

## Women at Warp Episode 130: The Fantastic Voyager, 25 Years Later

[Woman 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 to our first episode of 2020.

**In Unison:** Yay.

**Grace:** New Year. Bigger and badder attitude.

**Jarrah:** Only a few short years away from the Bell Riots.

**Grace:** Oh, that's less fun. [Jarrah laughs]

**Sue:** Yeah. You know what though? People keep posting about that and I'm like, "We pointed that out four years ago when we did that episode." [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah, exactly.

**Sue:** Ahead of the game.

**Jarrah:** So, today with me, as you've heard, we have Sue.

**Sue:** Hi.

**Jarrah:** And Grace.

**Grace:** My New Year's resolution is to be louder. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Okay. [laughs] And before we get into our main topic, we have a bit of housekeeping to do first, to remind you as usual that 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 \$1 a month and get awesome rewards like thanks on social media to silly watch-along commentaries and bonus episodes about non-*Star Trek* things. Most recently, Sue and I talked about that other Star franchise.

**Sue:** *Stargate*.

**Jarrah:** That other other one?

**Sue:** *Star Quest*.

**Grace:** *seaQuest*.

**Jarrah:** The one with the wars.

**Grace:** *seaQuest* had internal wars. That counts, right?

**Sue:** Battlestar Galactica.

**Jarrah:** [laughs] Visit [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp). That's P-A-T-R-E-O-N-dot-com-slash-womenatwarp.

**Grace:** I got it. *Babylon 5*. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yes. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

So, today's topic, we are going to talk about the series premiere of *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Caretaker*. Because this year is the 25th anniversary of *Star Trek Voyager* and *Caretaker* first aired on January 16th. So, just a few days away from when this episode drops, 1995, after about almost two years of work on the series framework and the plot of the episode by Rick Berman, Jeri Taylor and Michael Piller. So, yeah, we're going to get into that and talk about things like do we like the episode. What works, what doesn't. Some of the weird behind the scenes ideas they had. We'll talk about whether those might have worked well or not and how the episode holds up today or how we might view it differently today, 25 years later.

**Sue:** Let's do it.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, does anyone want to give a high-level overview of the plot of this episode?

**Grace:** High level overview of high concept sci-fi? That could be a little tricky.

**Sue:** So, the starship, Voyager, is chasing a Maquis ship through the Badlands, and somehow through magic, both ships wind up in the Delta Quadrant where they find themselves in a weird country barn. But that weird country barn is actually run by this guy, The Caretaker. And it turns out when he showed up years and years and years ago, he destroyed the atmosphere of the Ocampa planet. So, now it's his job to stay and take care of them. But he's dying, so he needed to find a replacement or rather someone to mate with to create a replacement.

**Grace:** That's creepy.

**Sue:** That's why he was stealing ships from all over the world, or galaxy rather. But none of it worked, so he dies. And then, the Kazon are going after the Array so they can get water from the Ocampa, and Janeway is like, "Not on my watch, bub." And she blows up the Array and now everybody is stuck in the Delta Quadrant. The end.

**Grace:** What hijinks will they get up to next? [Sue laughs] Can I just say one thing about the startup of this episode? I've seen this episode many times now, and it's a thing that I always forget, is that we get the introduction to the concepts of the fight between the Maquis and Starfleet and we get that in the form of a *Star Wars* style text crawl.

**Sue:** I forget about that all the time too.

**Grace:** And then, it's just kind of like "Oh, okay."

**Jarrah:** Isn't there a similar text crawl in *Deep Space Nine* in *Emissary*? Because they have a thing about Wolf 359 at the beginning.

**Grace:** If they do, then I forgot that also.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, but I also always forget it. And I've seen this episode so many times. And again, when I was rewatching it today, I was like, "Oh, right." I mean it does save a lot of dialogue backstory.

**Grace:** It does, but I also hope that this was them being like, "Heh, nerds. You haven't had a *Star Wars* movie recently. Look at us, *Star Trek*, giving you fresh, sweet content. This well hasn't dried up."

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yep.

**Sue:** But I guess were there a large number of people who weren't watching *Next Gen* and *DS9* who tuned in for the premiere of *Voyager*?

**Grace:** I guess that's what the audience were hoping to potentially tap there.

**Jarrah:** I think-- So, from what I read, *Voyager* we know is the flagship show for the new UPN network, which is like saying ATM machine, United Paramount Network. And they knew that they were going to have to port over those fans. So, they had considered like some other form of a split crew that would have some other people that would join up with them that would be Delta Quadrant people or something. But decided on the Maquis because they knew that there would be a critical mass of people who had already seen *TNG* and *DS9*. But I guess they had to have a little bit of exposition for people who just weren't maybe more casual fans.

**Grace:** People who are wanting to just occasionally tune in for an episodic sci-fi show.

**Sue:** Or perhaps reviewers.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, yeah, those people that still call them the marquee.

**Grace:** The people who just every time a new episode comes on, goes, "Now, is this the one with Captain Kirk?"

**Sue:** [laughs] Oh, so my dad.

**Grace:** Yeah, [Sue laughs] everybody's got a dad or an uncle who does that at some point.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, we get the Maquis chase scene and then we have our lovely opening credits with our beautiful opening music that I think most of us are fans of that.

