

## Women at Warp Episode 252: Cerritos Strong

[Women at Warp theme]

**Sue:** 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 Sue and thanks for tuning in. With me today are my cohost, Andi.

**Andi:** Hello.

**Sue:** And our special guest, Chrissie.

**Chrissie:** Hello. Thanks for having me.

**Sue:** Thanks for being here. In a second, we'll have you introduce yourself to our audience in a little more detail, but I want to get some housekeeping out of the way as normal. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron and help us cover closing costs and keep our content available as long as possible, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get some awesome rewards. We are also working on our very final patron-exclusive merch item that will be coming in February, so keep an eye out for that. And if you want to learn more, head on over to [patreon.com/womenatwarp](https://patreon.com/womenatwarp).

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And we also have a birthday shoutout. We want to wish a happy birthday to our patron, Tracy H, on December 31st.

**Chrissie:** Woo. Happy birthday.

**Andi:** That's an intense birthday. I have a friend whose birthday is January 1st and that's an intense birthday too.

**Chrissie:** Your 21st would be real interesting.

**Sue:** Oh my.

**Chrissie:** It's going to be on either day.

**Andi:** Well, also just I like to think that if my birthday was December 31st, I would be like, "Those fireworks are for me."

**Chrissie:** Why not?

**Sue:** As a July 4th baby, can confirm. All right, so our main topic today we will be talking about the fifth and unfortunately final season of *Star Trek: Lower Decks*. But before we do that, Chrissie, I'm going to throw it to you. Why don't you share a little bit about you and your history with *Star Trek* and your own *Star Trek* podcast.

**Chrissie:** Okay. I'm Chrissie De Clerck-Szilagy. I am a historian and a Trekkie of course, not necessarily in that order, depending on the day. And my history with Trek, geez, I don't remember a time in my life when Trek wasn't part of it. I'm sure there was at some point, but I always remember it being on. If it was on, my parents would have it on and then by the time I was old enough to pay attention, was about the time *Next Gen* started. So, then I had it on

and that was that. And so, I am very much a 21st century kid. *Next Gen* is my Trek, *DS9* taking a close second, which is why I adore *Lower Decks* so much, because of that love letter to the 21st century.

The podcast I'm on is Infinite Diversity. My cohost [unintelligible 00:03:09] I do a once over of the current episode of Trek and discuss that and anything interesting on it with an interesting guest every week. Unfortunately, now we're in a hiatus too, because this is over until the movie comes out, until *Section 31* is here.

**Sue:** But that's not far away.

**Chrissie:** No, it's not, thankfully. And then hopefully, next season of *Strange New Worlds* won't be too much further.

**Sue:** We're getting spoiled.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, we have been spoiled. Although you guys know from podcasting, if you can-- the year and a half where we had, I think we had like 60 episodes in a row or 60 episodes in 65 weeks or something, that was rough. So--

**Sue:** Yeah.

**Chrissie:** I'm not entirely unhappy although I would love to have more Trek all the time.

**Sue:** All right, so why don't we get into it? We are not going to go episode by episode because we just would run out of time. So, if you want episode-by-episode discussion, you can get that on Infinite Diversity, but why don't we pull out some highlights and, if you have them, lowlights from the specific episodes without going one by one.

**Andi:** The first thing I want to say is that I really appreciate *Lower Decks* for many, many reasons, but one of the reasons that I appreciate them is they have cohesive season-long arcs that have like a theme, and they just hit that theme repeatedly. And it's subtle enough that it's not hitting you over the head, but by the end of the season, especially if you watch it all at once like I like to do, is like, "Oh, yeah. This is about loving yourself and all of your various permutations."

I always appreciate that about *Lower Decks* and I always feel like now that we have-- The series is over, I feel like the message of the series is basically about being your best self and like growing into your best self. And I think it's pretty impressive that they basically put together a five-season arc with a coherent theme of that and like explored that in several different ways, and each season kind of focused on a different aspect of that. And then, this season is very much like, "You are you no matter what universe you are. But how do you change when your environment changes and how do the people around you change you? And how do work to be your best self and accept who you are at your core?"

**Chrissie:** Yeah, that definitely comes out in the monologue at the end of the last episode with Mariner talking about how the crew that makes up the Cerritos is the best crew that the Cerritos can have. And everybody that's there is there because of who they are, and they have these elements to contribute. And yeah, we're not the Enterprise, but that's okay.

**Andi:** Yeah. And then, another thing that I appreciated about that speech was-- And honestly, that final climactic mission was that they had spent the whole season setting up some of those characters to have heroic moments in the finale, which I thought was pretty brilliant. Usually, you'd have demigod gal who I'm never going to remember her name.

