

Episode 227 - New Lightyear, New Me: Character Growth in Trek

[Women at Warp theme]

Grace: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity and infinite combinations. My name is Grace and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Sue.

Sue: Hello.

Grace: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello.

Grace: Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar per month and get amazing, like out-of-this-world rewards.

Jarrah: Life-changing rewards.

Grace: Life changing, life affirming.

Jarrah: That will truly make your 2024.

Grace: Yes, absolutely. You could get everything from thanks on social media to our, again, life-changing watch-along commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp.

And, hey, I don't know about you, but I enjoy things, items, physical objects I can see and touch. Big fan of that. Big fan of things that exist viscerally.

Sue: Grace, are you a minimalist?

Grace: No.

Sue: [laughs]

Grace: Never in a million years. I hate minimalism. It's just a scheme by Big Nothing to sell more nothing. Not a fan. I like things and I like objects. And if you like objects, that remind you of things you like, like podcasts that you listen to, you could check out our TeePublic Store. We don't just have shirts, we've got cups and stickers and--

Sue: Pillows and tote bags.

Grace: You should check them out at our teepublic.com/store/womenatwarp.

Sue: If you're a fan of us and a fan of stuff, you can show both fandoms at the same time.

Grace: So, we're here, folks, recording in the New Year, the 20 and 24. It's a New Year full of new possibilities. And while a lot of us are thinking about resolutions and things that we can do to make our own lives better, we wanted to take some time here and talk about growth. Growth, it's an important thing. It can show up in a lot of different ways. It can be little things, it can be big things. And sometimes you don't want to fully commit to a resolution because you got a lot on your plate. So, you just got to look back and ask yourself, how have I grown? How do I want to grow? How are you going to go forward with your year with intent? So, we decided we want to talk about some character growth in Trek.

Jarrah: Earlier today, I just randomly was looking up what's the difference between character growth and development? And while I would say different people have strongly held opinions that are diametrically opposed to each other on this topic, it still seemed that-- and what I think I can propose we use for this episode, it seemed that the consensus is character growth is something the character does. So, something happens and the character responds and the character does something or changes. Whereas character development is something the writer does to tell the audience more about the character. So, for example, telling us backstory. So, for example, Seska turning out to be a Cardassian spy is not character growth. It is character development. Does that make sense?

Grace: She does get some growths though when the Cardassian DNA starts showing up again.

Jarrah: Yes. [laughs] So weird.

Grace: But that's physical growth and not emotional.

Jarrah: Hmm. Yes.

Sue: Oh, my.

Grace: Big difference there also.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, focusing more on characters who changed and not just characters that we learned more about their backstory over time.

Grace: Characters who showed us who they were rather than us being told who they were.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: Show, don't tell. Big fan of that.

Sue: I have a feeling that'll come up again.

Jarrah: [laughs]

Grace: Well, show us how.

[chuckles]

Grace: All right, Jarrah, do you want to get us started with a character whose growth really speaks to you?

Jarrah: Well, I guess that I would start with Seven of Nine in *Picard*, who I think is, in my personal opinion, the best thing that Picard has done. I think that while Seven had a lot of amazing characteristics and great episodes in *Voyager*, that the way they ended things off with the compulsory heterosexuality with Chakotay was not great. And that she was always kind of, I think, infantilized a bit. Yes, she did know very real trauma and very real kind of maturing to do because she basically did have like an arrested childhood development. But it was great to see her have agency, to see how she adapted and maintained her values even when the federation just was discriminating against her. And then, she ends up and she becomes the captain and she does it all while wearing more comfortable clothing.

Grace: I really like the fact that it adds on to the whole Seven-specific mythos and the idea of, no, she didn't finish out Voyager and suddenly everything was fine for her. She still had a whole lot of other growing to do. That was just one step of a big emotional journey for her that she still had to do. And that's a really good way to kind of portray growth, as kind of a multistep, nonlinear thing. It's not always going to be straightforward. It's going to go in a lot of different directions and be very confusing and weird, much like *Picard*, [Sue laughs] but the show, not the character. But yeah, the idea that she still had more learning and more growing and her story had more telling, I really appreciated that.

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. There's the part in Season 2 where she basically has to let herself get reabsorbed by the Borg and going through the whole, realizing what it's like to be able to be treated as someone who's fully human and not be discriminated against and how freeing that is.

Grace: It's really funny, because I immediately was thinking, when you were like, "She had to go back and be assimilated," I wanted to say, "Well, who hasn't been through that going home for the holidays?" And the more you were saying, the more I was like, "Oh, shit."

Jarrah: [chuckles] But, yeah, no, I mean, she has the realization that even though what happened to her was trauma, it was assault, that it made her who she was. And I don't think that romanticizes it or undermines how serious it was, but I think that it is a recognition that we're shaped by all the experiences that happen to us, good and bad, and that she would have been a different person if that hadn't happened.