**Grace:** And what's not to like?

**Jarrah:** And then, we go to Earth where Janeway is busting Paris out of space prison, except it's on Earth.

**Grace:** You say busting, but we get to first see her making the most perfect dramatic pose entrance. The camera just pans over to her and she's got one of those, "Oh, I've been standing here the whole time," poses and I appreciate that so freaking much. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Apparently, in an early iteration of the script, her and Paris go to a hotdog stand.

**Grace:** Little less gravitas there.

**Jarrah:** And they have a conversation about how her hot dog has ketchup and mustard. But he says he's a purist and only has mustard.

**Sue:** You're lying. That's not real.

**Jarrah:** No, it's totally in there. [laughs]

**Grace:** That sounds just goofy enough to be true.

**Sue:** That's like a *SVU* scene. That's not a *Star Trek: Voyager* scene.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** I mean, maybe someone wrote it really late at night, woke up the next morning and deleted it, but it somehow made it into a book about the production of *Voyager*.

**Grace:** Were they trying to be super like, "This is Janeway and she's intense and cool, but she's also a fun, casual lady you could grab a hot dog with"?

**Sue:** She's totally relatable. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** So, this was really interesting when I was reading this background stuff. It's interesting to me because this is not how I read the first episode, is that apparently the idea was that if we tell this whole thing from Janeway's perspective, it's going to be really predictable and she doesn't really have an arc and Paris is the one with the arc. So, we should tell the whole thing from Paris' perspective.

**Grace:** Okay. That kind of sets it off as being well, as our pilot, this is the guy we're probably going to be following most closely.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, but I guess they were like, he's the one who starts out as outside of both the crews, so he's more of a lower-level observer. So, that could be interesting. And they want him to end up a better person. So, when they were scripting out the 10 scenes per act, like, per part, the first one is basically just Paris and then it says "sex beat" which means some remark with sexual overtones to his supervisor at the penal colony.

**Grace:** That seems a really good way to end up in solitary, Tom.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And so instead, they just replace that with him harassing Stadi on the shuttle. But yeah, they knew that from the beginning. But also, I've never watched this and been like, "Oh, the whole thing's from Paris's perspective."

**Grace:** Do you see him as the character that they pin the carrying action of the story on?

**Jarrah:** Yeah, he is in all the important parts.

**Grace:** Does seem weird though to make that decision. When they were-- Correct me if I'm wrong, but they were really hyping that Janeway as our first main woman captain was going to be a big freaking deal and all that. And it seems odd that they would make that choice and then make this choice.

**Sue:** That's how I remember it. And I'm sure-- I can't say I'm sure, but I would guess that conversation came from the perspective of, "We need to have something people are comfortable with."

**Grace:** [chuckles] So, even when we're exploring brave new worlds and going with a female lead, in theory, we're going to have a guy holding your hand through it. Don't worry, audience.

**Jarrah:** Right. We're going to take the guy who is the least woke in this crew is going to take the audience by the hand and make them a little more woke.

**Grace:** Come with me and you'll be in a world of really slow progress. [laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yeah, no, but actually, I don't really see that in the notes. It seems more like he literally was the first character that they had written. They knew the woman captain, but they hadn't sketched out any characteristics. And because they had really liked this character from Nick Locarno from *The First Duty*, they were like, "We know we want someone like this who just isn't quite fitting in with Starfleet." And I think just because he was the most fully fleshed out, that would be, like, why him and not someone else. And it seemed like they thought it would actually just be more interesting if it wasn't step by step with the person who's the most morally centered.

**Grace:** Can you imagine if it had been Harry though that they had chose to be?

**Jarrah:** Oh, God.

**Grace:** Harry, this is literally his first assignment. He's none too bright, but he's a sweet kid. He plays the clarinet. And now, he's out in space. That would have been an interesting take on a similar theme. He wouldn't have been such a jerk also.

**Sue:** Described in those terms, it also kind of aligns with Michael Burnham's story.

**Grace:** Oh, you're right.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Wait, does Michael Burnham play the clarinet, too? Because that would be fun.

**Sue:** Not the Harry Kim part. Although, I'm sure Tilly plays some musical instrument.

**Grace:** She plays the baritone, but she can only practice after hours when Michael's trying to sleep. And that's why she has to go into stasis to get a good night's sleep.

**Jarrah:** So, the other thing they talk about a lot in the background notes is Michael Piller says particularly, the thing that must be remembered in all discussions is that it, being *Caretaker* was created in the shadow of *Deep Space Nine*. And there's this feeling that *Deep Space Nine* is not a success from Paramount's perspective in terms of the ratings, that *Emissary* was too cerebral and that, therefore, we need to make an action adventure story where all the characters become clearly defined as quickly as possible as individuals with their own traits as well as sort of in relation to the larger crew. So, that was a factor.

**Grace:** Well, we do see, in his first scene, Harry needing to be saved by Tom. In his first scene, we see The Doctor being just really annoyed with everything happening around him. We see Paris being condescending to a woman who's got more experience than him. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** And we see Chakotay wearing a weird mock turtleneck.

