

Women at Warp Episode 239: Feminine Rage in Star Trek

[Women at Warp theme]

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

Claire: Hi.

Jenn: Hi.

Andi: Before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watchalong commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. Looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic Store. There are so many designs with new ones being added all the time and on so much more than just T-shirts. Find it at www.teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp.

Great, so we have two special guests today, Claire and Jenn, who have both been on the podcast before. So hopefully you guys get a chance to check out the other episodes they've been on. But Claire, you want to tell us a little bit about yourself and your history with *Star Trek*?

Claire: Sure. I think I've been on two or three episodes of Women at Warp at this point. I've been watching *Star Trek* since I was two and a half. *Encounter at Farpoint*, 1987.

Andi: It's a good start.

Claire: Yep.

Andi: Yeah, *Encounter at Farpoint* is a pretty good starting place, but I don't know if I would have been able to fully understand it at two and a half years or whatever.

Claire: I mean, I'm sure I didn't either, but I do genuinely remember watching it, so.

Andi: That's pretty impressive. And how about you, Jenn?

Jenn: Oh, hi. I'm also a lifelong *Star Trek* fan. I'm as old as *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

[laughter]

Jenn: So, I also remember *Encounter at Farpoint*, that was a huge deal for me. I loved watching *TOS* and caught in the TV Guide, they were making a modern version of that and I was really excited to watch it.

Andi: Man. The TV Guide.

Jenn: [laughs] The TV Guide.

[laughter]

Jenn: That's where I got all my most important information in the 1980s.

[laughter]

Claire: We bought the TV Guide for *Enterprise* when *Enterprise* was airing, and they had like a big one with a silver cover. And I distinctly remember my dad being like, "Be careful when you read it." And then put it in a large gallon size Ziploc bag so that it won't get wet or damaged in any way.

Jenn: I love it.

Andi: Man, they had like-- People don't remember what magazines were like back then. They had special editions that were like collector's items and all this.

Claire: Yeah

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: Now everything's on the internet.

Jenn: That very TV Guide episode issue that you're talking about Claire had a pin-up version of the new *Enterprise (NX-01)*. And I remember pinning it onto my cork board.

Andi: [laughs]

Claire: That's awesome. I love it.

Jenn: Before it came out you know. It's like, "Oh, that's the ship. That's the new ship. It is so exciting."

Andi: [laughs] Oh, you guys are cute.

[laughter]

Andi: So, I brought Claire and Jenn today because I wanted to talk about something that came up when Claire and I talked about *Turnabout Intruder*, which was a really fun discussion. And I'm still really glad you suggested us rewatching that episode, Claire, because it really is a very interesting episode to look at through a gender perspective. But one thing that I thought of when I was editing that episode, we kind of briefly bring it up, but there was something very interesting to me about the fact that Janice Lester's entire motivation was basically rage. Just a deep and profound anger over her body, her life, her status as a woman, the obstacles that she saw for herself because she was a woman.

And I just thought it was kind of interesting that, especially from that time that we had this character that was so steeped in this feminine rage because in my experience, not just in media, but in real life too, women are not really expected nor encouraged to have or show anger. It's considered an unlikable trait. We are very much socialized to try and be the peacemakers, to try and always make everyone else comfortable, to make sure that if we were really upset, that we hide that from other people. And people have always been much more comfortable with women's tears than their rage, even though anger is a very valid and normal emotion for everyone to have and handle. And just the different ways that people are expected to, I guess, experience anger based on whether you're a man or a woman is just really fascinating to me.

So, when I was editing that episode, I was like, "Ah, man, we really should have talked about that feminine rage piece." And then I was like, "Well, luckily, I have my own show, and I can say whatever I want on it, and I could talk about anything I want." So, I just put a pin in it and

said, "I want to talk about feminine rage in *Star Trek*." And so now that's why you guys are here to talk about that with me today.

Claire: I love it. I would also say it is often that if women are not actively portraying being pleasant in some capacity, that the assumption is that they're angry. So, it's not even just that you can't actively show anger. It's that if you're not actively showing something positive or pleasant, it's perceived, not always, but it can be perceived as anger or irritation or bitchiness or whatever.

Jenn: Yeah, that's what it is the bitchiness. You're a bitch.

[laughter]

Jenn: If you're not personally trying to make a man feel good about himself, you're being a bitch.

Andi: [laughs] You have to actively at all times be making a man feel good about himself obviously.

[laughter]

Claire: Just bring one with you so that there's always a man in the room so that you could be fawning over the man.

Jenn: Exactly.

Andi: Well, what I was thinking about when you said that Jenn is like you rarely see men accused of resting bitch face.

Jenn: Right.

Andi: Where just your normal natural face is like, "Wow, you look pissed off." Or we haven't even got into the way people feel very comfortable telling women to smile, like, "Why do you not look happy? You have to look happy."

Jenn: I hate it so much.

Andi: Yes, it's very-- But I wanted to talk about it because obviously it's something in society, but it's also reflected in our media. And I wanted to talk about kind of two different ways that it's portrayed. One, I wanted to talk about it when it was portrayed, such as Janice Lester, and some of the other characters will go through our "angry women." But also, when it wasn't shown the absence of when I feel like, "Why didn't we see those people be angry? And how many times did we see our women characters allowed to be angry in situations where they had every right to be angry?"

