

Women at Warp Episode 89: Opening Other People's Mail

[Women at Warp theme]

Grace: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp: A Roddenberry *Star Trek* Podcast. Join us as our crew of four-women *Star Trek* fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Grace and thanks for tuning in. With us, we've got a full house today. We've got Sue.

Sue: Hey everybody.

Grace: We've got Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello.

Grace: And we've got Andi.

Andi: Hello.

Grace: Now, before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. To start, our show is entirely supported 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 that we do. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts, really. Just wherever you find us, rep us as best you can. Now, do we have any other housekeeping before we get started?

Jarrah: I think just Star Trek Las Vegas.

Grace: Yes, both me and Sue are planning to be at Star Trek Las Vegas.

Sue: That is correct. And we will be with the rest of the Roddenberry Podcast Network and as soon as we know exactly where that will be, we will let you know.

Grace: We've got a very near and dear to our heart's episode today. We are talking about listener mail.

Andi: You've made it sound extremely exciting and I'm now very excited.

Grace: That was the idea. I was getting people excited with the power of my voice. Because you know what, people responding to us and sending in their opinions is what gets us excited about our topics and gives us stuff to work with.

Jarrah: Definitely.

Grace: So, our first letter is from Ann via email. Jarrah, would you like to share that one with us?

Jarrah: Sure. Ann wrote, "I was wondering if any of you have gotten a chance to see the YouTube Series: *"Star Trek Continues?"* It is intended to serve as the final year of Kirk's original mission. What I like about it is that they expand the roles of women on the bridge. I also like that they have great set pieces, great callbacks to previous episodes, and even featured cameos by *Trek* actors. We get to see Uhura, of course, but we also get to see Ensign Barbara Smith (from "Where No Man Has Gone Before") get promoted to Lieutenant and get a fleshed-out story arc. The actress who plays Smith appeared on *Enterprise* as

Jane Taylor. My favorite "new" character on the show is Dr. McKennah. She's played by Michele Specht, and she's given the role of ship's counselor. She is intelligent, compassionate, and amazing." And she goes on to list her favorite episodes and that they're all on YouTube.

So, thank you for that email, Ann. I definitely have watched a bunch of *Star Trek Continues* and have got a chance to spend some time with Michele Specht at Star Trek Las Vegas. And she will be coming on the show for a supplemental episode to talk about *Star Trek Continues* and the importance of fan art, fan production, fan creativity in general a bit later in the year. So, stay tuned for that.

Sue: Yeah, we also did watch *Lolani* and talk about it a little bit in our Orion Women episode.

Jarrah: Yeah, I would say, we actually were looking at doing an episode on Star Trek Fan Film in general, and that might still happen, but there's a lot out there. So, it seemed like maybe just too big of a scope.

Andi: You can't just take a dip in that pool. You got to dive in.

Jarrah: Yeah. But certainly, having skimmed the pool, *Star Trek Continues* has some of the best quality set and costume pieces, acting, scripting. One of my favorite episodes is *Embracing the Winds*. I really like this episode that takes on the idea of *Turnabout Intruder* and whether women could be in command or not. And it has women who is up for a captaincy against Spock and discussion of institutionalized sexism. And it's pretty awesome. So, stay tuned and we will be interviewing Michele and talking more about *Star Trek Continues* in a supplemental episode in the fall.

Andi: Yay.

Grace: All right, for our next email, we've got two questions from listener Janet. Sue, do you want to take those for us?

Sue: So, her first question is, "Tell me about a scene in Trek where you asked, 'Am I the only one who thinks this is problematic?'"

Andi: I don't really think like that. I guess for me, if I find it offensive, I just assume that other people are going to find it offensive as well. And also, I know, and this is a criticism we get all the time and there seems to be this idea that we actively watch things looking for stuff to be offended by. And I don't think that's what Janet is saying, but I've heard that said about us before.

Grace: We don't need to look for things to get offended by. It comes to us.

Andi: It's a very natural, organic process.

Sue: Said about any women who offers criticism of a television show.

Jarrah: Truly.

Andi: Absolutely. But for me, it's really just like, I don't want to get upset about things I don't want to be like, "Wow, that was super racist." That makes me sad. So, when I'm watching something and I find something to be offensive or problematic or however you want to say it, it's very rare to me that I would be like, "Am I the only one?" because I'm sure I'm not.