**Jarrah:** We see Tuvok being smug and sassy.

**Grace:** You know, the best.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** And these introductions aren't nearly as clunky as they are in *Encounter at Farpoint*.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** They make a lot more sense. It's not just like, "Okay, it's my turn now."

**Grace:** Yeah. It's not a roll call.

**Sue:** No.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Oh, and we see B'Elanna having to make do with crappy, old, outdated technology.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** And just being like, "Are you freaking kidding me right now? I've got a 39-year-old engine, you guys. This is my job and it's so hard."

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I think it's a pretty well-written episode in terms of that. We definitely do get a sense of major character traits. Kes is very curious.

**Grace:** Neelix is very unsettling.

Jarrah: [laughs] Yeah.

**Sue:** Kes is very curious, but also especially in *Caretaker*, very determined.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** She has goals and dreams and ambitions right from the start, and I feel like those get lost along the way.

**Grace:** They definitely do. They definitely give her to us as a character that is a free thinker and kind of wants to see and explore things for herself. But she does kind of end up playing a passive role more often than not when we see her in the rest of the series.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Well, she gets taken along by a lot of exploitative people.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** She's curious, but naive. She does get a bit savvier later on. But a lot of the plots which she plays a part are like things are happening to her. In terms of the Ocampa, there was a lot of debate on what they should name them and whether they should rescue two

Ocampo. Michael Piller also pitched that instead of being an alien race from the Delta Quadrant, that Kes would be a J'naii science officer, like the androgynous species from *The Outcast*, which doesn't seem like it went anywhere, but apparently, he thought that could lead to more interesting sexual conversations.

**Grace:** Interesting, yes. Good, not necessarily considering how *The Outcast* went.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Not sure how they would have handled that, but interesting concept to see a J'naii science who would be androgynous but not villainized for it, that could have been really interesting.

**Grace:** Also, if they're filling Kes's role, one that's adventurous and curious and wants to see more, versus the ones we've seen that are stuck in a very strict society.

**Jarrah:** Yep, definitely. Pretty early on-- we had a question on Facebook recently. So, I wanted to raise it about how come in *Star Trek* do characters call female superior officer, sir. And there's that scene early in *Voyager* where she says, "Basically, I understand it's protocol to call everyone sir, but I don't like it." And then, they like, "Oh, ma'am?" "Oh, well, ma'am and oh will do in a pinch, but I prefer Captain." And this is not the first time we see that. We see that in *Deep Space Nine* and in *TNG* with, I think, Shelby, Crusher, some other folks, and also Mr. Saavik in the *TOS* movies. How do we feel about this and why do we think it was there?

**Grace:** I can't help but feel like it, whether it was intended this way or not, establishes that Janeway and, by proxy, women in roles of authority aren't quite the norm still, even though we're getting that, because I feel like it's an othering action for her, showing that either Harry has been very sheltered and doesn't know how to address a woman in an authority role, or this just is something that doesn't come up very often.

**Sue:** Well, I don't know. Harry is doing what protocol says he should do. Any superior officer is, sir. And that is not a thing I really have an issue with. I mean, our English is gendered. Not as gendered as some languages, but it is certainly gendered. And you see a lot of people giving up the female version of different nouns. Like, a lot of my friends who act do not want to be called actresses anymore. Everyone's an actor, things like that. But a lot of that is personal preference. But it feels to me like, in the future, they just picked one. But of course, it happens to be the male one. They could have come up with something else, but whenever you come up with a new word for a science fiction show, you have to explain it to your audience.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I think that was the intention.

**Sue:** Yeah. But I think the idea of having Janeway say, "I don't like it," was a reaction to the fear of making her seem too manly because we know that was a fear in creating this character for the creative team. They wanted to make sure that she was definitely a woman. And so, they gave her this, like, "I don't like being called sir" moment. They gave her this phone call with her boyfriend and it seemed to me like they were really pushing, like, "Yes, this is a woman in authority, but she's not just going to act like a man. She's still a woman."

**Grace:** She's a safe woman in authority.

**Sue:** Right.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Well, they said that she didn't like that scene with Mark and the scene with Tuvok were added because they felt like you didn't actually get a sense of who she was as a person. It was like, she's competent, and that was kind of all that you could tell. Yeah, but

we've talked before about this idea of treading a fine line with needing to make this character palatable for everyone, because 25 years later, it's much less risky to have a woman character that has "unlikable" traits. But as a protagonist of a show in 1995, that was you didn't want people to say, "Oh, my gosh, I don't like her."

**Grace:** Because as we have established, being an unlikable woman is the worst possible thing. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, I think that is something that definitely-- I think Janeway paved the way for some of the characters we have on TV now. But if you were going to do a show again now, that you wouldn't have that extent. It's not that you don't still have double standards and criticism and stuff, but there isn't-- There's many, many more examples of shows that are centered around women who are more complex and have certain traits or things that we don't necessarily consider nurturing and feminine and it's still okay.

But I think you're right, Sue, that the intention was just to pick-- Pre-*Voyager*, the intention was to pick a neutral term, and it was the masculine term, like fireman and all of those professional words, or just using he to mean they or he/she/they. So, it was sort of an unintentional-- Like, it was trying to be progressive and inclusive, but actually not. And it wasn't like copying from military. But yeah, I think they actually thought that it would be more open minded when they had Mr. Saavik, like, "Look, we're being equal now because we're calling this woman mister." Yeah, but I guess it raises an elegant solution that, "Why don't you just call everyone by their ranks?" So, yeah. Anyway, okay, so we've talked a little bit about Janeway, other Janeway thoughts?