So, yeah, that's pretty much what I was hoping to talk about. I kind of went through my thoughts on Janice Lester, were there any others from you two that you wanted touch on before we moved on?

Claire: So, this is something I kind of struggled with while thinking about what I wanted to talk about in this episode. And it is that rage is actually not a word that had occurred to me to describe Janice Lester. I think that's a me issue. I always saw it as intense resentment and hatred, self-hatred.

Andi: Mm-hmm.

Claire: And I think I'm getting too literal. Huge surprise to anybody who knows me-

Andi: [laughs]

Claire: -with the term rage. And I already kind of came up where I was like women can be perceived as being angry, bitchy, irritated, etc. Those are all I guess various shades of rage, I guess. I don't know. Rage to me is like you've cranked it all the way to 11 and to the point where I could barely think of anybody in *Star Trek* who expressed rage. I can think of four times that something I would call rage gets expressed in *Star Trek*. So, I think I just need to turn my dial back a little bit.

Andi: [laughs]

Jenn: Yeah, because you can internalize rage too. You can have that seething inside you.

Claire: That's really true.

Jenn: And some of it seeps out at different rates with different people. And what I think about-- and you're right, I mean, Janice Lester, she does have resentment, obviously. She's hatred first off, because she's a mixed bag of negative emotions, and she's portrayed in that episode. The thing that gets me about that episode is it's portrayed as, "Look what happens when you try to put a woman in charge. She gets all emotional." [laughs] There's a lot of that. She becomes the captain, and right away, she just gives in to those negative emotions, and it just dominoes into where it ends up. I think there's a lot going on with her more than just feminine. The self-loathing aspect of it I think is interesting, I think that's another emotion altogether than the rage of it, or else that maybe she just internalized that society's loathing of women so much that she turns it in on herself.

Claire: Yeah. She continues to express anger and rage at her own left behind body long after she needs to. Like, once she's gotten into Kirk-- If she had been a sort of done a better job of impersonating Kirk and gotten away with it, she could have just been like, "Bye" to that body and fully moved ahead with this plan, and she could not stop fixating on her old female body in a way that seems like more than just rage. [laughs]

Jenn: And the physical strength of her new body too.

Claire: Yes, yes.

Andi: Mm-hmm. She immediately uses her strength as a man and her power as a man against her old self, which is super interesting. There's a reason I thought that episode, I was like, "Wow, there is so much to unpack here." And one thing that I was thinking is, this is a good example of-- When we talk about the original series, I can't really think of, although I'm sure there are examples of very many instances where the women that show anger on that show aren't the villain.

Claire: Mm-hmm.

Andi: So, in this case, this is a very unlikable woman. We went back to like, "Rage makes women unlikable." This girl is not the most likable one around, and she's a villain. And then the other thing that I kind of was thinking through, it was like, when I could think of women that showed anger, they were almost all either villains or they were women that then the men on the show had to put in their place.

Claire: Yeah. The anger had to be corrected.

Andi: Yeah. So, in this, I was thinking of *Elaan of Troyius*, and then I was also thinking of--I can't remember her name in the show, but Julie Newmar in *Friday's Child*, where McCoy full on, like she's resisting him touching her, and he full on slaps her into compliance.

Claire: I think *Elaan of Troyius* and *Turnabout Intruder* kind of have a similar issue or problem or challenge, which is those are unlikable characters just in general. So, it's like you have this extra layer of, I wouldn't really want to hang out with *Elaan of Troyius*. [chuckles] She seems like an unpleasant person to be around because she's really snobby, and she walks around the ship and is really dismissive of everybody, and goes to engineering, and she's like, "Oh, this is so menial. Ugh, I can't believe you're not bowing to me," and all this stuff. She is independent of her womanhood and independent of her legitimate anger at the situation that she's in. She's a very unpleasant character, so it muddies the conversation about her valid anger at the situation she's in. Which again with Janice Lester is kind of the same thing.

She's a bad captain, not because she's a woman, but because of her as an-- And she individually is a bad captain.

Andi: I think you said something really interesting and something I want touch on, which was you talked about legitimate anger. I feel like all three of the women we've talked about so far had legitimate reasons to be angry.

Claire: Yeah.

Jenn: Right.

Andi: And it kind of makes me sad that there was no nuance around, like, *Elaan of Troyius* is literally being sold off like cattle. She had absolute valid reason to be angry about that. And then the underlying moral of that episode is basically like she should suck it up.

Claire: Well, and it's taming of the shrew. And so, you come into it with an automatic, "You're not supposed to like this lady. You're not supposed to side with her as an individual person. You're supposed to be like, 'Damn, I wouldn't want to marry her either.'"

[laughter]

Claire: And so, it really does muddy what you just said, which is like, yes, she's being mistreated and put in a situation that she validly does not want to be in. She's also super unpleasant. It's complicated.

Jenn: I don't know. I kind of feel like her unpleasantness stems from her situation. I think she's purposefully playing up the, "I'm the dolmen, bow down to me." She's trying to exert any kind of power she has over this situation because she's powerless in what's happening to her.

Claire: And they say that the men of that society are really arrogant too. So, I would imagine being a woman in that society probably is hard.

Jenn: Part of it's cultural too, just based on what we see from her versus the green guys, all the Trojians.

[laughter]

Andi: The green guys.

[laughter]

Jenn: And perhaps she shouldn't have stabbed the green guy.