**Sue:** Olly.

**Andi:** Okay, I believe you.

**Sue:** Only because I watched the whole season again last night.

**Andi:** Well, the nice thing about *Lower Decks* is you can do that. That's really always-- And that's another thing I like about it. But the fact is in season 1, we never would have seen her again. In season 5, not only do we see her again, but she takes the lesson she learned in her one-off episode and applies it and saves everyone.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Chrissie:** Yeah. I would just have to look up the line there what Mariner says is, "What we doesn't require perfection." And I love how that's-- The whole series is a commentary on Trek as a whole, but that line really touches on that idea, the utopianism, the perfectionism, that lack of conflict that if you read about the early years of Next Gen and how Roddenberry was very adamant about not having conflict internal to the Starfleet crew, and how that is a level of perfection that isn't reality. And I just-- It was a beautiful, you know, it's a one sentence commentary that on the whole thing.

**Sue:** They make that joke directly a couple times too.

**Chrissie:** Oh, absolutely they do, yeah.

[laughter]

**Sue:** Yeah. I noticed watching it in that condensed way just recently, some other themes in the season as well. There seemed to be like a commentary on technology of just because something is old doesn't mean it's bad or not useful.

**Chrissie:** And new is not necessarily good.

**Sue:** Right. New is not necessarily good or better. And even Rutherford has his-- When he falls back in love with the Cerritos, has his moment of like, "This is what were designed for.; The Enterprise, the Sovereign class couldn't do what I'm about to do."

**Andi:** To that point, we spent the whole season exploring how the crew members were exactly who they needed to be. And then, I thought it was pretty smart to make the finale episode be the Cerritos, the actual ship was who it was supposed to be. And they were like, "Hey, if you didn't get theme, here it is applied to ships," and being able to see all the different versions of the ships and their various strengths and weaknesses. And at the end of the day, their Cerritos is the perfect ship for this mission.

**Sue:** All season long, we also get both Freeman and Boimler reacting to their alternate universe selves that we meet or don't meet in the first episode. And the captain is trying to avoid Starbase 80 and becoming in charge of Starbase 80 for the whole season. And Boimler is trying to be beard Boimler. And in the final episode, they both give that up and say, "I need to be who I am." And they wind up switching places. It's so smart.

**Andi:** Also, it gives a nice throughline to watch Boimler grow that patchy, terrible beard through the whole season, and then at the end, the beard looks good.

**Sue:** It's genius.

**Andi:** [laughs] It's almost like as you're growing, it can be awkward and uncomfortable and not quite right. And then when you grow into yourself, it actually all comes together at the last moment. You don't have to be perfect right away. Hmm, visual metaphors.

**Sue:** [laughs]

**Andi:** I also love that there's so many visual metaphors around facial hair in *Star Trek* throughout the whole-- So many different series have beards be a plot point or even peelable way sideburns be like a plot point. So, I find it very *Star Trek* to have Boimler learning a lesson while growing a terrible beard.

**Sue:** But we talk about *TNG* growing its beard, right? In later seasons. Boimler literally and metaphorically grew his beard this season-

**Andi:** Pretty good.

**Sue:** -and came into himself. It's so good. All right, so that was season long stuff. What about moments in these episodes? What do you want to call out?

**Andi:** I really enjoyed that we had two queer relationships spotlighted in the show and they were both pretty toxic in a good way.

**Sue:** [laughs] Toxic in a good way. Say more.

**Andi:** Well, well, because, okay, so I've always loved the Jennifer-Mariner relationship because it kind of sucks. And by sucks, I mean, they are not good for each other. They do not bring out the best in each other. And I just find that so much more realistic and interesting than she met her perfect match, and they are a happy couple. And I find it much more authentic queer representation for her to have a super weird, toxic ex. They have to confront each other like that. That, to me, feels correct. And then also when we get to Bashir and Garak, which obviously. Thank you. Thank you for that.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, that was beautiful.

**Andi:** I've always really loved Bashir and Garak for being super toxic. [laughter] They also are just, honestly, in many ways terrible for each other. And I love that about them. I don't want them to be perfect and I enjoyed watching them find an equilibrium in this episode. And it's just funny to me that it's like these random versions of themselves that manage to find their way to each other in this particular universe, but also that they're just so funny to me of just like how snippy they are with each other and how much they love fighting and how much fighting is their love language is just so funny to me.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, there's a realism to that. People do not have those perfect relationships. That's one of the things I always love about Miles and Keiko too. They show reality. There are times where they are frustrated with each other, where they don't want to deal with each other. And there are times that they can't stay away from each other. And that's just true.

**Andi:** I'm just happy that I just watched *Our Man Bashir* again a little bit ago because like watching that episode and then watching this episode where I feel like you can see the moment Garak truly falls in love with Bashir and it's when he shoots him. And that, to me, is like, truly, truly the essence of that relationship. He's like, "Oh, you do have a ruthless streak in which you will physically harm me in order to finish your mission the way you need to finish it. I truly respond and respect that." That is so perfect to me, and I would not give them up for anything. And also, I just want to shoutout to Andy Robinson and Siddig El Fadil for finally they fought. They fought the law and won.