**Grace:** I appreciate how when things actually start to go down, you see her hair become half unfurled from the giant updo. And I like that because no one makes a comment out of it. And it's not supposed to be like a gag. It's just a, "Oh, shit. I'm getting tossed around and my hair came undone."

**Sue:** But it still became a joke that they have that scene where she's fixing it.

**Grace:** Yes.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** I forget what con it was, but I remember I was talking to Garrett Wang and that scene came up and he was like, "No, they had to add that." We were like, "Wait, what are you talking about?" And he goes, "They realized when they were--" I mean, this is his story. So, take it with a grain of salt, if you must, that when they were putting the episode together, they realized that in one scene her hair was a mess and in the next scene, it was fixed. So, they had to add a scene of Janeway fixing her hair for continuity. [laughter]

**Grace:** Because women's hair is mysterious and frightening. [laughter]

**Sue:** Because you can't just assume that she fixed her hair.

**Jarrah:** We can't just assume that she fixed it in a shuttle or a transporter or turbolift on the way to the next scene. Okay, so quickly, let's talk about the casting change since we're talking about the origin of *Caretaker* as well. So, originally casting Geneviève Bujold and she left in one of the comments that she apparently made-- was basically, "I can't do this. I have three people in here all working on my hair." She was hired without a screen test based on the strength of her reputation. And apparently, people like Robert Beltran had agreed partly because they knew who she was and they were really excited to work with her, but she quickly realized it wasn't really for her. And then, Kate Mulgrew was brought in.



From a 25 years later perspective, I guess I think it's an interesting footnote in the history of *Star Trek*, but I really dislike how the videos make the rounds of the Geneviève Bujold scenes and everyone's like, "Oh, my God. This would have been so terrible." It just strikes me as mean and unnecessary.

**Grace:** Yeah, yeah. I think it's one of those things where we can definitely look at certain scenes outside of the intended context and without seeing how the dynamics would have been different with her as a full character and not just with individual scenes, because you want to think that the character is at least a little tailored to the actor playing them in some way, shape or form, especially when they know they're going to be one of the primary characters of a show that they're hoping to have be continuous and have an arc. So, we don't really know what they had entirely planned for Geneviève Bujold captain, but it probably would have been something different.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. She only filmed a few scenes and it just clearly wasn't right for her. I think we'll agree it probably all turned out for the best for everyone. So, I don't know. Just interesting thoughts. But I guess the only difference from a representation perspective is I would say Geneviève Bujold definitely looks older than Kate Mulgrew. She's got gray hair. Her skin is a little bit less youthful. So, that could have been just interesting from a perspective of things we've talked about before of just you don't get a lot of middle aged or older women on TV.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** That said, not like Janeway was really going around having a ton of romances, so.

**Grace:** No, but she is younger and she is prettier.

**Sue:** And it gives the impression-- I don't think it's ever stated outright. It might be, but it certainly gives the impression, at least in *Caretaker*, that this is her first command.

**Grace:** Yeah, that's the vibe I was picking up.

**Sue:** So, she's also leading a crew for the first time, which if maybe they had an older actor in the role, that would not have been one of the elements.

**Jarrah:** Or would have raised questions.

**Sue:** Right. But I do enjoy in her introduction in *Caretaker* that she is established as a science officer right from the start.

**Grace:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's pretty cool.

**Sue:** That's like one of the first things she says about herself.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. One of the characters we haven't talked about a lot is B'Elanna.

**Grace:** B'Elanna. I think it's interesting that one of the first times we see her acting independently of the rest of her group and her crew, she's getting angry and she says something along the lines of, like, "Oh, sorry, it's the Klingon in me." And that just feels like such a weird statement to make. If anyone considers their ethnicity to be a character trait or something, that just feels awkward to me.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. And Roxann Dawson says that she didn't really have any idea what she was doing in that first episode, and she was just casting about and hoping that she did something

that would seem like when she watched the episode, she would understand the character. But I think she does a pretty good job with it.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** But just I think it goes back to that thing about having to establish all the characters right away. Whereas go back and look at Spock, we don't actually learn that he is half-human, half-Vulcan in the first episode.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** And we get these little tidbits of his culture along the way. Of course, we already know more about Klingons by that point, but you don't have to necessarily spell it all out in that first episode.

**Grace:** Again, though, the ethnicity as a character trait thing is just very odd. And that, again, I'm glad that when we first see her, she is busy, she is getting things done in terrible conditions. So, we establish what she's all about with that right off the bat.

**Sue:** And I think they give her a little bit more of a Scotty/O'Brien feel with that, because she's working with old, busted tech and she's making it happen.

**Jarrah:** I also just always like her scenes with Kim. I think they have an interesting, evolving friendship through the course of the series, and you can start to see it here. He is not someone who is exceptionally confident and he's very gullible at first, but when B'Elanna is going full-on personal crisis mode, he finds something in himself and is just like, "Okay, hey, this is ridiculous." And then, they both manage to kind of move forward together.