[laughter]

Jenn: But I understand why she hates him. And hates everything that's happening. And I don't know. The interesting thing to me with Elaan is how coded everything is, her sexuality versus-- if this was a male character, and the same thing was happening to the way Kirk-- Kirk threatens to spank her, before he even gets poisoned with her tears, he threatens to spank her. The scene where she's eating. She's eating like a boss [crosstalk] [laughs] sucking down Saurian brandy out of the bottle, and he criticizes her table manners because I guess she's not being ladylike. [chuckles] But if this is a male character, that wouldn't be the source of the conflict. I feel she's unpleasant, yeah, but I think she's just using the little bit of power that she has.

Claire: Yeah, that's a really good point. And that is not-- Like, yeah, eating table manners, who cares about table-- like, I don't care about her table manners. I was really thinking more about the class side of it, I guess, as a royal. But you're absolutely right that she's getting criticized for things that have nothing to do with that.

Andi: You know, kind of moving to *TNG*. I was thinking about when we were talking about Elaan, I was like, this is a good example of in *The Perfect Mate*, Kamala's in the exact same situation, and she's not angry. And I think that this kind of goes to my, "Why wasn't she angry?"

Jenn: Well, that was the opposite problem. [chuckles] That was the male fantasy. [laughs]

Andi: Yeah.

Claire: Yeah. Because in *Elaan of Troyius*, her tears enchant a man, will enchant a man. In *The Perfect Mate*, the man sort of enchants her brain for lack of a better word. Like the imprinting happens on a different character. So, she's even more passive. Well, I mean, she's not, she's active, she did it on purpose. But, yes, it is very male fantasy.

Andi: Well, and I think it kind of highlights what I think of when I think of the era of *TNG* and that most of the women weren't really allowed to be angry very often. And the number one person I think of for this is Troi. And I think it makes sense because she is kind of-- I've always considered Troi to be kind of a personification of a traditional femininity, which, by the way, I really love. And I'm very into a lot of the times. Her strengths are all typically feminine. She is the person whose job it is to make everyone else feel comfortable and manage everyone's emotions, the exact kind of emotional labor we were talking about at the beginning of the episode. And so, it makes sense to me that she would not generally be very angry person. And when we do see her anger, it's very specific.

Claire: The angriest we ever see her is the episode where she loses her empathic abilities.

Andi: And no one really-- This is another one where I feel like that's a really valid reaction to be angry, and it's portrayed as very unreasonable.

Claire: She lost an entire sense, that's like the core of her being as far as how she processes the world. And Riker is like, "Yeah, well, I'm not empathic. It doesn't hurt me any. I'm fine."

Jenn: Yeah. Picard tells her stories about someone he knew who was confined to a

wheelchair. This is a very typical to somebody with a handicap hearing stories like this. And her response-- And she snaps them, like, "I don't need to hear these ridiculous platitudes." It seems valid. But something that I find interesting, and the criticism of her there is a kind of like the Miss Priss, which is another one, like you can be only girls are prissy. And in this episode, Riker, he doesn't call her Priss, but he calls her aristocratic before-- And how proud she is of her Betazoid heritage, and she should just suck it up, basically, stop being so prissy, just suck it up. And I just don't think that they would have reacted this way if a male character was having this issue, which is interesting.

Andi: I do think we have an example on TNG though of a character that was allowed to be angry and it was not portrayed as a bad thing and that's K'Ehleyr.

Jenn: Yes. Yeah.

Claire: It's interesting because one hand, she's genetically angry because she's half Klingon and she talks about. And B'Elanna on *Voyager* has the same kind of background of my Klingon heritage makes my temper difficult to deal with, makes me kind of angry, etc.

Andi: Yeah, they get a pass for being angry. [laughs]

Claire: But what's interesting is they don't-- like B'Elanna certainly does not give herself that pass. I don't-- [crosstalk]

Jenn: No, I just mean the show does.

Claire: I don't [crosstalk] Klingon heritage.

Jenn: Yeah, like as far as bitchiness.

Claire: Right.

Jenn: Like a pass because they're Klingons.

Claire: But I also-- I feel like for K'Ehleyr, we can't let Worf off the hook too [laughs] much because especially that early in his characterization, I think Worf is very rigid. And I think any woman trying or anybody trying to spend time with him in a non-work-- I mean, it's a little complicated because it is work related, but it's also not completely work-related capacity. I think he would frustrate just about anybody.

Jenn: Absolutely.

Claire: Her anger is because of who she is, but it's also totally relatable. It doesn't seem unjustified.

Jenn: She's also very logical in her anger, especially for a Klingon. I mean, she has receipts. She always has receipts.

Andi: [laughs]

Claire: And she's very aware of it. She has that conversation with Troi where she talks about how she's constantly kind of calculating how angry is she right now and how angry can she be and how much wiggle room is there if she reached her limit.

Andi: That sounds exhausting.

Claire: Yes.

Andi: And then I think Beverly is kind of an interesting person when we're thinking about this because when I think of Beverly being angry, it's almost always like a righteous anger, and it's not very demonstrative. It's more stubborn. I don't know how to better explain that. But, like, every time I think of Bev getting angry, it's always like she has to stand up for something that the rest of the ship is doing that she thinks is ethically dubious. And she just kind of like plants her feet and won't get pushed. But it's not a very-- It's not a yeller, really. You know what I mean?

