

## Episode 248: Vulcan Women

[Women at Warp theme]

**Andi:** Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our 10-year mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Andi and thanks for tuning in. With me today are Aliza.

**Aliza:** Hello.

**Andi:** And Sue.

**Sue:** Hey.

**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 a month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch-along commentaries, visit [www.patreon.com/womenatwarp](http://www.patreon.com/womenatwarp).

I do have a little bit of a caveat for this one though. If you listen to our last episode or you have checked out our socials or our website, you will know that Women at Warp is ending our 10-year mission in March. So just a quick note that our final episode is set for release on March 31st, 2025. Until then, all patron rewards will continue. And we are working up a special item for our final round of merch to celebrate 10-years of Women at Warp, but at that point, rewards will end. If anyone would like to continue donating, we will continue to accept contributions via Patreon through December 15th, 2025 to help offset the costs of closing down and maintaining web hosting and all of those fund's things, so just a note on our regular Patreon announcement.

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**Sue:** On that note, that TeePublic store will also only exist through about December 15th.

**Andi:** Excellent. Caveat for number two. Same caveat, but just doubled it. [Sue laughs] And then on a more fun note, Kennedy and Sue will be at Star Trek New Jersey November 9th through the 10th. Sue, you want to tell us a little bit more about that?

**Sue:** Yeah. It's in North Jersey in at the Meadowlands Convention Center. It looks like we're going to be able to have a table. So, the remainder of merch from previous runs we should hopefully have with us as well as a few small giveaways. There may or may not be some Plomeek soup temporary tattoos [Andi laughs] in my apartment.

**Andi:** [unintelligible [00:02:36] apropos.

[chuckles]

**Sue:** So, yeah, if you're going to be there that weekend, stop on by and say hi.

**Andi:** Awesome. And then lastly, but definitely not least, we have a birthday. So big birthday shoutout to Amanda H. whose birthday is November 3rd. Awesome. So, today's topic is one near and dear to my heart, because anybody who's listened to our show for any amount of time knows I have a deep love and fondness for the Vulcans. I definitely have-- How do I put

this? A predilection for stoic people that are actually boiling volcanoes of passion underneath.

**Sue:** [laughs]

**Aliza:** Right.

**Andi:** So that's my type, you could say.

[laughter]

So, I've always really loved the Vulcans. And I think Vulcan women is kind of an interesting topic because Vulcan women are often treated somewhat differently than the Vulcan men we see. And most of our major, major characters that we've seen that are Vulcans are men. So, I find them to be very interesting in how they're treated both in *Star Trek* and how they are treated in the Vulcan society that we see on screen.

**Aliza:** Yeah. I mean, one of the things I really love about *Star Trek* and also what we do on this podcast is getting to put together so many different pieces of evidence of a thing in *Star Trek* and putting them together. And when you look at them all together, you see a different picture. So, looking at all these Vulcan women from all the different various series who don't interact with each other and seeing them in their context in *Star Trek* and comparing them, it's like, I don't know, I feel like I noticed new things about some of these ladies as I was like thinking through some of them. And, Andi, I also love Vulcans as much as I love Klingons. I love them both, and I feel very steeped in their cultures because of that-- Yeah, very similar. I just relate to that like having this simmering, boiling emotions underneath a serene cover or mask, really.

So, yeah, my thoughts generally about the Vulcan women of *Star Trek* is that I love considering like how their womanhood, their femininity, their roles in society affect their devotion or dedication to their faith and to the Kolinahr and even to Starfleet and to institutions, I guess. So, yeah, that's kind of generally what I'm excited to look at.

**Sue:** I think that the way we're presented Vulcan women is so full of contradictions.

**Andi:** Yes.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Sue:** And not even just throughout the 58 years of *Star Trek*, but even in sometimes a single episode. The first time we really meet any is *Amok Time*. We've got at least the way it's presented to us in *TOS*, like T'Pol is trying to figure out what she can do under this system where she has no power, but the person overseeing the situation, the person who is running the show is T'Pol. It seems like they have such different amounts of power and different amounts of respect they're given in the situation.

**Andi:** Yeah, I'm really glad you brought that up, because that's basically generally what I wanted to say too, is that I find what we see on screen to be somewhat contradictory as well. Especially, so if you look at it on paper, in many ways, you would think that the Vulcan society is more enlightened and their women have more power than say some of the more outdated versions that we have of the Klingon women who like are specifically barred from political power in some instances. But at the same time, the Vulcan women seem much more steeped in like a ritualistic power rather than like an actual power over their agency and lives.

And you're right that a lot of that comes up in *Amok Time*, which, if people do not remember *Amok Time*, I don't know what to tell you. You should probably rewatch it because it's a banger and there's lots of bells and fighting in the desert. Yeah, bells is the main thing. Plomeek soup getting hurled around. The addition to Pon Farr to *Star Trek* canon, which is the gift that has given us so many things, including fanfic tropes that will never die.

**Sue:** I mean we literally created it, come on *Star Trek*.

**Andi:** Yes, we very much did. [Sue laughs] So, if you're reading fanfic, you're welcome.

**Sue:** I'm not saying we created fanfic. I'm saying we created the [unintelligible [00:07:40] die trope.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Just to be absolutely clear.