**Sue:** But can we talk for a second about they warned us about Ferengi at the Academy?

**Grace:** Oh, God.

**Sue:** They warned you about an entire race at the Academy? Warned you? That's super racist.

**Jarrah:** And then, you're going to say it?

[laughter]

**Grace:** And, then after we established that, if that didn't make you go, "Whoa, okay," then, Tom goes out of his way to prove that they're absolutely right and that the stereotypes should be protected against at all costs. That's just kind of a, "Okay, what are you trying to tell us here?"

**Sue:** He also takes racist jabs at Chakotay twice.

**Jarrah:** Oh, that is to me, one of the things that holds up the worst of this episode because, yeah, he makes the comment about-- oh, man, what is it again?

**Grace:** "Don't your people have a thing where they can turn into a bird or something and fly away?"

**Sue:** And then, there's, like, "Now, your life is mine. Isn't that the way it works?" But he uses much more racist language.

**Jarrah:** He does. "If I save your butt, your life belongs to me." Isn't that some Indian custom?

**Grace:** Tom is such a douche in this episode.

**Jarrah:** And then, "Isn't there some Indian trick where you can turn us into a bird and fly us out of here?" And it's like he's obviously deflecting with humor, but it's not funny. It's extremely racist and would not fly today. I don't think really would fly in 1995.

**Grace:** See, what would have been great is if Chakotay had turned him and be like, "This, this is why we kicked you out of the Maquis, man. This is why we didn't want you here."

**Sue:** The only redeeming part about that scene is that Chakotay's response is, "You're too heavy." [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Not that fat shaming is good, but just that, like, he's just throwing it right back at him.

**Jarrah:** Well, we know that *Voyager* had this issue where they hired this consultant on Chakotay to help write indigenous content. But then, it turned out this guy was a total fraud and wasn't actually indigenous and was just making stuff up. But in this episode, they're not actually talking about Chakotay's character or indigenous ancestry. But it's like they feel a need to point out just in case you didn't get what he is, he's Native American. And they do that through racism.

**Grace:** Not the best way to do it if anyone listening is taking notes. Not the best way to do it. There are other much better ways to do it. Do them, not this.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. One thing on a semi-related note that I found in the notes for the production is that Michael Piller had written a memo about the inside of the array when they were trying to figure out like, what is going to be happening here? Like, they didn't know how they were going to encounter the caretaker. And before they had arrived at the idea of the farm, he talks about like, "Oh, well, we should have it be like they get beamed inside and it's somewhere just like Earth. Like, it could be like Brigadoon or the beach of Bora Bora. And the quote is like, "But quickly, the idyllic setting becomes dangerous. Not exactly sure how, but instead of probes, some optical zapping might occur." Then, one laughing native girl pulls Kim into the bushes, as native girls are wont to do.

**Grace:** Jesus Christ.

**Jarrah:** "But as he expects carnal delights, he winds up being grabbed by an optical beast and disappears."

**Grace:** Good Lord. Expect carnal delights from native girls. Guys, Michael.

**Jarrah:** It talks about earlier in the memo that, "You'd have like Tahitian women coming up and putting leis on Paris and Kim, which would be really interesting for them and hard to resist." And instead, they go for like this semi flirting farm girl.

**Grace:** Instead, they go for *The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*. They go for this just vaguely creepy, overly wholesome barn raising party. How is that supposed to make them feel more comfortable? Like, the caretaker has a really, really poor grasp on what social situations people want to be just dropped into the middle of.

**Jarrah:** Also, how un-diverse is this crew that like everyone and-- presumably, they did the same thing for the Maquis. Everyone can relate to this down -- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** I really would have loved to see the Maquis just reacting to this and just immediately B'Elanna going, "I'm out here. I'm out here. I hate this. I'm out here." [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** "Nope, nope. I'm going in that barn. I don't know what's in it, but I'm getting away from the people about square dance." Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, I mean, to be fair, Bora Bora thing didn't end up on the screen, but always useful to remember that, again utopia in the 24th century written by very humans in the 20th century, and that this issue with native stereotypes will become a bit of a persistent problem for at least the first couple years of *Voyager*.

**Grace:** Also, guys, just get more creative when you're thinking of a paradise.

**Jarrah:** Brigadoon could have been fun. I mean, we're all into, "Dinna go into the hoose."

**Grace:** That's fair. That's fair. We love "Dinna go into the hoose." It's a classic.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** But at the same time, get more creative. You guys are the writers. Do the right thing. [Jarrah laughs] Although, wouldn't it have been great though, if Ruckus had started at that little barn party that turned into a dance fight competition a la *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*.

**Sue:** Oh, my goodness.

**Grace:** Like, no matter how violent they try and get, it's all just super wholesome. They wouldn't need phaser fire for that. [laughs] Just aggressive kick lines. And that's my idea for the rewrite right there.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Although can we please heap in the scary lady with the pitchfork?

**Grace:** Oh, absolutely.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. That was terrifying when I was 10.

**Grace:** If anything, let's have there be at least five more of her.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I'm down with that army of people in pitchforks.

**Grace:** And at first, they're like, "Oh, do you have a twin?" And she's like, "Yes. I'm a quintuplet. Meet my sisters. We hold a quilting bee together."

