got to the end of the episode. And I think this is a thing that you could interpret differently. Like, you interpreted it as him changing his mind. The way I interpreted it is he saw this coming and he was worried.

Grace: Oooh, that's really interesting.

Andi: Because when I first started watching it, I was really like, "Come on, man. Like be cooler." But then like when I was thinking about it in the context of what he was worried about happened, he was like, "This is opening a door that-" I feel like really, he didn't feel prepared to- to protect them. Because he thought he would have to. And he was right.

Grace: Oh, what does that say about Picard sort of seeing himself as a protective figure of Data?

Blue: Well, it makes me think of, I feel like what Andi brought up, made me think that this might be like a spiritual successor to I think Measure Of A Man is-

Grace: Yeah, absolutely.

Andi: Yeah. Definitely.

Blue: Cause like, yeah, that's like a great example of like, he was essentially assigned to advocate for Data and Riker was like kind of the adversarial figure in that episode. Right? Like, and I feel like there was a point where Riker made a very compelling case for why Data isn't a person. And I think, yeah. I think like even though Picard kind of won the day in that episode, he's still kind of has that sense of mind that there's like gonna be challenges that are brought up because of that

episode and the consequences of like that thing. Yeah. I could definitely imagine that sticking in his head, you know?

Andi: Well, I will tell you that the first episode of Star Trek that absolutely blew my mind wide open and made me go, "Okay. Yeah, I'm a Star Trek fan" is The Measure of a Man. And I can nail it down to one specific scene. And that's the scene where Guinan and Picard are in 10 Forward and she blows his mind by reminding him that throughout history there's always been- disposable people have always been a thing and will always be a thing. And this is something that Data is going to have to fight. And I'll never forget- Patrick Stewart, I mean, throw all of the awards at his feet and Whoopi Goldberg too, but I'll never forget the look on Picard's face when his whole paradigm shifts. Where he's like, "Oh!" And I feel like that shift stuck with him because- I mean, when they referenced The Measure of a Man in this episode, he says, you know, "It's very clear Data is a person. I know, because that's the fight I had and won." Like, he reminds the Admiral of this. And the Admiral's like, "Yeah. And I really feel you on that. But actually-" and I was like, *disapproving noise*.

Blue: "I wasn't there for that episode. You can't have me accountable for this."
Andi laughs

Grace: Oh, that's what I thought you'd say you freaking Admiral. *Blue laughs*

Andi: It was super clear to me that the Admiral really- like, nothing they would have said would have changed his mind. Like, he came into that very much like "I want Lal, I'm not leaving without her."

Grace: Except that in the end, he does change his mind seeing how hard Data is willing and ready to push himself for Lal and her wellbeing.

Blue: Yeah. Like he came out of that operating room just like completely changed. In a way that was plausible. But yeah. Like he's just sort of like, "Oh my God."

Grace: You always got to love it when a character is relating something incredible that happened that they clearly did not have the budget to put on camera.
laughs

Blue: "His hands were going faster than the eye can see. It looked very expensive."
all laugh

Andi: Yeah, I guess I just- I didn't- I saw that he was like shaken, but I guess I didn't see the same kind of paradigm shift that I saw in Picard, I guess.

Grace: Well, we respect Picard. That's part of the difference there, I think. *Andi laughs*

Blue: Yeah. I think the paradigm shifts are different. But I definitely feel like he kind of was- at the end, he had that conflict between- cause there's that point where like, he's there when like they realize something is like catastrophic wrong with Lal, and he offers to help like kind of in like a medical capacity. And I think that was very interesting. I dunno, I could see him kind of like being nuanced in that way, but that you know is more than he might've been in another writer's hands. Maybe. It was interesting.

Grace: He could have really easily been the "Aw! Screw this guy" straw man character. But we got to actually see some progression there.

Andi: I mean, the same could be said of Bruce Maddox in The Measure of a Man. So I really do feel like this is like the followup to that episode.

Grace: I feel like one person can't say Bruce Maddox without me going *brooding voice* Bruce Maddox. *Andi laughs* I keep bringing it back to Guinan because I just was doing the transcription on an episode on Guinan. So I keep thinking about her and being like, this change bringer for Picard's perspective and him being so *pause* so big on her being that. And that just keeps coming to my mind. And the idea of her being just a teacher in general with Lal. And one of my favorite just little factoids about this episode is in an interview with salon.com in 2001, research assistant Richard Arnold says Guinan's explanation of relationships was changed at Whoopi Goldberg's request. So according to the script, Guinan was supposed to start telling Lal "When a man and a woman are in love" but- and in the background there'd be a man and a woman sitting at tables, holding hands. But apparently Whoopi refused to say that. She said "The show should be beyond that. It should be when two people are in love. This is the future. Let's portray it as such." So apparently they wanted- she was pushing for the idea of having two

men or two women, but that didn't happen. But the idea that she was pushing for that change of the verbal expression, that's pretty cool.