[laughter]

Especially Andrew Robinson, because I feel like he was working overtime to make sure he was conveying how gay Garak is through so many obstacles. And he finally was like, "Huzzah, I have my husband. Screw you all." The last thing I want to say about Mariner and Jennifer is I liked how kind of meta it was because Mike McMahan said that basically it was like he didn't think they needed to be revisited. And all the fans were like, "But what happened to Jennifer? We need closure on Jennifer." He was like, "Well, it's pretty clear they broke up. They broke up." And then was like, "Hmm, but they didn't have a conversation." So, he was like, "Fine, you guys want closure, you're going to get closure. Stop asking me about Jennifer."

**Sue:** Yeah, well, in interviews after he first brought that up and credited fans, he started specifically crediting friend of the show, Jessie Gender, for having that conversation. So, shoutout Jesse for giving us episode 3 of this season. I guess. [laughs]

**Andi:** Yeah. It's super funny to me that it's like not only a really realistic depiction of the end of a messy relationship, but also commentary on the fan-creator relationship where we're like, "You didn't wrap it up in a perfect bow. How dare you? We need the bow." And he was like, "You know what? Fine, here's your bow. Just because I love you guys." So delightful.

**Sue:** But also, this shows us Mariner's growth because they did ignore it previously and it's been a year, and they deal with it now. Just ignoring her problem is how the year ago Mariner deals with it and actually addressing it and talking about it and having a not arch nemesis ex is how season 5 Mariner deals with it.

**Andi:** I love that. Jennifer is like, "Wow, this is the first non-toxic ex I'm going to have." I'm like, "Girl, I feel like you need therapy." [laughter] I feel like this is probably an issue that you should address. Like, I have exes and all. I'm on good terms with all of them. Like, maybe this is a you problem. I'm sorry.

**Sue:** I mean, she also said she wanted to be with Mariner because she was a rulebreaker rogue.

**Andi:** Yeah, as I said, a toxic relationship.

**Sue:** Yeah. [laughter] Well, we started talking about some of the cameos towards the end of the season. Why don't we jump to Harry Kim?

**Chrissie:** The Harry's Kim.

**Sue:** The Harry's Kim. It's like attorney's general.

**Andi:** Extra pip drove him mad. He reached too far. He flew too close to the sun and he couldn't handle it. And the pip, just like not everyone can handle the responsibility of two pips. Apparently, Harry Kim is one of them.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Andi:** But I feel like that also goes to theme of accepting who you are and where you are. I feel like that was pretty pointed. And it's super clever because on the one they're making a commentary about the fan joke about how Harry never gets promoted. And then, they're turning that back around on themselves, "What if he is never meant to be promoted and he

doesn't need to be promoted to be a valuable member of the crew? Like, what if, guys? Because if we give him this extra pip, he's going to destroy the universe.”

**Chrissie:** Yeah. All of the other Harry's. One of them says, “You know, we're just happy to be in Starfleet and exploring space.” And they're good with who they are. And I haven't done a full rewatch of *Voyager* in a while, but I don't recall him complaining in the show about not being promoted

**Sue:** No, I don't think so.

**Chrissie:** I don't-- Yeah. Or if he did, it was very close to the end and it was [unintelligible 00:17:22] than anything else. So, I think that's right to his character.

**Andi:** So, I know that he died, right? He blew up.

**Chrissie:** Yeah.

**Andi:** But I like to think he didn't die and actually he went and found evil Locarno. [laughter] So, we have like, Lieutenant Kim and angry Locarno from the Academy days out there like the twisted Tom and Paris version. And they're just out there doing terrible stuff.

**Sue:** Wish.com Kim and Paris.

**Andi:** Yes, exactly, exactly. I like to think that's what happened to him. He didn't actually blow up.

**Chrissie:** I mean, it is a multiverse. It's possible.

**Andi:** Yeah. That's the other thing is the whole multiverse thing, I feel like we've seen so much of that late in sci-fi lately and some of it is done so well and some of it is done so poorly. And I feel like this is done so well because it has a sense of humor about it. And then, also-- And the fact that we've got to T'Pol and Curzon Dax friendship, it makes me think of fanfic because—So, fanfic is infamous for having no limits. And that means you either read the best thing you've ever read or the worst thing you've ever read and pretty much very little in between, but also because you learn very quickly that anything can work if it's executed well. The weirdest crack ships you've ever heard of work if they're written correctly. And I feel like this is a good example of who would have thought T'Pol and Curzon Dax would be the best frenemy duo ever? And they were, because it was executed well.

**Sue:** But speaking of T'Pol, Jolene Blaylock is someone I never expected to see in *Star Trek* again.

**Chrissie:** Oh, yeah.

**Sue:** I mean, the role is, I have to say, on screen credited as just Jolene. But that's Jolene Blaylock, right?

**Chrissie:** Yeah, it is. Yeah.

**Sue:** [laughs] I mean, good on them for that. Goddamn.

**Andi:** Speaking of big gets, Alfre Woodard. They got Alfre Woodard back.

**Sue:** Yeah, they did.

**Andi:** That's crazy. The second she showed up, I was like, "Oh my God." I ran to IMDb to be like, "That sounds like Alfre Woodard." They pay like an impersonator because I can't believe they got her to do this. But they did, and it was awesome.

