

Women at Warp Episode 231 - Amanda Greyson: Mother, Teacher, Fashion Icon

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 Jody and Sherri.

Jody: Hi, Jarrah.

Jarrah: And before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. First of all, 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 most recently, we released a spore jump episode, which is for spore jump level patrons and higher on the Gilded Age with me and Kennedy talking about costumes and how certain characters have hats that look kind of like Kai Winn. So, check out that and much more over on our Patreon visit patreon.com/womenatwarp.

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And we have a belated birthday shoutout to Matt. Happy birthday, Matt.

Jody: Happy birthday, Matt.

Jarrah: We hope you had a great day on February 15th and that it is carrying through to this week. And so today we're going to be talking about Amanda Grayson, aka Spock's mom, but that's a reductive identity. She's so much more. And this was a patron request from Alex P. So, thank you for this great suggestion. What I wanted to do was give a chance for Sherri and Jody to introduce themselves and to tell us about themselves and their relationship to the characters we're talking about today. So, first of all, I will start off with Jody.

Jody: Oh, thanks, Jarrah. Hi, I'm Jody. I'm a teacher of 15 years here in Ottawa, and my relationship to Amanda would be that I only ever thought of her as Spock's mom, as you said, the reductive personality, but she actually is a teacher, or was a teacher. And so, I thought it'd be interesting to look more into the other side of Amanda other than just the mother. And after watching a few episodes with appearances by her, it became obvious to me that she was probably a good teacher. And I looked into why, and of course, my respect grew for her, considering that she is not a Vulcan teaching in a Vulcan world.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. How about you, Sherri?

Sherri: Yeah. Hi, I'm Sherri, also from Ottawa, Canada. I'm a scientist, a Trekkie, a mother, and a wife. As far as Amanda Grayson, well, she really wasn't a memorable character for me, or even one I've really thought about until her appearances in *Star Trek: Discovery* and most recently in *Strange New Worlds*. And so, for recording this podcast, it was interesting to go back and see her other appearances because they really didn't register in my mind. And like Jody said, really, it was her identity as a mother, Spock's mom, and Sarek's wife.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. Yeah, and of course, as we're going to talk about, those are important aspects of her identity, and there's nothing wrong with that. But as we were saying, almost no single person is just one of those things. So, for me, I feel like I appreciated Amanda and remembered her mostly from *Star Trek 4*. This was like prior to *Discovery*, starting in *Star Trek 4*, the whole coming in on Spock and asking him how he feels and that moment, and I just thought that was like such a sweet scene.

And then I also remembered *Journey to Babel* in TOS is one of my favorite original series episodes. There's just so much going on. And I mostly, be honest, remembered her incredible outfits and the whole Vulcan finger touching kiss thing from that episode. Yeah. And it wasn't really until Discovery, when we got to see her a lot more played by Mia Kirshner, that I felt like I had more opinions on the character.

Jody: Cool. Yeah, for sure. It was interesting to see everyone who played her and how different, but how similar they all managed to keep her character.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. Yeah, so, let's just do a quick rundown of all the people that played Amanda. So, as mentioned, we have most recently Mia Kirshner in *Discovery* and *Strange New Worlds*. And part of the reason that this topic was suggested by Alex was the episode *Strange New Worlds Charades*, which we'll get into in a minute.

In *Star Trek 2009*, we have Winona Ryder. And I'm going in reverse chronological order for production. For *Star Trek 5*, in the *Final Frontier*, we have a scene of Cynthia Blaise really just giving birth to Spock. And *Star Trek 4* and the original series. Jane Wyatt played Amanda, and in the animated series episode, *Yesteryear*, she was voiced by Majel Barrett.

Okay, let's start right back at the very beginning with *Journey to Babel*. Thoughts on Amanda in this episode and how we're originally introduced to the character.

Jody: This was also one of my favorite episodes. In addition to her amazing fashion sense, of course, I'm looking at these episodes from the lens of an educator, and so even though it wasn't mentioned in this episode, I don't think that she's a teacher, it was obvious to me that she was. When she's talking to Spock about the blood transfusion that Sarek needed, she tries to sympathize with Spock as a half Vulcan, and she says, "Being logical is a better way than ours, but it isn't easy." So, that's like a mother and a teacher figure trying to speak to their child or a student and trying to get them to understand both sides, which can be really difficult to do.