Grace: Yeah. Which is really something-- I'm saying this from a personal experience, but in a lot of discussion of, not necessarily overcoming trauma, but learning to live with it, a very important thing to learn is, "Okay, it doesn't help me to think who I would be if this hadn't happened to me." It's important to say, "Okay, this is a thing that happened, and it shaped me," and learning to go forward with that is incredibly helpful.

Sue: Yeah. And I just want to quickly return to the comment that Seven on Voyager was infantilized a lot. And, I mean, it was not subtext.

Jarrah: No.

Sue: We were told multiple times on the screen that she was essentially a teenager in human years, if you will. And so much of the, I guess, attempted growth [chuckles] that they had on Voyager was directed by another character who also was not human. Yes, he very much had his own growing to do, but he guided her towards humanity in a way that was sort of fictionalized and idealized at the same time.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. It's like training someone how to be a human by making them watch, like romcoms.

Grace: Sue, do you have one you want to talk about?

Sue: Yeah. I also am going to go to more recent Trek, and I want to talk about Rok-Tahk.

Grace: Yay.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Let's, please.

Sue: I love Rok-Tahk so much. All of the characters on *Prodigy*, I think, grew a lot in the season that we've seen so far.

Grace: I don't know about Jankom, but yes.

Sue: Okay, fair. Most of what we got with Jankom, I would say, was development because it was backstory. But now, it's *Time Amok* is the episode with the oscillation of time and Rok gets stuck in the really, really slow moving, I think, time for her. So, more time passes for her than for anyone else.

Grace: And it's time that she has to spend completely isolated and alone from all of these friends she's come to emotionally connect and depend on, which is brutal.

Sue: And even in this 25-minute episode, we see that at first, she's despairing, but then she decides to take action, and she teaches herself all of science.

Grace: All of science.

Sue: And then, even when that experience is over, she is now super interested in science and interested in so many things that she can't decide which area she wants to focus on. And I love her so much.

Grace: This traumatic experience led me to hyperfixate, and now it's my superpower.

Jarrah: I feel like after a certain amount of time, I would just think, "Well, it's always just going to be terrible," and then just eat a bunch of chips.

Grace: Well, we did see that she ate a bunch of her protein goop, and she was going through it. Very clearly, this was a rough time for her, and I appreciate that we got to see, no, she wasn't able to immediately jump into action. She was a kid who got very frightened and upset about this, as would happen. And really, some of my favorite things that have happened on *Prodigy* have been based around-- what am I trying to say? Leaning into the idea of-- Oh, hey, and remember, these are children going through this, trying to cope as children, putting a weird ass, whimsical sci-fi death trap.

Sue: But honestly, if adults went through the same thing, I would be sad and scared too. But we're just supposed to be better at pretending we're not.

Grace: Oh, yeah. And that's part of what I love about children's media when done right, is being able to portray that and the fact that, no, we all get scared. There's just different ways we learn how to cope with it or different ways we learn how to express it and express it to the people around us.

Jarrah: I think that Dal also has a lot of great growth in *Prodigy*. I mean, like you said, basically everyone does, but Dal was a character that I don't think is meant to be like the most likable at the very beginning.

Grace: No, he's just out for himself. That's what he's had to do. Yeah.

Sue: I have a friend who insisted on calling him Rainbow Dash for the first half of the season.

[chuckles]

Jarrah: Oh, my gosh. Yeah, but he has to learn how to be a leader, how to think about other people's feelings and recognize that he can't just tell them what to do and expect they're going to do it. He has to actually care about them.

Grace: You can't just railroad the people around you into doing what you want.

Jarrah: And he has to realize that he can trust other people again because he's also been hurt and traumatized.

Grace: Yeah. Really, really early on, we get that episode of Janeway hologram just being like, "Okay, anytime you need help, I can help you out." And he's like, "No, thanks. We got this." And then after a while, he's like, "Okay, we need help. I hate asking for it, but we need help."

Jarrah: Yeah. The Kobayashi Maru episode where he does it, like, 50 times because he's not.

Grace: Okay with the idea of admitting that he lost at something. We get a lot of different points of Dal being incredibly humbled, and that's kind of his entire arc of the first season. I think. The Dal who's like, "Okay, I'm just going to moonwalk on out of here with this spaceship. I don't care if these people come with me or not. I can ditch them if I need to," towards the one who's able to take the huge dressing down that he gets in front of Starfleet to just prove that he should be there, he would not have been able to do that at the beginning of the season.

Jarrah: So, do you have one on your list, Grace, you want to highlight?