**Sue:** And she gets the credit she deserves.

**Chrissie:** She's not just Zefram Cochrane's helper. She's the scientist this time around.

**Andi:** I feel like a lot of what *Lower Decks* has fun with is "fixing things."

**Chrissie:** Yeah.

**Andi:** Fixing things that bothers the fans.

**Sue:** Fix it thick.

**Andi:** Yeah, exactly.

**Chrissie:** [laughs]

**Sue:** We jumped right to the end because we got excited, but I do want to talk about--

**Chrissie:** Well, it's just from the other day.

**Sue:** Yeah, it's true. I want to talk about *Upper Decks* a little bit. And even the episode description on Paramount is the lower decks have a pumpkin carving party, which is just perfect for that episode. But I really loved this being the episode right before our big two-part finale because we are getting the twist on the original *TNG Lower Decks* episode, but we're also seeing that our main characters aren't really the lower decks anymore, they're showing us that, because each of our bridge crew have other ensigns that they're dealing with now and helping along and mentoring. And our Fab Five now are just kind of hanging out, taking some time off.

**Chrissie:** I hadn't thought of it in that way that we see them with other ensigns. But of course, now that you say it, it makes perfect sense.

**Andi:** Well, the other thing is I feel like that episode is very much like everyone is the main character in their own story.

**Sue:** Hmm.

**Chrissie:** Oh, yes.

**Andi:** It's like just because you don't know the details of what everyone else is going through, doesn't mean that everyone else isn't going through something.

**Chrissie:** Very true. And I think that was well shown with Shaxs. I think his was the best story in that whole episode.

**Sue:** Poor Shaxs. I hope he does benefit from therapy.

**Andi:** I love that he was extremely excited about it.

**Sue:** [laughs]

**Chrissie:** Yeah, you don't have to drag it out of them, he's willing. Of course, Migleemo knows how to frame it. I think if somebody-- If it had been framed to him differently, it might not have been as-- he might not have been as open to it.

**Andi:** But the other thing is that that episode very much is about each of their flaws actually ends up being a strength, probably shown most obviously in Dr. T'Ana's like insane pain down [laughter] I love how they made her like a freak. And that I mean like kinky. And just unapologetically so. And it's so funny to me because she's this wizened old cat and she's also a freak, and it's always funny.

**Sue:** But cats are extremely good at hiding pain.

**Andi:** Yes.

**Chrissie:** Yeah. That's like a thing.

**Andi:** I know if something's wrong, if I come home and my cats don't come see me immediately, I'm like, "What's happening? What are you hiding?"

**Sue:** All right, so continuing to move backwards, what do we feel about Tendi's storyline at the start of the season, the pirating and then coming back to Starfleet?

**Andi:** Well, I think that was an example of theme, but in confronting your past, and we just talked about Shaxs, I feel like that was Shaxs theme in that too is like he had to confront his past and his past traumas and stuff. This is Tendi confronting a part of herself that she had never really liked and wanted to put behind her and wanted to ignore and coming to terms with it and coming to terms with her culture and her family that she had basically tried to cut out, and then coming back to Starfleet as a much more complete person once she had internalized those things and addressed them, I guess. So, I thought it was pretty effective. I also really enjoyed that she was this badass space pirate that was also a pacifist.

**Chrissie:** Yes. Let's try to not kill anybody.

**Andi:** That's a good bit.

**Chrissie:** Mm-hmm. I love that though she-- It wasn't-- You talk about her dealing with it within herself, but she also forces her family to accept her for who she is. And we see that because her sister recognizes that she doesn't want to stay and fulfill her role in training the next Mistress of the Winter Constellations, but she makes sure that she doesn't have the information that would prompt her to feel obliged to do that. And it's beautifully done because you don't feel like her sister would be like that a few seasons earlier when we first met them.

**Andi:** Well, I think it's also kind of commenting on the people who truly love you will love you who you are and support who you want to be.

**Chrissie:** Yeah. And I think actually that's a good point because we see that with both blood family and found family throughout the series. Yeah.

**Sue:** The thing I think I loved the most within the Tendi story was that she is an inspiration to her crew, but not for pirating, for leaving and doing something other than pirating. So, I just love that they all wanted to do something else but thought they had to be good enough at pirating first. And she was like, "No, just go do it." I don't know. It was nice to again break up the monoculture of the Orions again. And the Orions, which was amazing.



**Andi:** I feel like they've really-- Like we've gotten more world building about that culture through *Lower Decks* than literally any other *Star Trek*.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, I think you're right about that. I know there was-- And again, it's been a while since I've watched *Enterprise*, but that's where we get the matriarchy, right?

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Chrissie:** But yeah, I think we've gotten a lot more through Tendi than we have in any other way, which tracks with how *Trek* is. We learn more about Klingons because of Worf. That's the same kind of thing.

**Sue:** Right. And of our main characters, I guess we still just have to talk about Tallinn, who is a practical joker. [Laughs] I love it. It's my favorite thing that she is constantly like trying to fake them out and they always take her seriously.