Claire: Right.

Jenn: Yeah. And you brought the perfect mate. She's the one here, she's eating breakfast with Picard and she's like, "Excuse me, we are human trafficking this person."

[laughter]

Jenn: Like, "What the F." [chuckles] But she just says it to him over breakfast, raises her voice, but doesn't yell, and just says her point, like you said, her righteous anger, which is very justifiable. And that's always how she. Again, she's another one that's always just logically-- She uses her anger at logical times. She brings receipts to.

Claire: The one time that I can think of off the top of my head and I have blanked on the name of the episode. But the episode where she gets kidnapped and she has to work as a doctor for this terrorist organization, and they're using this extremely dangerous transport technology that is essentially killing the people who use it. I feel like that is one episode where we see her pretty strongly and repeatedly state her mind and stand up to that guy and like she is-- But again, it is a righteous anger of she's enraged that he's killing his compatriots by having them use this. It's like basically a slow-motion suicide bomb, sort of for them in terms of like the more times they use this beaming the closer they are to death, and it doesn't take very many times for them to die. She does spend a lot of that episode upset, but then she does kind of help them. So, it does fizzle out in the end.

Andi: Overall, though, I think that *TNG* is marked improvement from *TOS* in this, which is not unsurprising. *TNG* has its own misogyny issues, but it's light years away from *TOS*'s misogyny issues. And then when we get into *DS9*, I think they improve even more because we have characters that again show that righteous anger, and that righteous anger is celebrated in many ways. And I'm specifically thinking of Kira.

Claire: I think it helps a lot too that show is led by a character and an actor who also shows big emotions. So, I think that's.

Jenn: For sure.

Claire: And I think one of the challenges with showing any character showing rage, but maybe especially a female character is, "How does that level of emotion fit into the tone of the show in general?" And *DS9* has a much bigger emotional range just because of Avery Brook's performance and the way that they write for him. It gave all the other characters the room to also kind of perform and be written in ways that they have a more dynamic range, I guess.

Andi: Well, the other thing is that Kira was very specifically set up to-- Her first scene is her yelling at someone.

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: And it's very clear that they wanted her to be angry and they wanted her to be a tough gal kind of person, and I like that, and I think it works really well. And she's another person where her anger comes from oppression. Her anger comes from the occupation of her planet and the fighting back and resisting against the occupation of the Cardassian's. She comes by her anger honestly. And then the rest of the show a lot of it is showing that she was right to be angry. A lot of her journey is accepting that all of that happened to her and processing it and healing from it, but not in a way that makes it feel like she shouldn't have been angry.

Jenn: Just following up to what you just said, Andi, I was going to say the same thing about, the first episode, not only is she's yelling at someone, but then throughout that episode, we're shown that we are in her space. There's that scene with her and Bashir with the frontier medicine, and she's like, "Hey, that frontier is my home, bug."

[laughter]

Jenn: Thinking about what you say. So, we're set up that we're in her space. And at the very end of the episode, Sisko starts helping her clean up the promenade. And I think by placing the show so firmly within her space, like her emotions are-- We look to her emotions throughout the show to kind of see where it's going, how we should feel about things and what's happening in the greater-- How does Kira feel about this? [laughs]

Andi: Well, and the other thing is like we were talking about one of the flaws of *TOS* is that a lot of the angry women needed to be put in their place in *DS9*. Both the show and the other characters support and validate her feelings. So, it's just really light years away from where we started and where we get to in *DS9*. I will say that Dax is not nearly as angry of a person, but I don't necessarily feel like it's the same as Troi in that I genuinely feel like that's just part of Dax's personality.

Claire: She's also, like, 400 years old or something at this point. So, I would imagine that she's probably better than most people who don't live that long.

Jenn: Being chill.

Claire: Yeah. Yes. I would say being chill is a primary aspect of her personality, like just chill with people you would not expect. But it's not because she's a pushover, it's just chill.

Andi: Well, I think that's kind of going to what I-- Because when I'm thinking of Troi and her lack of anger, it doesn't feel right to me. Whereas when I'm thinking of Dax and her lack of anger, that fits with her character to me. I don't know if that made sense to anyone else, but I feel like it's different. It felt like in *TNG*, Troi wasn't allowed to have anger by the writers and in *DS9*, Dax just is not angry person.

Claire: Dax already was angry about this stuff, 300 years ago.

[laughter]

Claire: No, I'm serious.

Jenn: She worked through the angst.

Claire: Yeah. It's not that she was never allowed to be angry. It's that she did that several lifetimes ago, but she had that anger and she expressed it, whatever it was that she was

angry about, I don't know. She's moved on in the same way that-- She's kind of gone on the journey that we see Kira go on, already she starts at the end of that journey.

Andi: Well, and then we already started talking a little bit about B'Elanna in *Voyager*. But I do want to talk a little bit about Janeway in *Voyager* first because I think Janeway and the writers had kind of a tough tightrope to walk with her in that I don't think that she quite had the freedom to show any emotion at all that the rest of the captains got up until that point because she was the first woman captain and they were trying so hard to make her a strong leader but also make her feminine enough for the audience to like her. And all of these considerations, intentions that weren't present in our other captains just because that wasn't an issue. And so, there's a lot of things about Janeway where I think they were very careful about how they were portraying her and that includes her ability to express anger.

