

# Women at Warp Episode 199: The Facts of "Real Life"

\*intro music\*

**Jarrah:** 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's Jarrah and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Grace...

**Grace:** Hello, darling! How was your day?

**Jarrah:** It was so good! Thanks Kenneth! And, Sue...

**Sue:** What lovely listeners you are!

**Jarrah:** What do our listeners do? Algebra and science and they're top of their class in French and budding athletes.

**Grace:** And budding athletes!

**Jarrah:** So...

**Grace:** for the people who haven't figured out what we're talk, uh, what we're alluding to, it's gonna be really weird right now.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Write in! Tell us what kind of mental breakdown you think we're having.

**Jarrah:** I'm sure that this doesn't sound like a typical Woman at Warp episode, but that's because we are talking about the Voyager episode Real Life (Season 3, Episode 22) which was a Patreon suggestion from Craig. Yay. Thank you. Yay. But before we get into that, we have a 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 a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media, up to silly watch along commentaries and other stuff like earlier the same day that I'm recording this, me and Andi recorded a sport jump episode on Everything Everywhere, All at Once, which features much

gushing. So, visit <https://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp> if you'd like to take a listen. Are you looking for podcast merch, check out our TeePublic store at <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp> we have tons of designs and we're adding new ones all the time on t-shirts, masks, notebooks, stickers, basically anything you can think of, again, that's <https://www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp> .

You can also find our convention, pins and patches online at <https://www.womenatwarp.com/shop> while supplies last. And I also wanna give a very, very special birthday shout out to our patron, Laura, whose birthday was September 2nd. Happy birthday, Laura. You're the perfect patron. and if we made a hologram of you, it would... wait that sounds weird.

**Grace:** It would be unkillable!

**Sue:** It would be consensual.

**Grace:** We'd help you find your ion mallet any day!

**Jarrah:** And we would, we would make a holographic birthday cake for you.

**Grace:** Aw, that that's the, probably the sweetest one that we should go with. We'll all sign that card.

**Jarrah:** Anything else? Do we have any crew appearances and upcoming events? I think. Grace you have Rose City Comicon coming up.

**Grace:** That's right. Uh, the weekend of the 9th to the 11th is Rose City Comicon. So come check that out, check out the Trek offerings.

**Jarrah:** Nice. I will also be at Ottawa Comicon the same weekend, particularly Saturday, September 10th, where I'll be running a panel called Women's Roles in Star Trek Today. And we'll be talking about how roles are for women in all the new streaming era series, and where there's still room to do more, but I'm sure we'll also celebrate a lot about fabulous characters like Michael Burnham and new Seven of Nine, and some of our favorite characters from the other shows.

**Grace:** Fabulous.

**Sue:** And the day this episode drops is the last day of Dragoncon. So, future me is very tired.

**Grace:** Send, send your love and good vibes and anti hangover cures to Sue.

**Jarrah:** Yes. Definitely.

**Sue:** Apparently, my, my new medication, like makes you get drunker even faster when you drink with it.

**Grace:** Oh no.

**Sue:** So it's gonna be. Well, we'll see if I try that for the first time at Dragoncon. It is unclear as of yet.

**Jarrah:** You know, I'm on a medication that's supposed to do that, but I haven't actually noticed any impact. Don't take advice from us listeners.

**Grace:** We're not a medical podcast. Our medical advice should not be taken seriously. It's for fun. It's for fun. Ladies and gentlemen,

**Sue:** My doctor said be careful. So. Listen to your doctors.

**Jarrah:** Yes.

**Sue:** Not podcasters.

**Jarrah:** And also maybe don't listen to The Doctor. That's my segue for today's episode.

**Grace:** Oh, fabulous.

**Jarrah:** So, um, as mentioned, we're talking today about the Voyager episode, Real Life. Grace, do you wanna give us a super high level synopsis of this episode?

**Grace:** Yeah, Real Life is the episode where The Doctor to sort of try and figure out what this family thing, uh, humanoid species are always talking about, and makes a hologram family.

He makes them super loving and perfect and together, and like all of the criteria he would personally seek out in a family or hope to raise a family, to be, and B'Elanna hears about this and isn't wild about it. So, she adjusts the parameters some, and unfortunately it turns out family is really challenging and dramatic.

And you don't get to pick what happens with it. And the doctor gets to experience that firsthand.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Also there's a spatial anomaly, but it's very forgettable.

**Grace:** Yeah, I watched this episode just a few hours ago and I don't even remember the B plot. That's how unimportant it is compared to the rest of this episode.

**Sue:** It didn't make a ton of sense.

**Grace:** No.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I was taking notes trying to summarize it and just gave up. So, we'll just, we'll just leave it at that.

**Grace:** Pretty forgettable B plot, unfortunately,

**Jarrah:** But Janeway's hair was perfect.

**Grace:** It was terrific.

**Jarrah:** Awesome. So, and actually one other thing, I'll say from the B plot, it wasn't specifically about the anomaly, but before we dive into the doctor family stuff, there was a fun little scene of Torres and Paris flirting, where he finds her Klingon romance novel.

**Grace:** Oh my God. I love, I love that, that, that canonically, there are Klingon romance novels now, and I want to know everything about them.

**Jarrah:** Yes. I wonder if Powell would potentially branch out and also publish, a Klingon romance novel.

**Grace:** I love that idea. I love the idea of there just being various different romance, novel imprints across the galaxy

**Jarrah:** mm-hmm yeah. It's pretty fun. Also. It's kind of nice that there is a part of Torres's Klingon culture that she appreciates.

**Grace:** Yeah. I mean, who doesn't live a good steamy read every now and then.

**Sue:** I mean, doesn't it seem a little out of character though?

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it seems a little, little, little tiny bit.

**Sue:** Okay.

**Grace:** Look, man, everyone needs some contradictions in their lives.

**Jarrah:** I feel like season three, it seems out of character. I feel like if it had been in like season five, I know she still goes through kind of several points of rejecting Klingon culture, but I feel like season five and six, she's just more comfortable with herself as a person.

