

Women at Warp Episode 187: Prodigy Times Ten

Andi: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp, a Star Trek podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore Intersectional Diversity in Infinite Combinations. My name is Andi and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Jarrah...

Jarrah: Hello!

Andi: ...and our special guest Jenn.

Jenn: Hi!

Andi: So before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. 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 a dollar per month and get awesome rewards, from thanks on social media up to silly watchalong commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. Looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic store. There are so many designs, with new ones being added all the time, and on so much more than just t-shirts. Find it all at teepublic.com/store/womenatwarp. And Jarrah, do you wanna give the folks a little overview of what's coming up at Mission Chicago?

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. We are all gearing up for Mission Chicago in the second week of April. And we are going to have a panel—still waiting for final details on the timing for that. But we'll be doing a panel called “The First and the Onlys” about what it means to be the first, you know, Romulan in Starfleet Academy or the first Klingon in Starfleet. And how that relates to experiences of people in the real world being the first or the only person of their background or their gender or their sexual orientation in the room. And we're also gonna have a table, and we're gonna have some really cool merch. So please stop by and check it out. But best thing to do is to follow our social channels for more details.

Andi: Yep. We're looking forward to it. It'll be the first time the entire crew, including The Next Generation, will have all been in the same room.

Jarrah: It's very exciting.

Jenn: Oh, that's lovely.

Andi: And we're really lucky that they set it in Chicago because I will actually show up for this one.

Alright, so, we have a special guest today, Jenn. Jenn, would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself and your Star Trek fandom?

Jenn: Sure, I'm happy to be here. Thank you so much for having me. This is gonna be fun. I'm a lifelong Star Trek fan—been a fan since the eighties, I guess we could say. It's always been a part of my life. And now, as the new shows have come on, my fandom has taken form in things like podcasting. I have a podcast called SnapTrek, where we compare two episodes of Trek that are tangentially related somehow. And we compare them using different categories and just have fun with it. And we write some pretty questionable Star Trek poetry, which is fun.

Jarrah: Yessss.

Andi: That sounds awesome.

Jenn: And I've also been lucky enough to join the TrekCore team. And at TrekCore, I write the episode reviews for Prodigy. So I'm very excited to talk about Prodigy today cuz I love it.

Andi: Yes! So we are going to be discussing the newest of the Star Trek, which is Star Trek: Prodigy. They have done 10 episodes thus far. So we have a first half of a season to talk about, and a second half hopefully coming soon. So I guess probably the easiest way is to just work our way through the episodes.

And we have the first episode, the pilot episode is a two-parter called "Lost and Found," where we are introduced to our crew, which is a group of teens that are on basically what seems to me to be some sort of slave colony?...

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: ...that are mining. Mining why? Who knows. Some sort of spacey rock.

Jenn: Chimerium.

Andi: Yes. And they are all looking to escape, and they find a Federation ship and get into the ship and manage to escape and go off into the stars together. So we've had a couple of new pilots in the last couple of years for Star Trek. What do we think of this one? How does it stack up?

Jarrah: Personally, I will say that I didn't really love the show until the third or fourth episode. So, caveat that I get there, but if I'm just talking about the pilot, I was really surprised by the dark themes and I decided to watch this show with a friend's kid who's a nine-year-old girl named Daphne, who appeared in our blog post as Captain Daphne.

Jenn: Yeah, that was really cute.

Jarrah: I remember she was also really surprised in the first episode. There's a part where Dal—one of the main kids, he becomes kind of the de facto leader of the group for a while—and he is trying to escape the asteroid prison/mine/child labor camp. And he has a really big fall and he's being chased and it looks really like that fall could kill you. And she's like, 'Oh my god, is he gonna die?!' And so there were these moments that I was just kind of surprised, and I was trying to figure out like, 'What age is this supposed to be for?' Because it just felt super dark to me. So that was my first impression.

Andi: Yeah, starting with a colony of child slaves is a bold choice. And it's hard to use that word, but I do not see how anything else could apply. It's not like they could leave.

Jenn: Yeah. Oh no, they absolutely are slaves. Yes.

Andi: And that to me is—I guess, like Jarrah, it grew on me, but I was also taken aback. It did kind of remind me of—so there are basically two non-Star Trek properties that this show reminded me of. One of them was Avatar: The Last Airbender.

Jenn: Mm-hmm.

Andi: And Avatar: The Last Airbender is also a show that's pretty dark actually for a kids' show. I think it's the fourth episode or something where you have Aang literally walking on the skulls of his people, and we have to address the fact that there was a genocide. So it's not like that one is super cheery either, but they both kind of share this, like, 'Let's take very clearly children and then put them in a very adult situation.' It can work and I think ultimately it does work in this, but yeah, I agree with you Jarrah, it took me a moment. Jenn, how did you and your kids react to that?

Jenn: Yeah, I was also surprised by the dark themes, but I like it. I liked it right away because, by doing this, it's an interesting way for them to be able to introduce trauma into the lives of these children in a unique way, without you having to see them being abused by parents, you know what I mean? These kids have trauma in their childhood. It's an easy way for kids to understand that without actually showing anything, you know what I mean?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm

Jenn: And I think that just set up a nice stage for maybe why Dal reacts the way he does to things. For what happens with Gwyn's relationship with her father. It's abusive in a different way. You see her, gosh, in this episode—she literally has to bow down to him when they have their meeting. And he is very authoritative in a way that I think my kids were able to process, you know? So I think it worked from that end, but I agree with you: it was not what I expected; it was very dark. And there's some moments of levity. And by the time they actually get on the *Protostar* and have their little chase to escape, then it became more of what the show ultimately becomes. But it's funny, and you mentioned that about *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. There's also another one my children like called *The Last Kids on Earth*. And that one is literally about a group of kids who survived the zombie apocalypse. So there's the darkness there that literally their parents are dead. Everyone in the town is dead except for them. And they're in the town with them and the monsters. So I think in general my kids are prepared for darkness like that, you know what I mean? It doesn't faze them in a way that it might. I think that kind of theme is interesting to children because even kids that have a happy childhood have that sense of not having control. And putting kids in a situation where they do have control—Dal and the rest of the *Protostar* crew take control of a situation in a way that I think is very attractive to kids to watch, to see happen. So I kinda like it, but I totally get it's totally not what you would've expected. *Jenn and Andi laugh*

Jarrah: I'm also conscious of the fact that I think as someone who doesn't have kids, I have sort of lost touch with what I used to watch as a kid. And then I also don't understand what kids are watching to a degree. So I acknowledge I do not necessarily have a realistic idea of what is appropriate child programming.

