

Women at Warp Episode 94: “Elogium”

[Women at Warp theme]

Jarrah: 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 Jarrah, and thanks for tuning in. Today, with us, we have Kes. I mean, Grace.

Grace: I'm Kes in this situation? That seems a little out of character, but I can live with it. Hey, everybody.

Jarrah: And we have-

Andi: Neelix.

Jarrah: Tuvok. I mean, Andi. Sorry, I was going to say Neelix, but I thought it was too mean.

[laughter]

Grace: I don't know. Maybe we're talking Gucci Campaign Neelix.

Andi: Yeah, right. He's bringing sexy back.

Jarrah: Yeah. And we're going to be talking about the Voyager episode, *Elogium*. But before we do that, we have our regular housekeeping, which is reminding you that our show is supported 100% by our patrons on Patreon. If you have a dollar or more a month that you would like to contribute to our show, you can hop onto patreon.com/womenatwarp to support us. It helps us get out to conventions and upgrade equipment and pay for hosting and all that kind of things. So, we really appreciate your support and thanks for everyone who's supporting us already. Again, if you're not already a patron and want to become one, you can do so at patreon.com/womenatwarp.

And another way that you can help support our show is by leaving us a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen to your podcasts. That's a way that helps other new listeners discover us, so we always like to get your feedback in that form. So, any other housekeeping?

Grace: I'm officially going to be at PodCon in the winter.

Jarrah: Yay.

Grace: PodCon. PodCon. PodCon.

Jarrah: Cool. We will post more details of that on our social media and we'll mention it again as we get closer. Also, our next episode after this, which is two weeks from this release, will be our book club, *Articles of the Federation*. So, if you're interested in joining us for that discussion, head on to our Goodreads Group to comment, take a read of the book, and let us know what you think, and maybe we'll read your comment on the show.

All right, so on to *Elogium*. Does anyone want to take a stab at a sort of brief overview of this episode?

Andi: It's like the Kes Pon Farr episode.

Grace: That's pretty much it. Yeah.

Jarrah: Sure. Alien sexy times.

Grace: Also, adding to that weird recurring TV thing of, "Have sex or you will die, but if you have sex, you will die."

Andi: Okay, but see, no, I don't even think of that as a TV thing so much as a fic thing.

Jarrah: That is very true.

Andi: That is a fanfic trope that is very well known, and it always makes me laugh to see it in *Star Trek*. And I always think it's funny that *Star Trek* birthed this trope in fanfic to begin with Spock, who has-- They also started sex pollen with Spock. So, they really did a lot for us in the fic community. So, thank you, *The Original Series*, for that.

Grace: Yes, I would agree with that.

Jarrah: Yeah, so in this episode, there's a few things happening, but the main one is, yeah that Kes is basically going through puberty. And it turns out that women Ocampa only become fertile once in their lives, which means, I guess, that they have to have a lot of multiple births to repopulate. Otherwise, they're halving their population every generation.

Grace: Yeah, already, we have a bunch of questions about the Ocampa with what is even their deal, but this just adds to it.

Jarrah: Yeah. And so, Kes starts going through this early and has to decide whether she's going to have a baby with Neelix.

Grace: Ugh.

Andi: I mean, for me, that would be an easy decision.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Hard no.

Andi: [laughs] Actually, this episode is kind of weird in so many ways, but I actually like it.

Grace: Oh, really?

Andi: Yeah, in many ways, I actually do like it, and--

Jarrah: Oh, yeah, me too.

Andi: One thing that I like is that, for once, all of the plots are on theme.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: So, your B plot is not just some random crap.

Grace: It's more alien sex.

Andi: It's actually tied to themes and to the A plot. But really, when I think about this like whole Ocampan deal, I don't know how they're not extinct.

Grace: Yeah. Yeah.

Andi: Because not only do they have this really ridiculous lifespan, but also you can only be fertile once, okay. And you also have to go through really specific rituals of rubbing of feet and stuff. And it's really a lot of obstacles.

Jarrah: And you have to be bonded for seven days with your partner.

Andi: Yeah, a lot of obstacles here.

Grace: Wait, wait, wait, wait. So, this culture not only has it so that you only really, really, really, really, really need to have sex once, but they make you wait. Like, "Yes, we will have sex in seven days."

Andi: [laughs]

Grace: I appreciate that. That's just such a dick move on Ocampan society's part.

Jarrah: Well, and okay, so seven days in Ocampan time is like a couple years.

Grace: Oh, my God. Why would you do that?

Jarrah: Why would you take that much of your life in coitus with Neelix?

Andi: [laughs] Well, I think this just kind of goes to show that the way they set up the world building for this race really doesn't hold up if you start to think about it.