**Sue:** That, yeah, I just, I, I appreciate the jokes and the humor, but it just like it all, it has always felt a little bit off to me, but you know.

**Grace:** So has, uh, B'Elanna's asymmetrical braid situation in this episode? An awkward look that I guess they only did for this episode. And we're like this isn't working.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Memory lpha says it is literally the only episode, I wish that, that her style appears.

**Sue:** I think it looks cool, but...

**Grace:** Cool. But that to me doesn't feel very B'Elanna.

**Sue:** No, it doesn't.

**Grace:** She doesn't strike me as that, "I'm bored. I'm gonna braid my hair" type.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. It seems like, like with characters, like Kira, they went through periods of being like, how can we do this, this strong woman's hair differently. And just, yeah, not always being super successful.

**Grace:** Or maybe it's a call back to one of the plot aspects of this episode that I've got so many opinions on is when B'Elanna upgrades the doctor's family, his son gets like really, "you don't understand me, Dad". And he's into Klingon culture and they've all got some very interesting hair choices going on. And I wonder if that's meant to kind of be like a, oh no, this is, this has always been a

Klingon look, these weird rat tails we got, yeah, look B'Elanna's got a side braid, perfectly normal.

**Jarrah:** I would buy that. Um, I think, I mean, we do see other Klingons with braids, like Warf at periods of time. Um, or at least ponytails, I guess, maybe not fully braids.

**Grace:** Yeah. Braids and ponytails are one thing. But these guys, they have got like very specific dangly hair, extension things going on.

**Jarrah:** It feels very 90s teenage Klingon.

**Grace:** Oh, totally.

**Sue:** It feels very Padawan Anakin Skywalker

**Jarrah:** Oh yeah.

**Grace:** Yes! Oh no. Which came first, this episode or the Phantom Menace?

**Jarrah:** I think this episode, but it was similar era.

**Grace:** Oh no!

**Sue:** Padawan braids. I'm telling you.

**Grace:** Oh dear. Yeah. Oh man.

**Sue:** So, Jarrah, you, you pulled this quote from a review.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm, so, uh, yes, I pulled a quote from, um, Michelle Erica Green's review. She always has great reviews of Trek episodes with a feminist bent. And, uh, she wrote: "I'd much rather have seen why Torres decided to braid her hair and read romance novels, because although I certainly have no objections to women doing either of those things, the abruptness of this change makes it appear less like character development and more like a stereotypical signal of her softening up for Paris. Underneath that tough exterior lies a real girl. Maybe that will save her from the ugly anti-Klingon bigotry we see in the fantasy life of the doctor."

**Grace:** Yeah. Can we talk about that some more, a little bit about the son's whole "I'm into Klingon stuff how, dad". Wouldn't kind of the equivalent of that be like a white kid saying, like "I'm really into this culture now."

**Sue:** Yeah.

**Grace:** And the fact that there are a pair of Klingons like of Klingon kids, his own age, kind of taking him under their wing. I've got only two real considerations of the direction that that's going. And that is either they're like, oh my God, look at, look at this human tool, we're totally convincing him he is one of us. What a loser. Or they're young and dumb enough that they're like, no, man, we we're, we're so cool. We've got, we've got a human in our group. We're gonna teach 'em how to be Klingon take 'em under our wings. We have all the knowledge to recognize the true Klingon-ness of this human cuz we're teenage boys and know everything.

**Sue:** I mean, the latter sounds very much like my teen experience. Like it feels it that feels like authentic to teenagers.

**Grace:** Teenage stupidity, yes.

**Jarrah:** Well, and I mean, in the episode, they're directly trying to get him to like participate in a ritual where he kills someone, right. Yeah. Or kills something. I dunno. Were they trying to go for, like, he gets radicalized and joins a gang or something?

**Grace:** No, he's just fallen in with a bad crowd.

**Sue:** According to Jeffrey, he asked to participate.

**Jarrah:** Right?

**Grace:** Oh my gosh.

**Jarrah:** Well, and I think this kind of sums up, what's wrong with the doctor's approach? I mean, it's obviously super racist. He, he doesn't go, oh my God, Jeremy. You're being really inappropriate in these specific ways.

**Grace:** Also super culturally appropriative, kid. He's very, he's he's gunning for a young Mr. Rachel Dolezal. That's a little creepy, but you know, with Klingons.

**Jarrah:** He never tells Jeffrey, like, here are the actions you're doing that's wrong. It's like, no, your friends are Klingons and that's what's wrong. You should find some nice Vulcans to hang out with.

**Sue:** Oh my gosh.

**Jarrah:** It's so racist.

**Sue:** It's so racist.

**Grace:** Well, considering this whole episode starts in kind of the doctor's whole "Leave it to Beaver" fantasy. Yeah. It was probably gonna get uncomfortable at some point,

**Sue:** But I mean, I, yeah, it starts with this like 1950s sitcom, patriarchal bullshit. But then it changes into like a 1990s sitcom.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. It's basically Star Trek Malcolm in the Middle, but not funny.

**Sue:** And there's still plenty of patriarchal bullshit. But B'Elanna changes it, but she doesn't. I mean, maybe it's a little more reality based, but not a ton.

**Jarrah:** No. And I mean, I would understand it if it was like, B'Elanna just made it randomly generate problems.

**Grace:** I would believe that.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, but like if B'Elanna came up with that stuff herself?

**Grace:** Oh my God, if B'Elanna programmed the whole situation to be like, yeah, and then you're gonna have your son fall in with Klingons. Yes. This was programmed by a Klingon how are you gonna react to that Doctor?

**Jarrah:** Man. And then if she was watching, we never see her reaction. But like, let's go back to the, the 50s patriarchal bullshit for a second.