And then, that kind of contrasts later on and she says that powerful sentence, threatening sentence, "If you let your father die, I will hate you for the rest of my life." That was really powerful to me, and it's a perfect example of human emotionality that comes through that yes, even teachers have little breaks here and there when they're frustrated and don't know what to do, and it's what happens to us as humans when we get desperate, so I thought it was interesting to see she's a human, she's a mother, and she's a teacher, and we all kind of react the same way in desperate situations.

Jarah: Mmm, hmm-mm. Yeah, that's an interesting point. I think we do really get to see in this episode ways in which-- I think she fits the mold of kind of the conventional idea of, I guess like the mother stereotype as of TV at that time with the kind of cute, embarrassing Spock over his pet sehlat. And I do find it really charming the way that she's kind of joking with Kirk and McCoy. But we also get this very interesting dynamic, like you mentioned, of what must-- starting to get a glimpse at what must it be like to be a human, woman, and a teacher living on Vulcan with all of these hyperlogical dudes.

Sherri: I know for me, I did not like *Journey to Babel* and Amanda's portrayal. It was not one of my favorite at all. For me, I saw it as she was either portrayed as the obedient wife and hiding her humanity and adhering to Vulcan culture, or this human who was prone to emotional outbursts. And so, I kind of saw it as-- Especially at the end of that episode where she says to Sarek, "You should thank Spock for saving your life," and he says, "That's not logical." And then, she makes a comment, something like, "Logic, logic. You want to know what I think of logic?" And I think-- I can't remember if it's Spock or Sarek, one of them says, "Emotional, isn't she?"

Jarrah: Hmm. Oh, yeah.

Sherri: And then says, "Why did you marry her?" "Well, it was just logical." So--

Jody: How romantic.

Sherri: To me, that interaction, I'm like, "Okay, so now you're belittling her for being human." I don't know, I didn't like that interaction. I was definitely more in favor of her later portrayals in the newer *Star Trek* series.

Jarrah: Yeah, I do feel that interaction didn't age super well. That last scene you were mentioning for sure.

Jody: And it's kind of-- There was some redemption to that though. I know that we're starting with TOS, but if you jump ahead to *Strange New Worlds*, it's that interaction when Amanda is talking to Sarek, and Sarek's upset. What was he upset about? Amanda's upset that no one helped Spock when he was a child on Vulcan with his presumed dyslexia. And then, she becomes pretty assertive at the end, and he expresses his displeasure and says, "This is in violation of my authority." And she says, calmly but assertively, "I'm not under your authority. I'm your wife. I'm your partner." And I can't remember what the end was.

Jarrah: Try again, husband.

Jody: Try again, husband. Thank you.

Jarrah: Nice. So good.

[laughter]

Jody: And it kind of like smacked him in the face a little bit, and then he ended up agreeing with her. Yes, actually, Spock did need help as a child. No one stepped up because he was half human. There's a mother, there's a teacher coming through again to stand up for the kid.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, I think we have a sense, certainly, if you get to the episode, *Sarek*, of TNG that Sarek was not a great dad. And then we get in *Discovery*, also probably pretty challenging as a husband. Even in *Sarek*, he talks about how he regrets that he wasn't able to be more tender to Amanda and tell her how much he loved her, and it's kind of sad, but it makes this an interesting character to think about in some ways.

Jody: I think she's good though. Amanda's pretty good at the IDIC side of things, balancing being a human wife to Sarek and human mother to Spock. And she does a pretty good job throughout whichever series, keeping the differences and the similarities in pretty good balance, in my opinion. It's hard.

Jarrah: Yeah. And we see in *Discovery* that she kind of indicates she was able to mother Michael in a way that was more natural to her than what Sarek kind of forced her to do with Spock. But in terms of her being a teacher, we hear that referenced in *This Side of Paradise* when Kirk is trying to provoke Spock by insulting her and saying, "Your mother was an encyclopedia." And he says, "My mother was a teacher," but we don't really learn about really much more. We don't see her actively teaching, other than we know that she supported Spock to overcome his learning disability. But we don't know if she normally was a music teacher, if she was teaching college, kindergarten, anything in between.

So, I'm curious if you have just like thoughts or speculation or if we were going to see her actively teaching, what could we imagine her doing? Or what would we want to see?

Jody: My speculation, based on the little that's given, is that-- I can't remember which series but she at one point read *Alice in Wonderland* to Spock when he was little because he was apparently having troubles reading. So, I imagine her as kind of a primary junior level teacher, small to maybe 4-to 10-year-olds. But she doesn't strike me as a high school academic type, but she definitely seems literacy and basic reading skills type teacher.

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, she certainly seems to intuitively get as well as to have the experience with knowing how to support her son with his learning disability or difficulty, and I think important to recognize that is just as valid and skillful as teaching college.