Grace: This is going to be a very-- I think, kind of a minimal one, comparatively speaking. But I want to talk about bold Boimler while we're talking about newer stuff specifically, because it's not like the hugest change, but the fact that Boimler specifically goes out of his way to be like, "No, this is the person I want to be. This is the kind of person I'm going to act more towards being." That is personal progress. And being able to identify, and at the risk of sounding kind of crunchy, saying actualize, but realizing the person you want to be is the first step towards taking the actions towards the person you want to be and actually putting that into practice can be really hard. And so, I really appreciated the arc of him becoming bold Boimler, such as it was.

Jarrah: I also really appreciate the learning Boimler goes through when he gets promoted and has other people under him and realizing that he has to trust people, but also that he takes so seriously the fact that he's responsible for their fate and that he could get someone hurt or injured or killed. And I can very much feel like how that would put you in a spot of feeling like, "Oh, well, I need to take all the risk on myself," but actually, it's counterproductive. While I definitely don't have to order people into dangerous situations ever, I can definitely relate to the sort of responsibility hoarding tendency and the feeling that, "Oh, well, it's just faster if I do it," and recognizing that you need to treat people under you like how you wanted to be treated, and actually give in responsibilities and delegate to them and listen and trust that they can do it and give them space to fail when it's safe to do so.

Sue: I really appreciated the way they framed that for him in that his fear was about making sure that no one was injured.

Grace: Yeah. From the boiler we first met in *Lower Decks*, it could have really easily been like, he's afraid that it's going to make him look bad if they screw up or something. But no, he really does have their best interests at heart.

Sue: Right. Our typical framing of this kind of story is like, they don't want to get in trouble if a subordinate screws up. They want to get the praise for a job well done or the overcommitted, "I don't have time to teach you, so I'm just going to do it myself. It'll be faster if I just do it." And I like that this one was purely-- it wasn't necessarily questioning the abilities of the ensigns in that he thought they were going to do it wrong, but it was the fear of if something goes wrong, they could get hurt. And I appreciated it.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: That's the thing I appreciate about Boimler. So much of his entire base of actions is based around being frightened of something, but he's trying to be bold, and you've got to respect that. And how many of us hasn't had some kind of leader who just couldn't delegate because they specifically were like, "No, I'm the only one who can do it right. Ugh, just let me do it." So, we've all seen how this can go in a lot of different ways, but Boim's, he's coming at it from a good place.

Sue: And shout out to T'Lyn too who also grows a ton since we have known her on the Cerritos, but is the one to tell Boimler, because he's also sort of dealing with imposter syndrome at the same time. And she says, "You got this promotion because you are capable, you earned it. So, go do it." What an encouraging friend she is. And going from seeing her placement on the Cerritos as a punishment to feeling like that's where she belongs, it's just-- I want to hug her and she'd hate it.

Grace: [chuckles] It's true. I want to keep following this character. We all, I think, kind of became enamored with her when we first saw her on *Wej Duj*. And I'm glad that they were like, "Yeah, we can work with that."

Jarrah: Yeah. I wanted to highlight Mariner too, because she's someone that I think had pretty slow evolution in the first couple of seasons. But I think it was necessary for that to happen for her to get to the change that she made in this past season and the ability to stop self-sabotaging and recognize that she's a good leader and a good officer.

Grace: And sometimes a good friend.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. And earlier, she does have some other changes around, just realizing she can work creatively within the system and things like that. But I think major evolution this season being Season Four.

Grace: Damn, Quimp having the patience of a saint while dealing with her on a bender and being like, "What are you doing here? What is this?" What a guy.

Sue: I really appreciate Ransom's place in Mariner's story as well because he takes the time to try to figure out why she does self-sabotage and goes and looks at her records and sees the history of promotion, acting out, demotion. And says, "Oh, I'm not going to let that happen this time." So, he is seeing her patterns and then deciding that she needs a different kind-- or seeing that she needs a different kind of support and then providing that. It goes to show how the environment and the people around you can either help or hinder your growth.

Grace: Also, how just having one invested person can really change your life's trajectory.

Jarrah: Well, should we go in reverse chronological order then?

Grace: Yeah, let's go for it.

Jarrah: I feel like we've covered our main list for new Trek. Oh, actually, wait, I have one more, but it's still reverse chronological order because it's mirror Georgiou.

Grace: Oh, go for it.

Jarrah: I like this because it's not like a black and white redemption arc, nor should it be, but she starts out being a straight-up villain.

Grace: Well, I wouldn't say straight.

[chuckles]

Jarrah: Yeah. Eating a nerve ganglia soup and just killing people with impunity.

Grace: Having sex with and then threatening Orions.

Jarrah: Yeah. But she is challenged upon being stuck in the Prime Universe to see how she could potentially have been different had she been Prime Georgiou. And through her relationship with Burnham particularly, but also through her time in Section 31 and her relationships with other Discovery crew members like Tilly, she becomes way more nuanced. And then, she's forced to confront her health issues that are caused by the shift into the future. And so, we get to see her dealing with that fear and stuff as well. So, she's never fully able to become like a nurturing mother figure. But I think it's better that she is just so complex.