**Chrissie:** Well, there is a logic to-- There is a bending of logic that is logical the way she's looking at it, I think.

**Andi:** Well, also goes back to our main theme because her whole thing was the Vulcans rejected her because of this part of herself and now she's embracing it with her newfound family who accepts her for who she is. I also really enjoyed being able to see Tendi and Tallinn kind of bond and be competitive, but bond throughout the season, especially in the episode where they go into the pre-warp society undercover. And Tallinn is trying so hard to connect with Tendi, and Tendi is so focused on proving herself to Tallinn and doesn't even—Like, completely talking past each other and miscommunicating what they're doing to each other, and it's pretty funny. We also get Data, purple Data head.

**Sue:** True facts. Yeah, that episode in the pre-warp society is-- I don't know. It really spoke to me because of that Tendi's in this competition and Tallinn is winning it, even though she doesn't know it exists, but she's winning it because of Tendi's own self-talk and getting in her head. And I feel like that is such a common situation. Especially because of the way we are socialized to compete with each other, that happens in female friendships quite often. I'm pretty sure I have been on both sides of this multiple times.

**Chrissie:** Yeah. No, I know what you mean. You start comparing yourself to the other person and they're not comparing themselves, and there's no reason for me to compare myself to them. But there it is, and you get in your own way, which is definitely what happened to Tendi.

**Andi:** I also appreciated Data as like a mentor, as a head.

**Sue:** [laughs]

**Andi:** That's a tremendous bit that I fully appreciate. But I think he did a good job, and it was super funny to me where Tendi is like increasingly losing it and he's just like, "You should probably take a nap. Sleep is important for you to function at your best." And she's like, "Sleep is for other people. I'm above sleep." And he's like, "Perhaps no." [laughter] I just really appreciate it. I feel like everyone could use a purple Data head to carry around and give them reality checks, like, "Hey, drink some water."

**Sue:** [laughs] I feel like my sleep schedule would be much better if Data was telling me I needed to sleep.

**Andi:** I know it'd be like 12:37 A.M., and I'd be like, "Oh, cool, 100k fic. I can definitely start this," and then I won't read it and I'll go to bed at a normal time and my Data head that'd be on my dresser next to me would be like, "Actually, you should probably just go to bed now because you're not going to be able to finish that fic." Like, so true, Commander Data Head so true. And then I would sleep.

**Sue:** [laughs]

**Chrissie:** If I knew how to make apps, be perfect.

**Sue:** You can probably clip the audio and just make that an alarm sound. [laughter] I have plans now. I do have a go-to bed alarm because otherwise I won't. All right, anything else anybody wants to pull out of any individual episodes, moments, jokes?

**Chrissie:** We didn't talk about *Farewell to Farms* at all. I adore these two Klingon brothers and how the one who is presented as the dumb one is always the one who has the answers, and I just--

**Sue:** We also get Mary Chieffo back in that as well.

**Chrissie:** And Starbase 80.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Chrissie:** I was not entirely comfortable with that episode the first time around because of how it had been presented previously. But I feel like the way it was presented previously was that's entirely Mariner's perception of it and it's not reflective of the reality and we see the reality is that it's like the Cerritos. It's the place for people who aren't perfect.

**Andi:** Weirdos.

**Chrissie:** Yeah.

**Andi:** We love weirdos.

**Chrissie:** Cheers to the weirdos.

**Andi:** Agreed.

**Sue:** Led by Nicole Byer.

**Andi:** Yeah. And she is super funny. I appreciate very much modern *Star Trek* for being like, you know who should be in *Star Trek*? And then getting just amazing people. They're like, you know who needs to be in *Star Trek*? Wendy Malick. You know what, you're right. Wendie Malick does deserve to be in *Star Trek*. Thank you. You know what I mean? And it feels super random, but I just really love it.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, there's people I think who are requesting to get involved or who are expressing interest in being involved now for cameos too, which is great who you wouldn't normally think of getting involved in *Trek*.

**Sue:** That's what happens when you make a good show.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, no kidding. On a totally random note, the Zeus's granddaughter whose name we forgot, Olly.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm.

**Chrissie:** Yeah. Okay, so the very random, but I appreciated that she looked like a Greek goddess in that she wasn't thin as a stick and that we're getting more normal-sized people on the show over the last few years. I guess that's a *Discovery* really, but that's become normalized, and I'm like, "That's good. We need that."

**Andi:** One general thing that I really like about *Lower Decks* that they do regularly is they take B plots from throughout *Star Trek* and then just have them again and do them in new twisted ways and I very much appreciate that. And that episode of *Gods and Angles* is one where I think they do that super effectively where they're like, "Orbs versus cubes." And I was like, this feels like such classic *Star Trek* to me, but goofy version. And that's just something that I really appreciate about *Lower Decks* and have appreciated about it pretty much from the beginning. It's just like-- You remember that one really weird plot that you had as a B plot in some random *TNG* episode or something? What if we did that but dialed it to 11 and just made it goofy? And I appreciate that very much.