Jody: Absolutely. It's harder, if you ask me.

Jarrah: Yeah. You can't just swap a college professor and be like, "You go with that."

Jody: Definitely.

Sherri: Yeah. I got the same impression that if I had to guess what type of teacher, I also thought probably the primary grades. I think another example which leads me to think that is also where Amanda teaches Spock to-- When he's having nightmares as a child, she teaches him to use drawing his fears and what he's seeing in his nightmares as a way to remove the power it's having over him. So, again, this way of helping Spock lends me to think she probably as a teacher worked with primary age schoolchildren.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. And then it makes me wonder, because I think especially getting into *Discovery* as well as in *Strange New Worlds* episodes, charades, we start to get the sense of just how much discrimination there was against her. And Spock, by extension, just for her being a human on Vulcan. And my sense is not necessarily that they're saying that she is an active teacher on Vulcan. Although maybe there's like a federation school that's mixed species, and maybe she could teach there. But it made me wonder, are we looking at a situation where she had to give up her job to move to Vulcan with her husband?

Jody: I absolutely think she had to give up her career and her job as a teacher to move to Vulcan. I didn't get the impression at all that she was teaching on Vulcan or would even be welcomed into that profession on Vulcan.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. Certainly not from the schools that we see Spock and Michael going to, which are just like hardcore mean little Vulcan children. [laughs]

Sherri: You want to talk about hardcore mean Vulcan children?

Jarrah: Yes.

Sherri: I mean, *Yesteryear*, the animated series episode-

Jarrah: Oh, man.

Sherri: -those kids were so mean to Spock, I couldn't believe it.

Jarrah: And *Yesteryear* is important from an Amanda perspective because it is the first time we learn her last name being Grayson. In *Journey to Babel*, she just says her married name is usually unpronounceable by humans. So presumably, Grayson was her name that she was born with.

Sherri: Her human last name.

Jarrah: Okay, so I want to get a little bit more into *Discovery*, *Strange New Worlds* and some of themes that we are talking about, but let's do a quick side jump over to Winona Ryder in the Kelvin Universe as Amanda. I would say it's not Winona Ryder's fault, it's my least favorite Amanda, but it's my least favorite Amanda. But when I looked up again her appearance, it really reminded me of this kind of common theme that's run through Amanda's appearances. And we sort of see this in *Yesteryear*, but less explicit of Spock getting bullied as a result of her being human. In *Star Trek 2009*, we see a Vulcan kid call Amanda a human whore, and we learn that the reason he went to Starfleet Academy in the Kelvin universe was because the head minister of the Vulcan council thought his mom was a "disadvantage." And I just don't love it.

Jody: I don't love it either. She's my least favorite Amanda as well.

Sherri: Yeah. I agree and for all those reasons. And we just didn't really get to see much of the Winona Ryder Amanda Grayson. She's really just there so she can be killed off so that Spock gets upset and we can move the story along.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's a pretty classic fridging. You have her dying, and then not only does that shape Spock's character in his emotional reaction to that situation, but then Kirk deliberately uses the death of his mother to provoke Spock by mocking his outward lack of feeling in order to show that Kirk is the one who should actually be in command of the Enterprise. So, yeah.

I was disappointed because I remember when the casting was announced for that movie, I was really stoked because I figured, "Oh, Winona Ryder, she's a good actress. They're going to make this character substantial." And then, she just kind of-- It was like if all we had was that nice scene at the beginning of *Star Trek 4* and then they murdered Amanda and then used it to taunt Spock so that Spock could have character development.

Jody: Right.

Jarrah: Anyway.

Jody: I don't know. Is that lazy writing, or is it just we don't like it?

Jarrah: I mean, I think it's not necessarily lazy, but the whole idea of fridging is just that it's problematic how often that happens to women in media. And that given, I think, that we saw later with *Discovery* and with *Strang New Worlds*, that Amanda had such potential to be an interesting character, that it just feels like a missed opportunity.

Jody: That's fair. Yeah.

Jarrah: Certainly, with the casting and the outcome of that character, they could have done more, and they could have made her a bit more developed than what we got to see. So, is there a particular *Discovery* episode or moments that you wanted to highlight?

Jody: Well, *Light and Shadows*. So, it was obvious there like, she communicates with Michael differently than Spock, and it's not subtle to me. It's so obvious how much easier it is for her to talk to Michael than it is to Spock, and we can probably understand why, she's human, and this is something teachers see all of the time. They have difficult times with one child and not the other, and they're like, "Well, I don't know what I'm doing wrong. I'm raising

them both the same. Why is my son this way and my daughter this way?" There's no formula to it. It's just, I don't know if it's nature, nurture, everyone is different.