[laughter]

**Andi:** Yeah. Spock created a couple.

**Aliza:** Oh several, several many.

**Andi:** He also created sex pollen. So, congrats to Spock for all these terrible, dubious consent tropes. [crosstalk]

**Sue:** You could also go back and listen to our episode on *Amok Time, Spock's World. Amok Time, Excellent*, which is one of my favorite titles.

**Andi:** Yes. It's a good time. And you bring up our two first women that we really see, and they're in such interesting roles in this because on the one hand, T'Pring has no agency, but on the other hand, she has complete control over both Spock and Kirk. And you're right, Sue, it's an odd dichotomy. And we got some interesting comments on T'Pring, which I'm not surprised why, she's very-- I wouldn't even say polarizing, because I think, like, when looked through a modern lens, fans are much more forgiving towards her. But, especially at the time, I feel like she got a lot of pushback.

**Sue:** Oh, she was hated.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Hated.

**Andi:** Yeah. And one of our comments on this was from Bethany who said, "I'm sure it will come up, but I'd love to hear you discuss the contrast between how Vulcans are supposedly enlightened and civilized. But women seem to be considered property in *Amok Time* anyway. And there are two arranged marriages with reluctant wives T'Pring and T'Pau," which is a good point. But also, this episode has T'Pau who is serving--

[chuckles]

There's no other way to say that, but she's also serving in a ritual that's designed to, I don't even know what it's designed to do. Let's be real. This is another inherent contradiction to the Vulcans is that they're supposedly logical, but this is dramatic as shit and also makes no

sense this whole ceremony that they've got going on. So anyway, I love them, but also, what are you doing?

**Aliza:** Yeah. Seeing the two different roles that these two Vulcan women have in *Amok Time*, I feel like-- I mean it's not even that far from our own society because like Vulcan society from the comments, people consider it enlightened and civilized, but really, it's just their logic is their guiding truth. And sometimes logic is not the best thing to go by when you're making decisions about humans and their lives or Vulcans and their lives. So, I don't know, I never saw them as like an enlightened society because they're logical. I just saw them as a logical society. And seeing a very like high status Vulcan woman who is enforcing these very clunky ritualistic practices in something that another Vulcan woman is like sort of, yeah, just like treated like property to be passed around. It's really telling, I think about their society.

And then from T'Pring's angle, I actually love how she explains like getting out of this situation, and like her thinking of like pitting Kirk and Spock against each other and how Spock really respects her, that's super logical, and it is. Like what she did is super logical, and she was using logic to get herself out of a bad situation within this society that is built on logic. So, I don't know, I feel like very-- Again, it's not that far even from our society in terms of like, as a woman, as marginalized person or identity, you have to work with the system's rules sometimes to achieve that freedom that you're looking for. And, yeah, I just think T'Pring does that really well in *Amok Time*.

**Andi:** If you think about it, she's really exhibiting a really iconic use of malicious compliance.

**Sue:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** Right.

**Andi:** she was like, "Oh, you're going to put me in this garbage system? Well, okay, I'm going to use the garbage system against you."

**Aliza:** Exactly. Yeah. She's working the system for her own benefit.

**Sue:** So, I have this, I don't know, if you'd call it a fan theory or if I'm just trying to like force story into the bits we have of canon. If we think about where the Vulcan women were in *Enterprise*, and we'll talk more in depth about T'Pau, but we see her as much more of an equal. But one of the stories late in *Enterprise* is that the Vulcans rediscover the teachings of Sarek. And that's what reignites this logic boom, which is before Spock's time. So, there's sort of a return to the teachings of the Kir'Shara. Are Spock and T'Pring's family just like orthodox Vulcans? So, they're going all the way back to follow these rituals. Am I making any sense?

**Andi:** No, I think that makes sense. I mean, in some ways, trying to unpack canon, especially from *TOS* is difficult because they never intended it to stand up to the kind of scrutiny that we give it, but like that kind of stuff makes sense to me. And it's like when you start gaming it out, of course, not everyone on the planet's going to have the same way of dealing with things. And I bet you a million dollars, like someone else besides T'Pau does that whole ritual and it's a totally different ritual, like, has different-- Maybe there's even more bells like-

[laughter]

**Andi:** -you get crazy. I want to kind of pivot to some of our other Vulcan women in the *TOS* era because I find them to be extremely interesting as our first Starfleet Vulcan women,

which is to start with Saavik, who is a really fascinating character to me. And I don't want to reignite the age-old debate of who played the role better. But in general, I thought both actresses brought a lot to the role. And Saavik in general as a character brought a lot to those movies.

**Sue:** I wish she'd gotten to be the character she was conceived as, meaning canonically part Romulan because I think that explains a lot more of the choices made at least in Kirstie Alley's portrayal.

**Andi:** And I will pretty much never forget her crying in *The Wrath of Khan*, which I think is one of the more emotionally striking shots of that film. And then especially since—And, Aliza, you were talking about Vulcans and their “logic.” Spock is like PowerPoint slide numbers 1 through 10 of like a Vulcan who believes in logic, but also points out when logic is not enough and when logic is flawed and this simple feeling, all of this stuff, and I feel like combining her crying with Spock's death is a really powerful contrast.