Jenn: Well, I mean, I remember reading Stephen King novels when I was like nine. But you remember Christopher Pike books? I don't know how old you guys are.

Andi: Yes. Oh yes.

Jenn: Those were wildly inappropriate. I was like in fourth grade reading Christopher Pike books. I remember seeing *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. *Jenn laughs* So I guess I did see things that were inappropriate. And we try—my kids don't even watch Discovery because, especially when it started out, it was just very dark. And there was a lot of gore and things like that.

Andi: Yeah, I think ultimately it works because we leave right away.

Jenn: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: I have no interest in watching a bunch of children mine. *Jarrah and Jenn laugh*

Jarrah: Yeah. Especially the cat girl!

Jenn: Aww, they leave a little kitty there.

Jarrah: Kennedy, our co-host, was so mad that they left the cat girl. *Andi laughs*

Jenn: Oh, that's so funny. I was so glad that they had justice for the kitty. My kids were very happy about that.

Andi: The fact that it starts out and it's basically like, 'This is the situation they were in. It sucked a lot. Now they've escaped and things are better and we get to see them grow and learn and, as you said, take control of their destiny. That's much more palatable, so I think ultimately as a framing device it does work, once you get used to that.

And then when we get to the second episode, which is called "Starstruck," they've made it onto the ship, they've met Janeway—which is very exciting for us anyway—and they're starting to settle into the ship and figure it out and stuff. And they almost fall into a star and have to learn how to drive the ship and work together and all of these things. I felt like this episode was really—cuz the pilot episode I think did what pilot episodes are supposed to do, which is set up the premise and set up the characters quickly and in an understandable way, and I think that it did that. I think this episode kind of struggles with second-episode syndrome; we're still trying to figure out the tone of what the show is going to be like now that you've established everything. So I enjoyed this episode fine, but it was probably my least favorite of all of them. Thoughts from others?

Jenn: I would've preferred if they made "Lost & Found" into one episode and then "Starstruck" was the second part of the premier. I think that would've done a better job of showcasing what the show's actually going to be. When my kids were watching "Starstruck," you could hear a pin drop as they went through the different areas of the ship and showed them like, 'This is where they sleep. This is the mess hall. Look, they've got a replicator.' That stuff was very interesting to my kids. It was interesting to me too, from like, 'Oh, let me see the new ship we got,' I wanted, you know, 'Show me everything. I wanna see everything.' But for them it was all new. They were very interested to see that, 'This is the captain's chair. This is where the captain's quarters are.' It gave the little tour of the ship, and my kids liked that. And we got to know Janeway a little better. And like you said, second-episode syndrome. You're right—it's still kind of introducing, and I wish they would've combined the two. It would've made it go a little bit quicker for my kids, especially for my younger daughter.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: Well, let me ask you this. So the second episode kind of digs into the characters because the first episode is very much first impressions, right? And the second episode is where we get to know them a little bit more. Was there a character that stood out to you all very quickly and you were like, 'Oh yeah, that's the one that's gonna be my favorite'?

Jarrah: For Daphne, for sure, it was Rok-Tahk. And I think probably me as well. I automatically thought Zero was pretty cool because I'm like, 'Okay, a Medusan in a cool thing that you can walk around in and not inflict illness on people?' I'm here for the Easter eggs. Although I did find there was a lot of explaining to do for someone who had not seen Star Trek before.

Jenn: Yeah. Zero took my kids' imaginations right away, because the idea of what it means to be non-corporeal was interesting to them, was something they had never considered. My son asked me if Zero was a ghost *Andi laughs*, cuz that was his only reference to what non-corporeal meant, and I had to try to explain to him what that meant. And so that was really cool. We could see the gears turning about his character.

For me personally, the character that stuck out to me right away was Dal. I can just relate to him as someone that might have had a difficult childhood as well. And I find him very interesting in his journey throughout this. And, besides the character, I think also Brett Gray is just delightful. His delivery of the lines, he just makes me laugh. So right away Dal was my guy.

Jarraah: What about you, Andi?

Andi: Yeah, I would say probably Zero. I just find them interesting. I find them interesting for a lot of reasons. One, because as you said, a Medusan, so one of the few—because most of the characters we see on this show, we don't know their species, and so this one was a cool callback. And then I just like the way they wander around and are so curious about everything and really want to know more about literally anything. And they also are just very useful as a crew member.

Jenn: Mm-hmm.

Jarraah: Mm-hmm. They're also wise. Later on we get the episode where Gwyn is, I would say, experiencing some grief or possibly depression over feeling like she doesn't belong anywhere. And Zero is kind of helping her through that.

Andi: Yeah. And they seem older than the rest of them.

Jarraah: Mm-hmm. Yep.

Andi: So there's almost a parental vibe to them. I just find them interesting. I just think they're different from everybody else and in a cool way. And they add to the vibe nicely.

I do wanna talk a little bit about Gwyn in this episode, just because—so at this point Gwyn is a prisoner. They kidnapped her to get out of the camp and now she's in the brig and everything. But I think it's pretty clear from the beginning that she's going to have her redemption arc and that she's going to become a part of the crew. And, I don't know, I just feel like she gives me very... I said earlier that one of the things that this show reminded me of was *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. I think she has Zuko vibes. I also think that the other one is *Guardians of the Galaxy* and she has Gamora vibes, to me. You know, raised by a murderer villain type and then...