And I think Amanda does a pretty good job, again, at the end of the day, balancing Michael and Spock. Because in order to be a good teacher, she would have had to kind of embrace IDIC. If you're a teacher, you're not able to embrace IDIC, you're going to have a hard time because your students are not going to be one way. So, you need to learn to embrace them, like it, be good at it, respect them. And that's the same with parents. It's like, okay, your kids are different, but embrace it and try to improve it alongside them with respect, caring, and all that good stuff.

Jarrah: Yeah, that makes sense.

Jody: It's easier said than done.

Sherri: Yeah, I agree. And I think, for the most part, we see in *Discovery* that she always has the best interest of her children. And I think one of the examples that I wanted to highlight was the episode in *Discovery* where we see-- Where Michael finds out that she's not been accepted to the Vulcan expedition team. And you see-- And I think this is again like a different interaction between Amanda and Sarek here too that I liked. And Amanda is saying this is a mistake, she graduated top of her class. And she was the only human and she excelled above the Vulcans in her class like that this is a mistake they need to fix this. And what we then come to know is that Sarek didn't tell the truth and was keeping it from both Amanda and Michael that in fact, it was his decision because they were only going to permit one of his children to be in the Vulcan expedition, and he chose Spock over Michael.

So, I did like that portrayal of Amanda because it showed she was willing to fight for Michael for what she deserves and voiced when she feels like she's being unfairly treated. And it was nice to see that, and you didn't see Sarek criticizing her for having that emotional response to the unexpected news that she wasn't being accepted.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. And that was I think a pretty early episode with Amanda and Sarek. But yeah, I think that's interesting. And it goes to show that, I think with *Discovery*, we start to get to see a lot more sides of Amanda. And even though I think on the one level, it gets kind of dark because we see how hard it must be to be in the positions that she's in, and then she ends up losing Michael, essentially, and briefly has to deal with Spock being kidnapped by Section 31 and stuff. But also just, we see how hard it must be to be married to Sarek and be in that situation, in that society, but also, we get to see the waves that she is still very much herself and doesn't just-- She's not just like going around meekly accepting whatever happens. So, I think the one that I wanted to highlight was in point of light, where Amanda goes to Starbase five to try to get Spock out of where he's basically being held in like a psych ward. And they refuse to let her see him, so she just steals his medical report and meets up with Discovery, and I just love that and I was like, "Oh, Amanda's super badass," so, I like that as just a different dynamic of the character.

Also, in *Such Sweet Sorrow*, what I first think of when I just think of an Amanda's scene is when she's bringing plomeek soup to Sarek on the beach while Sarek's meditating. And I don't know, I just find it really funny for some reason. It's like, "Hmm, we need to have a scene where Sarek's meditating and he's going to have his eyes fly open and go, 'Michael, what should we have the interaction be?'" Well, it's Vulcan, so they eat plomeek soup, so I guess Amanda should bring him something. I'm like "What was the conversation that led to that scene?" So, we learned that Amanda likes to cook or prepare plomeek soup and that Sarek likes to dine al fresco.

[laughter]

Jody: If you take anything away from this podcast episode, it should be that. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yes. And before we get into *Strange New Worlds*, I did want to take a second for us to fangirl about the outfits, Amanda's outfits, because they're so incredible.

Sherri: Especially Amanda's outfits in *Discovery*. My favorite is this amazing cold blue full-length dress. It's sort of like an A-line cut. And the neckline, it's almost like a diamond shape, but it had also these amazing long sleeves that had a split opening from the elbow to the wrist. And this dress was tailored to perfection. It looked amazing. I would love to cosplay that version of Amanda.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. I have to admit that I just love the Vulcan outfits on *Discovery* and *Strange New Worlds* in general. And I think they have my favorite wardrobe. And I think the one that is my favorite is in-- I think it's the episode actually where Amanda goes to Starbase 5 and then she goes to *Discovery* and she's got this sort of like-- I don't know, it looks kind of like a jumpsuit or dress kind of thing, but it's teal and it's got a crossover thing going on the top and a little kind of gold decorative belt kind of thing and a hood and cape. And I'm just really into people being able to pull off hoods and capes. I feel like-- it's also consistent in *Journey to Babel*, we see her having a hood and a cape, so it's like a modern update of that. And I feel like if I tried to do that in real life, it would look terrible.