Grace: It is really tricky though when you find something that's bothering you and you are the only person in a group who caught it or is the only one who's in a position to notice that there's something wrong with it. Trying to remember exactly how this went down, but I was in a group of people, and I think we were watching some really bad swords and sandals sorcery movie, and there was a chick trying to give a rousing speech in a chainmail bikini. And everyone around me was going, "Yeah, because we're going to take you really seriously when you're wearing a bikini," and I realized, "I'm the only woman in this room."

And I also should probably say something about how that's a little slut shame-y, and you aren't allowed to judge someone that much based on how much skin they're showing, especially in this setting. But I'm the only one who will want to have this conversation. And that's a pretty crappy feeling.

Andi: Yeah, there's always this push and pull about wanting and deciding on whether or not you're going to speak up, whether you're going to speak up again on behalf of yourself or a community that you're a part of, or if you're going to speak up on behalf of other people. For me, it's always easier to speak up on behalf of other people. When it's for me, I'm usually just like, "Eh, that's fine." And then, like, that awkward smile. And it's always a tough balance, like, are you going to get such aggressive pushback that it's probably better just not to say anything? Yeah.

Jarrah: Andi, would you say that you had any degree of that. I know that you're not the only one that feels this way, but around *The Inner Light*, it strikes me that, that's an episode that's very beloved by a lot of people and I mean, you're not the only one among us even, but you have a very strong opinion on that episode.

Andi: Yeah, I hate it. And the thing that was funny for me is that everybody was super excited for me to watch that episode because they love it and they wanted me to love it too. And then, I didn't. But I don't know, someone's always going to agree with you, even if it's just like one person. And I have gotten people, like, when I bring up my criticism of *The Inner Light*, there are people who agree with me, which is really nice. It's sometimes difficult to have a minority opinion, especially since it shouldn't be a big deal to just be like, "Oh, that's interesting. I didn't get that at all. I disagree." And that should be a normal, healthy discourse type thing.

But in *Star Trek* fandom, and in fandom in general, it's more like, "You're wrong and you're a terrible person for being wrong, and your opinion is terrible. And let me tell you, snowflake, why you shouldn't be offended by that." And it's hurtful, especially if it's something that's super personal to you.

Sue: It amazes me the idea of, "Well, you should only say positive things about a show if you like it."

Grace: You're not going to have a lot to say sometimes then.

Sue: Yeah, I don't understand that. You can only praise something? I'm not ever out to attack. But if I have a problem with something or I don't understand something or I don't agree with something, I'm going to say it. I will say a couple years ago, there was a rather public incident of this, which I don't really want to talk about, but I thought my head was going to end up on a pike because I did not like an episode and I said so. It was apparently a huge scandal. I don't get it.

Andi: And you'll notice too that the people that say that don't follow that at all. It's just that the things that they get upset about are different. So, they're going to tell you all about how the Klingon design is a travesty which maybe it is. Like, that's a perfectly valid opinion to

have. But they can have that opinion or they can have this opinion about canon, or they can have this opinion about this character that they hate, but YOUR opinion is actually an affront to *Star Trek*. It's super hypocritical because nobody is going to view a piece of art the same way. Nobody.

And I just don't understand why it's so hard for humanity in general and *Star Trek* fandom in particular to just go, "Oh, that's interesting, man. I didn't see it that way. But that's cool that you felt that way. Tell me more." I don't understand why it's so hard for us to kindly disagree with each other and not turn it into a personal attack. I just don't. That is so foreign to me because for me, part of the fun of discussing things is to get different perspectives. So, when I'm talking about *The Inner Light* and I'm talking about why I don't like it, I like to hear why people did like it, because it's different than how I reacted. So, that's interesting to me.

Grace: And there's also the thing that people sometimes don't take into account, and that is that you are allowed to pick your battles. You are allowed to say, "This isn't great. I don't really have the energy to put into words why it's not great. It's just not great," versus, "This is something that has offended me personally and I really want to make sure everyone around me knows that this has hurt me and that this is hurtful." Sometimes, you just do not have the capability to get inflamed over every small offense and some people do, I don't understand how. But there are some things that are bigger and worth maintaining your anger over, and there are some things that are just minor. And that, again, is something that can apply differently to everyone.

Andi: The other thing is that if somebody says, "I loved something," it depends on your relationship with them. But you don't necessarily have to go, "Well, I hated it, and here's why."

Jarrah: Yes.

Grace: Someone saying that this thing meant a lot to me is not an invitation to change their mind.

Andi: Yeah, essentially.