Jarraah: Maybe Nebula vibes.

Andi: Yeah, that too. Yes.

Jarraah: Especially the torn-loyalty thing.

Andi: Mm-hmm. I like redemption stories if they're done well. And at this point in this story, in the second episode, I was like, 'How are we going to redeem this character who was an overseer on a slave colony?'

Jenn: I totally agree. I like how they didn't just ignore it, you know? Cuz it's a kid show. They could have just ignored it, but they didn't. Rok-Tahk even feels comfortable enough to call her out on it. And their fight in the amazing vehicle replicator—which I just love, and it was a really well choreographed fight I thought too—it was interesting to pit those two against each other to get through like, 'Why didn't you help us?' And it's important to remember Gwyn's a kid too, she's a victim. But she could have done more to—she's acting like she was oblivious to what was happening, and I don't know what her father was telling her, but it still should have been pretty obvious by the time she's—they appear, what, around 16-ish? So I had conflicting feelings about her in the beginning too. And then also the thing with Gwyn is that they made her almost hyper-competent, the hyper-competent character. She's very aspirational towards the end, not here in "Starstruck," but as she moves along the season, I think especially for my youngest daughter, she's a very aspirational character.

Jarrah: Well, and they play right away into the progeny/prodigy dichotomy thing. And that she has to go from seeing herself as just the Diviner's offspring to taking her place as a teen genius.

Jenn: Right. Exactly.

Jarrah: One thing I was gonna say is the first few episodes already really set the tone in terms of—I will say the artwork throughout is gorgeous. The animation is really nice. And it's really nice to see, as much as I love *Lower Decks*, it is nice to see a different style. I think they really take advantage of the freedom of the animation medium with things like the vehicle replicator and turning off gravity. And soon we'll start to get some pretty strange planets, as well as the fact that they're all different types of aliens that, other than Zero, we haven't seen before.

Jenn: Yeah. It's gorgeous. The innovation, like you said. The actual ship itself, the *Protostar* is amazing. I love that the wraparound window/viewscreen, whatever you wanna call it, on the bridge is just gorgeous. They take full advantage of animating these starfields, but also little details. Also it's worth mentioning the feel of the show is the music. It's just a gorgeous piece of art.

Jarrah: Okay, also, I forgot to mention when we were talking about characters making an impression, Murf, who is just hilarious and adorable, and kind of reminds me of a Lisa Frank drawing.

Jenn: Oh, for sure. *Jenn laughs* My kids are also big Murf fans. Like right away they took to Murf.

Andi: Well, this episode also does something that we see happen over and over again, in which they put them in a dangerous situation in order to force trust. In this case it's trust in Janeway. And I wanted to ask you all, do you—I read it as Janeway knows very well that they are not cadets.

Jenn: That's what I thought too, until later on...

Jarrah: She expresses surprise.

Jenn: ...she seems surprised, which I thought was odd too.

Jarrah: Yeah. Certainly you would expect that cadets wouldn't be behaving like they're behaving, and that they would have a bit more basic knowledge of things. She has to explain the Prime Directive to them and stuff, which is all a very convenient device for the audience, especially kids who didn't grow up with Star Trek. Yeah, I read it that way as well, and I think you could probably just explain away the discrepancy by the fact that her program had been tampered with.

Jenn: Exactly. That's what I think too.

Andi: Alrighty. Well, the next episode is "Dream Catcher," which is our first away mission. And this is really where I started going, 'Yeah. I'm onboard with this show' ...

Jarrah: Yes.

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: ...because it's really cool. I really love their away mission because they immediately are just wandering off by themselves. It's very clearly like, 'This is all the things not to do on an away mission.' And as Jenn pointed out, the art is amazing. I really love the planet. I always am a sucker...so this is a really common sci-fi trope, some sort of shenanigans that shows you what you really want or what you're really afraid of. And it always works if you do it right,

because it's a way for us to get to know our characters much better, and we still haven't spent much time with them. And some of the things are not surprising. I very much relate to Rok-Tahk, who's cute, puppy-like things...

Jarraah: Yeah. 'I wanna cuddle these cute things.'

Andi: ...'Cuddles!' She clearly just wants affection and love, which is very understandable. And then Zero wandering off with their tricorder, like, 'Woo. More readings. Excellent.' So I feel like this is a tried-and-true sci-fi trope for a reason, and I think it's executed beautifully in this episode.

Jenn: Yeah. It was smart of them to do it this early in the show to try to teach us a little bit more about the underlying motives of all our characters, and Rok-Tahk especially, cuz it's sad to think about her just wanting people to not be afraid of her. That's something very important to know about her, I think. And the murder planet, like you said, is gorgeous. Again here, like you said, them taking advantage of it being animation, the vines just go everywhere, and there's legitimate frightening things on this planet. Especially for me, "Dream Catcher," this is the episode with the Janeway who slinks like a snake with the vines. That image was particularly hard for me because I love Janeway so much, you know? Seeing an uncanny valley version of Janeway was really terrifying. So I don't know if my kids were as scared of that as I was, but that was really unique, a really unique thing to do.

Andi: I also just think that this episode is paced really well. You get the unease fairly soon, but it builds really nicely. So you're feeling like something's not quite right, but you can't quite put your finger on it, which I think is much more effective. And just overall, this is another one that we see where it's like, 'Here's your dangerous situation. Now, the crew has to work together and they have to learn that they have to depend on each other to make it through these tough situations.'

Jarraah: Yeah, this was the point where—I watched "Dream Catcher" and "Terror Firma," which is basically the part two together—...

Jenn: I love that title.