Jenn: Yeah, I agree. But I actually think they did a pretty good job of walking that tightrope. They definitely didn't-- She's not a lean in girl captain.

[laughter]

Jenn: You know what I mean?

Andi: She's not girl bossing.

Claire: No.

Jenn: Yeah.

[laughter]

Jenn: And her character, she's not very motherly, but she's a caretaker.

Claire: She's a mentor, but not a mother.

Jenn: She's a mentor, but yeah-- But there's one episode and one of the later seasons where she realizes that she kind of let three crew members slip through the cracks, like they haven't even gone on an away mission. And so, someone who's more-- If Troi was captain, that would have never happened. Troi would have been checking in with every crewman weekly meetings, "How you feeling? How you doing?" Janeway's not like that. But it doesn't make her less womanly.

Andi: Mm-hmm.

Jenn: I don't know. Janeway's so interesting. We could spend a whole hour talking about Janeway's love-life, and I think we should.

[laughter]

Andi: I think we have.

Claire: Yeah.

Jenn: Oh, have you? I don't remember that one.

Andi: We have a series in which we talk through the captain's love interest called "Oh, captain, my captain." And I think Janeway got one, but. Yeah, and then obviously, the

character that has the most to discuss when it comes to anger is, as Claire mentioned, B'Elanna, because that's a big part of her overall series arc.

Claire: B'Elanna's anger is interesting to me in that she is similar in some ways to K'Ehleyr and that she has that kind of automatic half Klingon, therefore she must be grumpy kind of thing. But then she also has something kind of similar to Janice Lester, not for gendered reasons, but she carries-- B'Elanna carries a lot of self-hatred about her Klingon heritage, and that is something that she-- I don't think she likes how angry she is, but that just makes her more angry with herself, and it becomes self-destructive in a variety of ways. But I also think this is kind of a general *Star Trek* thing a lot of the time we spend with these characters, they're at work. A lot of the times we see B'Elanna "angry," she's just doing her job. And she wants her job. She is kind of a victim of the if this was a man doing it, they would just be seen as a good kind of--

Andi: Efficient.

Claire: No bullshit leader. Yeah, efficient leader. But she's B'Elanna, so everybody knows she's half Klingon. And also she's a woman, so you kind of-- Like her behavior, which is actually pretty normal, has all these asterisks after it that just sort of unfairly sometimes flavor what's going on in a way that her actual actions don't really support.

Andi: You made me think of-- Because you mentioned these are-- This is such an interesting thing about *Star Trek* is we are in their workplace, and it doesn't necessarily always feel like their workplace, but sometimes I am reminded of that, and it makes me think of how women in the workplace today feel pressured to do all of these things to soften their behavior. It's a joke and meme at this point, but I'm always like, "And I need an extra exclamation point to make sure I sound friendly, but not, 'oh, God, I got to take out, that's too many exclamation points. I sounded crazy now."

Jenn: I did that today.

[laughter]

Andi: Yes, exactly.

Claire: Well, that's what I mean though, is like, B'Elanna doesn't really do that. And she gets judged consciously or unconsciously by the viewer, by her coworkers, by the writing for not doing that when she's really not doing anything wrong.

Jenn: Right.

Claire: It's okay if you don't put an exclamation point in your email.

Jenn: She also maybe perhaps shouldn't have broken that guy's nose.

[laughter]

Claire: No. I'm not saying that everything she does is fine. She does legitimately have anger issues, but I think they get trotted out more than they should. And I'm same with Seven of Nine kind of falling into that situation where if you're a woman and you're not smiling, then you must be angry. [crosstalk]

Jenn: She's a frigid bitch.

Claire: Right.

Jenn: If she's not smiling. Yeah.

Claire: Such an interesting dynamic between the two of them because it's sort of like B'Elanna gets-- Suddenly B'Elanna is kind of in the other position of B'Elanna's like, "Damn, look at this big, rude bitch that I have to work with now," When people may have been thinking mad about B'Elanna. And B'Elanna's like, "I'm not doing anything." So, it is an interesting little nesting doll of angry women at work.

Andi: I do think it's funny, Claire, though, that you're pointing out kind of what we were talking about, how the smile more kind of thing is just like, if you have a woman that's blunt and straightforward, then it's perceived as angry.

Claire: Mm-hmm

Jenn: Right.

Andi: And when they are literally just very neutrally saying something, it's just that it's not softened with all of the things that were socialized to soften, so I think that's interesting.

Claire: And Seven of Nine does not get the benefit really of having been bored because she was not socialized to do those things. But once she's 99% de-assimilated, she's a smoking hot lady in a cat suit, and she looks human. And so, then she is like, I mean she-- They, people, including B'Elanna, expect the socialization from her that she never received that she's not going to perform until later.

Andi: I haven't seen it yet. But some of this that we're talking about, I think, can be applied to T'Pol as well.

Claire: Oh, yeah.

Jenn: Yes.

Andi: Vulcan women in general, just because the emotionless that most Vulcans portray can be read as cold. And I think we're a lot more comfortable and used to an emotionless looking man.

Claire: Yes.

Andi: And I don't think people are as comfortable with seeing those same characteristics in a woman.

Jenn: She's got an internal struggle too because she's very Vulcan, but she also does have emotions. And her arc-- the term frigid bitch.