Jarrah: Well, I think that obviously we have to decide how much energy we're going to put into things, what's going to be important. But also, we get to decide how much energy we're going to put into listening. So, I totally appreciate that if this isn't your thing, you don't have to listen. [laughs] But I actually read this question a little bit differently and the situation that I thought of was when I wrote a review of the *DS9* episode, *Melora*, and I had a reader on Trekkie Feminist who wrote a really thoughtful response as a person with a physical disability, about why that episode meant a lot to her and so that was kind of the reverse for me, because I had written that I didn't think it was an awesome representation of disability because she so-- not that she's hostile because she is shown as, in my opinion, having a right to be hostile, but the fact that no one listens to her and that the whole point is about her changing her personality.

And so, I was like, "Maybe, I'm trying to be an ally, and I'm trying to use the disability theory and the testimonials and the stories that I've heard from people to be able to critique this. But maybe I'm wrong, and maybe people with disabilities who have a way more valid perspective on whether or not this is a good representation. Maybe think it's a great representation." It turns out I'm not wrong, but neither was this woman wrong. There are many different perspectives on that episode, but I think that when people engage respectfully and share their perspectives in that kind of way, that we can reach a better understanding of what these episodes mean to everyone.

Sue: Yeah, absolutely. And I remember when I heard Andi first talk about how much she doesn't like *The Inner Light*. I was one of those fans who watched the original airing, and is widely regarded as one of the best episodes of *Next Gen*. And I was like, "What are you talking about?" And we talked about it, and you changed my perspective on a lot of that episode.

Andi: Maybe we should do an *Inner Light* episode someday.

Sue: We absolutely should.

Grace: The inner workings of *The Inner Light*.

Sue: But you can have a discussion about in which you disagree with another person that does not involve torches and pitchforks. It is possible.

Grace: It is possible.

Andi: When we recorded our very special gay episode about *The Outcast*, I had gone into that, and I've always thought Riker should have romanced a male actor there. For me, it always made sense that she should have been played by a man, because I felt like that would have reinforced the theme that gender is internal. But then, we had Amy on, and she just flipped my mind on it so quickly, where she was like, "No, she's a trans girl. You shouldn't have a cisperson play a trans girl." I was like, "Of course not. What was I thinking?" But there was just this moment where I was like, "I never thought of it like that. You are totally right."

And I still think that it's valid to discuss other ways that could be portrayed and everything, but she had a completely opposite opinion from mine. And I listened to her, and I was like, "Word, you are so right about that." And I love that feeling. I love that feeling of somebody just blowing your mind like that. It's why I like discussing stuff like this usually.

Jarrah: Totally.

Grace: All right, so moving on to Janet's second question. She asks us, "Have you ever got the rep sweats?" And then gives us a definition. The phrase comes from an article interviewing pop culture critic Jeff Yang, who is great for one thing, talking about the show that his son stars on, *Fresh Off The Boat*, versus a show that he had to review back in the 90s when it was first airing, Margaret Cho's *All American Girl*, and how for both shows, they were a big game changer for representation of Asian Americans. But how when *All American Girl* aired, he wasn't crazy about it but did feel like he had personal stake in wanting it to succeed. I think I remember reading somewhere that he described the show as having so much canned laughter and forced jokes that it felt like Margaret Cho was reading her lines in a hostage negotiation.

Andi: Oh, wow.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. They say that the rep sweats are the feeling of anxiety that can come with watching TV shows or movies starring people who look like you, especially when people who look like you tend not to get a lot of screen time.

Andi: I guess I felt that in the sense that I want things to succeed and I might be a little kinder to them otherwise just because I know how important they are. But at the same time, part of what we're reaching for with representation is, I guess, space to fail completely. So, if

there wasn't only one show about an Asian family on TV, then *Fresh off the Boat* wouldn't have to carry all of the weight.

Grace: Yeah. If there hadn't been a 20-year gap between the two shows led by an Asian American cast, probably wouldn't be such a big deal, but there it is.

Andi: Exactly. I remember when *Black Panther* was about to come out, and I was like, "Even if this movie sucks, like, I'm still excited for it," and then it was amazing. So that was awesome. But even if it had been horrible, it would still be a step forward and still be important. But also, how many superhero movies have we seen with white dudes that absolutely sucked and nobody goes, "Well, I guess we can't do any more superhero movies about white dudes"? Like, that'll never happen. We want to get to the point where there's not so much responsibility for each of these properties to succeed because they are the only one.

Sue: Right. Taking this into *Star Trek*, I was nervous about *Discovery* and I really, really wanted it to succeed and I really, really wanted to love it. And for the most part, I do. But at the same time, I am not going to pretend to not have a problem with the things I have a problem with.