**Jarrah:** Also, the needles in the chest, and I like how it sets a tone for, "You will see Harry Kim undergo some pretty unpleasant things in this series."

**Grace:** Harry has been built to suffer. That is his purpose in our series.

**Jarrah:** He's like the only one that seems fully conscious of the fact the needle's going into his chest. Yeah, I found it super effective when I was 10 and it was 1995 and I don't have a hard time watching it now. I'm like, "Oh, okay, good. This is the scary part."

**Grace:** Kind of a *Matrix*-esque situation that he ends up in. And before the *Matrix* came out, come to think of it.

**Jarrah:** So, we talked a little bit about Kes, but we didn't really talk about Neelix's already slightly creepy protector relationship with Kes.

**Grace:** Yeah, we don't really get a full establishment of what their relationship has been like up until this point, just that he ended up at this Kazon camp at some point and found out she was there. And the amount of unanswered questions just makes the whole situation a little more uncomfortable.

**Sue:** Well, Neelix in general is a lot shadier in *Caretaker* than he ever is again, right?

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** He's this junk dealer. He knows all of these Kazon. And then, apparently-

**Jarrah:** He's a water addict.

**Sue:** -stole water from them, lies to Starfleet to rescue Kes.

**Grace:** I mean, that's really just setting the tone for him lying to everyone nonstop the rest of the series.

**Sue:** But after this, he's just sort of this comic relief buffoon most of the time.

**Grace:** This lovable doofus instead of this dude they literally found in a floating space dump who was going to fight them over plastic bags.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I think they really-- Hmm, I don't know. I'm like, there's some potential earlier on and some of the better scenes are, I think, Neelix and Tuvok and I'm like, if they had just been able to recreate a Quark-Odo dynamic, but I don't know. And not try to make him helpful counselor to people, because I don't know whether that worked out-- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** I'm just saying at the end of the episode, when Neelix and Kes are saying they want to stay on board, and Neelix's argument is, "Whatever you need, I will be," is just like, "Oh, that's sketchy."

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** What are your actual skill sets and not the things you're going to try and half ass and fake your way through, dude?

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** What are you actually qualified for here? No, no. Stop trying to upsell yourself and tell me what you actually know how to do.

**Sue:** But there were plenty of other things that *Caretaker* sort of set up that weren't ever really revisited. And the one that always bugs me the most is this water crisis.

**Grace:** Yeah. The Kazon are at war with each other-- [crosstalk]

**Sue:** Over resources.

**Grace:** Over a basic survival resource. It's all very *Mad Max*, and they don't come back to that aspect of it.

**Sue:** There's an explanation as to the Ocampo world, why their planet doesn't have water. But why is that whole area of space without water? Because that's how they make it seem.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah, they're in the *Mad Max* nebula. My God.

**Jarrah:** That is really interesting. I never even thought of that.

**Sue:** But they talk so much about how the Kazon are split into factions, into sects, and each control a different basic resource.

**Jarrah:** And so, it's like *Settlers of Catan*.

**Sue:** I guess.

**Jarrah:** Oh, my God. [laughter]

**Sue:** But it's not really ever like. Well, how did it get that way? Well, let's talk about how the Federation is coming from a post scarcity society and flung into one that is definitely not that and how did they get that way? And what did humans do to prevent it? I know I'm looking at this like 25 years on at this point, but water crisis, important.

**Grace:** Yeah, that's an actual thing that happens around the world regularly.

**Jarrah:** When Jeri Taylor was sketching out stuff for this story, she conceptualized the Kazon, which were not called the Kazon for a really long time. For a while, they were called the Gazon, or maybe it was pronounced Ga-zon.

**Grace:** Oh, wow.

**Jarrah:** But before that, they were just called in the notes, the Bloods and the Crips.

**Grace:** Guys, that's some very questionable taste there.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Yes. Again, probably at the time, there was less of dialogue about the carceral state and the origins of gang culture.

**Grace:** Well, this would have been in the 90s in California. Oh, my gosh, you guys, I'm overwhelmed with the lack of cultural sensitivity here right now.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, it's definitely-- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** Holy smokes, guys.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I definitely had a cringy moment reading that. And then, I guess they sort of saw this as, they wander into the middle of the gang war and they have to pick sides, and that's going to come back to haunt them. I think it also kind of speaks to-- Because you're

right, I think they had a really interesting opportunity, to get into resource scarcity as a dynamic instead of just, "These guys are dumb thugs," which is kind of what it became.

**Grace:** Which feels reflective of how they were considering the whole gang war situation, probably.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. So, that also it reflects on-- I hope that they had but I somehow think maybe they didn't have more nuanced ideas about human gangs.

**Grace:** But I definitely agree with you in the sense that they could have gone into that more and honestly, I feel like with *Voyager* itself, they never really dug into enough of the whole, "We've got limited resources here until we get to year of hell."

**Jarrah:** And even with the gang culture piece, we get that later episode with Aron Eisenberg, which I think is a great episode, but it seems like the only reason-- the Klingons are just like this, because it's a toxic masculine culture. There's no actual-- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** You mean the Gazon?