**Grace:** All of them lining up to see dad off to work and arguing over who gets to kiss him goodbye first.

**Jarrah:** Oh my gosh. And also all of their, like their house looks very 90s, even though they're in the 50s and, yeah. Like, so, but a couple things I don't get. So,



first of all, there's references that particularly Torres makes outside of the Holodeck and that the doctor makes that like directly come from that era, that don't seem to me to be like stuff they should just have picked up normally in the 24th century. Like when the doctor calls his wife, the little woman and Torres totally gets it and says like, tell your wife to break out the good china. Like who's, who's like families even have china today. Like my mom does and none of the kids want it.

**Sue:** Same.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So like the idea that we're going to have a culture in the 24th century, given everything we've seen in Star Trek, where someone's gonna call some their wife's little woman.

**Grace:** We're hoping that these concepts are unrecognizable by the future.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it's very weird to me. And then. Another point is like, basically, what does it mean that the doctor wanted his family like this? Cuz he says, I provided the computer with my requirements for a mate and children. If I were to choose a real wife, my taste would be the same intelligence, educational, organizational skills, which sounds great. But really like he's picked a wife who doesn't have a career and like fully exists to serve him and the children.

**Grace:** Yeah, he's kind of kidding himself there. Let's be honest. And also a lot of that really plays into the whole situation of, okay, but with a real life partnership and family, you don't get to pick their traits, there are traits that you look for in a romantic partner and there are traits that you encourage in your children, but you don't get to pick their personality. They develop that themselves.

**Sue:** And well, 1950s, Charlene exhibits, maybe one of those traits. Right? Which would be organizational skills.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah. So the doctor's full of it.

**Sue:** And, 1990s, Charlene exhibits, way more of them.

**Grace:** Yeah. And she's like got her, her life and she's like, I'm busy. I have stuff to do. I can't hear about your workday right now. I'm sorry.

**Sue:** So, I went to check, cuz I just hadn't looked before at who had written the teleplay and it was Jeri Taylor.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it was, but it was with a freelance script writer that, uh, she felt showed a lot of promise, not to say like, you know, I'm sure she had a big hand in it and yeah, I don't know. I mean, it's, yeah, it's got some issues, but like, I think it would've made more sense if he had, you know, if it had been like a WandaVision type scenario where...

**Grace:** This was kind of early WandaVision in a way, wasn't it?

**Jarrah:** Yeah. But like if he had come across the like archival records on like, on human families and modeled the, the holo-program, like off it, not knowing that that was like a 1950s sitcom, right?

**Grace:** Can we talk about Wendy Schall as Charlene again? Just because I appreciate the fact that her like super peppy 50s Stepford wife attitude thing, and how incredibly scary, good at it she is with just the slightly to void smile and the peppy voice. I appreciate that she got to bring that sort of peppy voice thing into a later role cuz she's also, she plays the wife on American dad. So it was one of those moments of, oh wow. That seems like such a quintessential happy perky wife voice. And it's like, oh wait, I've heard it before.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, she's really good in this role.

**Grace:** Yeah, and apparently she, and, uh, Robert Picardo both worked together on Innerspace so they were friends previously, already. So that must have been fun.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Random other casting fact, uh, Belle was played by Lindsay Haun who also played the child Beatrice in Janeway's holo-novel.

**Grace:** Oh, small world. Well, small casting call.

**Jarrah:** Uh, the actor who played Jeffrey was also fine and was in a couple of things that I had not heard of.

**Grace:** That's how it goes always when you're looking through the cast listings on any iteration of Star Trek, you're like, oh, they went on to do interesting thing. They went on to do semi-interesting thing and, and they just didn't really do much else.

**Jarrah:** Yep.

**Grace:** That's always the crap shoot of looking through the cast listing on any TV show though.

**Jarrah:** I mean, I'm sure, I'm sure he did other great things in his life. Just not things that were on IMDB.

**Grace:** Aw. Yeah. We're sure you have lived a happy and very full life. We just aren't very aware of it.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. But I can totally appreciate why B'Elanna would have a very negative reaction to seeing this family at dinner. It's so gross, just watching them all be like Kenneth's the best. He's the best dad ever.

**Grace:** Especially considering the fact that I don't know how much of it we've established at this point, but B'Elanna personally had kind of a rough family setup going on with coming from multiple cultural backgrounds that didn't really meld together very well and kind of resented each other.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm.

**Grace:** So, for her, that's gotta be really a kind of a personal jab in the ribs, hearing the doctor be like, I don't know. This family thing seems easy. I don't know what people are talking about when they say it can be challenging.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And okay, so then she's like, okay, but this is totally unrealistic and I can help. And the doctor agrees to this, but I feel like we have to pause here and talk, go back to the discussion on like holodecks and consent. And it's particularly weird because I mean, there's no reason to think these are sentient holograms, but the doctor being a sentient hologram, and these are supposed to be people he loves.

**Grace:** Or like a, it doesn't feel like he, until stuff gets like really emotional, it doesn't feel like it's a love thing so much as a, these are my prop family situation.

**Jarrah:** That's weird about it to me is it's, it's always missing that ingredient of like, these are people I love.

**Grace:** Yeah. These are people I have personally invested in, but no, they're just kind of trappings of what he thinks a family life should be like or what his concept of family seems like it should be to him.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, exactly. And he, I mean, it's partly his own hubris, like when Kes...

**Grace:** Oh, definitely, yeah.

**Jarrah:** Talks about like, are you sure about this whole thing? He's like, whoa, I've learned everything there is to learn about pediatrics. So...

**Grace:** Look, the Doctor is 50% sarcasm, 20% grandiosity and 30% hubris. So that was just bound to happen.

**Sue:** And that strikes again because he knows everything there is to know about pediatrics, and then there's nothing he can do for his holo-daughter.