**Aliza:** Yeah, I like that. I mean, it's also another way that we see how Spock's humanity. He struggles to see his humanity as a benefit for himself. I think most of the time that we see him throughout *Star Trek*, but he only would be able to see someone who is human as well, a Vulcan who's also human. But, yeah, that's beside the point. This is not about Spock. This is about Vulcan women.

**Andi:** It's not about Spock. But I will say that Spock, whenever we're talking about Vulcans looms pretty large in Vulcan canon.

**Aliza:** Of course. Of course. Yeah, I'm just kidding. I'm really just kidding. Spock will come up a lot, I'm sure.

**Andi:** And then of course, Valeris. I really love Valeris because again, going back to that logic thing, I think, and I mean, the show definitely kind of evokes this. I've always felt like the Vulcans are basically like space elves and they've got that whole ethereal, not quite of this earth, long lived and wise kind of vibe to them that also goes hand in hand with your trophy fantasy elves. And because of that, people struggle to see them being manipulative or lying or the villain. And in this case, we get an example of someone who uses logic extremely rationally and ends up at the completely wrong point.

**Aliza:** Yeah, exactly. And that goes to show logic is not guiding truth. Logic is just a way to look at the world. And everyone's logic can be slightly different or very different, and then you'll end up with different conclusions. So, yeah, I like how you just described that, Andi. Yeah, I don't remember when I first saw this movie, but I remember re-watching it as an adult and completely forgetting what happened and Saavik's role in it. Also, shoutout to Kim Cattrall, yay.

**Andi:** Oh, it's Valeris.

**Aliza:** Oh, sorry, Valeris. But, yeah, rewatching this a few years ago as an adult and, yeah, that excitement of getting to see any Vulcan, and a Vulcan woman be kind of on the wrong side of history and get to see that juiciness, usually that's just reserved for Romulans, and it's like these are the good ones and these are the bad ones. And I love that we got to see like a spicy Vulcan woman step outside the norm and what's expected.

**Andi:** Yeah. But also, somehow deeply embody a typical Vulcan, that's what I love about it.

**Aliza:** Right. Yeah, it doesn't go against her Vulcanness.

**Andi:** Yeah. I mean, there's a Vulcan criminal on *DS9* who I also feel the same way about, which is like, "Yeah. I'm gun running, why wouldn't I?" You know what I mean? I love that.

**Sue:** And we've seen some on *Strange New Worlds* as well.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Sue:** When you're talking about logic as being almost like a lens to view decisions and situations through, it made me think of D&D alignment charts. Yeah, it's like instead of lawful, it's logical.

**Andi:** Well, and I feel like Vulcans would be true neutral.

**Aliza:** Yeah, they probably would. They would strive to be, that's their goal. But they don't all achieve what they're trying to do with their emotional repression or suppression.

**Sue:** And just because you think you're neutral doesn't mean you are.

**Andi:** Yes, that's true because look at Valeris. I'm sure everything she did was rational, but it was also colored by bias that she wasn't seeing, which is a totally normal thing. Well, most people don't recognize their own bias, but she considered herself a clear eyed, logical-- And this is kind of what I was going back to you about like they've always been kind of the arbiter of what's true. We kind of look to them to be like the truth tellers or whatever and she just kind of shatters that, and I love it. And I love having a complicated Vulcan character like that.

**Sue:** Vulcans don't lie is the biggest lie they ever told.

**Andi:** I know. It's the same thing where they're like, "We don't feel emotion." Bullshit.

**Sue:** Right. Yeah.

**Andi:** Anyways.

**Aliza:** Thank God for retconning though, because I think Vulcan's would have been boring if all those details weren't added over time.

**Andi:** Well, actually, that goes back to something that I was thinking about at the top of everything, but we kind of veered. Another thing that I find interesting about how Vulcan women are portrayed specifically is that I noted that most of the Vulcans, major Vulcans we see are men. And I think there is a gendered reason for that. I think that we embraced Spock in a way we would not have embraced a woman.

**Aliza:** Oh. Hmm.

**Andi:** Like a cold, logical woman.

**Sue:** Well, that's number one. That's *The Cage*. Yeah, and that was part of the feedback. Not the all of it. I mean, the other part of the feedback was you can't cast your mistress in a lead role, Mr. Roddenberry.

**Aliza:** Oh, my God.

**Sue:** That's the part nobody ever talks about but us. But, yeah, no, that was number one,

was the Spock personality. And Spock was a much more exuberant, affable sort of character, and you can see that in *The Cage*.

**Andi:** Yeah, it's interesting to me. And it kind of goes to show how some of these, I guess, inherent discomfort with cold women still hangs around today. And I think we'll get into that later.

**Aliza:** Yeah. I don't want to jump ahead either, but I want to put a pin in T'Pau because I think T'Pau is also kind of a number one character, not really, but-- God, Andi, that's so on point. If they had aired *The Cage* or if Spock had been a woman, yeah, the reception would have been totally different because look at how T'Pau was treated.

**Andi:** And that was in the 2000s.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Not just by audiences, by the characters.