Grace: I don't think nurturing is on the menu for mirror Georgiou.

Jarrah: No.

Sue: But speaking of *Discovery*, I mean, there's growth all over that show.

Grace: Growth out the wazoo, growth out the warp core.

Sue: I mean, literally, they have all been through a ton. And I know a lot of us who deal with anxiety, identify a lot with Saru. I know a lot of neurodivergent folks identify with Tilly. The growth for both of those characters, I think, has been really incredible. I mean, when we first meet Tilly, she says, "I'm going to be a captain someday." Now, it doesn't seem like that's in her plans anymore. Saru, I mean, literally goes through a transformation with Vahar'ai. Personally, that's one part of the story where I don't necessarily love that they dealt with his anxiety through a biological process, and now it's not a problem anymore.

Jarrah: Felt kind of bogus, yeah.

Sue: Yeah. But I still love him. Burnham has been through so much and changed so much. Is it Kennedy who said she had to leave literally everyone thousands of years behind in order to rediscover her humanity after being raised by the Vulcans?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Oof.

Grace: Oh, my goodness. So many characters we're so proud of.

Sue: If we're going reverse chronological, after a show with all of the development, let's talk about *Enterprise*.

[chuckles]

Grace: I'd argue that T'Pol has some of the most character growth in the.

Jarrah: Yep.

Grace: Specifically with her starting out the show, also kind of feeling like she's being punished with this chore of taking care of the humans, to reaching a point where she's not only a trusted member of the crew, but also is emotionally invested in the people around her. And in an alternate future, was fully willing to be Archer's caretaker, when he started having some degenerative health problems. That is not the T'Pol we first met.

Jarrah: I think that one of the changes that I most appreciate is how her eyes are opened to the issues with the Vulcans in *Enterprise*. And that she's kind of forced to confront that her blind faith in her government was not super great. And then, she becomes a revolutionary, sort of, briefly. And she has stuff going on with her mom and everything like that.

Grace: Yeah. Not terrific.

Jarrah: Yeah. I am personally not the biggest fan of the Trip-T'Pol stuff, but that's just me personally. But I think that T'Pol's growth is not just about becoming more human. It's not just that Vulcans are weird and other, and humans are relatable to the audience, and therefore she needs to be more like us. It's also about just her worldview and how that evolves.

Grace: She really does learn that we're T'Pol in this together.

Jarrah: [chuckles] All right, so you know how earlier were saying about how Ransom being in Mariner's corner was really critical for her growth? Another person who is set on a path to growth by the faith of one person is Tom Paris when Janeway bails him out of a penal colony.

Grace: Which not every boss will do for you, let's be honest.

Jarrah: No. But yeah, I mean, over the course of *Voyager*, I think he has somewhat of a similar arc to Bashir in terms of they both start out being like. I mean, Bashir is definitely more wide eyed and naive, but they both start out being kind of horn dogs and kind of obnoxious, particularly to women. Although Bashir is definitely doing it from a bit of a more, like I said, naive place. Paris is very cynical. He basically joins the Maquis just to piss off his dad. And he goes from that to being responsible, empathetic, self-sacrificing. He is in jail on the ship for 31 days. Is that what it's called? 31 days? Because he stood up for a planet and their inhabitants in defiance of the prime directive. Yeah, he becomes a loving partner, great dad.

Sue: And a mentor really for poor old Harry Kim.

Jarrah: Oh, yeah.

Grace: This might be me projecting a little bit, but I think both with Tom Paris and Bashir, there's a certain level of them kind of trying to project this persona. So, the obnoxious horndoggery that they first give off and kind of the personalities that they give off early off are both of them kind of trying to give off an idea of the kind of person they want to be seen as, but not actually are. Like, with Tom, we are seeing him just have a penal colony and him realizing everyone on this ship sees him as that guy who just got out of jail and kind of his personality feels like a little bit of a reaction to that. Like, "Oh, you think I'm going to be the

schmuck who just got out of the clink? Fine, I'll be a huge schmuck. Deal with it." And with Bashir, he's really trying to overcompensate and trying to be like, "Yeah, I'm just naturally great. Everything is fine. I do not have any deep-seated issues about the things I am good at or need to overhype myself up or anything. It's all fine. [laughs]"

Sue: When they're both first introduced, it feels very much like they have been shoved into the Captain Kirk role that people who aren't Star Trek fans think Captain Kirk is.

Grace: [laughs] A little bit, yeah.

Sue: Right. The swashbuckling ladies man kind of thing. But you can throw Riker and Ransom into that category as well. But the main difference here, Ransom, of course, is supposed to be a caricature, so it works. But Riker has a charm that Paris and Bashir do not have.

Jarrah: Also, Riker's an ethical slut. Whereas Paris is just like creeping on women who clearly aren't interested.

Grace: He's throwing himself at women at work.