[laughter]

Jenn: [unintelligible 00:36:53] and that's what T'Pol gets that reception as well. And *Enterprise* does something that's, I guess it's uncomfortable, but it's also very realistic in that T'Pol, whenever they're put in a dangerous situation, T'Pol's threatened in a more sexual way than others. The aliens always like, "Oh, I want to keep this one kind of thing," you know what I mean with her. So, there's that added layer of conquering the cold, frigid woman, which is very uncomfortable, but it's also stems from some truth [laughs] of people's real experiences with this. The way people respond to angry women or women who are cold. It's not just, "I don't like you." It's also I want to control you and slap it out of you. And T'Pol's just such an interesting character.

Claire: Yeah. It's that you need somebody to show you a good time.

Jenn: Yeah.

Claire: Help you learn how to smile. And it's like, ugh.

Jenn: Yeah, argh, argh. Yeah. T'Pol gets that a lot.

Claire: Well, and she as a Vulcan has-- She's got the other side of it where, like, I don't know-- I'm imagining like a Venn diagram of human and Vulcan society. The middle of the Venn diagram is like, "Why don't you smile more?"

[laughter]

Claire: And the Vulcan side is don't show emotion at all. And the human side is make sure you show lots of pleasant, positive emotion. And serving on a predominantly, nearly entirely human ship, T'Pol's got people doing the, "Why don't you smile more?" And it's like, "Because I'm Vulcan, you idiot. Trust me, I'm not going to be smiling around you unless something really weird is going on." So, she has to repress her emotions culturally and as a Vulcan and all of that stuff. She's got her whole Vulcan side that she's dealing with. But then there's also like perform for the humans. [chuckles] I don't know how else to put it.

Jenn: You have to be a Madonna and a whore. [laughs]

Claire: Yeah, exactly. And it's like-- [crosstalk]

Jenn: At the same time.

Claire: Yeah. It takes the gendered aspect of it and then turns it and puts the extra layer of species and society and culture on top of it. She's got a double thing she's got to be dealing with.

Jenn: This is why the Gillian D. No, I see why she turns to that. [laughs]

Claire: Yeah. Also, everybody smells really bad on that ship. And she's like, got the sensory experience of humans stinking. And she's got a-- [crosstalk]

Jenn: Can you imagine?

Claire: No, I do.

Andi: It does make me think though that Vulcans do not perform emotion. And all of our Vulcan's get pushback from humans on that. Like, that's one of the key things from *TOS* and Spock. But it just-- Adding the gendered aspect of human expectation for performative emotion has to be twice as hard on Vulcan women.

Claire: I also think that-- I want to talk about Amanda a little bit because human women married to a Vulcan men, I'm not sure we ever really see the opposite or any same sex, cross species relationships between humans and Vulcan's. But when the wife is a human, boy, that is a tough position to be in because in *Journey to Babel* in *The Original Series*, that version of Amanda, like that's an example of a female character that I would have liked to see be a little more demonstrably angry because she gets treated really poorly in that episode by her husband and her son. And treated poorly in a way that's, like, "I don't know if I understand why these two people are married." Like, Sarek is so Vulcan that it sort of becomes like, "Does he even really like this woman that he's married to?" Like, he's almost

ashamed of even the barest bit of any emotion. And so, I feel like Amanda is pushed into that pleasant-- Kind of just have that pleasant smile on your face at all times, but not too much. She is constantly adding and deleting exclamation points.

Andi: Yeah. And she's also the person that is like it's her job to translate her husband to others, which I have seen that dynamic in human relationships. And sometimes it's cute and it's like a balance. I don't know that this version of that is super balanced.

Claire: No. I love the trope of like someone who seems kind of gruff, where it's like, "I don't understand why this person is with that person," but then if you see them alone, it's like, "Oh, my God, the gruff person is actually like a real secret softie, and it's really sweet."

Andi: There is a reason why grumpy sunshine pairings are very popular ships.

Claire: Exactly, right. But we never get the payoff from that ship dynamic with Sarek and Amanda in *The Original Series*. He's just grumpy.

Jenn: No. And even *Strange New Worlds* Amanda, what we're getting is-- We get to see more of-- Okay, I don't know why she chose to deal with this to be married to Sarek, but I know why she chose to deal with it to make her son's life better. She silently keeps that stupid smile on her face so that the other moms will let their kids play with Spock. She's in that memory and charades, and her motivation then becomes a lot more clear to me with what we've learned, at least after Spock was born, I don't know what led her to those decisions. [laughs] But, once Spock's around, then that motivation becomes clear. And that scene with her and the T'Pol that I just adore it. That's her rage, her internal rage that she's holding in, and she can focus so strongly that she can keep that stupid smile on her face while she's getting burned with a T'Pol.

Claire: Yeah.

Jenn: She's a master of it.

Claire: For this ridiculous ceremony, that's just-- [crosstalk]

Jenn: Right, right.

Claire: Vulcan's doing their Vulcan thing.

Andi: [laughs]

Jenn: The Vulcan's doing their thing, but she has to do it for her son. And that's why she's going to keep that rage so laser focused. [laughs]

Andi: Well, I don't know that we've ever gotten the sense that Amanda has a job. I can't think of anything. But regardless, I don't think she has time for a job. All of the amount of emotional regulation that she is performing-- [crosstalk]

[laughter]

Jenn: It's her full-time job.