**Andi:** Yes, yes.

**Sue:** My God. The constant pressure to assimilate, really.

**Aliza:** Yeah. Awful. Just poking her with these metaphorical sticks all the time.

**Andi:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** Sorry. I get really mad when I think about T'Pau.

**Andi:** We got some good comments on T'Pau. And, overall, I feel like she is the obvious choice of a character to discuss. One, because she's I think our only major series regular Vulcan woman, but also just because she's a complex and polarizing character. So, Madeline said, I feel like T'Pau is too obvious, but especially considering the context she had to struggle against. She is the most stunningly Vulcany Vulcan that ever Vulcaned. She out-Vulcaned to every other Vulcan she ever shared the screen with, which I very much enjoyed. Thank you, Madeline.

**Aliza:** That's sweet. Yeah. And I agree. I love T'Pau. I think she's one of the things that made-- When I was very angry watching *Enterprise*, she's one of the things that made it watchable and refreshing for me. Her, and like, basically all the people of color on the bridge who never got enough storylines for themselves. Sorry, I could also just talk a lot about *Enterprise* and the racial dynamics of the whole thing. But, yeah, T'Pau is dear to my heart. Yeah, for these very reasons. She's super Vulcan. We get to see a Vulcan woman in many different angles. And unfortunately, we see her just kind of being socially tortured for most of the time. But, God, I mean, how wonderful are the moments with the human stink moments, that's such a beautiful, visceral thing that T'Pau brought us. And it's just so not Spock to say something like that. I mean, obviously, also because he is human and has human family members. But, yeah, I love those little details about T'Pau that we got to see and helped flesh out Vulcans in general through her.

**Andi:** The other thing I'd add about T'Pau is, to me, she operates somewhat in the fandom of a similar reaction to her as to Seven of Nine, in which, because they cast such gorgeous women, which is obviously not a bad thing, but I think a lot of people kind of see that first and

don't see past, that as like to what's beyond that for their character. They're just like, "Oh, she's just the hot one."

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Aliza:** Yeah, that was definitely at play with T'Pol. And, yeah, it's funny because it's-- Again, I feel like I keep spinning into other topics, but it's a repeating thing with *Star Trek* where we see, they always put one of the hot ladies will be in a catsuit and people will hate her, and then we'll realize how awesome she is, and then we'll feel bad, it's on repeat in *Star Trek* until I feel like we haven't had that in a while, thankfully.

**Andi:** Maybe someday we'll actually learn.

**Aliza:** Yeah, maybe the catsuit lady will be a captain.

**Andi:** That would be awesome. I would love that. We also got a comment on our Instagram from Trekker Nan that I really liked, which says, "I think T'Pol is an underrated woman character. She grows throughout the series without compromising her own core values. T'Pol is a great precursor to Spock in that she also comes to represent a bridge between Vulcan and human society. I'd argue she's just as influential in founding the Federation as Archer at least from what we see on screen. The Enterprise mission wouldn't have gone forward without her. Thanks for listening to my TED Talk."

[laughter]

**Aliza:** Absolutely.

**Andi:** And also, Trekker Nan wrote for our blog on this, so we will link that in the show notes so people can read that, but I thought that that was very thoughtful.

**Aliza:** Absolutely. And I'm front row for that TED Talk. Very well said. T'Pol is seminal in the founding of the Federation and Starfleet. I just love to T'Pol so much. I don't even know what else to say. What else--? [crosstalk]

**Sue:** And she didn't even want to be there.

**Aliza:** I know. Poor lady. I feel so bad for her, but she's also wonderful.

**Andi:** That just makes it more impressive.

**Aliza:** Yeah. God, that's so funny like thinking about her not-- Yeah, she didn't want to be there, and she made such an outsized contribution for one person.

**Sue:** And she went through a significant amount of trauma on that show.

**Aliza:** Yeah, yeah. For real.

**Andi:** Which again is something that some of our other quote "hyper femme," hot ladies have an issue with in *Star Trek*. They love torture Troi. They love torture Seven of Nine.

**Sue:** Yeah. And they all have episodes where they are being assaulted.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Physically and/or mentally.



**Andi and Aliza:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** And sometimes they have one of each-

**Sue:** Mm-hmm. Or multiples.

**Aliza:** or multiple episodes of each.

**Andi:** Frustrating. It is wild to me that where *Enterprise* is in the, I guess, timeline of *Star Trek*, I find it to be so odd. So in like chronological order, it's after-- Like an air order, it's after our mid-90s shows, right?

**Sue:** Yes.

**Andi:** But in like canon order, it's before *TOS*, but it's somehow less progressive than both.

**Aliza and Sue:** Yeah, yeah.

**Andi:** I find that to be very interesting. I would love to be a fly on that writer's wall.

**Aliza:** When I was like reentering my *Star Trek* fandom and starting my full chronological watch, I did start with *Enterprise* and many *Trek* fans were like, "Just don't watch it. Just skip it. It's awful." I was like, "Are you kidding? I'm a completionist. I'm going to watch all of it." And then *TOS*. And I did watch *Enterprise* and what was funny to me is that they told me very specific reasons they hated *Enterprise*. And this is several people of all different backgrounds, ethnicities. But when I watched it, I just saw the racial dynamics and how poorly everyone who wasn't a white guy on that show was being treated. I also saw how every guest star actor who was an alien was just a white guy with a squiggly forehead, like they never had-- I think I remember one major female guest star in all of *Enterprise*. And then no people of color and no-- Yeah, just no people of color, basically, and very few women, if any. So you're right, it somehow, just chronologically made society worse or something in this timeline.