Grace: No, no. It just straight up makes no goddamn sense.

Andi: Right. And also, it really dives into how absolutely, ridiculously creepy it is that she's in a relationship with Neelix.

Jarrah: Totally.

Grace: That was just creepy from day one though. This just drives it further home.

Andi: It was always creepy, but this episode really drives it home because apparently, she's prepubescent and a lot of the allegory is like teen pregnancy. But with Neelix being like a full-grown adult and Kes being some sort of sexually mature child, and that is a whole load of gross mess, so--

Jarrah: Totally. Neelix has witnessed genocide and been a soldier and a merchant and tartapplesauce on Tumblr, wrote a big analysis of Kes's age difference and basically said, "If one Ocampan year equals nine human years, then Kes is between the ages of 9 and 18 in human terms." That means Neelix took up with her before she was even age of consent in USA and most developed countries.

Andi: Uncomfortable.

Jarrah: "Even if he only started sleeping with her once they came aboard Voyager, this is uncomfortable. But it gets even worse if, as stated, the Elogium is directly analogous to human puberty. Kes is freaked out because she's too young for this to be happening in humans. Puberty in females happens roughly around the ages of 12." So, this means Neelix

is in a romantic sexual relationship with a girl younger than the human equivalent of 12 years old or 14, if you want to stretch it to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Andi: Yeah, it's messed up. It's messed up. And I can't help but feel like they came up with this idea with Kes to kind of fit into this like wide-eyed girl trope.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: And then, when you really start to think about it, you're like gross man, and they could have just made her a regular alien. They didn't need to do this. And I guess I get it because they wanted to do something super alien and weird and different and sci-fi-y, but then you put her in a romantic relationship with a dude, so like--

Grace: A fully grown adult.

Andi: Yeah. And not only just a dude, but like a gross dude that's super insecure and possessive and creepy and tries to control her in every way and the whole thing's super gross. You know what? it's bad within the love triangle, Tom Paris is like the more attractive option, that's not a good sign.

Grace: The more sensible option.

Andi: Yeah. The one that will respect you more is Tom Paris.

Grace: Oh, good lord.

Andi: Yikes.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's super gross. Like, in the very beginning of the episode is another one of the scenes where Neelix is getting all territorial because he thinks that Paris is flirting with Kes. And, he's like "I know people like that." And basically, the subtext of that is like, "You're mine."

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: It's not like, "Somehow, you can trust that I'm going to look out for you better than this other dude," even though they both just want to sleep with her.

Grace: Which is kind of a really creepy recurring theme. Every time you hear a true story of a younger woman who ended up marrying very young to a much older man, usually it falls apart because there is a level of him wanting to keep controlling her there.

Jarrah: Yeah. And he even goes like, "You're such an innocent."

Grace: Oh, my God. This is giving me way too many Woody Allen parallels here.

In Unison: Ugh.

Jarrah: Super gross.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: In some ways, that kind of makes it interesting and I think good that the first person she tells when she realizes what's going on isn't Neelix, but it's Janeway.

Grace: Smart move on her part.

Jarrah: We'll probably get to talk more about the Neelix stuff, but I actually really like the discussions she has with Janeway in this episode. And I think it gives them both a lot of room to sort of demonstrate a caring, kind of maternal relationship and I guess sort of the kind of advice and support you would want.

Grace: Wouldn't that have been an amazing arc for them to do on Voyager? For them to come on board and for Janeway and Co to make her realize, "Hey, Neelix is not your best option here," and for her to ditch him.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah, I mean, she doesn't go that far, but she does definitely support whatever Kes wants to do. She is like, "You're too young. You can't handle this."

Andi: The other thing that I really like in this episode is I really like the Janeway-Kes relationship, but I also really like the Kes-The Doctor relationship, which is one of the highlights of Voyager for me anyway, because I like that Neelix is-- Well, first of all, Neelix is a total douche when he is in the sickbay with The Doctor and The Doctor's trying to figure out what's wrong with Kes. He's in his face and just screaming questions at him, and The Doctor is like "Out," which is the correct decision, right?

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: And then later, he's like, "It's not fair that he's not a real person. He shouldn't be able to tell me what to do." Really, bro? But then later, he says something similar to Kes, and she says, "He's very real to me." Kes is the number one Doctor protector. She is the one that has seen that he is a person before everyone else and fought for him. And I just really love their relationship in general, but it's super cute in this episode where she's really lonely and scared and she's missing her dad. And they have that very sweet talk where he's inexplicably rubbing her feet. And I just think it's very cute and nice and such a cool relationship for both of them. It really deepens both of their characters and that's the best kind.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Grace: Yeah. That's what good conversation should do for the characters.