Jarrah: And so is Bashir, just in terms of how he pursues Dax. And she humors him, but she is not into it.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Although I am still mad at Riker for asking Troy who the father of her magical baby was.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Yeah. That's pretty messed up. None of your business, Riker.

Sue: But he grew from that experience as well.

Grace: Who's next on this roundtable of picking a character?

Sue: Well, if we're talking *Voyager*, we have to talk B'Elanna.

Grace: We gots to.

Sue: Let's say having explosive anger.

Grace: Yeah, that's kind of her main character trait at the beginning. She's good at engineering and she's real pissed off.

Sue: I mean, not to say that anger is not justified.

Grace: Hell no. The more we find out about her past, the more we're like, "Oh, yeah, she's got every right to be pissed."

Sue: But she learns to-- control isn't the right word. What's the phrase I want--

Jarrah: Manage?

Sue: Manage? Yeah.

Grace: Live with?

Jarrah: Express it in productive ways? Like, while it's valid to be angry, it's not valid to punch your coworker in the nose.

Sue: Right. Not often, anyway. [laughs]

Jarrah: I mean, I don't think Carrie did anything wrong, particularly at that point. He was just a little mansplainy maybe.

Grace: Wait, wait. There was a guy on *Star Trek* being mansplainy?

Sue: [laughs]

Jarrah: I don't know if we even saw what really happened, but it sounded like she just didn't like him touching the engines.

Grace: Well, also, let's talk about her personally and how she sees a family dynamic. We get her not happy when she's talking about her personal family. And I'm thinking specifically with the doctor and the episode where he's doing a holographic family and he has a very *Leave It to Beaver* attitude and she's like, "No, that's not what families are like. Families are freaking messy and uncomfortable." Yeah, that's what you got to learn to deal with with family. But then, we reach a point where she and Tom decide they want to have a family. She wants to be in a relationship with him, they're going to raise a kid, and she's kind of like, "Okay, it's going to be messy and weird, and my kid is going to have to deal with a lot of the baggage that I have the same way I had to with my mom, but I'm going for it. That's how it's got to be." Sort of learning to be okay with a thing that she had a very deep resentment for.

Sue: And we see her go through that frequently, let's say, [laughs] repeatedly, dealing with her identity and if her experiences growing up would affect how she raises any of her children. Some people could call it repetitive, but I think it actually is more real. Like, growth is not linear. And just because you maybe unpack something once, that doesn't mean, like, "Okay, better now. We all move on."

Grace: You've still got to keep dealing with some things sometimes.

Sue: Yeah, things come up over and over again, and sometimes things you thought you've moved on from come up out of nowhere and you've got to deal with it all over again.

Grace: Especially when we're talking about family baggage, that is unrelenting.

Sue: Oh, my God.

Grace: Well, a character that I think has kind of a similar growth we could talk about is Major Kira, if we wanted touch on her next. Sort of similar in the way they started out with being like, "Oh, no, this is our angry lady. Isn't she mad about everything? Oh, such rage." At the same time, not one of those characters is like, "Well, the angry lady needs to calm down." It's very much with both of them a case of them figuring out how to work on themselves a little more through what they go for. And I'm not going to say that means they needed to be fixed or anything, but they both figure out more what they need to do for themselves and how to take care of their feelings.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. It's like moving out of survival mode.

Grace: Yes, exactly. Especially with Kira.

Jarrah: Exactly. And I think that largely, Sesko gives her space to go through that and to pursue what she needs to pursue. We get to see her reevaluate her connections with her former resistance friends. Look at, what does it mean for me to now be in the position where I control access to resources and stuff for my own people? And also, I think, most notably, have to grapple with her feelings about the Cardassians. And there's numerous episodes and instances where she has to really form a more nuanced look, including eventually helping fight for the liberation of Cardassia.

Grace: Definitely not something the first time we saw Kira would have done.

Sue: We also see her sort of lean into examining her faith.

Grace: Absolutely. That's a really rough type of growth. Yeah.

Sue: And that's not a typical story for *Star Trek*.

Grace: Goodness no. Religion is goofy and weird, and we should point that out as much as possible. No, people are allowed to have nuanced and complicated relationships with it.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Grace: [laughs]

Sue: But if we're going to talk *DS9*, we have to talk about a certain Ferengi family.

Grace: [gasps] Do we?

Sue: [laughs]

Grace: Could we, please?

Sue: Yeah. Both Rom and Nog go through incredible amounts of growth throughout the series, but I kind of think it's more impressive with Nog because I feel like he's not around as much.

Grace: That's absolutely true. You look up the amount of episodes Nog is in, you feel like he should be there every episode, especially when he becomes like a regular member of the crew, like the literal crew. And then, you're like, "Oh, no, no, he's just a guest star actually."

Jarrah: I also like how Nog kind of combines the concern for others and the belief in the more Federation-y values that Rom has with the business acumen of Quark.