Blue: That is super cool. I hadn't heard that anecdote before.

Andi: Well, we got to make sure though that it doesn't get too queer guys. I mean, a little bit of queerness *Grace laughs* is okay, but...

Grace: David Livingston is going to talk down some of the casual misogyny, but well, let's not get crazy with the gay rights in here. *Andi laughs* We can't let them have the run of the place.

Blue: Like, I know enough about the background of Trek to know that like Rick Berman is kind of like the emperor Palpatine of like- *Andi laughs*

Grace: Basically!

Andi: Rick Berman's like "We gave you The Outcast, now shush." *all laugh* Okay. Okay.

Grace: "We gave you a half-assed analogy. Why aren't you cool with it? God!" *all laugh*

Andi: Sometimes I like to think about Rick Berman watching Discovery. *laughter*

Grace: Maybe all of those people complaining about forced diversity in Discovery are like somehow feeling like they're making Rick Berman's spirit live on or something. Okay. Like I said- and I talk about this so much I wrote an article about it for Star Trek Quarterly. The idea of representing not just neuro-typical characters, but how intergenerational relationships between people who are non neurotypical or who have mental health differences can be really complicated. And also can be really incredible. And is this thing that's just kind of pop culturally ignored I think to a degree. We get this kind of idea that non neuro-typical characters just kind of burst out of nowhere and are like some kind of huge burden on their parents. And that's kind of an archetype we see more than we really should. But the idea of, "Yes, you can grow up different and you can grow up to raise children who are also different and there's nothing wrong with that." and I

just think that's a conversation that needs to happen more. And I really appreciate that we got to see it happen in Star Trek.

Andi: Another the thing that I really like, and kind of goes along with that, is that at some point Data is like, "Hmm, I'm a parent now. I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. What should I do?" and he goes to another parent. And we actually get to see Bev being a parent, and like being acknowledged as a parent, and them having a really lovely conversation about parenting and about how hard it can be, and like the challenges and how do you deal with it when your child is different and is struggling. Like the scene where Lal is in the classroom and all the kids are like, *uncomfortable noise* that was hard to watch! That's sad.

Grace: It was so sad!

Andi: Yeah. And like, it's sad for a parent. It's really- like when your child is suffering, you want to make them not suffer. And sometimes you can't protect them from everything and you can't control everything. And how do you deal with that? And then also equip your child to handle that? So like, immediately afterwards, him having to gently tell Lal like, "No, they're not laughing with you. They're laughing at you." Oooh, that was good stuff.

Grace: That's gotta be such a hard conversation to have as a parent.

Andi: Yeah. And it hits you right in the feels.

Blue: Yeah. That was a very very good scene in that *laughs* in my re-watch.

Grace: That was an, "Oh, my heart!" Moment.

Andi: There was lots of "Oh, my heart" moments in this one. What do we think about the choices they made to end with Lal's death? And like, the reasoning behind her death. Like to me, and bear in mind I'm really bad at the science-y kind of stuff. This is- I leave this to Sue and Sue's Science Corner. But I didn't really understand. Like she felt too many emotions and it caused her brain to kapoof? Uh, I don't really understand.

Grace: Well, I've been there.

Blue: It's a little hand-wav-y. Like, I think I understand the landscape of like TV at the time. Like they just, weren't going to have a character stick around for like a few extra episodes. But in the back of my head re-watching it again recently, I was like, "If this were DS9 they'd have her around for at least a season." Like I would love- like, and she could still - she could kind of have like a Ziyal arc where she still like, dies at the end. Spoiler alert. But like, you know? She could have like a more of an arc that's not as rushed. Because yeah, it doesn't quite make sense. Or it's not quite satisfactorily explained, like what happens to her.

Andi: And then also the implication being that the thing that she wanted and that what Data wants for himself is ultimately the thing that will kill them, which is kind of a weird story beat to end considering the rest of the thematic resonance of this episode.

Grace: I mean, it's better than infected by computer virus by Ferengi's *Andi laughs* for one thing.

Andi: In the middle of the third act, the Ferengi just show up and they're like, "Hey!"