Grace: I know I have definitely had it happen multiple times where I'll find out there's a new show or a new movie coming out or something and this is a fun one that pops up every couple of years or so where there's always a new crime drama coming out about some kind of detective who's got a mental disorder of some sort which gives them crime-solving superpowers. And every time that comes around, I'm like, "Oh, that could be cool. Actually, talking about people who are non-neurotypical in the context of law enforcement. I would like that to be good. I would like that to not be terrible. Please, please." It's terrible. It's bad again every time. Every damn time. Every time.

Jarrah: Yeah, I'd say as a white cis straight woman, I definitely haven't experienced the rep sweats to the degree of that's discussed in this article around Asian American shows. However, I think if *Voyager* hadn't come out, I would have way more rep sweats over *Discovery*. I still was worried about it because there was this narrative about how whatever this is an attack on white people or something-- [crosstalk].

Grace: --attack on the straight white dudes.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah.

Grace: SJW propaganda run amok.

Jarrah: Yeah. But I think that because *Voyager* lasted for seven years, that makes it feel a little bit safer even though it was a totally different TV environment. I think though that collectively there was a bit of white women rep sweats around the time of the female *Ghostbusters*.

Grace: There definitely were a lot of mumblings of, "This is going to be great. This is going to be great." "Dear God, I hope this is okay."

Jarrah: And I mean, and I remember when *Bridesmaids* came out too that there was this whole thing about if *Bridesmaids* fails, no one's going to make a female-led sort of raunch comedy again even though there were a few other ones around that time. But *Bridesmaids* was a big turning point and then *Ghostbusters* was another one and there's still the action figures are on shelves and no one's buying the action figures and all of these narratives around it. And what happens if this is a market failure, are the studios ever going to do this

for us again? Which is ridiculous, but I feel like we're more or less over that first degree of hurdle. We just need better, more diverse representations.

Grace: So, moving on to our next question. Andi, do you want to head this one up?

Andi: Yes. All right, from Lydia, we have, "With *Discovery's* success new trek shows may possibly be in development, some top secret in plot. What would you love to see as a new show? Let your imagination run wild. I mean, personally I'd love to see a *DS9* follow-up with Jake and Nog who is now a captain himself. And, of course, all the others. Some hijinks, a Bajoran prophecy revealing Sisko's return. I NEED IT.

Jarrah: Nice.

Grace: Of course, we'd all love more *DS9* follow-up.

Andi: I would love a brand-new show with no characters we know.

Sue: Agreed.

Grace: It's always interesting to see what new can be added to the landscape of *Star Trek* and what more can be done with the concepts we already have.

Sue: So, we've heard the rumors that there are up to five shows in development, that at least one of them is to be an animated show, and the possibility that Patrick Stewart has signed back on to play Picard. My brain puts that all together to say if we're rebooting *TNG*, that's going to be our animated show.

Grace: I mean, wasn't *Gargoyles* pretty much *TNG* animated?

Sue: A little bit, but to me, that's how you get all of these actors back without having to worry about, like, the android aged again.

Grace: Yeah, that does solve a lot of problems, doesn't it?

Jarrah: Can we have Yar back-?

Grace: Yeah, that'd be nice.

Jarrah: -if we are going to get an animated *TNG*?

Sue: For sure.

Jarrah: We probably have to figure out some way to still self-actualize Worf, but we can do that without killing her off.

Grace: Let's hope so.

Sue: But I also think it would be fun if we get a second animated show to do a Department of Temporal Investigations show.

Grace: Isn't that kind of fringe?

Sue: I think it would be a lot of fun.

Jarrah: *Warehouse 13*?

Sue: *Warehouse 13*-- I mean, there was a show called *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century*. Okay.

Grace: Yep.

Jarrah: Yep.

Sue: I can have a DTI show.

Grace: Yeah, totally.

Jarrah: Oh, I mean, yeah. No, I don't disagree with that. I don't want to see a Section 31 show. I don't know, something, someone-- [crosstalk]

Grace: I would get bleak really fast.

Jarrah: Yeah, too close to home.

Grace: Yeah, I do like this Jake and Nog idea here but the way I see it, it would have to be a buddy road trip story thing about a whole host coming-of-age story of them being like, "Our friendship meant so much to us once, but now we're completely different people. We're men with our own lives. How do we continue but keep honoring how much our friendships meant to each other?"

Sue: Road trip in space.

Jarrah: I like the idea that they're looking at doing a Starfleet Academy show. And when we did our book club on the Starfleet Academy comics, we talked about how that could possibly go wrong or be awesome. So, you should take a listen back to that episode. Yeah, just try not to make it too much like *Star Trek Riverdale*. *Riverdale*'s really fun. I just don't want *Star Trek Riverdale*.