Grace: That's absolutely true. Yeah.

Jarrah: So, he brings that into his interactions in a way that uses it for good and it's very cool.

Grace: He really did get influenced by both of them growing up.

Jarrah: And then, we see him go through post-traumatic stress. Before that, we see him struggling to figure out how to be accepted by the cool kids at the academy. Just really so much from being basically a kid just stirring up shit on the promenade with his buddy, Jake.

Sue: I mean, Rom too. Rom goes from basically a punching bag when we first meet him.

Grace: The punching bag who will betray Quark whenever he has the chance.

Sue: [laughs] And terrible at business. But we find out that he is fantastic at engineering.

Grace: He cares about his whole family an awful lot.

Sue: And he joins O'Brien's team, and he starts a union and [chuckles] he marries a Dabo girl and he has--

Grace: And they become a power couple.

Sue: Yeah. He has a feminist awakening and he becomes the Grand Nagus. Like, what? [laughs] But I buy all of it.

Grace: Yeah. And you love it for him, don't you?

Sue: Absolutely.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And he loves his mom.

Grace: He just is a big mama's boy. Jarrah, do you have another example you'd like to bring up?

Jarrah: I think if we are going to *TNG*, then I wanted to mention the somewhat repetitive growth of Data.

Grace: Oh, please. Different from trying to break out of patterns that are hard to break out of so much as we need to keep going back to draft one Data, so that we have the show being consistently the same selling point with this character, especially when we have the *TNG* movies.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. Yeah. It's not growth to be like, "Hey, I'm a flotation device."

Grace: The thing I specifically think of is he goes from learning, "Ah, these are funny. This is the things that people find entertaining," and that's like a specific thing he's learning about on the show. But then in the movie, we have him be like, "Oh, if I push you in the water, that will be comedy." It's like, Data would know better. Data would know a lot better at this point. He's learned it. We saw it happen.

Jarrah: And I don't mean to dismiss the growth we saw him go through in the series because I think there really is growth there. What he goes through with raising Lal and dealing with her loss, trying to date, trying to act.

Grace: Being a cat dad.

Jarrah: Yeah. And I think that at the end of *Picard*, there is some very nice additional growth, development and movement, I guess, for the character as he becomes basically an entirely new version that's an amalgamation of Data lore and before. And I like that integrating those different versions of him. And I feel like it's just like a more progressive, well-done version of *Face of the Enemy*.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Had to make the good side and the evil side go into the same guy.

Grace: [laughs]

Jarrah: But basically, he fights the bad guy for love and it's very sweet.

Grace: I just imagined a Data Sailor Moon transformation sequence and it was pretty great.

Jarrah: Yeah. But oof, the *TNG* movies for-- not just him, but some of the other characters too also get very repetitive development.

Sue: Whenever they wanted *The Next Gen* characters to attract a new audience, there was definitely a character reset for just about everybody which, for those of us who were with it the whole time, was frustrating.

Grace: Who were invested in the characters they had become, it's also just really-- ugh, I'm not going to say, "Big explodey-explodey, sci-fi, boom-boom, movie questioned my intelligence," but it felt like it.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: But you know who did not get reset when they came back in *Picard* from *Next Gen*?

Grace: Who please?

Sue: That would be Worf.

Jarrah: Yup.

Grace: Son of Mogh.

Sue: Yeah. I guess this should have been when we were talking about *Picard*.

Jarrah: Yeah, I forgot.

Sue: Yeah, me too.

Grace: Look, part of our growth is learning that we don't need to be such sticklers about the list.

Sue: Or that we could put it in order. [laughs]

Grace: [scoffs] Growth isn't linear. Neither is this list.

Jarrah: I just feel like I need life coach Worf in my life. And I love that he has rethought violence and things like that. I do know at least one person who felt like it was way too much of a character swing, but personally, I found it both heartwarming and funny.

Sue: I love that he literally said, "I've been working on myself." [chuckles]

Jarrah: Yep.

Grace: How great is that to hear from Worf?

Sue: But the Worf we meet in early *TNG* is another one of the angry security characters.

Grace: Yes.

Sue: Right? And we're supposed to believe he's this badass but every foe that comes on the ship beats him up immediately. And that's supposed to--

Grace: To show that they're tough, they have to beat up our tough guy.

Sue: Supposed to prove that they're tough, but it just makes our guy look terrible.

Grace: He's just very maladjusted and angry.

Sue: Right. He does grow throughout *TNG* and then *DS9*, but I feel that *Picard Worf* is like the badass that were told he was back at the beginning of *TNG*.

Jarrah: He also just really adjusts on his toxic masculinity because he has that point early in Season 1 where he talks about basically, like, "I can't have sex with human women because I'd break them."

Grace: "Because they're delicate."