Andi: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Yeah. I think in this episode, it works really well. Actually, the last scene they have together is one of my favorites, where she has decided she isn't going to have the child. And he talks about like, "While there's a powerful biological drive, at times almost impossible to resist, species are driven by these urges in order to survive." And she goes, "But isn't that why we have minds to look beyond biological urges, to consider their consequences? If I'm going to ask myself to look at those consequences, then I have to ask myself some questions." And she talks about, "I'm not sure I'm finished growing. How can I help a child grow?" And I'm just like damn. I'm totally pulling that beginning part on my mom next time she raises grandkids. It's like isn't that why we have minds? Biological clock isn't everything.

Andi: [laughs] Yeah, but this scene is a good kind of microcosm of why I like this episode, is that it has a point of view and a really interesting one, and it kind of tackles some really complex issues to do with pregnancy and relationships and mating rituals and all this sort of stuff, but it does it in a really interesting way and I think it works.

Grace: Meeting rituals cause me so much trouble on the day-to-day basis.

Andi: [laughs]

Jarrah: So, maybe let's just go back to the Neelix stuff for a second. So, he starts up being territorial and then the next thing is Kes starts acting weird. And this part, I think, is supposed to be kind of just a humorous regurgitation of pregnant women be crazy tropes.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Where she's eating dirt and just generally eating everything and feeling super weird and--

Grace: Not even pregnant, she's already got the pica.

Jarrah: Yeah, well, I mean, that happens, but-- And then, Andi, you mentioned, they go to sickbay and he's really annoyed. And then when they figure out what it is and she tells him, he is so preoccupied with how it's going to affect him. And I get like that's a normal thing to think about, but I feel like she spends the whole time making him feel better.

Grace: And relationship wise, that is a bad sign.

Andi: You do have to admit though that it's pretty funny that when he is trying to drag her to sickbay, she takes the flowers he brought her in apology and eats them.

Jarrah: That is really funny.

Andi: That is--

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: -gold.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: It's so funny. It's such good physical comedy on her part. She's just sitting there and she just grabs a handful of flowers and just is like [onomatopoeia] [laughs] so funny.

Jarrah: Totally. But, right away, he's trying to talk her out of it being like you know-- And she does a really good job just like calmly countering all his weird ideas, like somehow, if she had a baby, she couldn't continue studying medicine and all this kind of stuff. And then basically, when they reveal that he has, I think, 50 hours to make a decision before the stage will pass and she won't be fertile anymore, he basically just bails to go deal-- I mean, good that he's thinking of his own questions and whether he wants to do that, but I don't know. It's just annoying. Especially at the end, when she decides she's not having a kid, then she's comforting him because he had decided suddenly that he was really looking forward to a baby.

Grace: Oh, for God's sake, Neelix.

Jarrah: But I do really like the Neelix and Tuvok scene where Tuvok is like, "Why would you be doing anything different with a girl than a boy?"

Andi: I wish Tuvok was my dad.

Grace: We all wish Tuvok was our dad. #TuvokForDad2018.

Andi: [laughs] I mean, to be fair, he is kind of like the dad on that ship. He's just sitting there eye rolling while everybody is getting into shenanigans, and then he makes them run laps. It's pretty great.

Grace: I don't know why, but I just had the great mental image of Tuvok just straight up doing some of the John Mulaney dad quotes, like, "You have the moral fiber of a chocolate éclair."

Andi: [laughs]

Grace: Want to see that now.

Andi: And, I mean, that's a great scene anyway, that Neelix-Tuvok scene because I just really like Tuvok in that scene and the way he breaks down what being a parent means to him. And it kind of--

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: It really brings us into sort of his emotions even though he says he does not have them.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Towards being so far away from his children. I especially like too that he has that line where he talks about how his daughter benefits from his presence and his parenting as much as his sons. And I just really dig the way he talks about both the responsibilities and the joys of having children, while at the same time not saying he doesn't experience joy. BS, but okay.

Grace: And what a great detail to put into your character, who is constantly presented as being cold and detached and just can't deal with this to be actually a really good and involved dad.

Jarrah: Totally.