**Grace:** Yeah. The sort of bent of the third act is when things start getting, you know, challenging and stuff for the family, then his holographic daughter has an accident and even, you know, with his, you know, expertise, she's not gonna make it. And so he kind of tries to bail being like, no, I can't deal with this, and she does end up dying. And that's the end of the episode, which I, based on remembering that ending, I assumed this episode came way later in this series. It seems like you just such an intense thing to put the doctor through and such a dark kind of end that I would've expected for later in the series, but not as early as season three. And we really, I think with the doctor and with Tom Paris, we definitely see some hint at the future growth of both the characters there, because we have to see the doctor try and learn through this whole situation. It's actually kind of neat that we get to see Tom be the one to have the conversation with him, of being like, well, that's, that's the thing with family, and that's about getting emotionally invested in stuff. There's the good parts. And you don't get to pick when and how the bad parts happen. You just have to take it all as part of the experience. And that's the real challenge of any kind of relationship. And it's kind of cool that we get to see Tom be the one to deliver that in that we already see him having grown from being like season one, Tom Paris. Who's just like, yeah, I'm the fun Flyboy who hits on everything.

**Sue:** I think they could have driven that home a bit more though, because, we've already seen B'Elanna mess with this program. Right? And then the Doctor goes back and he's like this is bananas. This is too hard. What's happening?

**Grace:** Oh my God. Thank God he didn't get Tom to look at the hologram program because we get Tom considering himself kind of the hologram doctor, like of hologram programs later.

**Sue:** But, that doesn't even come up. Right? He could have said, I don't like this. I wanna change it back. Which could have opened another discussion about like the things you don't get to choose. And that like, life just comes at you and family just comes at you and the people in your family, your children are people. They're not just your props and they're not just who you want them to be. They're who they need to be.

**Grace:** For good or for bad, yeah.

**Sue:** Well, and that, that doesn't even come up. All we get is like a passing line in a log entry of like, I've decided to stick with it. And I think if, yeah, if he had had that discussion with someone, you know, somewhere in act two of like, you don't get to choose this. Then that makes what happens in act three with, with his daughter, with Belle even more impactful.

**Grace:** Yeah. Also the fact that we never see his holographic family ever again, the rest of the show. So I guess he gets bored with it.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Cuz Paris is like, oh, you need to be there to support them. So he's there once.

**Grace:** Well, maybe it was just a factor of getting closure on the situation for the doctor and being like, okay, I'm gonna experience what this is like, and now I'm done with this experiment.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. It does feel like that. It does feel like, you know, especially if they're not sentient and you're just allowed to like, edit their reality and like their, your algorithms and you just kind of can give them a hug and go home that it's more about his own experience than it is about them, which just feels like kind of cold and weird.

**Grace:** Think about it this way. Is the Doctor's speed running through familial trauma or is he just having a really rough week playing the Sims?

**Jarrah:** Oh man. That's put so well.

**Grace:** Thank you.

**Jarrah:** Okay. The other thing that I think doesn't work very well about this episode is that problematic Charlene is career woman, Charlene.

**Grace:** Yeah. Yeah. And that's the thing that he didn't expect that he was gonna put together all of these things like she's well organized, thoughtful, intelligent, and all that. And then when she actually wants to do something with that, then he is like, what. She's being totally reasonable also. She's just like, look, I'm on my way to a meeting I can't hear about your day right now. I love you bye.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, exactly.

**Grace:** Me and my sensible jacket don't have time for this.

**Jarrah:** Also like her hairstyle is like harsher and stuff.

**Sue:** Yeah. But she makes an excellent point to him at his little family meeting of like, we're supposed to be in this together. I thought you would've consulted me.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, exactly.

**Grace:** Yeah. It's kind of funny that the holograms get to be the one to do that whole, it doesn't sound like anyone here is really making compromise that we're the ones making compromises and not you.

**Sue:** And his kids say, what are you sacrificing? We're all sacrificing. What are you sacrificing?

**Jarrah:** Yeah. He's basically like redone her schedule for her and all this stuff. It's so ridiculous. But I think, you know, I get that there aren't a lot of families on Voyager, but there are couples. And he, so all of his frame of reference...

**Grace:** And, and presumably a lot of people who grew up in families.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, but also all of his frame of reference should be couples where both people work cuz they're on a ship. So it should be weird to him that you would have a couple where the wife doesn't work.

**Grace:** Well, he is also a little self-centered so

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And I'm not saying that like that's never a valid choice, but like in this case it's clearly a, it's a "Leave it to Beaver" stereotype and that, and so like for it to be like the ideal family is my wife doesn't work, and then, you know, the problems he deals with with his kids are also like understandable kid things. But it still like positions him as like, he's the normal one.

**Grace:** He's the Marlyn of this family. He's the Marlyn Munster of this super 90s family. And now I'm just imagining the doctor with that Marilyn Munster helmet hair, Google it won't you.

**Jarrah:** I don't know. I feel like you could have just had Charlene at the beginning, also have a job and it would've made it a lot less weird and cringy. It could have just been that she's less willing to help, like, you know, to just like, be endlessly patient with him and do all the work with the kids.

**Grace:** She had to give, uh, holographic lectures to other holograms about holo-grammatics. Yeah.

**Jarrah:** And like, okay. So, so that's her like, you know, uh, redo is that she is harried career woman who doesn't has have time for his shenanigans.

**Grace:** And yet, still when she can't find like her Parisi squares, mallet, the daughter, Belle is freaking out being like, I want mommy. So mom's the one who's got all of her, uh, ducks in a row still in this situation.

**Sue:** Isn't that child a little old to be throwing an, I want mommy tantrum?

**Grace:** I was thinking that too, but also then again, everyone, if you, if they're freaking out hard enough, can throw a tantrum. But generally, I would agree with that.

**Jarrah:** I mean, I've seen kids that were around that age, throw temper tantrums, but I agree. It seems a bit like...

**Sue:** The, the specific I want mommy like that, that feels like a very young child thing to me. Anyway. I don't... I have cats.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I don't know.

**Grace:** Maybe she was a different age at a different point in the script writing.

**Jarrah:** Well, again, it just seems like it goes from a 50s stereotype to a 90s family stereotype. And like all of these types of like problems are like almost not complicated enough.