Grace: Starfleet Riverdale.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: There are plenty of directions they could go in because they have a whole universe to play with. Like, they could do-- [crosstalk]

Grace: Literally, we have a multiverse at this point.

Sue: They could do the organization of the Federation and do a politics show. They could do Starfleet JAG and do a crime show.

Grace: *The West Wing* in space.

Sue: They could do anything.

Grace: But at the same time, anytime we have had multiple *Star Trek* series running at the same time, we've seen some question and animosity over about which one are the producers putting more love and energy into. That's generally the reaction I've heard from actors talking about being on *TNG* when *Deep Space Nine* was starting up, and with *Voyager* and briefly, the overlap of *Deep Space Nine*. You've got to wonder, can Paramount maintain multiple *Star Trek* shows doing different things at once?

Jarrah: I don't know if they're looking at doing them all at once, and I would hope not for that reason. As much as I love all the *Star Trek*, I don't know that they need to all be on simultaneously. Like, a couple and especially if they're targeting different demographics in terms of age is what I mean.

Grace: Oh, God, we're going to see Starfleet babies, aren't we?

Jarrah: But one thing, the other rumor that's out there is that one of these would possibly involve the character of Khan. So, I just want to put in what should be probably pretty obvious now. But just given that Alex Kurtzman did work on *Into Darkness*, please do not cast a white dude as Khan. And also, just be careful about it because there's a really interesting potential to show that racial superiority does not equal whiteness. But we're in very fraught times. So, not also creating an idea that brown people are terrifying, also a good plan. So, get some diverse people in there if you're going to be writing that one.

Andi: Yeah, yeah.

Grace: Make sure you've got a broad writer's room there.

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: And don't forget the broads.

Jarrah: Yep.

Grace: See what I did there? All right, moving along to our next one. Jarrah, you want to lead it?

Jarrah: Yes. I am going to summarize this email from Dave, which, by the way, came with the subject line, oo-mox. And when I just was checking my email one day and I went, "What the- Am I okay to open this?" Turns out, yes, it was a great question. [laughs] So, Dave says, "One aspect of *TNG* and *DS9* that I've long found problematic is the issue of Ferengi oo-mox." And basically, he's saying that, "We're told that the lobes are a major erogenous zone for the Ferengi, but they seem to make no effort to conceal this fact and often discuss oo-mox openly. Being open to discussions about sex and pleasure is fantastic and it would be great if we could see other species, such as humans, discussing things like masturbation openly and doing so in a sex positive manner. However, oo-mox seems to be held to a different standard. Whenever a character wants to manipulate a Ferengi, oo-mox seems to be the go-to and no one seems to bat an eye."

And so, he highlights a few episodes like *Menage-a-Troi* and *Chain of Command*, and *DS9's Q-Less* that show women enticing Ferengi with oo-mox to achieve their goals, which he says, "Seems to reinforce stereotypes of women 'sleeping' their way to the top or performing sexual favors to get their way." And also, in *DS9's Facets*, Dax does that to Quark in front of everyone to convince him to help their plan and everyone just kind of laughs.

Grace: Yeah. Is that like the equivalent of her just making a pass at him?

Jarrah: Kinda, yeah. I don't know what do you guys think?

Sue: It's an excellent point. You're absolutely right. [chuckles]

Grace: It's a definite point. But at the same time, we're kind of given the impression that Ferengi sexuality is kind of a joke in the sense that they're kind of dumb, they're kind of raunchy, and they're kind of sleazy.

Jarrah: I think it ties into this idea that men can't be sexually assaulted, which we talked about, obviously, not a true thing in our episode on sexual assault. This idea that boys will be boys, and if someone comes up to you and grabs your balls, you must want it because you're a guy or grabs your ears in case if you're a Ferengi male and I think it echoes that it's just funny because of course you would want it.

Sue: Right.

Grace: Which is definitely problematic.

Jarrah: One of the episodes that bugs me the most, which also shows the flip side of those tropes, is in *Little Green Men* when Nog, I think, gets Garnet, the nurse, to give him oo-mox without knowing what it is. Like, she just thinks she's massaging his ears. And we all know that she's basically jacking him off and that is super, super gross. It is not true yet--[crosstalk]

Grace: Jacking him off in front of his dad and uncle. That's creepy.

Jarrah: Yeah. And then, it's like, "Oh, ha, ha, ha." But it just-- you can't even imagine what it would be like if you didn't know what sex was and you were tricked into doing that. That's a really horrible violation.