**Sue:** All right, so I have some season questions for you. Based on a hot take from the internet-- I don't know if it's a hot take. Is this the best *Star Trek* finale ever?

**Andi:** I don't think it beats *TNG*, but--

**Chrissie:** That was my first instinct too. Yeah.

**Andi:** -I think it's really good. It's a really good series finale. It kind of wraps things up in a nice way but still leaves the door open for us to imagine their new adventures. It ends with a really smart repackaging of the themes of the show. It's really funny. The characters all are awesome. You grow to care about them immensely. And I think it's just a really, really good series finale. And I think it's definitely up there as one of the best of *Star Trek*, but I feel like probably top three.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, all good things. What we leave behind next Generation. If I had to rank.

**Sue:** I mean, the Prodigy finale, if we believe this is the end of Prodigy, is also pretty excellent in my opinion.

**Chrissie:** I'm holding that one out though.

**Sue:** Mm-hmm. Understood. Perhaps the more important question. Did they just set up a multiverse exploring spinoff?

**Andi:** I hope so.

**Chrissie:** I hope so too. I hope this ends up being like, this is the last season of *Lower Decks* because two years from now we're going to have Multiverse Decks or something. That didn't make sense, but you know what I mean.

**Andi:** Well, I think part of it is-- I do think-- *Lower Decks*, I think was kind of starting to run out of runway for their concept, which is fine, and they did it fairly gracefully, but there were a few bumps along the way. But I think they had kind of gotten to the point where it can't really be *Lower Decks* anymore because as you said, Sue, our characters are not lower decks anymore. And they were really starting to struggle to find ways to keep them ensigns and keep them not as important crew members. By the end, Freeman's like, "Boimler and Mariner, my two best crew members," or whatever she says. No, they, they have to grow and

they kind of have outgrown their concept. That doesn't mean the characters or the like world can't come back in a new way with a fresh concept that fits the direction of the characters better. And that's the nice thing about animation is you could do that 30 years from now and it would still work.

So, I like to think the door is cracked. And that's one reason why I like a series finale that leaves the door cracked for new adventures. I appreciate some series finales for like a final "this is how it ends" type vibe, but that's not how I feel like *Star Trek* should because I feel like it should always be onwards. And I have to say that Ransom's-- Ransom [laughs]

**Chrissie:** Engage the core.

**Andi:** Engage the core is too perfect for this world. Just like, "Yeah, engage the core. Go for it."

**Sue:** I love that. One of the things you hear, I think it's Boimler whine, "Don't make this our life now."

**Andi:** [laughs]

**Chrissie:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Oh, man.

**Andi:** But I think it's just such a smart play on a lot of the *Star Trek* stuff ends with the captain going like, "Onwards." And that's what they did, but they did it in a very *Lower Decks* way. It was very clever and very sweet and very funny.

**Sue:** Well, I do hope we get some multiverse exploration because I really loved the little speech from Lily Sloane where she says, "You are learning about the universe by learning about other people. But we can learn just as much, if not more, by exploring our own possibilities." It was really lovely.

**Andi:** Yeah, I understand why people are a little bit sad that *Lower Decks* is ending because I think it's still operating at a high level. And so, you're always going to want more when your show is doing well. But I do think as an ending, it was really good and kind of went out on top. So, I can't be too mad at it. It was a really, really good season and a really good show.

**Chrissie:** I was personally hoping that it was going to be *The Simpsons* of *Trek* and go on for the next 30-some odd years. But that is almost the antithesis of what *Trek* is, of showing people grow and change. So, it almost couldn't have been that.

**Sue:** Right. If it were strictly a comedy show or a show of cameos or easter eggs, yeah, but if you're going to have dynamic characters that grow and change and learn, it has to end eventually.

**Andi:** And honestly, when's the last time you watched *The Simpsons*?

**Sue:** Oh, wow.

**Chrissie:** Oh, I think big no.

**Sue:** It has been a while and.

**Chrissie:** Probably the last time I saw it was a rerun. So, that doesn't even-- Yeah, all right, point taken.

**Sue:** [laughter] All right, let's open this up now to the series as a whole, as if we haven't been. But still, over these five years, who-- I mean, all of our characters have grown, including our bridge crew and our side characters. Who's grown the most? Who's grown the least? Who had the best character arc? What are you thinking?

**Chrissie:** I think Ransom's grown the least myself.

**Andi:** I mean, he didn't really have to grow, right? He was pretty perfect from--

[laughter]

**Sue:** His muscles grew.

**Andi:** Why improve on perfection?

**Chrissie:** I'm sure he grew some strength or something like that. Yeah.

**Andi:** I wouldn't say that any one character really struck me as they grew the most or whatever. I will say that I feel like Mariner, although she really had a very solid arc, she was the one I found the most frustrating because she was the one that feel like they took her forward and then back and then forward and then back and forward and then back, and I started to get a little bit annoyed with it, which is kind of what I was talking about when I was talking about the growing pains of the concept. Like, you start to run into that problem, and I'm sure that they were aware of it because they certainly make fun of it later.