Grace: If you reference an unnamed Ferengi file in the first act... *Andi laughs* Data as a character is such an interesting example of this need to maintain a specific status quo to kind of maintain parts of the show's core concept. Because we get to see a lot of progress from Data over time, he gets to have some wild growth, but at the same time there's this idea of, "we need to maintain this stock idea of what Data is." and we see that happen in the movies, I think, pretty strongly of like, "No, this is what Data is. Data has not learned the subtleties of humor and intercommunication. He's going to push someone off a boat and think it's funny."

Blue: Yeah. The last shot of this episode is kind of brutal. Like, he comes out of the operating room where his child has died. He explains what happens, and all of the bridge crew are like, "Well, rip. Alright. Take your post." *all laugh*

Grace: "Back to work."

Blue: Like, I get why they did it. But it's very impactful that that's like the shot. Like, he just kind of resumes the status quo. But it's brutal.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: It really hearkens back to the classic tos where they're like, "Well... 'kay." *all laugh* "Bye."

Grace: "I guess that's the end of that chapter."

Andi: "Scotty, you got a joke for us?"

Grace: *Scottish accent* "Your daughter's dead, sir." *all laugh*

Andi: I mean, the thing that he says too is basically like, he absorbed her almost? Like her thoughts and feelings are- well feelings. "I don't know. What are feelings?" *Grace laughs* But like-

Grace: Her thoughts and not feelings, quote unquote.

Andi: Like, did he download her? *laughs* Like, I- this is another hand-wav-y thing, which is fine. But like the emotion of it is that she lives on in him, which I think is actually a very common way for people to grieve and something that does bring me comfort. Like, the people that we love when they leave, they are still with us because we still hold them in our heart kind of thing. And then they tried to make that like an actual representation of that feeling. Like, he downloaded her or some hand-wavy science-y stuff. But then like, give him the day off. *all laugh*

Grace: Let the dude grieve. Let him.

Blue: Don't make him go back on shift. *all laugh*

Andi: Or like, at least let them have an awkward windows 95 funeral. *Grace laughs*

Blue: Yeah! Like gave Geordi and Ensign Ro a funeral. Like.

Grace: They gave them an awesome funeral.

Andi: Yeah, actually.

Blue: Yeah. They gave him a sick funeral.

Grace: Let Data have an awkward wake for his child.

Andi: Where is Riker playing his trombone in 10 forward? Come on. The jazz is nowhere to be seen.

Grace: They could've mashed it together with Wrath of Khan and had him playing Amazing Grace on the trombone. *all laugh* oh my gosh.

Andi: Yeah. Anything is better than "Okay. Engage." and then he has to go back to work.

Grace: Well, according to one of the show writers, I found this in some notes from a convention from 1992, there was at one point talks of doing an episode where were going to bring back Lal to have her- or her body be stolen by Lore to make it be like a whole family drama thing.

Andi: Veto.

Blue: That could have been cool. Well, that could have been cool especially if like Lal got turned like temporarily evil or like, you know, like turned against her dad. Like that could have been really interesting.

Grace: It could have been like her teenage rebellion years.

Blue: Yeah!

Andi: I think that is amazing that my immediate reaction was "No" and Blue they were like, "Yeah, let's see that." *Blue laughs* that's fascinating. No, for me, it's kind of like- okay, first of all: Lore. I am super over Lore. *Grace snorts* His episodes are not my favorite. And then also this idea of Lal being like kidnapped

by him is just- not into it. But at the same time I would- you're totally correct that I would love to see an evil Lal, just cause I think that would be funny.

Blue: Yeah. It doesn't have to be Lore, cause that's fair. Like, Lore isn't my favorite either. But like just some kind of like foil who's like a Android or cyborg man or whatever. Just somebody to give her like a different perspective, be like, "Hey, that was kinda like messed up what they wanted to do. Maybe there's like another way." And that way involves being evil. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Like, I'm just imagining mirror universe Lal right now. *all make noises of excitement* And I'm totally here for it.

Andi: I was actually thinking that. I was like "Mirror universe Spock just hands her a mustache."

Grace: I want to see it be the exact same like, little girl kind of frumpy dress, but it's like all in leather or something. *laughs*

Blue: Yeah. All leather and vinyl. And that kind of weird tinfoil jewelry that like Mirror Universe Kira wears.

Grace: Yes. I feel like we found some really good potential here and we need to be taking these notes down and sending them to IDW for the expanded comics.

Blue: There you go!

Grace: That would have been wild. There was so much potential to do more with Lal. Which is also a recurring theme on this show of "Man, this one-off character. They could have done a lot more with that than they did?"