**Grace:** Like, if anything, B'Elanna should have pushed shit farther. Like had the son fall in with the Ferengis, and then he has to explain to his son the evils of capitalism, but keep it within, you know, a 90s prime time rating approval.

**Sue:** And they can be racist in a different way.

**Grace:** Exactly in a slightly more complicated way.

**Jarrah:** The doctor should have to explain appropriation to his kid. The doctor. Oh. How about the kid falls into, in with a bunch of other white humans that wanna be more like Klingons. And then the doctor has to explain appropriation.

**Grace:** The son instead of falling in with Klingons falls in with a bunch of white guys with dreadlocks who try and talk with Jamaican accents and he has to be like son, not only is this super cringe, but it's also kind of fucked up.

**Jarrah:** And how about instead of the daughter being still like a really high achiever and super competitive at a sport. how about she just like, doesn't wanna do any of the things that her parents want her to do and she wants to do something completely different.

**Grace:** Also, the fact that the complication with the daughter is that she is, you know, competitive and wants to keep playing Parisi squares with people who are in an older age group and stuff. I feel like that says something also. It's sort of like, oh no, the daughter's competitive. No!

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I mean, coupled with the wife being too like career focused. It feels like it all just highlights again, the role of the doctor as the patriarch

**Grace:** Oh, doctor.

**Jarrah:** Doctor knows best.

**Grace:** Doctor is not gonna be the one leading the dismantling of the patriarchy in space. Dismantling of hologram oppression, maybe a little, but patriarchy, not so much. Oh man. It must be a, it must suck so bad to be a woman hologram in that movement.



**Jarrah:** Uh, yeah, it, it seems to me like it also happens so fast. So like with his new family, we'll call him, we'll call them The Zimmerman's 2.0, they are all, uh, like the only moment that he has that is really good with them is like the one moment where Belle's like, I love you, daddy, and everything else yeah, is kind of a disaster too. So, it also makes it hard to kind of feel like he would be that attached to it.

**Grace:** Yeah. It feels like they had to do the, I love you daddy thing. So that there's actual, like emotional stake in her having a deadly injury. Like if it had been the son, it probably would've been like, oh, well, better luck next time. Let's restart this program and tweak my Sims so that they're more fun for me. They're all gonna be plant people this time.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I don't know. I feel like there could have been more, if, I don't know, maybe if they hadn't spent so long on the first iteration of the family, or if they just did away with the stupid B plot with about the anomaly that no one remembers.

**Grace:** Yeah. I say, uh, just yeet that B plot.

**Jarrah:** Like what if people like Janeway and other people came and gave him some useful advice?

**Grace:** I think it's funny also the fact that Kes comes to visit and it's, and her interactions are just so innocuous and have so very little to do with what goes on. Like she's just like, yes, this is nice. Okay. If that's what you want. And that says something, I think about both Kes at this point in the series and, uh, Kes and her relationship to the Doctor. I think that it's just like, oh no, she's just the nice, sweet, accommodating little blonde. And then that kind of translates over to the wife and you kinda have to go. Ummmmmm. At least I did anyway. I think the only thing that Kes really does is show up to the family and just kind of side eye them a little bit with uh B'Elanna and then later on being like, oh yeah, how's your family doing? And then him being like, I'm not doing the family thing anymore. Poor Kes, this was a stop gap episode for her.

**Jarrah:** You know, who could have given good advice, Tuvoc.

**Grace:** Tuvoc would've been great. Cuz Tuvoc actually, you know, has a family and kids and is, you know, very logical. But no, I guess, uh, Tuvoc was too busy with the B plot this episode.

**Sue:** Maybe the doctor needs to make some Vulcan friends.

**Jarrah:** I feel like Paris also could have been helpful as someone who had a fraught relationship with his dad. Not just like helpful at the end about like you have to go be with your dying holo-daughter.

**Grace:** Oh no, no. I kind of liked the fact that Tom doesn't get to even for what it is, Tom, having had a fraught family relationship gets to be like, yeah, you don't get to pick what you, what happens. And the people that are in your family, it just kind of happens. And as someone who's had some kind of fraught familial times that yeah, that's it. Or at least again, in my experience, sometimes the best thing you can do after a bad experience with family is be like, well, I know what happens when all that collides together now, and now I get to just walk away and be like, well, that happened.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, definitely. I just feel like, I don't know. I feel like we're missing things that could have made it work better. Like, I, I think there's some good things here.

**Grace:** Oh, there's some great things here. Like I there's some good points where Picardo is just acting his ass off.

**Sue:** It just, the whole thing feels like it's written first for comedy, instead of first for analysis, isn't the right word. But for, for learning, for, for discussion,

**Grace:** That's kind of a recurring theme with Doctor centric episodes though, isn't it? We've got this and we've got Author, Author (VOY Season 7, Episode 19), and they both start out as like kind of comedic, and then after a while, get into like a pretty serious conversation. And while they both have their merits to them as episodes, there are some points where you're, you get kind of whiplashed by it by the change up.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Same with Virtuoso (VOY Season 6, Episode 13). I think they figured out, like we have a strategy for doctor stories.

**Grace:** Start funny, get serious.

**Sue:** When you've got Robert Picard, you use him, right?

**Grace:** You don't keep the Mustang in the shed.

**Sue:** It could have been so much deeper.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** It could have. Yes, definitely.

**Sue:** And it, it feels...

**Jarrah:** It feels as superficial as that bandaid on that dying little girl's head

**Grace:** I love that it looks like it's just kinda peeling off there.

**Sue:** It probably was.

**Jarrah:** Oh man. Like, okay. If she had a, had severe and like multiplying cerebral hemorrhages, I don't think she would be that articulate and peaceful. I mean, she is on probably very good 24th century drugs. But it just, yeah, it feels like another cliché.