Jarraah: This was definitely the point where I started talking to my adult Star Trek friends and being like, 'Okay, this show is actually great.' Like you said, Andi, it's a common sci-fi trope. I mean, it's basically "Shore Leave," but it didn't feel like a rehash; it felt like, 'Oh, this is Star Trek. It's not just a cool kids' cartoon, it's Star Trek.' I also appreciated—we get many, many more

Easter eggs through the rest of it, but they come across a downed Klingon ship and they're playing with a mek'leth and stuff. So there was some more of the stuff for the more seasoned fans in there as well. But I think it was really entertaining for kids too.

Jenn: Yeah. One of the things that Prodigy does really well is introduce the Star Trek thing in the beginning and then have that thing be important later on. Here we get the tricorders and then they use the tricorders when they go to murder planet and say, 'Oh wait, there's no lifesigns, but I see this cute little bauble in front of me.' And you see that later they do it with the transporter, with the phasers, and it's really cool to see the tech and then use the tech, which is helpful for the newbies, you know, for my kids. Cuz they don't know what a tricorder is.

Andi: Yeah. I feel like this whole first season is like their level-up mission.

Jenn: Yes. That's a good way to put it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: So, moving on to "Terror Firma." So this is the one where the planet has given up on trying to woo them to stay and has decided to scare the crap out of them instead. It's obviously—I agree, it's like a part two, and I think equally great. It's also the episode where we really get to start to unpack Gwyn and the Diviner's relationship and how toxic it is. And I knew this was gonna happen. I mean, it's a kids show, it's not like they were trying to hide it. But I knew there was going to be a moment where he chose the ship over her, and it happened pretty much how I thought it would, but it was executed really well and you could really feel the pain she was going through. This is just another way for them to learn, to trust each other. And these themes of a found family when your own family is not loving—I'm a sucker for a found family. I love it. Give it to me, inject it straight into my veins. Always.

Jenn: Yeah. And they did a good job introducing them as a found family in "Terror Firma," I thought, because this is the first time you actually see them as a group interacting on a quote-unquote "mission." But you know, when they're walking, when they're trying to get to the ship, when they're trying to get away and you see them bantering back and forth, like, 'I wanna name it "Larry." I wanna name it, "Murder Planet,"' you know, even just like the little things like that, you kind of see how eventually what their group dynamics are gonna be and how they relate to each other. And this is really the first time you see it. And it's really interesting. We could talk about it later when we get to the later

episodes, but they really make a good team. And we just see that little speck of it start to happen here in this episode. But the part you guys are talking about with the Diviner, it's really, really, really sad to know that what Gwyn wanted more than anything was just to hear her dad say he was proud of her and smile at her. And when he said he was proud of her and smiled at her, she knew it couldn't be him. That's what gave it away to her. And that's just really, really devastating. But when he did choose the *Protostar* over her, I was kind of scared that eventually they would walk that back or come up with some way, like, 'Oh, I had to do it because of XYZ,' and we'd have to have a forgiveness arc. And they didn't go in that direction, which I was very relieved about. You gotta be really careful when you're a parent and you see these subplots about forgiveness and things like that, and forgiveness is good, but there's also just protecting yourself and doing what's right for you, you know? And—we can talk about it later on—they really made it very obvious that she doesn't have to forgive him. You know what I mean? Like, 'Oh, I'm sorry. I did all these horrible things to you.' She doesn't have to do that. And I think that's also a valuable lesson, you know? Cuz a lot of times it's just like, you hear the quote-unquote "bad person" saying they're sorry. And then the forgiveness happens and then that's supposed to be the happy ending. And so I was kind of worried about that, if there was gonna be some of that. But there wasn't; they totally went in the opposite direction, which I was happy about. Cuz that's some cold, cold stuff. He left her to die and suffocate in a pile of vines, you know?

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's a really good point. He gets some depth later, but they don't excuse it. So I really appreciated that as well, and I think that...

Andi: Well, I mean, I think that goes to show how Gwyn's redemption arc works, because she acknowledges her wrongdoing and seeks to make amends. She just doesn't go, 'Ah, sorry, my bad.' She goes, 'I should have done more. I knew better and I didn't do it.' And she makes the sacrifices for the team to make amends for her wrongdoing in the past.

Jenn: Yeah, and she never has conflicted loyalty after this. She's never tempted to join her father's side, to join the dark side.

Jarrah: We do see in this episode—okay, what is her bracelety, swordy, psychic thing? Her awesome...

Jenn: I love that thing. Her "heirloom," it's called.

Jarrah: Yes. I think in this episode she uses it in many ingenious ways, including as a leg brace.

Jenn: It's a sword, it's a shield, it's a leg brace.

Jarrah: Oh yeah. It's very cool.

Jenn: She uses it to get that last few inches so Dal can lift her up into the *Protostar*. Oh, I love it. So cool.

Andi: The first time that she used it and she used it as a sword, I think it was right in the pilot, but she does that thing that I love where you put your hand out and your sword comes out. I was like, 'Oh, hell yes.' *Andi laughs* So yes, that's one of those moves I will always be down for.

Jenn: And then it's really cool because at one point it crawls up her hand and goes into her other hand and becomes a sword again. Cuz it'd have been useful to have a sword in her left hand, and then she uses it. It's so cool. They make really good use of that thing.

Andi: Yeah. Amazing. Yeah, definitely.

So moving on from murder planet, much as we love it. Next up is "Kobayashi" ...

Jenn: I do love murder planet.

Andi: Yeah. Murder planet's pretty great. Next up we have "Kobayashi," which is my favorite episode. I really, really liked this one. First of all, maybe it's cuz I'm a gamer. So "Kobayashi" is basically Gwyn struggling with her father's betrayal and Dal struggling with his leadership, so trying to find where he fits in as a captain. And him kind of pushing back on what everyone else wants to do, which is go to Starfleet. He sees being a captain as, 'What I say goes,' because he's a kid, you know? And so I love this episode because he gets to use the holodeck in the way that I would use the holodeck, which is a vast gaming system.