**Andi:** Well, it's also in a very specific niche of American media in that—[crosstalk]

**Sue:** Yes.

**Andi:** Post 9/11, which was a very specific media landscape that was very reactionary. So, I don't know, I think you could probably write a whole dissertation about the time in which *Enterprise* was written, but the time it's portraying also and Starfleet history and like, "Wow, interesting."

**Sue:** It's part of the contradiction I mentioned right at the top because we're 40ish years further on than *TOS*. And in certain ways, T'Pol is more of an equal to her crewmates than T'Pol certainly is in her world of *TOS*. She's not a Starfleet officer, but she's an officer. She has reports, she's in command, she's part of the senior staff. But the outlook from the writer's room seems to be what was worse off than *TOS*, really.

**Aliza:** Yeah, it does make a lot of sense. And I sometimes remind myself of that. I still think, it's not an excuse really, but so much of the story of *Enterprise* really did show how Americans were literally dealing with the trauma of 9/11 and having to regurgitate that trauma in a show.

**Sue:** It was also the era of television where networks would dictate that all of their shows

had to do episodes on certain topics, which is like a very early 2000s sort of concept. And all of a sudden that's where we get *Fusion* and *Stigma*. Is them trying to do an AIDS awareness episode in the context of *Star Trek*. And it doesn't always work great.

**Andi:** Sometimes people don't have the range, Sue.

**Aliza:** Wait, is that why we have all those like, "A very special episode?"

**Sue:** Yeah, 100% in *Enterprise* because UPN in particular was like, "It's environmentally friendly week," or whatever.

**Aliza:** Oh, God, wow, my brain is spinning out because *30 Rock*, the episode where they have the like--

**Sue:** Exactly what I was referencing.

**Aliza:** Yeah, that's exactly how they got to. Oh my God.

**Andi:** Greenzo on *Star Trek: Enterprise*.

**Aliza:** Yeah. So, for anyone who doesn't know that reference *30 Rock* had, and I think it was like two episodes where they had to do all green awareness, like climate change and stuff like that, and it's ridiculous, it's bonkers. And what's that actor's name from?

**Sue:** David Schwimmer.

**Aliza:** David Schwimmer plays Greenzo. You can infer what he-- Yeah, just watch it. It's fun.

[chuckles]

**Sue:** There's some. We harp on *Enterprise*. There's some good stuff.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Sue:** At the end of *Enterprise* in particular. And I very much enjoyed specifically the Vulcan storylines at the end of *Enterprise*.

**Aliza:** And I love those. And I also love the Klingon stuff that we got from *Enterprise*. I think they did some really fun things with Klingons on that show.

**Andi:** Well, let's move on to *Discovery*, where we have T'Rina.

**Sue:** President T'Rina of Ni'Var. I love her a whole lot.

**Aliza:** Yeah, she's awesome.

**Andi:** Her costume design makes me feel very nostalgic for the old Romulan costumes.

**Aliza:** Oh, yes. Yeah, for sure.

**Andi:** And I'm definitely intentional.

**Aliza:** Mm. That's true. Oh, yeah.

**Sue:** The little emblem that she wears is like the Vulcan-- not Vulcan. The Romulan spread wings like the Bird of prey mixed with the IDIC.

**Aliza:** I just zoomed in. Oh, my God, you're right.

**Sue:** It's gorgeous. And I want to buy it.

**Aliza:** Whoa.

**Sue:** Someone please sell it to me.

**Aliza:** Wow. Yeah, that's dope.

**Andi:** Master Replicas, are you listening?

[laughter]

**Aliza:** Yes.

**Andi:** Specifically, for Sue, made for that.

**Sue:** I'll even take like a 3D print file. I can make friends print it, [chuckles] anyway.

**Aliza:** Yeah. This conversation, even just like, thinking about T'Rina and Ni'Var and the reunification again makes me excited to-- Now that *Discovery* is one of our *Star Trek* ancestors, we can go back and do the rewatches that we do of all the other series from those different lenses. So, I'm excited to go back and watch the Ni'Var storyline. And T'Rina wasn't in early seasons. She was more like season three and four or five.

**Sue:** Yeah. Because she's in the future.

**Aliza:** Oh, that's right. Duh. Yeah.

**Sue:** So, they don't need her until they meet up with the Federation again.

**Aliza:** Yeah, I'm excited to, like, go back and watch that and just watch it through the lens of Vulcan stories and Ni'Var in particular. I have so many questions about Ni'Var.

**Andi:** Could probably do a pretty cool rewatch of just the Romulan Vulcan storyline that goes over several series.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Andi:** Also, shoutout to *Spock's World* and the *Rihannsu* series by Diane Duane. I know it's not technically Alpha canon, but I can't help but, in my brain, think of it as canon because it makes so much sense. The world building she does about both Vulcan and Romulus just makes so much sense to me that I can't not internalize it.