Andi: And it's part of one of the smaller themes in this episode, because most of these themes are about sex and procreation, but it's also about the fact that there are people on Voyager who have loved ones far away. You see that throughout the episode. Janeway makes a comment about how she hopes that her boyfriend will wait for her, and Tuvok's got kids, and Ensign Wildman has a husband that's back on DS9. Just reminding us that there are missing loved ones for a lot of these characters and reminding us of the tragedy that is Voyager, that is their everyday life. Even when they're dealing with all of these shenanigans, they're mourning. In a lot of ways, they're mourning that people that they lost and that they're not sure that they're ever going to see. And, I mean, especially with Tuvok, can you imagine like your dad goes off into space and doesn't come back, and him knowing that they're waiting for him, that's heartbreaking.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. And this is also the episode where we meet Samantha Wildman and she is pregnant, apparently having got pregnant before they left the Alpha Quadrant, which is weird, but is explained by the fact that this was supposed to be a season 1 episode. And

some of the creators, including Jeri Taylor and stuff, noted that the fact that it was pushed to the season 2 made it seem weird that she had somehow been pregnant for seven months without knowing it, which at this point was not explained. And a bit later, they sort of have a throwaway line about how because her husband's a different species, that led to a really long gestation.

Grace: A plot hole, we can fix that with alien biology.

Jarrah: Yeah. But it's another example of the way that the being lost in the Delta Quadrant has affected people's lives and that she doesn't even know if her husband thinks that she's dead, and then she's going to come back with a baby that he didn't even know he was expecting.

Andi: Yeah. And her pregnancy also kind of ties into another one of themes that they explore through on every level of this episode-- Yeah, I know.

Grace: So many themes to this episode.

Andi: I really think it's very well crafted because it's also about whether or not Janeway feels she has the right to control the way that people are going to procreate, love each other, have a relationship.

Grace: Yeah, because they've kind of got a Noah's Ark situation going.

Andi: Yeah, exactly. And whether or not they need to.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: And whether or not they have the right to make that decision for the crew, and I think that's tremendously interesting.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: And I think Janeway handles it so well, and I love that she's-- Because we start out the episode with Chakotay coming across people having fun in the elevator, like they're on *Grey's Anatomy*. And he's like, "Should we say something?" She was like, "No, man, we're in space. They're going to pair off. They're going to have relationships. Like, there's no one else."

Jarrah: She's also like, "Starfleet has always been reluctant to regulate crew members personal lives." [unintelligible 00:20:45] Troi and Riker.

[laughter]

Andi: Yeah. Right.

Jarrah: Picard and Crusher. Remember Worf and Troy? Remember-

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: Ther's so many.

Jarrah: -Janice Rand? List goes on. And then, Chakotay is like, "Yeah, okay, I take your point."

Grace: Remember a lot of Kirk and a lot of different people?

Andi: Yeah, but-- I mean, I think that's a healthier way to look at it, is there are going to be relationships, how do we handle them, as opposed to, let's try and stop people from having natural human and, in some case, alien urges.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: But I do think it's interesting that they bring this up at all. And it's also a little bit of flirtiness for her and Chakotay.

Grace: Oh, definitely.

Andi: So, there's some eyes. But Janeway also saying, "I'm the Captain. I can't have a relationship with anyone on my crew." So-

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: -they really get a lot of stuff into this episode, and I think it's very impressive.

Grace: I, again, though want to say, "I can't be in a relationship with anyone because I'm the captain," I, again, want to be like, really? Really? Because we've seen some captains that wasn't really applied to quite so much.

Andi: Yeah, it's too bad that-- Well, no, see, I don't know as I kind of agree with her, but at the same time, it is kind of hypocritical because we've certainly had other captains getting into relationships.

Grace: We've had dude captains not have this standard placed on them.

Andi: Yes, exactly. But also, I do want to say that it does make me laugh a lot that Janeway's way of around this is going into the holodeck and having Jane Eyre-like adventures. [Laughter] That's pretty funny. And to be honest, probably what I would do too.

Grace: I'm single, so I'm just going to rip into this stack of bodice rippers.

Jarrah: Yeah. I don't think it's a bad idea in principle to be like, "Hey, I'm going to be-- I'm also stuck here with this crew. If I have a relationship with someone and it goes wrong, then I'm stuck with that person for maybe the rest of our lives. So maybe, that's not fair to anyone, especially if it's someone higher up in the crew and then how are you going to work with that person." So, I think that's valid. It's just the double standard that comes about and the fact that you get the sense that part of the reason they did that with the show is this idea that you wouldn't respect a woman as much if she was in a relationship.

Grace: Or if she was dating around.

Jarrah: Yeah. You needed her to be taken. She's on hold for a guy, but she can't be out there dating the crew members or subject to the whims of her hormones.

Grace: Much like a Korean pop star, she's been put on a love band. That's your Korean pop music reference for today.

Andi: More K-Pop references, please.

Grace: That was for you, man.