Grace: It's very gross. Yeah. Can we just retcon oo-mox and save ourselves a whole bunch of trouble? Is that something we can do? Who do we have to talk to get that done?

Sue: Probably Ira Steven Behr.

Jarrah: Armin Shimerman?

Sue: That too. [laughs]

Jarrah: Gene Roddenberry? I don't know-- [crosstalk]

Grace: They've got to work it out.

Jarrah: Was oo-mox not a thing before *Menage-a-Troi*?

Sue: I don't think so.

Jarrah: Like, the Ferengi came around in season one, but they weren't the same. They were supposed to actually be threatening, and they were always supposed to be hypersexualized, but I don't remember the whole rubbing the ears thing, but it's possible it did happen before that. I'm not looking at a list of Ferengi episodes, but it certainly wasn't super early on in those-- the battle and those other really early Ferengi episodes.

Grace: All right, moving on to our next question. Sue, do you want to take this one from Keith?

Sue: Yeah. So, Keith said about episode 63, our Disco Fever episode. "I was listening to the podcast review on the first half of *Discovery* and everyone seemed to love Paul Stamets. I love him as well, but you guys seemed to like how he was prickly and appreciated his gruffness. Paul could be viewed as a character who isn't likeable and as someone who has

clashed with other members of the crew, particularly Burnham. Dr. Katherine Pulaski is my favorite character in *Star Trek*, and she has been vilified for having those same qualities. I'm curious as to what you all think is the difference between these two characters? Is Dr. Stamets easier to like because he was interested as a regular crew member and wasn't replacing an already established character?

Grace: They're all pretty good points. And it definitely helps the character that he isn't just brought in to replace someone out of the blue and who you're supposed to automatically like. We are given this impression that he is rough around the edges from the get-go.

Sue: He's also a man.

Grace: He's also a man, yeah. But again, there's also the fact that while he butts head with people, he isn't necessarily antagonistic the way Pulaski is. We don't see him, like, picking on Tilly or anything where we see Pulaski just straight up being a jerk towards Data.

Jarrah: First of all, it's worth noting that this was an email that we got after the first half of the season. So, I think things changed a little bit in the second half. But in the first couple episodes, I was already primed to Stamets because I'm a Broadway fan and I was excited that they cast Anthony Rapp, and I was excited that he was going to be part of a biracial gay couple. And we get to see Wilson Cruz being a very sweet character who loves him. So, it kind of softens him a bit.

But I have a friend who's a bi-man who really disliked him and said that he thought in the first couple episodes that he was sort of like almost a negative stereotype of a bitchy queen kind of character. And that changed over the course of the season. But that at first, he felt it was actually like a not very challenging representation of queer identity. So, that was just an interesting view that I thought.

Andi: See, the reason it doesn't bother me is because I understand his motivation. So, it doesn't seem to me that he's just being mean to be mean. It's that he's stressed out and that he's being forced into using his technology for purposes that he doesn't want to use it for. And so, his antagonism towards Lorca especially made total sense to me and because there was a motivation there and because he wasn't-- Yeah. It's like if he was just being mean-mean to be mean, that's one thing. For me, it was more like this is his only chance to register his displeasure because he's powerless. So, for me, that made sense, and it didn't bother me to the point where I enjoyed it, because I think it's funny how grumpy he is. It makes me laugh.

Sue: I think the Pulaski comparison has quite a few things going on. It's very simple to say, "Well, Pulaski is a woman and that's why people hate her, because she has these character traits." And that is far too simple of an answer, but I do think it contributes. Ask any woman in the workplace and they're going to tell you they feel like they have to be nice all the time because they're going to be dismissed if they're mean or direct or perceived as aggressive or bossy. All of those things, it's a problem today.

Another instance is that the two characters are 30 years apart. Another thing to consider is that we don't really have a Data analog in *Discovery*, at least at the point at which Stamets is introduced, because a lot of the complaints we still hear about Pulaski are she was mean to Data. And Data is the puppy that was being kicked. Stamets is not kicking a puppy. He's also introduced at the same time as everyone else.

Grace: Except for when he was electrocuting a tardigrade at one point. [laughs]

Sue: We didn't know that then. [laughs] He's introduced at the same time as everybody else, except really for Burnham. So, there's are lots of different things at play, but I definitely think that misogyny is one of them. [laughs]

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: And we don't get a reason for Pulaski for why she's sort of crusty. We just get she's old, or she's old-fashioned. You're invited to fill it in with stereotypes because there's no story about, well, she's like Stamets, that she's frustrated because she wishes she was somewhere else. There's no reason for us to immediately jump into empathizing. But I think you're right that there's also a gendered and ageist double standard.