**Sue:** I mean, also shoutout to 1960s fanfic and fanzine creators because that's where the name Ni'Var came from.

**Aliza:** Oh, that's cool.

**Sue:** Should I be a super nerd right now?

**Aliza:** Do it. Do it.

**Andi:** Always.

**Sue:** I know. I've put this on the blog. I don't remember if I've actually said it on the show before, but I think it's the first issue of Spockanalia. I don't have my fanfic panel notes in front of me, so forgive me if I misstate. I think it's the first issue of Spockanalia in the mid to late 1960s where one of the fan works is a poem and the author-- It's like a two-form poem where there are supposed to be two voices that are speaking sort of kind of in sync, but like a little bit off, almost like around and telling different sides of the same event really.

So, the very first one is Spock keeping watch on the bridge. It's supposed to be like in universe. The idea is that Spock wrote this after keeping watch on the bridge overnight. And one of the voices is talking about like all of the beeping on the ship and the reports and the readouts, and the other is the vastness of space and looking down at the planet they're orbiting. So, it gives that idea. And the author's note, she explains, forget her name, of course, that the form of this poem is called a Ni'Var, and in Vulcan it means "to form." So, the *Discovery* writers went all the way back to 1966 fanfiction when they renamed the rejoined Vulcan and Romulus to be Ni'Var.

**Andi:** Honestly, as they should.

**Sue:** And I love it. It makes me so happy.

**Aliza:** Yeah, that's awesome.

**Andi:** That's very cool.

**Sue:** Don't try and tell me the disco writers did not know their *Star Trek*.

**Aliza:** Who said that? Just kidding, I know.

**Sue:** the whole internet.

[laughter]

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Andi:** Yeah, I do think too that the fact that she's the president is kind of goes back to the interesting contradictions we have about the place of women in Vulcan society and the power that they have.

**Sue:** But her story also shows like a softening of Vulcan, not only because they've reunified with the Romulan people, but because she's outwardly showing emotion and she becomes involved with Saru and there are whole discussions about how much of her relationship does she need to tell her people about and will they get upset? And it's an interesting conversation to have. We see that sort of thing happen on political shows all the time of like "What do I disclose about my relationship?" But I think it's extra interesting when you put the Vulcan'ness onto it.

**Aliza:** I have a craving for more Ni'Var stories because I feel like *Discovery* gave us tastes of that story-- I feel like the politics was covered really well. Yeah, I hope we get to see more of

Ni'Var fleshed out in canon. Oh, and speaking of in canon, going back to the Deltan canon stuff, I don't know, I have to shoutout my own because I played T'alon on a TTRPG show called *Shield of Tomorrow* where we played *Star Trek Adventures*. And we played that game for a year, which is-- So every session was three hours and we barely missed any weeks. So that's like a lot of hours of *Star Trek* Story that you can go watch on YouTube of our show.

But my character was T'alon and she was a quarter Bajoran and she was very Vulcan in the style of Spock being very Vulcan and Worf being very Klingon. She was that kind of like mixed person. Just like, "I'm super into this culture." But she also was very-- I found a lot of fun playing her light moments and silliness that-- She was making jokes without realizing it, but she was never the butt of those jokes. And I also want to say, like, "Thank you to our cast and our audience and the Ox crew, because I feel like that character grew because of them. And they created this apocrypha for all of our characters where our characters got to grow and have lore. And so, yeah, playing a Vulcan woman, I think also-- Yeah, back then, I watched all of these Vulcan ladies, or most of them at least, and took a lot of inspiration from them. Even in my name, T'alon, T'a got to keep the T apostrophe name.

**Andi:** T'a T'a T'a

**Aliza:** T'a, T'a, T'a.

**Andi:** What's interesting is as we move along for the streaming shows, we get to circle back to T'Pring in *Strange New Worlds*, which is kind of an interesting bridge.

**Sue:** Yeah, it's quite interesting to see fan reaction, especially a lot of-- I would say *TOS* fans, let's put it that way, are saying *Strange New Worlds* makes me like T'Pring. But we got a comment from Tina, who wrote, "I like that they're fleshing out the character more in *Strange New Worlds*. And I think that the new actress is amazing, but I don't like that it changes the motives in *Amok Time* from avoid a forced marriage to a stranger, to scorned lover punishing a man who didn't choose her." And I think that's a really interesting take based on what we've seen so far of the Spock, T'Pring chapel storyline in *Strange New Worlds*.

**Aliza:** I love a retcon. I love a good retcon. And I also don't mind changing motives and lores, but I think it still fits to me as what we thought it was. I don't know, and I'm probably wrong. I think this take is probably more correct than it'll be closer to what it actually ends up being, but in my mind, I like to think that the T'Pring we saw in *TOS* was a stranger to Spock because they were super alienated. We don't know how many years passed. Well, actually, we probably can figure that out sort of-- But I don't know, maybe they were that emotionally estranged that they just were like really didn't know each other anymore. I don't know.