Andi: Yeah. It's a full-time job.

Jenn: Working on Vulcan.

Andi: You manage these two stubborn men and their emotions that they won't admit are emotions while also hiding her own emotions. It's just like, "Wow, this woman--" Like, can you imagine every night before she goes to bed, she probably goes out of porch and smokes a cigarette-

[laughter]

-stares bleakly into the middle distance, like, "God damn it." Maybe she snuggles the say [unintelligible 00:44:55] and goes back in to just pick up her pickaxe and go back into the mine of managing this terrible family's emotion.

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. That's a lot to deal with. Not something I would have chose but she clearly loves them both dearly, so I will not judge her.

Jenn: Yeah. What's so great about him?

Claire: Mark Lenard is very handsome.

Andi: Yeah, I was just about to say it. He's very hot.

[laughter]

Jenn: Okay, okay, true, true.

Andi: Their house in the desert is pretty cool.

Claire: Yeah, yeah.

Jenn: Young Sarek is hot too. Who? I can't get the name of the actor.

Andi: James Frain.

Jenn: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. They're both-- [crosstalk] And maybe they're amazing in bed. We don't ask--[crosstalk]

Claire: Once every seven years.

[laughter]

Andi: I think Claire brings up a good point. The problem isn't the dynamic. The problem is we don't see the good side or-

Jenn: We don't get to see [crosstalk]

Andi: -the dynamic. It's probably behind like 50 doors. And they never put a camera in there to just show us, but I like to think it's there because otherwise it's bleak.

Claire: Right. And Sarek, obviously, when we see him in *The Next Generation*, and Amanda has died of normal human age, he's married to another human woman. So, he obviously does not find human women as, like, "Oh, my God, I got to deal with their emotions." Like, he doesn't think that, even though that's what it sort of exudes. He had the opportunity to not marry another human woman and he still did so.

Andi: Well, and then he picked another human blonde woman who likes statement necklaces.

Claire: That's because Vulcan's are the most dramatic. They all have statement necklaces. They are so dramatic for being such logical people.

Andi: I mean, honestly, I think that says more about the writers because they were like, "Obviously, Amanda can't still be alive, but we really liked that dynamic, so we're just going to copy paste here." Whereas I feel like it's super not realistic that he would have just copy pasted wife too.

Claire: Oh, I don't agree.

Jenn: Some men just have a type like that.

Andi: I guess.

Claire: Well, and also, he's an ambassador who let's be real, never really learned how to take care of himself because that was Amanda's job. He needed another personal assistant.

Andi: Oh, God.

Jenn: 100%.

Andi: Bleak, bleak.

Claire: Sorry. We're going to get hate mail about.

[laughter]

Claire: That's being too mean to Sarek. I love Sarek, don't get me wrong. I'm just saying. He's the CEO.

Andi: Yeah.

Jenn: Yeah.

Claire: He's good at his job. He's a very good ambassador, but he does not fold his own underwear, come on.

[laughter]

Andi: Well, and then speaking of the Vulcan's, I do want to talk about *Lower Decks*, because *Lower Decks*, I think is a great example of a show where I feel like all of the women characters get to show rage, and it's super nuanced and great. And T'Lyn is a good example of this in that she shows her own version of rage, which is not really-- It's pretty mild. [laughs] but like you can sense her frustration with her rejection from the Vulcan's because she threw a little too much shade.

Jenn: She has lost all control.

Claire: Yeah. That's the thing, though. I feel like she gets the same treatment as T'Pol, but she gets it from other Vulcan-- [crosstalk]

Andi: It's like, "Wow, guys." She's calmly, like, "We should do this." They're like, "God. You're out of control."

Jenn: Yeah.

[laughter]

Andi: But even more so especially Mariner. Especially Mariner. We get to see extremely nuanced portrayal of feminine rage. And I just think the stark difference of where we started and where we came in, *Star Trek's* portrayal of not only this emotion, but just women in general, it just makes me happy.

Jenn: Makes me so happy.

Claire: Yeah.

Andi: And plus too, the other thing is when it's animated, everything is already a little exaggerated. So, they have even more space for all of their emotions to go to eleven.

Jenn: I especially love the Captain Carol Freeman in this instance too because she's allowed to raise her voice and to show rage when. And a normal captain, we know would be feeling it, but maybe not show it, and she's not portrayed as angry character. It's just normal person character who gets outraged when some rich guy doesn't want you to blow up his moon.

Claire: Well, and she's a mother as well. Yeah, but she's not painted into that kind of-- She has to be gentle and loving and maternal all the time.

Jenn: Right. I love her so much.

Claire: Yeah, they balance that really nicely.

Jenn: Yeah, they balance that really great.

Andi: Well, and for both Freeman and Mariner, there could have been a landmine there for the angry black woman stereotype, but I think because both characters are well written and their anger doesn't define them, but they are allowed to experience the full range of human emotion. Because I feel like especially with black women characters, we run into problems where when you're trying to avoid stereotypes or you're trying to avoid things, you honestly back yourself into a corner in which feel like you have your black women characters have to be calm and soothing.

Claire: You overcorrect.

Jenn: Right.