Sue: Well, it's also very clear that she's modeled after Bones.

Jarrah: Yep.

Sue: And that is not as clear with Stamets.

Jarrah: No.

Grace: All right, so moving along to this next question here. Andy, do you want to take this one from Karen?

Andi: Yes. So, Karen said on Facebook, "When I played *Star Trek* in the back yard, even though I stole my sister's boots and plotted out adventures, I was never modeling myself after the women and didn't think it was odd at all to play Kirk or Spock (though I did have a pretty big Spock crush)." Who can blame you? "Just wonder about what was that like for you? It's struck me that growing up on *TNG*, no matter how imperfectly written, you actually did have women role models. So, where as it would never occur to child me to play, say, Janice Rand or something, I just automatically went for main characters, you actually had choices. I wonder how that affects each generation as adults."

Jarrah: So, did you guys play *Star Trek* as kids? I mean, I guess Andi didn't, because you didn't-- And Grace also didn't start as a very young kid.

Grace: I played *Star Wars* most of the time, up until my teens, I wasn't really into *Star Trek*.

Jarrah: But I think this is a really interesting question. And so, Karen had been writing about the generational gap between some listeners who were fans of *The Original Series* when it first aired or in early syndication versus us, who did not come along until much later. I didn't play a lot of *Star Trek* but this reminds me of my friends and I used to be big fans of the 1960s *Batman* show that for some reason played every afternoon. And there weren't a lot of women in that, but there was, I think we still felt a lot of pressure to be feminine. And so, we would always fight over who got to be-- There were three of us, and there was only Catwoman and Batgirl. And so, it was a fight for who would get to be Catwoman or Batgirl, and the other person would always have to be Batman. And yeah, because it was seen as like, "Ugh. Who would want to play a boy?"

Sue: Interesting.

Grace: I'm just remembering, in the schoolyard, there was lots of wanting to play X-Men. This was back when the cartoon was on. And there were many times where I would have people be like, "Okay, we're going to be this guy. We're going to be this guy. Grace, you can be Wolverine." And I'd just be like, "Why would I be Wolverine?" "Because you've got the longest nails," and I'd be like, "Yeah, I do. I want to be Wolverine."

Sue: I didn't play *Star Trek* growing up because there wasn't anybody else who really watched it. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah, that was my problem.

Sue: But, yeah, like Grace, we played other things, *X-Men* or whatever. And there was never any question about girls playing male characters, but I do remember that none of the boys wanted to be the women characters.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And that it's sort of that way that you hear about how just feminine things are seen as worse or bad. How girls can wear boy clothes, but boys can't wear girl clothes. And there have even been studies on the fact that girls grow up knowing how to identify with male characters, because so much of the media we consume has a male lead. So, I think it's easier for girls to do that.

Grace: And there's been a lot of discourse about how in fandom, there are so many people who identify with more male characters or want to see romantic pairings between male characters, because we just get a much wider width and breadth of them, for one thing, and we get to see them fleshed out a lot more than women characters are.

Sue: They tend to be more developed. But I will tell you, in my daydreams, I definitely played Dr. Crusher in my head. [laughs]

Grace: Of course, you did.

Jarrah: And I played Troi, but I don't think that was really the most empowering choice. Even discussing the strengths of Troi, I didn't recognize those at the time, so I just thought Troi was the prettiest. So, goes to show you that maybe my childhood self was not the most developed feminist psyche, but that was where I was going, and what I wanted to be was someone who was pretty and smart, but pretty first.

Grace: Sometimes, I was Leia, sometimes I was Luke. And in hindsight, that's probably pretty telling.

Jarrah: But I do think it's important and how things change that there are options and that we make it more okay for kids to feel like they can play characters regardless of gender, and that there are options for kids to play characters that they see themselves as.

Sue: Yeah, when we played *Ghostbusters*, I was Egon.

Grace: Well, Egon was the best Ghostbuster.

Sue: Clearly.

Grace: Yeah. [Sue laughs] I mean, no contest. So, we've got another email of Tim replying to a previous mailbag episode we had. You guys mind if I read that one out?

Sue: Take it.

Jarrah: Go for it.