**Sue:** So, you're saying maybe between *Strange New Worlds* and *TOS*, they just don't talk for several years.

**Aliza:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Mm.

**Aliza:** I mean, I have very close ex's that I have stopped talking to. I think everyone, not everyone, but a lot of people have, so, yeah.

**Sue:** I was wondering if there might be some sort of memory thing coming up.

**Aliza:** Oh.

**Sue:** Because the rest of the crew also acts like they don't know T'Pring-

**Aliza:** That's true.

**Sue:** -in *TOS*.

**Aliza:** Well, but that's a different crew.

**Sue:** Not entirely.

**Aliza:** Not everyone. Uhura, yeah. Good points.

**Sue:** Yeah. There's a lot we don't know yet.

**Andi:** The story is still playing out.

**Aliza:** Yes.

**Sue:** Yeah.

**Aliza:** Oh, my God. Yes, shoutout to the actress.

**Sue:** Gia Sandhu, I believe.

**Aliza:** Thank you. Thank you for-- [crosstalk]

**Sue:** Sandhu.

**Aliza:** She's so perfect at-- Oh, my God, she's. I'm mean not even--

**Sue:** Excellent.

**Aliza:** Yeah, not even-- Just like she looks the part, for sure. But her playing T'Pring is like a match made in heaven. I hope she knows that. She's amazing and she's perfectly cast. I've said it before in another episode. Oh, wait, that might have been on a different podcast. Oh. Oh, no. Oh, no. I cheated on Women at Warp. I'm so sorry.

**Andi:** Your ideas are not owned by this podcast, you cheated on us.

[laughter]

**Aliza:** I think we're going to go--

**Andi:** [unintelligible 00:42:38]

**Aliza:** I'm going to need to get like a relationship counselor for this. [laughter] We're going to have to sit down and work through our feelings. But no, were talking about *Amok Time* and-- Oh, sorry, no, *Spock Amok* and-- Oh, God, I feel like that's a perfect marriage of the very serious bills of the *TOS* episode with how far we've come in showing, like more the light-hearted side of *Star Trek* in general and then specifically getting to see Vulcans through different lenses. Yeah, I just love-- I think that whole episode is perfect and it's just so great. That's it, I love T'Pring.

**Sue:** I really love that she is, I guess, like a-- I don't know if she's a lawyer, but she somehow

works-- No, she works in rehabilitation, that's what it is. I love that she works to rehabilitate Vulcan criminals. I also want to know what she's doing with Sybok because they dropped that at the end of the first season and haven't brought it back.

**Aliza:** Oh, God. Wait, do you remember-- what did she say?

**Sue:** It's just like they have him locked up.

**Aliza:** Oh, my God.

**Sue:** Yeah. So, like, I need to know what's happening with Sybok, please. Thank you.

**Aliza:** Oh, snap. Wow. That'll be interesting if they go back to that.

**Sue:** If they ever go back to that.

**Aliza:** Mm-hmm. I don't want to spin out too much out into this, but yeah, like, seeing-- I would love to know more about her work rehabilitation and Sybok thing, I didn't remember that, that's very cool.

**Andi:** Well, moving on to probably my favorite Vulcan woman, we have Tallinn from *Lower Decks*, which, I mean, honestly, it's hard to talk about such an emotional character that's always just having these big, huge tantrums--

**Aliza:** Flying off the handle.

**Andi:** Just makes everyone else deal with her problems and how she can't keep herself under control. Just the most wildest emotional meltdowns I've ever seen. So, of course Tallinn is like such a good character introduction because I love that she was in a single episode of *Lower Decks*, *Wej Duj*. Oh, one of my absolute favorite episodes of all time, just truly, really, really good. And I just love that she didn't actually-- if you probably counted up, have all that much time in that episode and everyone ended that episode and was like, "Well, Tallinn's got to come to *Lower Decks*." She's got to come to our shit. We need her as a regular, and they listened to us and brought her.

And I just love her so much because on the one hand, the ongoing bit of the Vulcans just acting, like, appalled at how emotional she is when she is showing absolutely zero emotion is always going to be funny to me. But also, like, I just genuinely think she just brought such a cool vibe to *Lower Decks*. And she kind of shook up the character dynamics in a cool way. And I would not say that the character dynamics had gotten stale in any way, but it's still a way to keep them from getting stale is to continually introduce different flavors into the mix and change the vibe even a little. For instance, I really enjoyed the episodes that she got a chance to really bond with Mariner and having Mariner have someone who wasn't Boimler to like explore her emotions about super certain things. And then also Mariner being a really good friend and helping her deal with basically the trauma of being rejected by her people for like really silly reasons. And I just really loved that friendship. And I am super excited to see her in the new season. 10 out of 10.

**Sue:** They show her, doubt herself, which is not something we really have seen from Vulcans before because she keeps being told that she's not like everybody else, and she feels like she's not Vulcan enough. And we've had Spock deal with feeling like he's not Vulcan enough, but that has always come before from like being half human. And as far as we know, Tallinn is full Vulcan and feels not Vulcan enough and feels rejected. It's played for comedy, but it really is that great bonding scene with Mariner. But the idea, like, you had

Bendii Syndrome, it's Vulcan as a motherfucker. There's nothing more Vulcan than having this disease that affects Spock's dad.