**Grace:** It's very cliché, but still at the same time, this is, uh, I, I did tear up while watching this episode again, I, I don't usually actually cry very much over stuff, but this one was one where by the time it got to the end, it was like, no, I'm, I'm feeling an emotion here, and it is sad.

**Jarrah:** The first time I watched this, I a hundred percent bawled. I have a strong memory of that.

**Grace:** Yeah. The point where he, where his, uh, daughter's like where he's talking to hologram daughter and he's telling her she had a head injury and she's like, well, what's gonna happen to me. And he just has to go computer freeze program and walk out. That part just gut punched me.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I used to feel feelings about this episode before I was a cold cynical career woman. Like Charlene.

**Grace:** You either die a Belle or live long enough to be a Charlene.

**Sue:** Oh no!

**Grace:** Also, can we talk about the fact that, uh, because we're talking about it being kind of comedic and then going into dramatic territory that the director of this episode was, I can't get over, it was Patsy on Happy Days?

**Jarrah:** Whoa. Okay.

**Grace:** Yeah. So talk about a comedy background.

**Jarrah:** Nice. Yeah. Um, what's his name?

**Grace:** His name's Anson Williams. Yeah, he did a bunch of directing after being a teen TV star. Yes. So, you know, good for him and all that, but at the same time, it's fun every now and then be like, oh yeah, this was like this intense episode where like, uh, the Doctor has to learn all about, you know, the fragility of human life and emotion, the risks that you take with emotional connections and how you don't get to call the shots, even if you're looking for a specific thing... It was directed by Patsy.

**Jarrah:** Nice. So, okay. So, we sort of talked about like what would've been a better approach if we had had more time. And we weren't necessarily having all the other characters drop in to give advice, like which approach should the doctor have taken to like his new family do you think?

**Grace:** I would've said invite like more of the crew to that family dinner thing, cuz then we would've gotten to see more creative side eyeing of the 50s family for one thing and then we would've gotten everyone's 2 cents on this is bullshit.

**Jarrah:** Like, so with the Klingon, your friend, your kid is hanging out with Klingon teens.

**Grace:** How to talk to your kid about hanging out with Klingons.

**Sue:** Still racist.

**Jarrah:** I, my take is to focus on the focus on the actions and not the race of the kid. And also like, try to figure out, try to maybe listen to him and like figure out what he's trying to gain from these types of things.

**Grace:** Yeah. Be like, okay, what about this is speaking to you. What about the life that you have now is not speaking to you? Like flesh 'em out a little more. If we could have just fleshed out the one dimensional hologram characters a little more. That would've been great.

**Jarrah:** And what about like super competitive Parisi Square's daughter?

**Grace:** Yeah, all we really get of her personality is she really likes Parisi squares and she throws a temper tantrum. And she's ambitious.

**Sue:** I feel like that is the one place where the Doctor's point is actually valid. Right? That she's playing with kids who are much older than her and it's dangerous.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Well, I mean, ultimately he's also mad about the Klingons and then it turns out that like the Klingons want him to do some kind of knife ritual. So I feel like that is also kind of validated.

**Sue:** Right. But, it's not like the Klingons were talking his son into it? Like, the, the reasoning there was different.

**Grace:** That would've been an, a plus moment for a "I learned it from watching you!" outburst from the son.

**Sue:** But, I mean, it seems reasonable to me to have a like legitimate conversation with Belle and be like, "You could get hurt by this". And that's what we're trying to prevent. Cause I mean, that is exactly what happens that was like Chekov's Parisi square mallet or whatever.

**Grace:** And if the tragic irony of the end though, is that it kind of turns out, at least in that department that father did know best in the worst way possible, like how it goes at the end of all the 50s sitcoms and stuff. Like I told you, so. That is like, oh God, I was right. I didn't wanna be this right.

**Jarrah:** And he also should have talked to his wife about all of these things. Instead of being like, oh, I just have to solve these problems myself.

**Sue:** We have to be a united front. So you have to do whatever I say. That's not not how that goes.

**Grace:** Boy, that's giving me some family flashbacks.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm as long as you live under my holodeck roof...

**Grace:** My holo-roof.

**Sue:** Oh, I mean, this is, this came just came to me, but not necessarily what he could have done differently with his holodeck family, but I feel like there could have been like a button on this episode of the doctor, like reflecting on his bedside manner now that he's had this experience, of like, I understand this...

**Grace:** Of having to mourn a loss.

**Sue:** This grief more now, yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And I mean, also considering that this is also a lesson about his hubris, the fact that he goes through a very similar arc on other components of his hubris, it's actually striking me, like I never thought about it before, because I generally, I think a lot of people like love Doctor episodes. They're usually very funny, very well written, very well performed, but they, it, it's not dissimilar to what we've talked about with B'Elanna about her having to like rehash the same feelings about her Klingon heritage multiple times that they kind of like found a formula and they stuck with it. And we don't necessarily see the Doctor, we do see him becoming humbler in, in little ways, but he's still like very susceptible to flattery and like trying a new thing and being like, I'm now the master at this thing.

**Grace:** Also, I'm gonna sing an opera about how Tuvoc is going through pon farr in front of everyone. I mean, it was a dream, but still.

**Jarrah:** That was so great. I do like the point though, that Paris makes also about not just like, you have to take the, the good with the bad, but also...

**Grace:** You take the good, you take the bad, you take it all and then you have, the facts of real life.

**Jarrah:** But also the point about all of the loss that the Voyager crew has had to go through, that he has never been able to empathize with until now. And that it brought the crew closer together. So maybe he can now like, be part of that in his chosen family.

**Grace:** Yeah. That's a very good point. Yeah. Dang we were robbed!

**Jarrah:** So I have one question that's that's slightly, tangential, I guess, but this episode is not totally dissimilar plot-wise to The Offspring (TNG, Season 3, Episode 16). How do...

**Grace:** No, it is not.

**Jarrah:** How do we feel it compares to the TNG episode The Offspring?

**Grace:** I don't think it's as good, but it plays at the heartstrings in some of the same components. Some of the same ways I cried over both of them.