Grace: “As you discuss the use of real people in *Holodeck* episodes, I refer you to the *Voyager* episode where Tuvok’s wife is created for shall we gently say ‘therapeutic’ purposes. In this case, to thine own self be true. Tuvok needs this or he will die.” Pon far is fun like that, isn’t it, guys? “And he must imagine this character is his real wife and yet the holodeck wife will undoubtedly be treated with respect even if her purpose serves, in part, a sexual capacity. So, my question is, when the Doctor on *Voyager* imagines expressing his feelings to Seven, but can only do it on the holodeck – is it creepier to have a romantic relationship with a holofake of a real person than to just have a physical relationship that serves only that purpose and there is no commitment attached?”

Well, that’s a tricky one, isn’t it?

Jarrah: I feel like it is creepy when there is a person having a relationship with a fake, like a holo version of a character without their consent. And we talked about this, I think, in the mailbag episode, about how we’re assuming that the holodeck, that the computer has knowledge of that person that you wouldn’t be able to just create in your imagination. So, that’s where it becomes feeling more invasive than someone today. Obviously, a lot of people have fantasies about other people that they just conjure out of their imagination. But I don’t have a computer that tells me exactly how Hugh Jackman’s body looks underneath clothes.

Grace: There’s a reason likeness rights are definitely a thing and something you can sue over.

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. So, for me, the likeness thing is a bigger deal than people just having-- Like, I don’t have an issue with people having a physical relationship with no commitment attached. It’s the issue of consent that’s a big deal.

Grace: Yeah, definitely. But is a holographic character in a position where they can fully consent with full knowledge, if they don’t know they’re a hologram?

Jarrah: I guess it’s how developed are they, right?

Grace: Yeah. So, with Moriarty, it would be cool.

Jarrah: Like, Moriarty would have to consent. [Grace laughs]

Sue: If it’s part of their programming to consent, they really don’t have the ability to actually consent.

Grace: Holy crap, guys.

Jarrah: So, what about Janeway’s holo-boyfriend?

[laughter]

Grace: Yeah. The one who she makes slightly taller and more handsome?

Jarrah: I mean, I don’t love that episode, but I’m not particularly perturbed by it. I mean, it’s partly because we talked about this a little bit in an episode that we did recently where we were talking about the Doctor, and that they don’t really seem to have a super clear way that they say, like, “Well, this hologram is sentient. Well, but this hologram has the potential of becoming sentient.”

Grace: Well, what hologram doesn't have potential?

Jarrah: Yeah. So, then if we say, well, all holograms have the potential of surpassing the limits of their original programming, then there should be no holographic sex with non-sentient holograms because they could become sentient and really regret it.

Grace: We need a Voight-Kampff test for sexual consent.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: That's a third date activity though.

Jarrah: Complicated. So complicated. But that is a good question.

Grace: Most definitely.

Jarrah: But if it's like Data versus an android that doesn't have a positronic brain.

Grace: Yeah, like Data is definitely able to positively consent. We see him do as much.

Jarrah: Like if we had android that went to *Measure of a Man* and didn't have friends and they all--[crosstalk]

Grace: Aside from being a really depressing episode. [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. Then, would they-- I mean, oh, gosh, it's so hard to-- [laughs]. I can't definitively rule on this one. I guess it depends, like, what is their--?

Grace: There's a lot of ifs, ands and buts here.

Jarrah: Yeah. Because I certainly wouldn't have an issue with, like, Tuvok going off with a blowup doll, but-- [crosstalk]

Grace: He just sharpies his wife's face onto it.

Jarrah: But it's complicated because it's science fiction technology. [sigh]

Grace: Sci-fi and sex, why you so complicated?

Jarrah: I don't know. But you can let us know what you think or ask us more questions for a future mailbag episode by emailing crew@womenatwarp.com or messaging us one of our many platforms.

Grace: Well said. And that about wraps it up for us today. So, Jarrah, can you tell our listeners where people can find you on the internet?

Jarrah: Yeah, you can find me on Twitter [@jarrahpenguin](https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin).

Grace: And, Andi, where can people find you?

Andi: You can find me most easily on Twitter [@firsttimetrek](https://twitter.com/firsttimetrek), where I'm live tweeting through my first time through *Star Trek*.

Grace: All right, Sue, where can people find you online?

Sue: You can find me on Twitter [@spaltor](#). That's S-P-A-L-T-O-R.

Grace: And I'm Grace. And you can find me on Twitter [@bonecrusherjenk](#). And you can find me in the future- Oh, hang on a second. If you'd like to reach the show, you can find us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook [@womenatwarp](#). Check out our blog show notes at [womenatwarp.com](#) or send us an email to [crew@womenatwarp.com](#). Thank you so much for joining us and have a good listening experience. If you're binge listening to this, we hope the next one's just as good.

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