Jarrah: But when you look at-- I agree with you. I think it's super interesting that they explore this, but when you look at the actual conversation they're having, it does feel very much like first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in a baby carriage, like kind of heteronormative assumption that-- She says, "Eventually, people will begin to pair off." So, there's an assumption that people are pairing off heterosexually. And then basically, they start saying, "It's inevitable," Like Chakotay, "I wasn't even thinking about procreation, but I suppose it's the inevitable outcome." So, they start talking about it like, "Well, inevitably, if people are having sex, they're going to have babies." There's a lot of members on the ship, so probably, yes, there's going to be some babies, but it's just worth just unpacking that a tiny bit, I think.

But then, they do have the conversation about what if we need to repopulate the ship? That's I think super fascinating. This idea that yeah, if we're still on this ship, a bunch of us are going to die for various reasons. We're going to need replacement crew. And that is a little bit of a creepy idea because it feels sort of social experimentation.

Grace: Can't find crew members? Breed them.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: I like how that's their thought. Not like we can pick up crew members along the way or find them if we run into a habitable planet or something.

Jarrah: No, Janeway is like, "We did that with Neelix, never again."

Grace: Right off the table until Seven shows up.

Andi: I will say that it is a very common kind of dystopian conversation that people have.

Jarrah: Mm-hmm.

Andi: And this conversation made me think of actually *Battlestar Galactica*, because they have a very similar-type quandary where they have a certain population and at that point they're thinking about outlawing abortion because they need their population to grow and do they have the right to do that. And I just think it's interesting that they came at this same problem, I guess, but thematically and tonally very different. And Janeway's decision is very different. But it is something that would come up if you are-- in this case, they're lost, but if you do have a small population and no way of leaving, that is a question that's going to have to come up, as creepy as it is, to start thinking about breeding an engineer to take over for B'Elanna.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Just makes me think of opening chapters of *Stranger in a Strange Land* where they're talking about, "Well, this mission took twice as long to plan because we couldn't just send these single men to be off alone in space for the rest of their lives with just each other. So, we had to find wives for them who are also scientists and capable astronauts."

Jarrah: Or they just stop letting people use the holodeck. Sorry, guys, got to do it by yourself or with someone else, real people only.

Andi: No, Mr. Rochesters for you.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's super interesting, and I appreciate that there's still having a pretty respectful discussion about it. And you don't ever get the sense that Janeway-- Like, it would take a while to get them to the point of seriously considering any sort of restrictions on people's reproductive rights. They're very supportive of Kes having a choice, and there are many options in between not supporting people having babies and supporting people having babies, and then forcing people to, which I don't ever get the sense they're really seriously considering.

Andi: Yeah. And then, Ensign Wildman, when she comes in, and Janeway figures out pretty immediately what she's talking about, and you can sense that she's nervous to tell Janeway, and Janeway is just like, "Congratulations," and it's fine.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: And I think it's great. I think it's great because it brings up so many of these issues, but I also think it's great because it ties into the A plot.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: So many episodes do not do this. They just have throwaway filler and I get that because you're doing 27 episodes and production is really rushed, and you can't quite make it all fit together neatly sometimes. So, you have to throw on your plot hat and be like "Okay, it's a disease that came from a rock," and, "This episode is not that episode."

Grace: There is definitely a sliding scale in the quality of the B plot.

Andi: Right. This is really the C plot, and we haven't even talked about the B plot yet, which is that there are like space--

Grace: Sperm. Sperm.

Andi: Yeah, I was trying to think of a better way to say that.

Grace: Keeps it on theme, keeps it on theme.

Jarrah: [laughs] They were literally-- So, the images of the cloud were CGI, but they were partly composited from footage of magnified sperm. So, it's like a cloud of aliens and they actually say they flagellate. When they're observing how they move, Janeway says "They flagellate," and it's these like little red basically space sperm that are attracted to Voyager's energy signature or something, or warp fields and damaging the ship.

Grace: They're going to need a giant condom.

Jarrah: They make the whole space around them look kind of womb-like because it's all red and-- Yeah.

Andi: This is not subtlety, okay?

Jarrah: No, it is really, really not.

Andi: [laughs] But I think it's great because-- Okay, so first of all, it's hilarious, but second of all, this B plot is the reason for A plot. They've tied in the space sperm have some sort of science-y word, I don't remember, field that is affecting Kes and her hormones.

Grace: They're radiating horny.

Andi: Yeah. Basically. So, they're interconnected plots. And I can't get over it. It's so dang funny. First of all, they're observing the sperm and flying through space and watching it and stuff and all of that is so funny. I liked this episode when I first saw it. I liked it even more when I saw it the second time.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: And I get the sense, and you guys can tell me if I'm wrong, that this is one of the kind of more or less well-regarded episodes of *Voyager*.