Jenn: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: And I just love it. You know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of "I, Excretus" ...

Jenn: Yes.

Andi: ...when Boimler is...

Jenn: He got a hundred percent.

Andi: ...getting his hundred percent on the Borg queen scenario. And I equally love that episode, so it must be the gamer in me. And just the idea of having all of these different Star Trek characters—can you imagine how much fun that would be? You get to choose your crew.

Jarrah: Every Star Trek fan has those types of fantasies, right?

Andi: Absolutely.

Jarrah: You know, build your—who would you pick for all of your positions on your crew?

Andi: Yeah. Dream team. So thoughts on this episode from others?

Jenn: Yeah. My kids are big in video games too. And so that really resonated with them from that angle. The biggest laugh of the episode for them was when he did the Kobayashi Maru for the first time and got a 3%. They thought that was hilarious; they could relate to that, you know? And it's interesting seeing it from their perspective and from my perspective, of seeing these characters. Cuz they understand that too. They play Smash Bros., you know what I mean? They understand picking your characters you want on your team in a video game. But they didn't realize—well, it's funny. My son said to me, as soon as they all popped up, he's like 'You know who these people are, don't you Mom?' I'm like, 'Yeah.' So he got that, even though he didn't know who they were. He got that they were legacy characters. He doesn't know that term, but you know what I mean? And so I thought that was cool. And one cool thing is, after we finished watching it, I told them how they did it. Cuz the dedication at the end—I couldn't help and I started crying. I forget what the wording is. But, you know, 'For Leonard Nimoy, Rene Auberjonois, and James Doohan to help us to boldly go' or whatever it is, and I started crying. And then I explained to my kids how the people who played those characters have passed away, and the way they made them talk was they got the clips of what they said in previous Star Trek episodes. And they didn't get that; that was news to them. They're like, 'Whoa, that's cool.' And they wanted to watch it again, see how they did it.' I thought that was interesting, cuz right away it's like, 'Oh look at this cool archival footage,' you know?

Andi: So I do wanna talk about that a little bit more because, I don't know, I have mixed feelings about it. In this particular instance, I feel like it's fairly benign, but in general I have very mixed feelings about using actors who have passed away and creating a performance for them. There's a part of me that feels like we should probably be extremely careful with that. They're not around. And the thing is, in this case, I really feel like they would've all been fine with it, but, you know, you can't really know. And I just feel like it's a slippery slope. So even though I obviously enjoy seeing Spock and Odo and Scotty and stuff, there was a part of me that was very much like, 'I really wish they had just stuck with voice actors that were still around.' One, because I do feel like the performances were lacking a little bit of their magic. Voice acting is a true art, acting is a true art. You can make it sound like them, but it's not really them. And there's not really a performance. And also, I just think it would've been fun to have more characters that we don't see as often. So I really enjoyed seeing Crusher, for example, but we could have had, I don't know, Ezri Dax or some of the Enterprise characters. Give some of the characters that haven't always gotten their due some extra time. You know what I mean? So I would say that, overall, this is my favorite episode and I loved the idea. But there was definitely a part of me that was like, 'I feel like I would've loved it way more if they had all been original voice performances and they had chosen some more-obscure characters to just give them a little bit more Star Trek time.'

Jenn: I agree with what you're saying about the actors, about using actors' who have passed voices, but here they're literally taking the characters, what they've said, and just putting them in a new—it's like Spock has already said that and he's just saying it again. You know what I mean? Like you said, it's benign. And they did say that they got all the estates to sign off, which helps. But yeah, it's not the actor signing off on it.

Andi: Yeah. As I said, I think in this particular instance, I feel fairly comfortable with it. It's just the concept that I am in general uncomfortable with.

Jenn: I agree. I did like Spock kind of signing off on Dal as a leader at the end.

Andi: Yeah, that was very cute.

Jenn: But again, they could have had Ethan Peck come on and be Spock, right?

Andi: Yeah.

Jenn: Because I agree with what you're saying too. We have this whole vast universe of characters, of actors who are still here...

Jarraah: Could've had Tuvok.

Jenn: Yeah, could've had Tuvok. Like you said, Ezri's a really good choice. Because it was great having Beverly Crusher back. And so I definitely see that side of it too.

Jarraah: I will say that, overall, I think it worked. I totally agree with you, Andi, and I definitely saw some fans on Twitter who thought it was borderline sacrilegious. *Jenn laughs* I think that largely it worked and the context of it being a game and in the holodeck helps a lot.

As someone who knew where most of the references came from, it pulled me out of it a little bit. Cuz I feel like, 'Oh, that quote, that's from that moment' and could connect to that back. But obviously most kids would not be doing that. I also had a little bit of discomfort with using Nichelle's voice in that way, even though Nichelle is obviously around. But I think that there is, you know, a question about...

Jenn: Her ability to consent?

Jarraah: Yeah. I think that we know she's not, unfortunately, as well as she used to be. And it just made me a bit uncomfortable knowing the issues there are currently with her conservatorship and things like that. But, on the face of it, the tribute to these characters, including Uhura, I think was really lovely. And it's a really nice way to introduce them to a new generation.

Andi: Yeah, absolutely.

Jenn: I really liked what this episode said about Dal as a character. There was a lot of people who just simply did not like Dal at the beginning. And I get it, but I think the way he's reacting is very, very natural for someone who's lived the life he's led. We hear in the beginning, in "Lost and Found," the two things we know about him is he never gives up hope—you know, he has Starfleet levels of optimism—and that he's a survivor. That's what Zero says: he's a survivor. I think part of the reason why he's a survivor is his coping mechanism, his survival mechanism, is to be alone, to not trust anyone. Like, 'I'm not going to Starfleet. That's just another name for someone else in charge.' You know, 'I'm not doin' this. I've been on my own, I'm going to do on my own.' So I think it's

a very important lesson for him to learn in the Kobayashi Maru that he's gotta listen to his whole crew. And he does, he learns it pretty quickly, I think.