Sherri: I also appreciate her outfit in *Journey to Babel*, the outfit where it's like a hot pink jumpsuit, and over it she has like a red, again, like a cape that has hot pink fur trim, and this is just like some fashionable loungewear that looks comfortable at the same time. I loved it.

Jarrah: There's another one in an episode where she's reading *Alice in Wonderland* to little Michael, where she looks like she's just wearing the comfiest but also most stylish white sweater dress. So apparently, she also never spills plomeek soup on herself.

Jody: The one that stands out to me, and I don't know all of them, but the one that is ingrained in my brain is in *Journey to Babel*. Babe-I or Bab-el? Bab-el, it's like that super high kind of Dracula neck collar that comes up all the way to the top-

Jarrah: Hmm. Yes.

Jody: -With the dress and there's a veil over top of it. And the dress, it kind of says more like Romulan. Kind of like the long, drapery front. It's like professional Dracula. And it's kind of-- It's a statement piece for sure.

Jarrah: Business Dracula.

Jody: Yeah.

Sherri: And I think-- And that cape was blue as well. Like, the collar was black, but the cape was blue. So maybe another thing we know about Amanda is maybe her favorite color is blue.

Jarrah: Hmm. Possible. Yeah, she does wear a lot of blue and green and teal. Yeah. And shoutout to William Ware Theiss for his costumes on *Journey to Babel* and to Gersha Phillips for her costumes on *Discovery*. Awesome. Well, I feel like that is a good segue into *Charades*, which is the *Strange New Worlds* episode where Amanda comes to the ship along with T'Pol's parents, and there's some drama.

Jody: There is drama.

Jarrah: Sherri, I know this is an episode you particularly enjoy. Do you have thoughts on-- Just in general like what was your thoughts on seeing Amanda in the episode, in general, why do you like this episode?

Sherri: Yeah. So, this episode is one of my top ten favorite episodes of all *Star Trek* series. I love this episode. Really, it was the comedic value of it and also seeing Spock completely human and essentially going through human puberty and being like an emo teenager. And as far as Amanda Grayson goes, I really liked her in this episode too, where she's coming and going to teach Spock how to lie, because that's what you're going to have to do to be able to survive the engagement ceremony with T'pring's parents.

And then, I also think at the same time, we have all of these really amazing, funny scenes. But then, we also have the very touching scene at the end where Spock asks during the mind meld, why did Amanda choose the memory that she did. And this was a memory where Spock gets accepted for the first time by his Vulcan classmates. And it also helps-- Spock then realizes how much Amanda had to give up of herself to live on Vulcan, be a mother to him and a wife to Sarek. So, I think it was a really great emotional rollercoaster of an episode.

Jarrah: Hmm. Yeah, I wondered about that. And I appreciated-- even though I think it's challenging, I did appreciate that Spock got to see a bit of just everything his mom had to sacrifice.

Jody: Well, yeah, you segued into one of the points I had made. At the end, the touching scene, like he stands up for his mom, calls her courageous and compassionate, and even though he barely held it together with anger, how T'pring was talking about him and his mother. But Spock going through that adolescent crisis as a human was particularly enjoyable to me because that's the age group of students that I teach. They're 13, 14 years old. And Spock as a human almost made me feel like I was in the classroom.

It was funny. After he lost his DNA, he becomes erratic, hormonal, irrational. He's obsessed with bacon. He can't stop eating. He's obnoxious. He laughs way too loudly. And he's very social, and he wants to be around other people. So, it's obviously not really a side we see of Spock. It's probably a side we've all been curious to know what it's like to see him as a human. So, that was really interesting as a viewpoint. But the educator in me was like, "Oh, yeah, I see this every single day." It's just slightly more hilarious to see it from your favorite fictional character on TV.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah, it's definitely pretty funny. Just both your comments made me think, and I don't particularly know that I have an opinion on this, but it made me wonder, do you think Amanda wanted Spock to stand up for her? Like, was that partly what she would have-- She obviously knew she was getting into a situation where probably someone was going to be a jerk to her. Do you think that was a reaction she was hoping for? Would there have been a scenario where it would have worked for her to stand up for herself? I'm just curious.

Sherri: I didn't get the impression that it was something she was wanting to have be the outcome. I agree that I hadn't thought about it, but yeah, it maybe would have been nice for her to stand up for herself, but then maybe that's just having what she has to do to fit in to Vulcan society, because she's going to have to go back, live on Vulcan with T'pril and have to have a good relationship with them going forward.