Jarrah: I don't know. I've always thought it was pretty good for season 2.

Andi: See, and there are always these episodes that I kind of randomly love, that other people are like, "What are you doing?" *Home Soil* is one of those. I think *Home Soil* is a great episode.

Grace: Well, she's eating some home soil today.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: But like ugly bags of mostly water is genius. And then also, everybody was super excited for me to see that *DS9* episode, *Move Along Home*, because they thought I'd hate it. And I was like, "This episode's pretty legit. I like it." And they were like, "Whaaat?" [Laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. I mean, it certainly got some panned reviews. CineFantastique rated it 2/4. It was rated in the unauthorized reference book, *Delta Quadrant*, 1/10. I'm not sure how legitimate a reference that is, but it's one that Tim Russ and Jennifer Lien and Kate Mulgrew all had nice things to say about it. And Ken Biller, who did most of the rewrite on the script, said basically thought it was a good episode. It just came at the wrong place being at the beginning of season two, when it should have been near the end of season one.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. If thematically, it makes more sense in the first season, because this is still when they're dealing with a lot of these feelings of like, "Oh, crap, we're alone in space. What do we do?"

Grace: How great would it have been though if it reached a point where they're like, "Her husband is an alien. So, her delayed pregnancy makes sense." And someone just looks at the camera and goes, "Does it though?"

Jarrah: Does it?

Andi: Does it? Does it really?

Grace: And then we've got a pregnancy *Mamma Mia* situation on *Voyager*.

Jarrah: I think it would be great if Tuvok broke the fourth wall more.

Grace: He would be the perfect one to do so.

Jarrah: He would just look at the camera and just raise an eyebrow.

Grace: *The Office* style. That's pretty much the entirety of his arc on *Voyager*, isn't it?

Andi: Yeah, pretty much.

Jarrah: But there's also the scene with the space sperm where-- So, then the big one shows up, and it's clearly seeing Voyager as a rival because it's whatever the opposite other gender sex is from the space sperm and--

Grace: Space ovum?

Jarrah: Yeah. Starts attacking Voyager. They refer to it as a he, but it's really like you can't gender these things because they're alien.

Andi: Yeah, but see, I think that they did that because they instinctively codified the aggressive behavior as masculine.

Jarrah: Exactly.

Grace: That would make sense.

Jarrah: Yeah. Even though the way that they're behaving is like sperm towards an egg. But you're totally right. They're like it's an aggressive one, it's a rival, it's big, therefore it's male, so, yeah. And then, Chakotay eventually recommends like, "Look, trying to bump it isn't working."

Grace: They just seem to like it more.

Jarrah: Yeah, and he's like, "I think we should roll over to show we're submissive and vent plasma so it seems like we're behaving like the little character or the little space sperm," and that works.

Grace: The little sperm.

Jarrah: Yeah, and so they basically roll over and show the thing, Voyager's belly, and then it's like no longer interested and flies away. And then, there's another very JC shipper line, where Janeway jokes that like, "Well, if I have any questions about mating behavior, I'll know where to go."

Grace: [singing] Dreamweaver.

Jarrah: Chakotay, show me your belly. [Laughter]

Andi: I will point out too that not only does the rival whatever, space sperm be like, "Oh, well, these people aren't worth fighting," the smaller space sperm are like "Oh, well, these people aren't worth attaching to." And then, they go to the other one which gives us THE greatest line of this episode and one of THE greatest Tuvok moments of all time, where he says, "It appears we have lost our sex appeal."

Jarrah: Yup.

Andi: [laughter] Oh, my God. I loved it.

Jarrah: It is such a great line. Apparently, when Ken Biller was pitching the rewrite to the episode, he basically pitched that line, and I think it was Brannon Braga, Rick Berman, they

were just like, "Haha, sold." [Laughter] Oh, yeah, it was Brannon Braga. So, yeah, Ken-- So sorry, that actually wasn't Ken Biller, but it was the original writer who was named Jimmy Diggs.

Grace: Jimmy Diggs actually sounds like an old timey news reporter though, doesn't he?

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah. yeah. But he had actually been in the Vietnam War, and there was a thing where they turned the lights on their ship at night and they were swarmed by these fish. And so, that was the mental image he created that part of the episode about. And then, Jeri Taylor added the Kes storyline. But then when Diggs was pitching the story, he pitched the Tuvok line, "Captain, I believe that we've lost our sex appeal," and said that Brandon Braga just laughed and said, "Sold."

Grace: I did hear somewhere that Jimmy Diggs said that he based a portion of this episode on his war experience, and part of me kind of assumes the worst. Like, what part of this?

Jarrah: Did you go through puberty early during the war?