Andi: He's also a kid!

Jarrah: Only like 140 attempts.

Jenn: Yes! Exactly. But that's what's interesting too about him here. He doesn't give up. He doesn't know it's a no-win scenario, but he wants to beat it and he's not giving up, and he's not gonna give up until he gets it. And it's worth noting that he *did* eventually come up with a winning scenario to the Kobayashi Maru.

Andi: I also *love* that he beat the Kobayashi Maru, which no other character has, and without cheating, and then immediately biffed it. That was so funny.

Jenn: Yeah. That was really funny.

Jarrah: I love also when you see the montage of the failed attempts and there's the one where he has this kind of crazed look in his eyes and he's blaring rock music and it's an homage—there's so many homages in this episode—it's an homage to *First Contact* with Zefram Cochrane. It also harkened back to *Star Trek: Beyond* for me and the Beastie Boys stuff. Also, just before we finish this episode, I need to mention the reference to “The Game,” cuz he is literally playing the game. *Jenn laughs* It's so great. And also, like you said, the “I, Excretus” episode where they—in this they have the montage of holodeck programs that Janeway shows them. And it's all these references to episodes including, I love, poking fun at her Jane Eyre holo-novels. *Andi and Jenn laugh*

Jenn: I love the Dracula one! I want to play that. I wanna play Starfleet Dracula...

Jarrah: Yes!

Jenn: ...and it's gorgeous too. If you pause it, there's so many hidden deltas in the castle. It's actually quite lovely. It's pretty cool. But yeah, it was a nice selection of holo-programs that she picked to show them.

Andi: Let's just be glad that none of Quark's holo-programs were there. That would've been inappropriate. *Jarrah laughs*

Jenn: Oh no. Yeah, is there child, uh....

Andi: Child safety protocols on the holodeck? *Jenn laughs*

Well, we were talking, Jenn, about Dal's distrust of people. I think we see why when we get to this next episode, "First Con-tact."

Jenn: Yes.

Andi: This is also another one that gave me *Guardian* vibes. This kid who was picked up by this thief... Also a little bit of Cupboard Under the Staircase [Stairs] vibes.

Jarrah: Star Wars Rebels for me, with Ezra's smuggler friends.

Andi: Yeah. But I think that that kind of goes to show why Dal is the way he is. He was raised super unconventionally and taught a pretty immoral way of looking at things and very transactional. And then the person that he trusted immediately sells him out. And it's similar to...

Jarrah: And also previously literally sold him.

Andi: Yes. It kind of mirrors why him and Gwyn—I think that they understand each other in some ways, because they're both betrayed by people they see as parental figures. In Gwyn's place, literally; in Dal's case, the closest thing he has had.

Jarrah: There's also just a lovely Star Trek message in this episode. And it's absolutely gorgeous when they go down to this planet. They think they're gonna basically con these aliens out of a crystal. And then they realize that they actually need all the crystals to communicate and it would destroy their culture and the aliens give them this beautiful gift of a song-and-laser show. And they realize that the gift is communication and exchange and learning something new about someone. And that they've just given you this gift of them and their culture and you can't then go and stab them in the back and steal from them.

Jenn: Yeah. And when she rips the crystal from them it's almost physically violent, cuz it feels like it's part of them, the way they set it up. It's a very unique and interesting alien culture that, again, they were able to do because of the animation, these—I forget what, 'acoustic terraforming,' I think they call it—these big beautiful sand caves and things, and these aliens that look like—I don't know, they give me *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* vibes, honestly. But there's just these ghostly figures that you wouldn't be able to do. And it's just so neat and so beautiful. And then Nandi violently rips these crystals from them,

and it gave me a visceral revulsion in the pit of my stomach when she did that, which I thought was really good. They did a really good job of building this alien culture in just such a short amount of time, for me. So that was very interesting.

Andi: And the fact that Dal doesn't hesitate to defend them...

Jenn: Yes.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: ...is great. And the way he fights...

Jenn: Yeah, he sends them off to safety and then goes to fight her. Yeah.

Andi: Again, somebody acknowledging their mistake and seeking amends. It's a theme.

Jenn: It's a theme, yeah. And it's worth noting that these are all just really good kids. They all *are* Starfleet material, you know what I mean? They're good people. Their motives are pure in that sense, you know?

Andi: It's interesting that you bring that up because one thing that I was thinking that I didn't like from earlier is when Rok-Tahk is telling Gwyn that they're not prisoners, that they're not criminals, that they didn't do anything wrong.

Jenn: Oh, as if that would've been okay?? *Jenn laughs*

Andi: Yeah, I was like, 'I'm sorry. I'm glad you're not a criminal.' But even if they had committed crimes, it still would not have been okay to have them mining forever.

Jenn: Right. I noticed that too, yeah.

Jarrah: Yeaah.

Andi: Not great. Not great.

Jenn: Not great, Gwyn.

Jarrah: Also they were kids, but yeah.

Jenn: I think that might just be early characterization.

Andi: Well, I think she sees it as a justification.

Jenn: I mean, growing up in an environment like that, you're almost brainwashed too. I think that some of that is Gwyn having this brainwashing, and having to deprogram from that is part of her character development too.

Jarrah: Well, the next one is my favorite episode.

Jenn: Mine too!

Andi: Yeah! So "Time Amok." So this is the time anomaly episode, which can be tricky. As we know, Janeway is not so into time travel, but I think that this one was really fun and goes straight to our theme of trusting each other and working together. And I just see it as a really cool sci-fi version of this. I really enjoyed it. Why is it your favorite, Jarrah?