**Sue:** The Offspring feels more genuine to me. It doesn't have this like comedy overlay. I mean, there, there are comedic parts to it, but like it's not, it's not jokey.

**Jarrah:** Do you think it's also because Data doesn't come into it with pride thinking he's gonna be awesome at this?

**Grace:** Yes. I think, I think that's a very good reason reasoning there that that's part of why it works better. Data is seeing this as an experiment and not a thing that he's going into immediately knowing everything about.

**Jarrah:** Also he listens to Lal and so does everyone else.

**Grace:** Also, she has the complete and total agency of him being like, what do you want to do? He allows her self-actualization.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Well, now I'm just thinking about The Offspring again.

**Sue:** Now I'm wondering is the doctor's way of doing this more ethical? Right, because for him, this is an experiment and he is using non sentient holograms. Data is creating actual life. It's artificial life, but it's actual life and it is still an experiment.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. But I think that when you look at, in The Offspring, what ends up happening to Lal, is not through any is like not foreseeable. And it's similarly, like what happens with Belle is a random accident, but I think the fact that like, it was not foreseeable and that Data was like it's like saying, you know, anytime someone has a child, in some ways it's an experiment, you don't know what's gonna happen.

**Grace:** And if you go into it thinking, you know, 100% how it's gonna go and the kind of person your child will be, you're setting yourself up for failure.

**Sue:** That's true. And it, the Doctor does see it as more of like a pastime I'm bored. So I'm gonna do this. Whereas I think Data's is a lot more...

**Jarrah:** Like, this is what it means to be...

**Grace:** He's more fully invested in it.

**Jarrah:** A sentient being is that we reproduce.

**Sue:** About exploration and curiosity and learning and growth

**Grace:** And empathy.

**Sue:** And empathy, yeah.

**Grace:** Sort of to a degree. And there's the fact that Lal gets like, I wanna say they mention Lal again later on and this never gets mentioned again.

**Jarrah:** Mm-hmm yep. Well, I mean, there's certainly, uh, I don't remember if they actually talk about Lal in, um, Picard, but I know there was a lot of speculation about Lal in Picard because of the whole daughter thing. But, um, regardless, like I think, yeah, that episode is trying to show that it's an expansion of the exploration of, of Data's quote unquote human rights. But with this, it doesn't really seem to have that same kind of weighty ethos on it. It's like you said, it's like the doctor exploring something else and kind of having fun.

**Sue:** Right. And he'll get bored of this and then he'll take up opera and then he'll take up writing. And then, you know.

**Grace:** I mean, honestly, if the show had gone on long enough, he probably would've taken up every imaginable hobby at some point.

**Jarrah:** You know, what would've been really funny is if Jeffrey just looked like a mini doctor and was like bald teenager.

**Grace:** Just like a slightly shorter bald Picardo. Thanks dad. I love you.

**Jarrah:** It also, would've been very, um, appropo for the doctor's hubris.

**Grace:** What it had just been like a scaled down Picardo wearing the Klingon gear and the frizzy wig. Just being like "I'm into Klingon now, Father".

**Jarrah:** I mean, all I'm saying is if you're gonna do comedy, you should just own it.

**Grace:** Also, if you're gonna do sitcom tropes lean into it. But then we would've had to have insisted that Belle also be played by a slightly smaller Robert Picardo.



**Jarrah:** Yeah. But I mean, all the stuff that, you know, the kind of problematic elements that we've mentioned are also in line with the 90s sitcom family where often it's like the dad is so put upon and, uh, you know, his attractive, uh, intelligent wife and...

**Grace:** His inexplicably good looking wife.

**Jarrah:** Exactly. And like, we kind of make fun of, of how he doesn't really know everything and isn't necessarily the best at being like a husband and a father. But at the end of the day, we, kind of accept this as plausible and cut them some slack.

**Grace:** What if I'm just gonna, I'm gonna throw a, what if at you and I want you all to run with me on it for a second. What if the son who's really into Klingon culture had gotten Moriarty'd and had gained like hologram sentience and just showed up as a villain, every couple of seasons. But still is trying to be a cool Klingon.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I, I feel like that would've been fun. I was trying to think about what would happen if his wife got sentience and then became a member of the crew.

**Grace:** She would've left him probably

**Jarrah:** And been better at everything than him, but I feel like that also would've just, would've ended up reinforcing, like ex-wife tropes.

**Grace:** Yeah. Then we would've gotten the doctor making a lot of, well, let me tell you about my ex-wife.

**Sue:** Do you think he did leave the program running for them though?

**Jarrah:** No.

**Grace:** No. I don't think they would've let him, they need to conserve energy and stuff.

**Sue:** No that's true.

**Jarrah:** They were letting him run this program in the middle of a major crisis that we didn't understand and was not very memorable, but still.

**Grace:** Yeah, maybe he was running it and just didn't ask anyone for permission.

**Sue:** That sounds like the doctor.

**Grace:** They're just like oh my gosh, the ship is under attack. Where's this big power drain coming from what's going on. And then they're like, doctor what's going on. He's like a very important experiment that is based around my ego.

**Jarrah:** It also feels like, I don't know what, what they would've done to conclude it in a way that felt right, but it does feel a little bit weird that B'Elanna never shows up after she messes up his holo-stuff. Like she shows up in the B plot stuff, but she doesn't ever like check out what happened.

**Grace:** Okay. Yeah. In that point, I kind of take it back in that maybe B'Elanna should have been, the one with the "You take the good, you take the bad" monologue or have her...

**Jarrah:** I don't know. I think it, it helps that it was Paris because you can't construe that it was his fault in any way. I don't know that it was B'Elanna's fault per se, but yeah.

**Sue:** She has a lot of family trauma as well, but a lot of anger towards her parents. So she, I mean, she might have sided with Jeffrey who knows, but I think it would've been interesting to see her and Kes go back for dinner.