Grace: Did one of your co-fighters take a child bride? What?

Jarrah: Did you eat a lot of flowers?

Grace: Did you hit puberty and discover what the beautiful young woman you were?

Jarrah: Did you realize you needed foot rubs?

Grace: Well, I'm sure, yes.

Andi: Everybody needs foot rubs.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Especially during a war, probably.

Andi: I will say though that if somebody pitched this episode with that line to me, I would also go, sold.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yep.

Andi: [laughs] Like that--

Grace: No question.

Andi: The first time I saw this episode I laughed until I cried at that line. It's just so perfectly delivered. And it's the perfect line for Tuvok because imagine if Paris had that line, because Paris could have probably brought a different spin on it that could have been funny.

Grace: If it was Paris saying that line, I probably would have gone, "Shut the hell up, Tom."

Andi: But Tuvok is like deadpan delivery is the most perfect thing for that line. It's so funny.

Jarrah: I also like that. I mean, Paris at this point is still pretty annoying in this, but-

Grace: Yeah, exactly.

Jarrah: -I did like the part where he misses the crewman making out in the turbolift, and he's like, "What was that all about?" And Chakotay is like, "I'd call it an example of indiscreet shipboard fraternization." He goes, "Really? Sorry I missed it." [laughter] It was very in character. And actually, it's worth noting that the rewrites for this episode were done during the filming of *Caretaker*. So, the writers didn't have a super strong grasp on where the characters would be by season 2. And I think, other than theme timing and the timing of Samantha Wildman's pregnancy, that the characterization is very good.

Andi: Well, yeah, and Kim just stands there, something very new and different.

Jarrah: [laughter] that's also pretty accurate for Kim.

Grace: That's in character. That really-- That tracks that makes sense.

Andi: I do want to say though that I appreciate that-- so B'Elanna and even Tuvok are standing there on the bridge going, "We have to attack it." And I appreciate Chakotay kind of just sitting there and thoughtfully thinking it through and being like, "We're approaching this wrong." And I dig that. I dig. And I also dig that Janeway's response to these creatures in general is very Picard like. She's not going to harm them. There's this great moment where she's like, "We're the ones that are interfering with them. They're just living their lives. We're the ones that are encroaching on their space," or whatever.

Grace: Yeah. And Chakotay coming up with the idea is a really good usage of the show's concept of having Janeway as a leader, but Chakotay is kind of there as a coleader, but coming from a different angle and a completely different background.

Andi: Yeah. And I just like the idea of he's probably the closest thing they have to an alpha male on that show.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Paris, maybe, but only in the sense that he's super--

Jarrah: Paris thinks he is.

Andi: Yes, exactly. So, not really, but Chakotay is the closest thing they have to, say, a Riker. And having him have the idea of being submissive and showing that the other being has dominance over them, I just like it. I just think it's cool kind of twist, because you have B'Elanna being like, "Shoot it." [Laughs]

Grace: "Captain, sometimes you just need to know when to be a sub."

Jarrah: I also really-- I mean-- Okay, so I-- Just compare and contrast for a moment with *The Child*.

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: Wildly different handling though.

Jarrah: It's not 100% analogous. But just the respect for the woman's body in this episode is so much greater. And assuming that having a child or not having a child, that one is better

than the other, and just generally taking a minute to consider things. I mean, Picard does in the episode in *The Child* as well, but it's just-- And also, I like that it shows pregnancy as messy. I like that Kes gets like this gross yellow stuff on her hands and she's sweaty and eating dirt and stuff. And it's nice that she didn't have to look like a porcelain doll when she's--

Grace: Eating flowers?

Jarrah: Yeah. I just liked that it showed that there's-- bodies can be kind of gross.

Grace: Which we see addressed a lot less with women characters.

Jarrah: Yeah. You get instead like they look perfect and then they give birth, and then they look exactly the same as they did before.

Grace: Or they have the skin on their face regenerated with the makeup on it.

Jarrah: Yes.

Andi: I do like that Kes, in the end, she decides to focus on herself.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: And that's not treated as a bad thing in any way.

Andi: Yeah. Except for Neelix's disappointment, and Neelix's disappointment is more about his feelings towards having child more than hers. It's less that he's disappointed with her and more that he's disappointed with the loss of something that he had gotten excited about.

Jarrah: Yeah. Because he got all excited because he was trying to support her. He wanted to come around to where she was at, because this was a really important opportunity if that was what they both wanted, and he got there and then suddenly it wasn't an option.

Andi: Right. So, Neelix, in general, is pretty gross in this episode. The first third of this episode is Neelix being horrible in like one million different ways.