Jarrah: So, first of all, I thought it was really well paced. I thought that the time anomaly, while it was a little complicated—basically, they're all in a different circle of time that is moving at a different speed, and Janeway is moving between those circles, and as they go toward the circles that are the person [who] time is stretched out for, they are learning from the people that went before and didn't have as much time. Everyone dies, so I was again like, 'Bold move.'

Jenn: Dark! *Jenn laughs*

Jarrah: But it works really well. It's dramatic. It's poignant. My favorite Murf moment is the one where Janeway is like, 'Whoever's in this next circle is gonna have to save us.' And then she finds it's Murf and she's like, 'Oh, great.' *Andi and Jenn laugh* Also Drednok comes back. He came back in the previous episode where we find out he's actually on the ship. And he comes after Gwyn, and also is trying to take their *Protostar* engine. So there's a complicating figure in this situation. And then there is a really poignant moment about how Rok-Tahk had basically lived a *really* long time during this whole thing and was alone this whole time. And there's this really sad moment where she's tucking herself in and talking to the crew like they're still there, but they're not. And knowing that that is going to have an effect on her. And I think

we see that it both has a traumatic effect, but also she levels up big time in this episode, in her abilities and her knowledge.

Andi: I also like that it's all based on a character-development piece, where Gwyn is trying to push her into being the security officer or whatever, and she doesn't want to do that, and she's resisting this view of her that other people have based on what she looks like that has never really fit her. Her kind of taking control of that and deciding what *she* wants to be good at and finding confidence and pushing back on that. I always think that shenanigans are much better when they are tied to emotional character arcs. And this is a great example of that.

Jenn: Yeah, I totally agree with everything you guys just said. I feel like this episode is just as good as the best time-travel episodes in the live-action Star Trek. This belongs in the same pantheon with some of those. I mean, the damped-sine-wave temporal anomaly that they're in—when you think that you've seen it all, everything you do with time travel you think has already been done—I've never seen that. That's what a great idea that was. I thought that was really clever. I thought it was really well done. It was done in a way that my kids could even understand what was going on. I had to explain a little bit to my youngest, but my older two got it, understood right away what was happening. And, like you said, there's really good character moments involved in it, which is also a good sign of a start of a good Star Trek time-travel episode.

But it's gonna resonate with this character [Rok-Tahk] throughout the rest of the series. They came up with a really, really unique way, and a really, really believable way, to give this character super science powers. You know what I mean? Okay, now we know, cuz she spent, if you do the math, probably over a year alone learning quantum mechanics and computer engineering and whatever else she said she learned, you know? It's just fascinating. My kids were really, really into this idea and they *still* debate about how long Rok-Tahk was alone. It's heart-wrenching to think about it. It really struck my kids' imagination and they're still talking about it, which is what you want. I couldn't have asked for anything more than that out of this show for my kids. I just love everything about this episode.

Andi: Yeah, and you talked about leveling up. As I said before, this whole season is basically giving them all of the pieces that they need to go back and make their stand, which they do in “A Moral Star: Part 1 & 2,” where all of the lessons that they learned during their journey kind of come together.

Jenn: Absolutely.

Andi: And they work together. They all use their various strengths that they have worked on during this time. And they confront the Diviner and Drednok. And they save their fellow—they finally got justice for the little Caitian. So they go back and they confront what they've been running from.

Jenn: Yeah. And I think that's really important too, what we were talking about with "Lost and Found," about how this is dark and these are really dark themes and these are children slaves, you know? And so I think it was really important for them to go back and set free everyone who was on that prison planet. I think that was important especially for a kid show. I would've loved if they'd done it with a live-action show too. But, especially for a kid show, to see that this group of kids could come together and really, really make a change—I think my kids really understood that too.

Jarrah: Yeah, two things I really liked about the two-part conclusion to the first half of the season was, I mentioned they gave more backstory to the Diviner, so he is not just like—cuz I remember Daphne at the beginning being like, 'Why is he like that?' And I'm like, 'I have no idea.'

Jenn: Right. Yes.

Jarrah: So at least you know that he thinks it's right in his weird, warped way. And as much as I don't think that you should go destroy the whole Federation, I am sympathetic to the argument that the Federation sometimes goes in and messes with other worlds. And the other thing I really liked was how, when they go to liberate their former fellow mining child prisoners, one of the first things they do is give them the universal translator so they all can communicate with each other. And it's so joyous to see these people that have not been able to understand each other suddenly all speaking the same language. It's very cool.

Jenn: Yeah. It's really satisfying. And I love the two miners who have a love connection. It is just sweet. What a fun little thing to throw in. I really like that.

Jarrah: So cute!

Andi: Yeah. Well, it goes to the theme that they started up in the pilot, which is 'communication is everything.' They can't organize and fight back because they can't communicate with each other. And the big turning point for Dal and the crew was finding the universal translator. It is also the same for the miners.

Jarrah: We also get another uncanny evil Janeway.

Jenn: Oh my god.

Andi: And I gotta say—*respectfully*—goth Janeway was very hot. I'm just gonna say.

Jenn: Very hot. Yes. For sure.

Andi: The dark lip, man. Yeaah.

Jenn: Yes, yes. The dark lip. Yes. *Jarrah and Jenn laugh* And I also like too that it was just a ploy. I like the way they handled that, cuz they've done a lot of messing with Janeway's program this first half of the first season. And apparently in the past too, with what we see with Chakotay and what happened...

Andi: Which we have not discussed yet. So what do we think happened to Chakotay? Do we think we're gonna find out in the second half?

Jarrah: Yeah, I think so.

Jenn: Oh yeah. I mean real Janeway is gonna find Chakotay. She's not gonna rest until she finds out what happened to Chakotay. Now the only question is with all the timey-wimey stuff, are we gonna find the Chakotay we know and love, or are we gonna find old-man Chakotay, or what's gonna happen?