But she's the one that I feel she had a very clear point of view at the beginning and the one that was the least likely to sustain throughout the concept, which is she was like, "I'm a maverick. I'm never going to fit into Starfleet." Well, okay, if you're never fitting into Starfleet, then why don't you just leave Starfleet? It's like a problem that they needed to solve with her, like realizing she loves Starfleet, but then once you do that, what's her journey? So, I think they had the most growing pains with her. That is not to say that I think her arc is bad or anything. It's just she's the one that I felt like they struggled with the most to make sure it was coherent throughout the seasons and always moving forward.

Whereas I feel like Boimler's was more of a traditional "here's where he started, here's where he ended" kind of straightforward growth. And I feel like they did the least with Rutherford probably, which is frustrating although they did get better with that in the later seasons than in the first season especially. But I still enjoyed some of the stuff they explored with him and his various "upgrades" that he finally decided he didn't need all of those things, I think that they all had a really good and interesting arc.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, I hadn't really thought about who's got the best and worst arc. I definitely appreciate the shift in the relationship with Mariner and Freeman. It's kind of representative of that coming to a place where a parent and a child are dealing with each other as adults and neither one really knows how to do that, and it takes a while to get into that mode. And that is made more difficult by the fact that the parent was the captain and therefore also in charge and the chain of command having nothing to do with parenting. So, I really liked how they dealt with that.

**Sue:** I agree with that. I was thinking about Rutherford though, Andi, when you brought him up and early on when we got the Texas class storyline and we saw like pre-augment Rutherford, they made him like much darker and kind of anti-authority. And I always thought

we might get more of that and find out more about his backstory, and we never did. I'm a little disappointed in that, but I can handle it.

**Chrissie:** That might have been season 6. I think there's a few things you can see in these last few episodes that were out that were hanging there, that were left hanging, and they did their best to close them up, but it's still going to be there.

**Andi:** I also think it's kind of unrealistic to think that you can always close all of the storylines and character moments. That to me is where the fans come in because life isn't like that. You don't meet someone when you're in elementary school and have an important moment and then 30 years later, that person comes back in a meaningful way. That doesn't happen.

**Chrissie:** Mm-hmm.

**Andi:** So, there's always going to be more to explore with the characters and more aspects of their past that we could always unpack. And I don't think it's necessary nor realistic to think that you could ever possibly, fully finalize those things. That doesn't mean that it's not fun to think about it or like even like try and do those things. And I appreciate how many things were wrapped up very nicely.

**Sue:** All right, I have a couple more questions/notes I jotted down. So, we started on this one a little bit, but how has the series as a whole changed how we see the Orions? We've certainly broken up the monoculture. I have also enjoyed the multiple shades of green that we've seen. That's a little superficial, but I still enjoyed it.

**Chrissie:** It's superficial, but it's-- Every time we see people in multiple shades or aliens in multiple shades, it's reflective of humanity and the fact that they're there and that's not part of the-- It's not an issue.

**Sue:** Yeah, exactly.

**Chrissie:** Is part of the Trek utopianism thing, not that it should not be utopian for that, but yeah. End stage of blue for the end there, I don't know that it changed-- I'd have to go back and actually think about how I thought about the Orions before. See, the problem for me is that I read a bunch of the *Enterprise* novels and things get really fleshed out in some of those. So, I feel like whoever wrote in for the Orions here was versed in the *Enterprise* post series novels where they talk about what goes on with the Orions.

**Sue:** Yeah, I would say I didn't really think about the Orions much. And then, we had the one that showed up in *Discovery*. So, we know at least in the far future they are still not part of the Federation, but that's about it until *Lower Decks*. All right, and then the big, big question is how will or what will be the lasting impact of the series on the Trek franchise as a whole? Or, what would you like it to be? How about that?

**Andi:** What I would like it to be is I would like the writers of the live action series to think about what happens when they leave the planet.

**Chrissie:** Oh, yes.

**Andi:** You know what I mean? Because *Lower Decks*, the thing that it excelled at is being like, "After you left, here's what happened after that. And the Cerritos is coming for Second Contact." Like, that whole idea of their lives didn't end because the *Enterprise* left, you know what I mean? So, I would love it if writers in the Trek franchise thought more about that and revisited some of those things more often. And part of that is just *Star Trek* for such a long

time was such a standalone episode type thing. We did have some throughlines, but for the most part it was like they showed up, they handled the planet, they left.

And I would love to see a good balance between standalone episodes and our storytelling because I think *Lower Decks* of the modern series has been the most successful at that. Where it's like, "Yeah, you can watch this episode just on its own and it's enjoyable, but it has so many throughlines to not only other episodes of the show, but other episodes of *Star Trek*." And I would just like to see that more and see that way of thinking more incorporated into how writers are breaking out these stories.