Jarrah: Yeah. And then, while he has a few moments where he seems like he appreciates women's rights--

Grace: They have a bunch of weird points where they decide that Worf is going to be the asshole guy of the week.

Jarrah: Well, like in *The Outcast*, his comments are really not cool. But yeah, here, he's left toxic masculinity behind.

Sue: I think we could also maybe file that in the trying to be more Klingon than Klingon category.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: He's developed some realistic relationships with his culture based on who he is.

Sue: He has sort of left that desire behind, for sure.

Jarrah: All right.

Sue: So, in this *TNG* era, I also want to mention Wesley. Aside from becoming a traveler on other dimensions of whatever, I mean, the real growth that I see in Wesley, the thing I think about is that when we meet this young kid, he sort of idolizes Starfleet, and we get the impression that that is from his father that he doesn't know very well, and he put Picard or Riker or Geordi or whichever male character of the week into that role for himself. He memorizes the ship schematics, and he talks about going to Starfleet, and he wants to do all this at the Academy, and he wants to do this, and he wants to do that, and he's on this top flight team. And as he's at the Academy, he realizes that maybe this is not for him. Maybe Starfleet is not what he wants to do and that is just a huge shift for that character. And it can

be a hard thing to express to the people who have watched you want this with every fiber of your being until that point.

Grace: And can be incredibly rough, especially when that's what all of the people around you know you as that being your goal and your end-all be-all. And contrastingly, we could talk about Jake a similar way in the fact that it isn't so much shrugging off the expectation he's come into as just being like, "This was never for me, and I've got to be honest about that." So, it's a different type of growth, but it's still growth.

Sue: Yeah. Jake knew that Starfleet wasn't for him and the pressure for him was coming from outside, from Ben. And I think the point of growth for Jake is when he gets the courage to express that and say, "This is not what I want."

Jarrah: And even after that, he has to go through more growth as he learns that-- he goes from being a pretty young and cocky writer, figuring out that, "Hey, I can't just go into a war zone and write great reporting and be like a war reporter because I'm scared as hell."

Grace: And also, "Oh, God, war is hell." He gets to have that whole Hemingway arc.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm. But also, he's basically one of the few people on the station during the Cardassian occupation even though his dad's out there in danger.

Grace: One of the few civilians also.

Jarrah: Yeah. And he matures as a writer and a person.

Grace: Just a character who you're all around super proud of for everything he's gone through and not just because you saw him as a little, baby-cheeked child.

Jarrah: Dressed like a bus seat.

Grace: Dressed like a bus seat.

Jarrah: Well, I feel like this is good point to move into *Those Old Scientists*.

Grace: Yeah, that is correct. I have Sulu on the list just because I love the fact that-- maybe character growth isn't the right word for it as much as evolution of the character. But going from the super earnest plant and fencing-loving guy to a guy who can literally smooth talk his way into stealing a helicopter, I love that for him. And then he gets to be a captain. He just going places, that guy. He's just going up the ziggurat.

Jarrah: Yeah. I feel like Spock is almost like an obvious example, but one that maybe flies under the radar as an example is Janice Rand, who goes from being in a handful of episodes as basically the captain's woman to-- I mean, I guess she's not literally, but she goes from being the captain's yeoman and to being his love interest. And then, the actress was done dirty.

Grace: To say the very least.

Jarrah: And she was kicked off the show. It's cool that she gets to come back in the movies, although maybe *Star Trek* motion picture, not well as cool. She's the transporter chief. Not really cool where it goes, but by *Star Trek 6*, she is on the Excelsior, and then she's a fairly big part of flashback.

Sue: Yeah. I would say for *TOS*, just because of the way television worked, the growth that we're going to see from those characters is mostly going to be in the films.

Grace: Yeah. Because there's still a very episodic nature to the TV there.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Sue: And even with Spock, I would say a lot of the growth of that character does not happen in *TOS* but happens in *Strange New Worlds* and the films and *Next Gen* and *Discovery*.

Grace: That's kind of the beauty of Spock being a character who spans so much of the franchise, is we get to see all these different iterations of him and all these different points of growth for him. To coin a phrase, it's pretty fascinating.

Now, we've talked about a lot of different types of growth. If we each had to pick who's the character, do you think that has grown the least throughout their character's tenure? Who's ungrowing? Who's unmovable?

Jarrah: The first one that came to my mind was Miles O'Brien. I think he has a lot of kind of micro growth. So, he has a lot of episodes where, although it's often the same thing, it's basically, "I became less prejudiced briefly," or, "I went through a really horrible thing that was forgotten by the next episode." Even, *Hard Time*, for example, at the end, there's a moment where they sort of are saying, like, "Oh, this is going to stay with him." And it's sort of like the way that Janeway talks about Rok-Tahk, where, "Oh, he's been through a lot." Yeah, absolutely. If someone had actually lived all that time in that kind of awful prison condition.

Grace: We're just never going to bring it up again though.