Andi: Yeah, exactly. And in this case, I'm thinking of Guinan, which obviously, Guinan's an amazing character, and 10 out of 10. She very much is an incredibly calm person, and a lot of her storylines are about her supporting other characters, and I don't really feel like she necessarily gets as much as I would like. And to be fair, she's a supporting character, so she doesn't necessarily need to, but being able to be portrayed as someone who has deep emotions, I don't feel like she gets as much of that. Whereas with Freeman and Mariner, they run the gamut. They're complicated women.

Claire: So, I was actually really pleased with Season 5 of *Discovery* for reminding me how much Burnham's character has changed and grown over the six or seven years between these seasons. We see there's a time travel episode, and we end up kind of re-meeting early Season 1 Burnham, and she is a much angrier. She's closer to her Vulcan upbringing character, and I had honestly kind of forgotten how-- She's just sort of vibrated with rage at times, and I had honestly forgotten about that because she evolves into this much-- she's a much more emotionally expressive character, but she tends to express positive, loving, caring, awestruck type emotions and not anger, which I'm glad for Burnham that she is able to not live in a place of anger all the time. I had forgotten that she was living with so much anger at the very beginning of the show.

Andi: Well, in Season 1, Burnham, I feel like she was very much repressed. She had all of these feelings, but she had been taught to repress them, but it never quite fit for her. And honestly, she's another victim of Sarek's A++ parenting.

Claire: Right.

[laughter]

Jenn: Sarek, man.

[laughter]

Andi: Amanda was doing her best as always in her full-time job of trying to keep that from happening, but at the end of the day, that was harmful to her and it was harmful to her to suppress all those emotions. And even in the first season, a huge chunk of Burnham's arc in the first season is about learning to open up to people and trust them. And that just, I think is a larger journey she takes throughout the whole series. And by the end, she is a much happier and a much more in touch with her emotions type person. She doesn't repress them anymore. She processes them and heals those wounds throughout the course of the show. So, a satisfying journey.

Claire: Yeah. This really has turned into like the Sarek.

Andi: Yeah. I mean, I was not-- He's not even in our outline. We did not expect to talk about this man for 20 minutes, but we did, and it worked.

Claire: He personally, individually, is the reason that feminine rage does not get expressed.

[laughter]

Jenn: *Star Trek* sometimes-- He sucks, really sucks. Sorry, he's hot, but he sucks.

Claire: He looks great in a robe.

Jenn: He does at any age.

Andi: The thing is like as a character, I really like him, but if he were my dad, I would not enjoy that.

Jenn: Right. That's the thing.

Claire: You would need therapy if Sarek was your dad.

Jenn: For sure

Andi: Yes. I would book many trips to Troi's quarters, but please put some candles on, I've got some things to say about my dad's A++ parenting.

Wow, while we really ran the gamut and went through a lot of different shows and a lot of different characters, I am sure, 100% sure we missed some that folks would like to talk about. So, if y'all want to do that, please feel free to leave some comments and have some discussions about characters you'd like to discuss when it comes to this, because lord knows, an hour is never enough time to really get into the depths of *Star Trek*, and that's why we love it. But was there anything anybody wanted to add before we wrap up?

Jenn: Well, I would just say another example of how we're doing so much better now light years away from where we started in *TOS* is La'an in *Strange New Worlds*, because if she was written, say, in the 1980s, she would have been written as just a truly angry, angry person, like a true bitchy person. And then, oh, then you might have found out a little along the way, it's because she had this horrible experience as a child and blah, blah, blah. But the way she's written now, she's allowed to have more than just-- She's a security guard, but she's allowed to be more than just an angry character, or the hard character. We've seen so much range of emotions from her. And I think if she was written in the past, we wouldn't have such a rich character in her that we have.

Claire: They've also not just said, "Move past it, she got to learn to stop being so angry." Like, her friends and her coworkers care about her and would love to see her happier, but they are giving her the space and time to do that herself if she wants to, and support instead of just being like, "Come on, smile. Stop being so-- it's in the past." I love La'an. I'm really glad you brought her up. She's amazing.

Jenn: I love her so much.

Andi: I think that's the core of the difference as, like before, it was very much portrayed as a negative thing that had to be fixed. And now it's more, this is an aspect of this person that we care about, and we want to validate and hear them when they are angry, which everyone is angry sometimes. I'm sure there's a children's book out there that explains it.

[laughter]

Andi: All right, well, thanks so much for joining me, ladies. I really had a lovely time talking with you guys about this, and I'm happy we got a chance to unpack this a little bit more because I have been thinking about it for months, but that's about all the time we have today. Claire, where can people find you on the internet?

Claire: I am on Bluesky. It's [isolinearchip](https://bsky.app/profile/isolinearchip) dot whatever the regular one is.

Andi: [laughs] Awesome. And, Jenn, where can people find you on the Internet?

Jenn: Yeah, I've been trying to let social media go for my life, but I'm still on Twitter at [@eatatquarks](https://twitter.com/eatatquarks). I still occasionally lurk there. If you get to send a message to me there, I'll find it. You can also find coming up in July, we're getting 20 new episodes of *Prodigy*, which I'm very excited about. And you can find my reviews for *Prodigy* on trekcore.com.

Andi: Huzzah. All right. And I'm Andi. You can find me [@FirstTimeTrek](https://twitter.com/FirstTimeTrek) on Twitter. And to learn more about our show or contact us, visit womenatwarp.com, email us at crew@womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook or Instagram [@womenatwarp](https://www.instagram.com/womenatwarp). Thanks so much for listening.

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