Jarrah: He even gets jealous of The Doctor wanting to rub her feet.

Andi: Yeah. Just the worst. But at the end, I think it makes sense that he's disappointed. And I don't think that he puts too much of an emotional burden on her. A little bit, because she comes and she comforts him, but for the most part, he's like, "I'll get over it."

Jarrah: Well. And they say they might be able do it anyway.

Andi: Yeah, and that makes him-- But he doesn't know that. So, it's nice that he kind of-- He's disappointed, but he's ready to move on and I dig that part at least.

Grace: He's shown some growth in the episode.

Andi: Very infinitesimal, but, yes. [laughter]

Grace: Yeah. It's like knowing you're exactly two feet closer to home.

Andi: Yeah. When we did our episode on episodes for girls, Annika chose this episode. And she chose it because she thought it was a good allegory for teen pregnancy and also for

young women just going through puberty in general, just be like "Yeah, it can be hard." And I think that was a good choice. She was kind of like-- When she brought it up, she was like, "I know this is kind of out of left field."

Grace: We're allowed a left field choice.

Andi: I think it was pretty apropos. And I like--

Jarrah: I totally agree. I mean, I love that no one is shaming her for it. Either way, they're going to support her. So even though, it definitely was deliberately designed to have some analogues to teen pregnancy, and there's a line from Ken Biller where he's talking about, we want to explore the question of like just because you can have a kid, does that mean you should. But they don't ever-- I remember at that exact time that this episode aired, getting lessons in school about teen pregnancy, it was much scarier.

Grace: Yes.

Jarrah: It was like, "You better not do this. Whatever you do, don't do this." Just like, "Whatever you do, don't get pregnant." And the way that were sort of trained to look at girls who did get pregnant in high school was awful in retrospect. So, I love that this is just like, you should be empowered to make your own decision. You should be supported to be able to evaluate the consequences and take time to think about if this is what you really want, but at the end of the day, whatever you choose, we'll support you.

Andi: And also, that there's time and there's time to let yourself grow up and become who you want to be and do the things you want to do for yourself before you decide to have a child.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: So overall, both thematically and story structure wise, I like this episode.

Jarrah: Should we do ratings? Who wants to go first? Grace, do you have a rating for this?

Grace: I'll give it 3/5 fistfuls of dirt.

Jarrah: I'm going to rate this one 4.2/5 space sperm.

Andi: [Laughs] I am going to give this episode 4/5 ritual foot massages.

Jarrah: I want me a ritual foot massage.

Grace: I think we averaged out like 4/5 edible plant arrangements.

Andi: That you then stuff in your mouth as you're being dragged to sickbay.

Grace: Yeah.

Jarrah: [laughs] That's great. Awesome, well, any other thoughts before we wrap it up?

Andi: I do want to give a shoutout to another really great Tuvok line. It's a throwaway, but I like that Neelix is struggling, so he doesn't make lunch. And then, he's like "I've got this stew, and it's very popular," and Tuvok is like, "Well, there's no other option. So, that would make sense," [laughter] and I just love that, because I love it whenever anybody acknowledges that Neelix has a captive audience, they have to eat his food, and it's terrible food. And also,

going to that, he thinks mashed potatoes are gross, so he should not be a cook. He should not make anybody food if he thinks mashed potatoes are gross, so just saying.

Grace: He cannot make life decisions, much less culinary ones.

Jarrah: I think that my favorite Neelix recipe is in the episode, *Parturition*, which I think you've seen already, Andi, the one where he gets in a food fight with Neelix throwing-

Jarrah and Andi: - Alfarian hair pasta?

Andi: Yeah.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: Yes, I have seen that, and that's a great scene.

Jarrah: Yep. Awesome, cool. Well, Grace, where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

Grace: You can find me on Twitter [@bonecrusherjenk](#), and in a literal barn burner at a barn.

Jarrah: And what about you, Andi?

Andi: Easiest place to find me is on Twitter [@FirstTimeTrek](#), where I am live-tweeting my way through *Star Trek* extremely slowly.

Grace: It's not slowly. You're just making your way down Trek Walking Fest.

Jarrah: Slow impulse speed.

Grace: [scats]

Andi: It's like [unintelligible 00:47:48] speed.

Jarrah: And I'm Jarrah. And you can find me on Twitter [@jarrahpenguin](#). And you can also find our podcast on Twitter [@womenatwarp](#). We're also on Facebook and Instagram [@womenatwarp](#). And our website, [womenatwarp.com](#). If you would like to send us a message, you can do so on those above channels, but you can also email us at [crew@womenatwarp.com](#). And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, you can visit [podcast.rodnenberry.com](#). Thanks so much for listening.

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