Jarrah: Yeah, exactly. So, then it's like, "Oh, I have to take care of a Jem'Hadar kid for a bit. Maybe I'll be less discriminatory to Jem'Hadar for a bit. And, oh, maybe Cardassians aren't all that bad, but let me still use slurs about them." I think ultimately, he is not that dissimilar a character at the end of *Deep Space Nine* than he is at the beginning of his appearances in *TNG*.

Sue: I would say, I think Malcolm Reed is probably one.

Grace: I think part of the problem with Malcolm Reed is we see him initially and we have to kind of be like, "Okay, what's the arc we think that the writers are going to go for here?" And then, they are kind of like, "Nah, we're going to change a lot about this character based on stuff."

Jarrah: Yeah, I don't feel like most of the men of *Enterprise* changed a great deal.

Grace: God, no.

Jarrah: Like, Trip is probably the most and that's partly responsive to the attacks on earth and stuff and his relationship with T'Pol.

Grace: Unfortunately, we don't really get to see Mayweather because he doesn't really get to do a lot, which is sad because he's such an interesting concept of a character. I would have loved to see them do more with him.

Sue: You know what? I don't think Geordi really changes a lot either. Again, not until *Picard*.

Grace: Unfortunately, his major change that we see is getting new eyes, I think. We could see him experiencing this great, profound friendship with Data and the rest of his crew. And dealing with a lot of his own personal past. But I don't think we see a lot of actual growth, which is unfortunate because over and over again, Geordi is one of those characters who I think he got kind of done dirty in a lot of ways.

Sue: Oh, yeah.

Grace: And just not given the care and attention that some other characters got.

Jarrah: I mean, I think LeVar would agree.

Grace: Yeah, absolutely. [chuckles]

Jarrah: I'll also mention Kim and Chakotay.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Even Tuvok, I think, doesn't have a lot of growth.

Sue: Tuvok grows for a Vulcan. He never murders Neelix.

Jarrah: But he doesn't grow as much as T'Lyn in way more time.

Sue: Correct.

Grace: Harry couldn't even get a promotion. We don't get to see any real character growth for him beyond just getting closer to the people he's on board with, which is a form of growth in farming community. But I love the idea though of Harry getting back to earth and then just everything comes together for him. He meets the love of his life, they have a million kids, he starts up a leper colony.

Jarrah: Wait, there's leprosy in the 21st century?

[laughter]

Grace: Makes an incredible patent or something and by the time he dies, is basically Bruce Willis at the end of *Death Becomes Her* just like universally beloved and accomplished. I love that idea, that it was Starfleet holding him back all along. [laughs]

Jarrah: I also don't think every character needs tremendous growth in a series format. But I think that if we had more time, you could probably identify that there are several characters of color who don't--

Grace: Oh, yeah. You can definitely see that some characters' growth and arc are prioritized over others.

Jarrah: Yeah, clearly in some cases, just writers had more ideas with what to do with some people than others.

Grace: Very true.

Jarrah: But overall, I'm still a big fan of Tuvok and Miles O'Brien.

Grace: They're good guys. We like them an awful lot, you see. And while we are listing people here, both the characters that we don't think grew and the characters that we do think grew, this is in no way an end-all be-all list. It's just ones we wanted to talk about. So, before you start sending us messages saying, "We forgot someone," we didn't. We just only had time to talk about these ones and chose to talk about them.

Sue: Not a comprehensive list.

Grace: Not a comprehensive list. We are not Wikipedia. Try as we might.

Jarrah: You are very welcome to send us your list.

Grace: Yeah, let us know your thoughts, because--

Jarrah: We don't have time to talk about everyone.

Grace: No, that's about all the time we have today. Sue, where can people find more from you online?

Sue: Right now, because social media is a trash fire, you can just find me over at the show's website.

Grace: And, Jarrah, what about you?

Jarrah: Well, for the next two weeks, you can find me writing 2023 on everything instead of 2024.

[laughter]

Sue: You can also find me at *trekkiefeminist.com*.

Grace: And I'm Grace. And you can find me across social media at *@BoneCrusherJenk*. And also soaking in a bathtub full of ethanol as I deform and change and stretch beyond your wildest imagination into something completely new and terrifying. That's the kind of growth I'm looking for this year.

Jarrah: Oh, you just need to get that devolutionary virus thing from *Genesis*.

Sue: Barclay's Protomorphosis, I think.

Jarrah: Nice.

Grace: No, I think I want to become something new and horrifying.

Sue: That works.

Grace: I want to be Gracely's Protomorphosis though, my own thing.

Jarrah: All right.

Grace: It's important to have goals, you see. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit *womenatwarp.com*, email us at *crew@womenatwarp.com* or find us on Facebook or Instagram *@womenatwarp*. Thank you so much for listening and a Happy New Year. Take it easy on yourself.

[Women at Warp theme]

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