Jody: I would say, yes, she did want him to, even if not outwardly obvious that she wanted him to. Because, quote me if I'm wrong, and I'm sorry if I'm making a mistake here, but I do believe in *Journey to Babel*, she makes a remark to him in the exchange about the blood transfusion, and this is not verbatim, but, "You have to be more in touch with your human side." And I don't remember exactly the context. And maybe it's more TOS Amanda who's more willing to say that. But if we're talking about her as a character, and if she's human, which she is, of course, she's going to want her blood, her own blood, her child to stand up for her in such a culture clash. And she's being respectful of T'pring and her parents. But, I mean, we all have a breaking point. And I think she probably felt super satisfied after Spock stood up for her. That's my two cents on that.

Sherri: I think maybe too, she did stand up for herself in a little bit of an indirect way, and that was during-- So, during the engagement ceremony, there was the portion, basically, where they criticize-

Jarrah: [laughs] Right.

Sherri: -And Amanda, you know, where she has to criticize T'pring just says, "You could visit more." And there was another thing, another comment, and T'pril then says, "Well, shouldn't you be saying she has many more faults? Shouldn't you be pointing those out?" And then, Amanda says something along the lines of like, "T'pring knows how I feel about her, and I don't think there's a reason to be unnecessarily cruel," which is implying that T'pril is being unnecessarily cruel in this ceremony.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure. Yeah. I think that I didn't mean to suggest that Amanda set that up as an interaction, but I think that it would make sense if she was encouraged or heartened by Spock's reaction, and it also would make sense if she didn't feel like she could more vociferously stand up for herself, because we have that background from *Discovery* about how Spock was raised in this very certain way because Sarek willed it so, and because he was again bullied on Vulcan by other kids who don't like his human mom. So, understandable that she wouldn't necessarily want to be in a situation where she could risk her relationship with her son by screwing up Vulcan customs or reinforcing her difference, even if it's kind of a sadder, dark dynamic again. But I like that you pointed that out, Sherri. I think that yeah, she does have these kinds of ways of getting through that she's not super cool with the way that T'pril is behaving in this situation.

Jody: I wonder if TOS Amanda would have said the same. Like, it's so hard to know, we can't know. But yeah, *Strange New Worlds* Amanda does a good job, and I absolutely love the "try again, husband." It's like my jaw dropped. It kind of like feeds into the same thing.

Sherri: Yeah. Another example she challenges Sarek's-- Or maybe it's in contrast to *Journey to Babel* know where Sarek says, "She's so emotional," and then it's a joke, you get in *Discovery*, there's an interaction, Sarek's there, and Amanda's talking to Michael. And then, she says that being the wife of Sarek and living with him is impossible. And then, Sarek turns and goes, "Maybe improbable." So, it's a little more lighthearted and it's her sort of giving it to Sarek a bit that it's not so easy to live with a Vulcan either.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. Yeah. It makes me kind of curious to see Amanda and Sarek dating, like flashbacks. And I'm wondering if there's a moment where Amanda is at a bar with her friend, and she's like, "I can fix him."

[laughter]

Jody: That is all of us, isn't it?

Sherri: And I think there was also another scene that stood out to me, or a comment. She said to Sarek, "I moved to Vulcan for you. Would you have moved to earth for me?" He doesn't answer the question, but it's implied-- The way she says it implies that he wouldn't have made that sacrifice.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I do feel like even though TOS Amanda says that Spock needs to embrace his human side, and even though that message is in all of Spock's story, there's also the comment about how logic is like a higher value, basically. And I feel like that is something that *Star Trek* has definitely backed away from in the last couple of decades. And I think that was something that probably came a bit more from Gene Roddenberry, feeling that logic and critical thinking is super valuable, and it is. But recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence and that is something that I think was in TOS but is more explicit in recent *Star Trek*.

Jody: Agreed.

Jarrah: All right. Any other thoughts on *Charades*?

Jody: I just agree that it was one of the most interesting because it was different, almost like I think you said, Jarrah, like it's a comic relief in the storyline. It was really interesting to see him as Vulcan, like a mirror universe, but in a different way.

Sherri: Well, and for me having in this new work world where it's these hoteling and shared workspaces, I totally get it why Spock is losing it at that meeting room when Kirk's got his crumbs on the table and his dirty dishes, is like, "Are you going to clean that up?"

Jody: Yes. I will break you. [laughter]

Jarrah: I mean, you have no idea how many times I've gone into the breakroom and seen that my colleagues just left all their dirty mugs in the sink instead of taking them down to the breakroom dishwasher and just being like, "Do I work--" In my head, "Do I work with children?"