**Chrissie:** Yeah, yeah, that's-- It seemed an obvious joke every time they went somewhere that things had reverted back to-- I always go back to the purge planet [unintelligible 00:47:38] planet. I can't think of the name of it that those issues had been ignored, but, "Everything's okay now because Kirk broke the computer and they're going to take care of themselves." And that would be good if we saw some return to places we had been, see how things worked out. I don't know. I'd like to see-- Part of me wants to say that I hope to see that *Lower Decks* inspires a bit more humor, but at the same time you don't want to force it.

*Lower Decks*-- or, excuse me, *Strange New Worlds* does the humor stuff well. And one of the reasons they do it well is because they have it in the right place at the right time. And so, you don't want to see it forced in. The exemplar of that being the difference between *Voyage Home* and *Final Frontier*. *Voyage Home* was amusing, not unintentionally, but it wasn't forced. And then you have stuff in *The Final Frontier* that was an intentional written jokes that fell flat. Yeah, I guess I'd like to see some of that. I'd like to see some of these people come back. I guess that's my main thing.

**Andi:** Well, Boimler and Mariner exist in *Strange New Worlds*.

**Chrissie:** They do.

**Sue:** And Tawny is in the writers' room for *Starfleet Academy*.

**Chrissie:** Yes, that's true. That's true. We could find out what happened to Mariner from textbooks for 700 years later.

**Sue:** Oh, my God, I hope we do. The thing I think I have always appreciated the most about *Lower Decks* has been that the creative team, and specifically Mike McMahan, props where it belongs, have listened to fan critiques. And I mean that not in the sense of like, "I didn't like that you should fix this particular storyline," but more in the sense of like, "Hey, you said that you wanted this character to be queer, but you need to make it explicit." Or, literally quoting Andi in Mariner's dialogue [laughter] and talking to Jesse about, you never really broke up Mariner and Jennifer and that sort of thing. There are more than those three examples.

But knowing where I guess your blind spots are, because one of the things that Mike said to us at Chicago was that, "Hey, I'm a straight white guy. I don't know queer relationships." All right, well, then listen to people who do and then he did. And it's just that's the kind of thing I would like to see come into the writers' rooms of the other shows more. If your fans are pushing back against something to do with representation in a way or to do with the way the story is told and not a plot point, maybe listen to them.

**Andi:** Yeah, because I feel like it's such a fine line to walk because you don't want to run into an issue where it's just fan service and you're not-- I don't need the writers to be following the fans lead when they're telling stories. I want them to follow their own inner creativity. But also, when you hear a critique and you're like, "Oh, actually, I didn't think of it that way. They're kind of right," and then having that inform your new creative direction, that is still

yours, I think that's the healthy way to do it, because I feel like otherwise you get just pure empty fan service that I'm not interested in. And certainly, it's an impossible thing anyway, you're never going to make everyone happy.

We were thrilled about Garak and Bashir, and then somewhere in another corner of the internet, they're all peeing their pants over it. You're never going to make everyone happy, so you need to make yourself happy as a creator and make sure you're telling the story you want to tell. And then after that how people are going to react is how they're going to react. But I think he found a good medium between those things, and it's appreciated.

**Chrissie:** There is an element there of practicing what's preached, because Trek does model listening to and reacting to what you're being told by the people who know. And listening to people who are not like yourself and reacting to that. So, if the writers are doing that, then it is that element of, here's what you're presenting to the world. Now, you can show everybody how you do it too.

**Sue:** Nice. Nice, nice. So, anything else? Anything I missed? Anything somebody desperately wants to talk about that we didn't touch on?

**Andi:** I'm sure I will think later about something I wanted to say I miss it, but that's why this conversation never truly ends. So, I can't think anything off the top of my head, but I'm interested to hear what other fans thought of this season and what moments were important to them.

**Chrissie:** I'd like a Doctor Minglemo cookbook. It's fascinating soups and stews.

**Sue:** I'm going to miss this show so much.

**Andi:** Me too.

**Sue:** All right, well, if that's all everybody can think of right now, then I guess we will close out for the day. Chrissie, where can people find you and/or your podcast out on the internet?

**Chrissie:** Well, thanks again for having me on. This was a lot of fun.

**Sue:** Thanks for coming.

**Chrissie:** You can find me over on [unintelligible 00:54:00]. I'm on two podcasts. The first of those is Infinite Diversity that I mentioned earlier. And that's where we discuss each new episode of Trek as it's released. And then the other one is History with the Szilagysis. That is a twice-weekly history short podcast. We try to keep it 10 minutes, 15 minutes at most that I do with my fellow historian husband, Jason. And I'm also on the various socials, but mainly on Bluesky as *@thegoddesslivia*. And that's T-H-E-G-O-D-D-E-S-S-L-I-V-I-A. And there you can see my opinions on *Star Trek* history and leftist politics.

**Sue:** All good stuff to check out.

**Chrissie:** Oh, yeah.

**Sue:** Check and check. All right, well, to learn more about our show or to contact us, visit *womenatwarp.com*. Email us at *crew@womenatwarp.com*. Or find us on Facebook or Instagram, you guessed it, *@womenatwarp*. Thanks so much for listening and Happy New Year.

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