**Jarrah:** [laughs] Yeah. All the socioeconomic forces that contribute to this are just kind of-- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** "They're just too dumb and angry to take care of themselves," is what we're saying. Good Lord. "And what's with their hair? We don't understand it." Guys, stop.

**Jarrah:** I do really like Kes, though. At first, she seems a little bit almost timid and gaslit. She's like, "I'm too curious. I'm told it's my worst failing." And she's obviously, like-- [crosstalk]

**Grace:** We literally first see her as a victim, yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, they've beaten her. She has a black eye and a split lip, but she's the one standing up to Neelix and being like, "No, we have to stay." And she stands up to her elders and says, "We need to break free from our dependence on *The Caretaker*." And she also helps everyone escape, even racist Mr. Paris.

**Grace:** Yeah, they really did set her up to be a lot more proactive than the cast we got throughout the series. That's a little sad.

**Jarrah:** Well, maybe it's like a bit of a-- I don't think consciously, but maybe it sort of makes sense that you also don't have to be that determined when you're in safety. Like, in the rest of the time, she is not having her basic needs met.

**Sue:** Right.

**Grace:** Right.

**Jarrah:** So, she kind of changes from scrappy to wide eyed and eager. But maybe that's also partly because she's safe now.

**Grace:** Mm-hmm.

**Sue:** But I think a little bit, it just gets refocused. Like, what she reads all those medical texts in overnight or something.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Grace:** Yeah. We have her go from being this rebel character to this very sweet, nurturing, healing character which, again, kind of seems to fall into the, "This is what we have deemed safe roles for the women on this show. We've got the nurturing, sweet one. We've got the one who is in authority, but not too an authority, not intimidating in authority. And then, we've got the angry woman." So, I feel like that's telling from the get-go there of what I'm not totally sure. I just felt like it was worth noting.

**Sue:** Or like the ingenue, the mom and the bitch.

**Grace:** Exactly. Yeah, that's a better way of putting it. Well, damn, I've just bummed us out, haven't I? [laughter] Damn.

**Sue:** It was bound to happen.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Not you particularly, but-- [crosstalk]

**Jarrah:** I think Ronald D. Moore, one thing he didn't really love about this episode is-- well, there was a big debate about should the Maquis end up part of a Starfleet crew at the end, or should they be Maquis that are somehow integrated into the system, but they're wearing different clothes? There's more tension. Ron Moore definitely felt that it was death to the show to make them all one crew. And he also felt that there should have been more fallout from half their original crew dying. Although, to be fair, they did only know them for three days. Still, would be probably traumatizing because it could have been you.

**Grace:** Yeah, there would have been some survivor guilt there, probably.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Thoughts on the integrating the crew piece?

**Grace:** I think it does give us an interesting concept from the start. And even as a pilot, knowing that there's going to be this huge difference between one-half of the crew and the other, that does make you wonder, "Oh, what's going to happen next?" Which I think is successful in terms of finishing out a pilot. It does get you wondering. It does make you want to see more.

**Jarrah:** So, Michael Piller had also wanted the Maquis keep wearing their own outfits, but Berman pushed for them to wear the Starfleet uniform, feeling that ongoing tension would get irritating. But it also, again, came back to that this needs to be different than *Deep Space Nine*. And Michael Piller says the driving philosophy was to recapture the bright, optimistic, ship-driven energy of the *Next Generation*. And the most notable decision in this regard was to put the Maquis into Starfleet uniforms at the end of the pilot.

**Grace:** Also, let's be real, their Maquis outfits were pretty terrible. They all had that same weird shoulder pad structure going on.

**Jarrah:** Yeah.

**Sue:** I definitely remember in the lead-up to *Voyager*, a lot of the press pushing this idea of, "These two crews are going to integrate and there's going to be tension and tension unlike we've seen on a Federation starship before." And really, that lasted maybe two episodes.



**Grace:** Yeah, doesn't stick around.

**Sue:** It came back every now and then and got used as like an, "Oh, yeah, he doesn't like me because he's Maquis," every now and then. But it didn't really stick around.

**Grace:** Yeah, the first time I was actually watching *Voyager*, I was watching it in syndication and just reruns and a friend of mine showed up and was like, "Oh yeah, they probably don't like each other because of the Maquis thing." And I was like, "What's the Maquis?" Because I was watching it just episodically as it was on in the afternoon and mixed up in rerunlandia. And she's like, "You said you like *Voyager*. You don't even know what the Maquis are." I'm like, "I don't know what the Maquis are." And then, I got fixed with the most intense "Oh, you freaking idiot," that an 11-year-old can give another 11-year-old.

**Sue:** But it's true. If you turn on a random *Voyager* episode, you're not going to know there's any tension among the crew.

**Grace:** No, and I didn't. [laughs]

**Jarrah:** Certainly, I think that it could have been balanced better, I think without losing the optimism-- And certainly, I'm a fan of other shows like *The Expanse* that have a lot more tension among many, many different areas of the main characters. But I don't think *Voyager* should be the same show, but I think they could have done that by having them have a bit more fallout from people losing their comrades. They could have maybe had them just wear some generic different uniform or something that wasn't the awful rando mock turtlenecks and shoulder pads.