[laughter]

Jarrah: It's just Spock didn't have the filters.

Jody: Yes.

Jarrah: All right, well, so one more thing that I wanted to talk about, and then I'll ask if you have any kind of final thoughts or takeaways. So, I read an article by Keiko O'Brien, who's an academic, and this article was written before *Discovery* premiered, but she was writing about motherhood in *Star Trek*, and arguing that *Star Trek* pre Disco, specifically, she's looking at *TNG* and *Voyager*, and she argues that it reinforces a cultural narrative or a stereotype that a good mother is selfless, compassionate, and patient. So, see for example, Jennifer Sisko, Worf's mom, other characters as well, and that it often links that being a good mother equals or involves a certain amount of denying one's selfhood and often denying sexuality. So, she talks about kind of two different types of depictions, one-dimensional nurturing, or even mystical mothers or mother figures like the ones that I just mentioned.

And then talks about mothers who are shown to have an identity outside motherhood, but their motherhood is downplayed, like Crusher in *TNG*, with her identity being doctor first and Wesley's parenting being done by father figures on the crew. So, I was curious if we felt like, basically, where does Amanda fit into this? Like how's this-- You may also not agree this applied to pre Disco *Star Trek*, but also, where do we feel like *Star Trek* has gone since then

in the portrayal of mothers? Does Amanda fit into one of these categories, or is she challenging it?

Sherri: So, I think Amanda does fall into the category of more the one-dimensional, nurturing mother. I think she does fit that she is a good mother because she is selfless, compassionate, and patient. I think we do see she's definitely denying her selfhood by having to suppress a lot of her human side. Yeah, I don't think we get much from her, other than her being a mother to Spock and Michael.

Judy: I would say along the same lines, but I don't think we're given enough. I'm not given enough to really say either way. To me, Amanda is more tragic than anything. It's just like, I'm just sad for her because difficult husband, semi difficult children, adopted child, non-adopted child. She's doing the best she can. She's not a single mother, but she kind of is in a way. I don't know if there's enough that I could go on. Is she denying herself her sexuality because of it? I don't know. But my takeaway is that it's more sad. I almost take pity on her, a little bit. I want to be her friend, want to have a coffee with her, but I don't know really much beyond that.

Jarrah: I want to have a human ladies on Vulcan night and complain about T'pril with her and share all the hot gossip.

Judy: That's awesome.

Jarrah: Oh, I was also going to say when we were just talking about Spock being mad in the breakroom and working from home, I was like, "Well, for all we know, I guess Amanda could be virtual schooling people on some human planet from Vulcan."

Sherri: True. And maybe we'll get-- in the coming seasons of *Strange New Worlds*, maybe we'll see Amanda Grayson more, and maybe we'll get to see more sides of her and what she's doing on Vulcan outside of her identity as a wife and mother. And I read the article that you were referencing, Jarrah, and to me, it was really interesting, and I had to think quite hard to think of what mothers do we have in the Star Trek universe that sort of don't fall into one of those two categories. And for me, there was really only two that came to mind. So, for me, Keiko O'Brien was one. I mean we knew she was a botanist, she had a career. We know she took a sabbatical on Bajor for at least six months away from Molly and Miles. She was a school teacher as well. So, I think we got a lot of-- She wasn't a one-dimensional mother. And I don't think we got the sense that her identity as a botanist came first over her being a mother to her children. So, I think she sort of broke those two depictions mentioned in the article. And then, maybe another one is mirror Philippa Georgiou as the adopted mother of Burnham.

[laughs]

Jarrah: Yes. Yeah. I definitely don't think she's suppressing-- denying her sexuality-

Sherri: No.

Jarrah: -Or that she's particularly nurturing or mystical.

Sherri: Exactly.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Is it Lwaxana, is a pretty good example of how sexuality can still come through no matter what. [laughs]

Yeah. I think that the thing with Lwaxana and potentially with mirror Georgiou is that I do think that we're, ultimately later on we see with Lwaxana, like she is a good mother in her own way. But in the beginning, she's very much the monster-in-law type figure where she's showing up, and it's just like, "Oh, God, mother, please leave. You're embarrassing me." And so, I don't know that she fits into a good mother that has sexuality. Georgiou is obviously not a good person, but I do think that we see some level of meaningful connection and it's in a world universe of *Discovery* where there's just a lot more gray areas happening than there was in TNG.