**Andi:** You are in the same boat as Spock's dad. You can't get more Vulcan than that.

**Sue:** And yes, I know it's Sarek.

**Andi:** Yeah. But in this case, it's Spock's dad because that's how Mariner would think of him.

**Sue:** That's how she said it, I think.

**Andi:** Yeah. And something that kind of makes me think of is like I know it's comedy, so it might just be a bit. But the fact that what we're seeing and what they're reacting to is so disparate, makes me wonder if there's something going on, like, is there a bias there we're not aware of? Is there something in her background that they are projecting onto her? Do you know what I mean? Like, because obviously the joke is that she's not being emotional at all, and she's being super calm and very Vulcan. But the fact that the whole ship is like that, is it just a joke, or is there more going on underneath the surface there? I guess we'll have to see. I think it still works perfectly fine as just a throwaway bit, but it would be interesting to know if there's a reason they treated her like that.

**Sue:** I mean, the little bits that they have pointed out in those scenes have been centered around the language she uses. I have a feeling about this, or I have a hunch about this, the commanding officers on the Vulcan ship are seemed to be upset with her because she's reacting based on instinct rather than logic, but that seems to be the only identifiable difference that they keep harping on.

**Andi:** Yeah, it's just so minor.

**Sue:** Of course, they're Vulcans. [laughs]

**Andi:** Well, yeah, they're Vulcans. I could see them making bitchy comments till the end of time about it and just being spectacularly shady. To go as far as to want her off the ship is a surprising escalation to me.

**Aliza:** Well, keep in mind, she thinks it's a punishment. She thinks she's getting booted. But she ends up realizing how good-- This might be a good thing for her, and so maybe they weren't seeing it that way either. Maybe ultimately, whoever made the decision, because it wasn't just those few officers on the bridge, it was someone higher up who made that decision. So, maybe they were getting back reports about this one Vulcan who is getting estranged from everyone else, doesn't have full, flawless, logical, whatever. And this higher up was like, "You know what? I'm going to throw her a bone. Go hang out with the humans. Clearly, logic is not the only thing that's in you. Your emotions are a little close to the surface. You'll learn something from them."

**Andi:** I love that idea. Just like there's an admiral in Vulcan, the Vulcan High Command or something that's like, take the Spock route. I think that's a better route for you to Tallinn. And I think whoever that person is that we just made up. I think that person was right.

**Sue:** I just love that we have a Vulcan on a Starfleet ship who is welcomed and encouraged as she is and not forced to become more human.

**Aliza:** T'Pau. This is retribution for T'Pau.

[chuckles]



**Andi:** Yeah, definitely. And the best thing about it is she's not done. We get to see more of her.

**Sue:** one more season.

**Aliza:** Yay.

**Andi:** Well, we've gone through a lot of characters. There are obviously many, many, many more. So, if folks want to discuss some of the characters we didn't get a chance to get to in this discussion, absolutely feel free to throw some comments our way to talk it through. Are there any, however, like, last characters that you just want to bring up quickly that you think deserve an honorable mention here?

**Sue:** Yeah. I mean, as always, when we do this type of episode, it is not a comprehensive list, but I want to shoutout-- actually two of them. There's, of course, Selar in *TNG*, who we don't get to see much, but is a mainstay in fanfiction for sure. [chuckles] Somebody has got to take over sickbay when the CMO is busy. But also, a *Prodigy*, and the introduction of Majel, named, of course, for Majel Barrett in this last season. And I love her, and I would die for her.

**Andi:** There's lots of ladies on this list that I would fully throw hands for.

**Aliza:** Yeah, yeah, same. Just thinking about the future like what's to come. Not just with the characters who they have created and established, but with-- Yeah, more Vulcans. I want more Vulcans all the time.

**Andi:** Yeah. And they'll have to do a rigorous vetting process. They need to make sure that they are able to, say, "Live long and prosper like a few, otherwise, they're not a real Vulcan, and I don't accept them."

**Sue:** Just take lessons from Gabrielle Ruiz.

[laughs]

**Aliza:** Everything Vulcan say is kind of key.

[laughter]

**Andi:** Yes. That's why I love them so much. That's why they're my favorite. They pretend to be calm and cool, but they're actually huge bitches, I love it. Tremendous. Well, thanks for having this discussion with me, guys. I really enjoyed it, but that's about all the time we have today. Aliza, where can people find you on the internet?

**Aliza:** You can find me @AlizaPearl. A-L-I-Z-A on Instagram, X, and a lot of those other new ones that people are using, Threads, BlueSky. Yeah, whatever. You can find me. Just google me.

**Andi:** And how about you, Sue?

**Sue:** Yeah, for now, just find me over on the podcast website if you're looking on the internet. Or again, that *Star Trek* New Jersey, or Trek to New Jersey or whatever they're calling it in early November.

**Andi:** And I'm Andi. You can find me @FirstTimeTrek. To learn more about our show or to

contact us, visit us at [womenatwarp.com](http://womenatwarp.com). Email us at [crew@womenatwarp.com](mailto: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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[Women at Warp theme]

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