**Grace:** So, many vests.

**Jarrah:** And then, decide later on that, "No, we have to do this, but maybe there could be more objection to it." Or it would have also been interesting to see the scene where Chakotay and Janeway decide that and maybe they argue about it.

**Grace:** Yeah.

**Jarrah:** But another, okay, funny, random political side note, Apparently, the episode was criticized for seeming to sympathize with some of the politics of Newt Gingrich, who was advocating welfare reform in a document called the Contract with America. And he had argued for the idea of moving welfare children to orphanages. And so, says the scene most notable for seeming to align with this notion is the one where Janeway tells the caretaker the Ocampa need to be left to fend for themselves.

**Grace:** That's a stretch.

**Sue:** Wow.

**Jarrah:** Jeri Taylor says, "I think we were certainly cognizant of the issue of taking responsibility for oneself. It was after the whole Newt Gingrich Contract with America issue came along and unfortunately, in my mind, they have been lumped together. I think we weren't talking about anything as drastic and draconian as he seems to be. Now, of course, many people assume that we are part of the new right, which is anything but the truth."

**Grace:** Good gravy.

**Sue:** But *Star Trek's* never been political.

**Grace:** Never. Never. They only just made it so in the last couple years, and they're ruining it for everyone. [Sue laughs]

**Jarrah:** Yeah. I had never read it that way. I can see how you could find that problematic, but it certainly is different than like the situation around-- Like, the Ocampo situation with the Caretaker is not analogous situation to people on welfare.

**Grace:** Yeah, that's subtle difference there. Subtle, subtle difference. Good freaking grief.

**Jarrah:** Entertaining.

**Grace:** That is the first and probably only time Newt Gingrich has ever been referenced in conjunction with *Star Trek*.

**Jarrah:** Or on this podcast. [laughter]

**Grace:** Thank God, right? [Jarrah laughs] We've never had to. What the hell?

**Jarrah:** But by and large, critical reception for this episode was pretty darn good. And it was the highest rated night for UPN for all of *Voyager* up to and including the debut of *Enterprise* in 2001.

**Grace:** Seems like it went pretty well for them.

**Jarrah:** Yeah, I think of all the pilots, it's one of the--

**Grace:** Least terrible?

**Jarrah:** -less messy. Yeah, yeah.

**Grace:** It's one of the ones where there's the least, "What are you guys doing?"

**Jarrah:** Yep. And certainly made an impact on me 25 years ago,.

**Grace:** And we're still talking about it 25 years later.

**Jarrah:** When is *Picard* premiering? The 10th?

**Sue:** The 23rd.

**Jarrah:** Okay. So, it will not have come out when this episode runs. So, I can say that this was the least bumpy premiere because I haven't seen the *Picard* one yet.

**Grace:** I don't know. I thought the premiere of *Discovery* was pretty good.

**Jarrah:** Yeah. Although I think it definitely-- a lot of things changed from the premiere on because of the changes in showrunners. So, it didn't necessarily set the tone for the whole first season.

**Sue:** There's also an argument to be made that the *Discovery* premiere was for a different show because it was set several years before the main action of the first season.

**Jarrah:** I really enjoyed it but I understand-- I think it's a little bit less of a coherent vision for the whole first season. Yeah. I guess, overall, should we rate this episode?

**Grace:** Absolutely.

**Jarrah:** Any final thoughts and ratings before we head out?

**Grace:** I give it three glasses of water that Neelix gargles and then spits into the bath of five. Three out of five.

**Jarrah:** I will give this three and a half holographic old ladies with pitchforks out of five.

**Grace:** One of them is their half-sister.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** Yes, exactly. Out of all the possible quintuplet, creepy old ladies with pitchforks.

[laughter]

**Grace:** They all talk in stereo too, so it's like a creepy echo. You never hear them coming. You sure hear them leave though.

**Sue:** I will give this 7 out of 10 shriveled paperweights that used to be caretakers. [Jarrah laughs]

**Jarrah:** Aww.

**Grace:** He's beef jerky now.

**Sue:** It's really gross, though, that she keeps the dead caretaker on her desk, like, gross.

**Grace:** That's a weird trophy, Janeway.

**Jarrah:** I mean, the Ferengi have been doing that for a while.

**Grace:** Weird flex. Weird flex there.

**Jarrah:** Awesome. Okay, well, happy birthday, *Voyager*, and thanks to all of our listeners for sticking with us through 2019 and looking forward to a year ahead of many exciting opportunities of being stuck with you in the podcast quadrant. [laughter] Sue, where can people find you elsewhere on the internet?

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

**Jarrah:** And, Grace?

**Grace:** You can find me on Twitter [@bonecrusherjenk](#). And you can also find me in the root cellar trying to figure out where these gosh darned space hillbillies keep their moonshine.

[laughter]

**Jarrah:** And I'm Jarrah. And you can find me on Twitter [@jarrahpenguin](#) or at [trekkiefeminist.com](#). And for contacting our show, which is something we highly encourage, you can visit our website, [womenatwarp.com](#) or email [crew@womenatwarp.com](mailto:crew@womenatwarp.com). Or you can find us on the media social [@womenatwarp](#). And for more from the Roddenberry Podcast Network, visit [podcast.rodnenberry.com](#). Thanks so much for listening.

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