But other things that we would like to see to round out Amanda. I mean, now that we're talking about how know tendency is to portray these one-dimensional, nurturing mothers, or mothers who are divorced from their motherhood role. And the mention of denial of sexuality makes me realize we have not seen a lot of sexy time Vulcan-- We've seen T'pol and Spock, but we haven't seen Amanda and Sarek. I'm here for it, I'd just like to say. They're attractive people.

Sherri: Yeah, I'm here for it.

Jody: I don't disagree.

Jarrah: Yeah. And now I'm just like, obviously it's never going to happen, but young Amanda and Sarek dating and figuring this stuff out, prequel show, or it could be a short trek, sure.

Jody: Some fan fiction aspirations.

Jarrah: Yeah. I need more than just finger touching people.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Yeah. I would like to see her be more than-- I agree to me, she comes across as a tragic figure. And I'd like to understand more if there's particular joy or rewards that she's getting out of this or if she really does just feel stuck, was it like, I got knocked up by a Vulcan, and given what-- I mean, who knows what parental rights situation is like on Vulcan. If I wanted to have a relationship with my kid, I had to marry him, we don't know. Or, it could be that they actually do have a really passionate relationship, and it's just frustrated later because Sarek.

Jody: Because Sarek.

Jarrah: Yes. Well, we also know he has a thing for human women. And the one Vulcan, that was Sybok's mom. But, yeah, later, after Amanda dies, he marries another human woman, and it's just a little weird.

Jody: Yeah. It would be nice to see her just-- as any friend in your own life, it'd be nice to see her happier. Mothers are so busy 24/7, and it's hard as adults to get together if-- I don't have kids myself, but I do know that my friends who do have kids often feel the same way that Amanda does. And trying to find time to hang out and see each other on just like a friendship level can be really challenging. So, it's like looking at your friends who you never get to see, and you just want things to be a little easier for them.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. Yeah.

Sherri: I think it could also be interesting if we got to see Amanda's interactions on diplomatic trips or meetings accompanying Sarek as wife to ambassador and maybe how

she's able to leverage her experience in interacting within that network and maybe influencing decisions and backroom deals to help Sarek either, or the Federation, whoever accomplish the goals. I think that could be really interesting to see how she navigates that world.

Jarrah: Hmm-mm. I think it's also kind of too bad that because of the storyline with *Disco*, with them getting catapulted into the future, so we get to see that the outcome of Spock's legacy was the uniting of Vulcans and Romulans. And maybe Amanda's presence, and maybe Sarek was quietly advocating behind the scenes for just less discrimination and stuff, maybe that had an impact on Vulcan society, even like centuries in the future, and that would have been kind of a cool thing if there was some connection there.

All right, so any final thoughts on Amanda Grayson before we wrap up?

Jody: Only thing I would say is that it's interesting, like Sherri, you said at the beginning, you never really gave much thought to Amanda, neither did I. And when your listener brought up Amanda as an episode idea, it's like, who else can we look at in the same way? Who else do we not pay enough attention to might be really interesting to talk about, so I appreciated this topic as well.

Jarrah: Absolutely. And, listeners, if you think of someone else that we haven't done an episode on and we need to do a deep dive, maybe another underappreciated character, give us a shout. Sherri, any final thoughts from you?

Sherri: No, other than it was a lot of fun going back and rewatching all of the episodes that Amanda made appearances in. It definitely gave me a better appreciation for her as a character, and I just hope we get to see more of her in *Strange New Worlds*.

Jarrah: Awesome. All right, well, that's about all the time we have for today. Sherri, is there anything you would like to plug or social media coordinates you would like to share where people can find you?

Sherri: Sure. I'm not too active on social media, but you can find me on Instagram, [@anchoredpisces](#), where I mostly share photos of my *Star Trek* cosplays.

Jarrah: Awesome. And, Jody, is there anything you would like to plug including Ladies Who Trek?

Jody: Well, it would be Ladies Who Trek. I also don't personally use social media, but I do run a Facebook group, and we're on Instagram as well, called Ladies Who Trek. And any woman or identifying woman can join anywhere in the world. And we're based in Ottawa, but we talk about things. You can join in virtually to some parties, join us in person in some parties, and join in on the fun. We're about 350 strong, and so come on in.

Jarrah: Yes. Awesome. And you can find me at [trekkiefeminist.com](#) or over on Instagram. And I guess I'm sort of on Threads now [@jarrahpenguin](#). And to learn more about our show or to contact us, you can visit [womenatwarp.com](#) email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook or Instagram at [womenatwarp](#). Thanks so much for listening.

[Women At Warp theme]

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