Andi: I will say though, that one reason why we do that so often is because Star Trek is pretty good at giving us three-dimensional excellent characters that exist only within one episode.

Grace: Unless they're Jeffrey Combs, and then they'll come back episode after episode. *Andi laughs* If Lal had been played by Combs, it would have been a different story.

Blue: God, I'm just trying to imagine that. Where like, that was Jeffrey Combs and they were like, "You know, *Grace laughs* I kind of want to have him back again?" *laughter* I'm also just imagining like, in this alternative Lal-verse, like where she isn't just

Grace: "Into the Lal-verse"

Blue: choosing human female for her form. Like, what if like the premise for like the evil Lal like storyline is like, they keep seeing all these different- like what if she is temporarily like an Andorian woman or like a Klingon man or whatever? Like, she just goes in between them. She's like, "I don't have to be a girl- like a human girl all the time." Like that could be a cool kind of-

Grace: That'd be sick as hell!

Blue: Yeah, she can be like a shape-shifter. That'd be radical.

Grace: And then like the third act reveal is you like, see out the window at giant thing floating by. And she's like, *booming voice* "I'm a Gormagander motherlovers!" *all laugh*

Blue: like, that would be kind of a cool premise if she was like made out of like nanites or something. And she could like shapeshift. Like, I don't know. That could be cool.

Grace: That would have been awesome.

Blue: I'm also like currently Photoshopping Jeffrey Combs's head onto Lal's like haircut. *Andi laughs*

Grace: Welcome to my brain, a good chunk of the time.

Andi: So I think this kind of circles us back to what we were kind of talking about about the queerness of this episode and the trans aspect, is that the ability to present as any gender you want and like just have it be simple and easy? And like even the idea of your parents asking you what your gender is, instead of telling you what your gender is, I think is super powerful from a trans perspective.

Blue: Yeah, absolutely. I do think it's funny that they kind of like, "Okay, here's your one gender". *all laugh* "Don't spend it all in one place"

Grace: "You get one. Don't lose it.

Blue: That was pretty funny. But like, I get it. That is kind of fun they even let her pick at all.

Andi: I remember a long long time ago when I was first starting to do podcasts and people asked me about this episode, I was like, "Isn't it funny how, like, they always choose to make these like robot Android people women usually?" And the people I was talking to were basically, "No, she chose herself." And I was like, "Yeah, in the episode. But like the writers chose that she would be a woman. And like that changes the dynamics a lot." I mean, I personally think Riker would have been just fine being kissed by a dude Lal, but *Blue laughs* they probably wouldn't have let him, David Livingstone would have come running in slow motion,

Grace: *slo-mo yelling* "Nooooo!" Intercept the kiss.

Blue: He would have been like banging *all laugh* on the window.

Andi: You know Frakes would have been down for it.

Grace: Yeah. Yeah, Frakes is cool like that. Yeah.

Blue: Yeah. Frakes- I had heard a story from like the making of The Outcast that he would've been cool if- oh, what's their name? Soren would have been a male actor, but-

Andi: It was his suggestion.

Blue: Oh yeah, that's right! Yeah. We just can't have nice things I guess.

Grace: Sigh. But now that we actually do have queer people on Star Trek, we're shoving it down their throats. *Blue laughs*

Andi: They'll live.

Grace: Any final thoughts before we kind of close up shop as it were for today?

Andi: Uh, this episode rocks. I really like it. It holds up surprisingly well, considering it's an episode that tackles gender in a meaningful way and was in the nineties or whatever. And overall, I just think it deserves its place in the best-of lists.

Blue: Yeah. It holds up for real. Like, better than I was remembering even.

Grace: This episode wrecks me emotionally in all of the best possible ways. *Andi laughs* I can give it no higher praise than that.

Andi: Absolutely.

Grace: Well, that's about all the time we have for today. Andi, where can people find you on the internet?

Andi: Easiest place to find me is on Twitter, @firsttimetrek, where I rarely talk about Star Trek.

Grace: And Blue, where can people find more from you online?

Blue: If you want to follow me on Twitter, I'm @bluedeliquanti at Twitter. If you want to read my comic about robots in relationships and having feelings, you can read that at ohumanstar.com.

Grace: It's really good. Check it out. And I'm Grace, and you can find me on Twitter @bonecrusherjenk, or you can find me probing the secrets of the Lal-verse. It's gotta be out there and I want to know more. *laughter* To learn more about our show or to contact us 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. Blue, thank you so much for joining us today.

Blue: My pleasure.

Grace: And thanks to all of you for listening.

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