Andi: Where has he been? I don't know. And I'll be interested to find out. So I thought that this was an excellent conclusion, and I just was really impressed with the way that there was pretty much nothing wasted in this season.

Jenn: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: It was all leading somewhere. The character moments all led somewhere specific. The themes all led somewhere specific. All the little clues we got built up to each other, to this final episode. I just thought it was a *really* well done season, and I really dug this show. It was really good, very much enjoyed it.

Jenn: Yeah. Each character had, you know, a beginning and a middle and an end too in their development, of where they wanted to be at the end of this mid-season break.

Jarrah: I mean, did Jankom Pog grow much?

Andi: See, I was just about to bring that up because I do feel like Jankom Pog is probably the weak link here. He's very, very fun.

Jenn: I'm sure there's more coming.

Andi: I hope so.

Jenn: You know, we learned about him that he was on a Tellar sleeper ship. So who knows what his background was? I wanna learn more about his Go-Go-Gadget arm. But he does get a moment in "A Moral Star: Part"—I think it's part two—when Rok-Tahk does her thing, and science is the way, he lets her step in and then he becomes a security guy. And I like that too because he's subverting expectations as well, because you wouldn't expect him to be as agile as he is in that scene, you know what I mean? They do a really good job of making him have instincts with the security and using that Go-Go-Gadget arm in unique ways to keep the bad guys back from Rok so she could do what she needs to do. And it's really cool to see, you know? So he does have a little bit of finding his place as well at the very end there, but yeah, it's definitely the weak link as far as development goes.

Andi: They didn't give him an arc the way everybody else got an arc. Except for, I guess, Murf.

Jenn: I'm sure there'll be more. And Murf, yeah.

Andi: But do we need Murf to have an arc? Because I don't think we do.

Jarrah: No. Murf is perfect already.

Jenn: Well even then, like you said, nothing was wasted. Murf eating things at the beginning seemed like a funny thing, and then it turned out to be really important later. Like, 'Oh, uhhh, asking for a friend, what would happen if someone ate a photon grenade?' You know? So it was just like a funny thing, but then later on, 'Oh, now Murf can eat the *Protostar* and it's cool,' you know? Or the dilithium chamber, whatever it was that they actually swallowed. But yeah, I totally agree with you.

And Jankom Pog has—it's interesting cuz my son's favorite is Jankom.

Andi: He's a fun character for sure.

Jenn: My son's really into gadgets and I think he's got a mechanical tendency, you know, tactile-mechanical thing is where his strengths are. So I think he just relates to Jankom Pog from that perspective. So I thought that was interesting. I was like, 'Really? All these dynamic characters and it's cool that that's one you focus on.' There's something for everyone, which is cool.

But I do wanna talk a little bit more about the Diviner cuz, what you were saying, I felt the same way, especially in "Lost and Found." I was like, 'Oh, so this bad guy, there's not really anything deep about him,' you know what I mean? It's just like, 'I'll get you, He-Man,' you know what I mean? And so I really, really like what they did with him in "A Moral Star." First of all, it really helped figure out why he treated the prisoner so terribly, when you just realized that he just thinks that his species is superior to all other species and he is xenophobic and racist and horrible. So, 'Oh! I get it now. I get him. That makes sense.' But he says—oh my gosh, I can't remember the exact quote—but he says that they were fighting to preserve their way of life. And that's a really coded thing for a villain to say, because that's how you get into the horrible racism and xenophobia and things like that. I think that made him a very, very good villain for the times we're living in. So his little speech in the holodeck when they were visiting Solum, that made me really into him as a villain, cuz I think that's very interesting. And I like the way they did it, cuz I was fully prepared—I was like, 'I'm gonna hate what the Federation did. And I'm gonna have to feel sympathy for this jerk who runs a child mining slave colony.' That was my fear. But the way they did it, it's like, 'Okay, there was first contact and then they couldn't handle it and they spiraled into civil war, and Starfleet didn't do anything wrong with the first contact, but what they probably did wrong was then not follow up on it,' which is then the Lower Decks second contact thing. They need a California class to come in and...

Jarrah: Crossover!

Jenn: Yeah, exactly. But yeah, I think there's a lot of opportunity with that for them to show like, 'Okay, the Federation's great. We've been telling you for these 10 episodes how great the Federation is, but they're not perfect.' And that's important to know, and it's important to see ways that even these good-intention people could learn and change and grow just like our characters are learning and changing and growing, and there's potential there. But I also like that I'm also still not sympathetic to the Diviner because he's a racist, he's

awful. And, quite frankly, he deserves what he got, which is a horrible thing to say. There's poetic justice there for Zero to be able to confront, you know? So I just thought that was really interesting. And again, when we're talking about it going dark, that was a really dark thing to happen. And I'm sure he'll be back. He'll be back. That's just not over cuz he's Gwyn's dad. There'll be more storylines with it, and obviously it's not settled. So he'll be recovered, or whatever. And Drednok will be back—he's great—cuz we could just print a new one. Which I love—you know, it's Big Wayne vibes from Drednok, which I like a lot. And I love Jimmi Simpson. I think he's great.

Andi: Yeah, they spared no expense on the villain voices, John Noble and Jimmi Simpson.

Jenn: Right? Oh my god. Exactly.

Andi: Well, I think that's about all the time we have. So I would love if people would comment and let us know where they wanna see the story go in the second half of this, because I think they've planted some really interesting seeds and I am very interested to see what they grow into.

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: Alrighty. Well, Jarrah, where can people find you on the internet?

Jarrah: You can find me on Twitter @jarrahpenguin. That's J-A-R-R-A-H penguin.

Andi: And Jenn, if folks wanna track you down and talk to you about Prodigy, where can they find you?

Jenn: You can find me on Twitter. I'm @eatatquarks.

Andi: And I am Andi. Easiest place to find me is on Twitter @FirstTimeTrek. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com, or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @WomenAtWarp. Thanks so much for listening!