**Grace:** I feel like she would've taken some issue with Jeffrey also. Yeah. That would've been great if we'd gotten like a second act of Kes and B'Elanna coming back for dinner with the new family.

**Jarrah:** Or what if we'd have had, like, if Voyager had been a series today and we had more narrative, long form storytelling if like the family just showed up occasionally throughout the season.

**Grace:** That would've been really cool.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. You could see how the doctor was adapting to things over time and you could have different crew members drop in and it would be like, yeah, just he has his family. Although yeah. Now that I'm saying that, I think that could have been really cool, but I also can't help, but wonder how would other people feel about the fact the doctor gets to have a family when none of them get to be with their families.

**Grace:** I think it would be kind of cold comfort of they're not actually real. And for all we know, maybe other people have other fake hologram families set up on Voyager. I mean, they're having fake hologram love lives and beach parties and Captain Proton adventures.

**Sue:** I mean, we know Tuvoc does, right?

**Jarrah:** And there's that, that lady Mirena? And I'm not saying that, like, he shouldn't have been allowed to do it for that reason. Like obviously you don't, you know, deprive someone of something that they can have just cuz you can't have it, but it just makes me think that would be an interesting dynamic.

**Grace:** We could have also gotten into some weird Leah Brooms territory there though.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** I'm just hoping that I don't think we ever see it discussed, but I'm hoping that like holodeck time is rationed in the same way that replicators are rationed.

**Grace:** You would think so. Yeah. I mean we do have like episodes where people are like, you're cutting into my holodeck time!

**Sue:** Yeah, but that's like a reservation, you know.

**Jarrah:** But, also like you have to hope that the doctor has allotted time off. Even though he doesn't necessarily need it, it seems to be that he does. But like if the doctor had this family that was developing over time and other people were able to come and interact with them, I think that could have been a really interesting dynamic for a season.

**Grace:** You need to make some more Vulcan friends and then cut to like him just hanging out with Tuvok and being like, what do we do now?

**Sue:** I wonder if it would've gotten old though.

**Grace:** Good question, yeah.

**Sue:** Cause if it's ongoing for a season, it's probably never gonna be the main plot. Until we get to the, the end, assuming that it's like the same story drawn out along a season. Right. And Belle is still injured.

**Jarrah:** And then it also, would've been harder for, to explain why he just abandoned the program after that. If we had like gotten, you know, if all the crew members had gotten to know these characters and Janeway's asking him, like, how are your conversations with Jeffrey going? And Kes is like, I can't wait for another one of Charlene's pies. And, uh, Um, I don't know, then it would've been really hard to explain, but I was gonna say in terms of like the holodeck time, you have to hope that if it was like the Sims potentially that the doctor also just could have, like, instead of leaving the program actively running...

**Grace:** Set them like on auto run.

**Jarrah:** Well, just like, be like I'm joining now two days from now. Like I went on a business trip I'm back in two days and still like advance things forward. I know that's not also very realistic, but given that he is kind of a family tourist.

**Grace:** He's an emotional tourist. That's what he is.

**Sue:** He really is though.

**Grace:** Oh, wow. Can't can't shake that identification of him now.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Well, I feel like there's like a lot of really interesting issues that this episode could have touched on and maybe didn't a hundred percent get there, but I'm grateful for it giving us the opportunity to talk about it.

**Grace:** Yeah, it's definitely an episode worth having a conversation about.

**Sue:** There's always a lot to unpack when it comes to holodeck stories. I feel like.

**Grace:** Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Do we have any like final thoughts on this episode?

**Jarrah:** Well, we should rate it.

**Grace:** Yeah, I give it seven out of 10 missing ion mallets that I could have put away directly when I got home, but didn't.

**Sue:** That is a very high rating for this episode, Grace.

**Grace:** Like I said, it made me cry.

**Jarrah:** Fair enough.

**Grace:** Okay. Maybe 6.5.

**Jarrah:** That's okay. You can stick with your original rating. I'm going to give it 3.1 out of five harried wives who can't deal with the fact that their husband won't help with the kids.

**Sue:** Oh my. I, I feel like, like a Debbie downer now.

**Grace:** Just do it, man.

**Sue:** I'm gonna go three out of seven, cuz why not be prime Padawan braids.

**Jarrah:** Nice.

**Sue:** I just, it's not one I feel like I need to come back to again for a couple of decades.

**Jarrah:** That's fair. Shouldn't we be calling them Jeffrey braids though. And we should go tell, tell Annakin Skywalker, tell, uh, episode one, Obi Wan Kenobi, like you had a Jeffrey braid all along.

**Sue:** Jeffy may have invented them, but Anakin popularized them.

**Grace:** I don't know, I felt like Obi Won rocked it harder than Anakin, but then again, Ewan McGregor can just wear anything.

**Jarrah:** Don't take away the one thing we have to be smug about over star wars.

**Sue:** One of my Mandalorian friends on his, on his armor has a section where it's just like a pile of, of thin braids. From the braids of Padawans that his character has cut off. It's great.

**Jarrah:** Nice.

**Sue:** Shout out. Falco clan.

**Grace:** If he gets enough can make a wig.

**Jarrah:** All right. Well, thank you so much for joining us today for our discussion, and that's about all the time we have Grace, where can people find you on the internet?

**Grace:** You can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BonecrusherJenk> or listening to my Klingon music upstairs, brutally.

**Jarrah:** And Sue?

**Sue:** Uh, you can find me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/spaltor> , or perhaps watching some Parisi Squares.

**Jarrah:** And I'm Jarrah. And you can find me not attending my Parisi Squares practice. and I am also on Twitter. <https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin> And I have a website <https://trekkiefeminist.com/> to learn more about our show or to contact us, visit <https://www.womenatwarp.com/> email us at [crew@womenatwarm.com](mailto:crew@womenatwarm.com) or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. Thanks so much for listening!

**\*\*outro music\*\***