

**Star Trek: TOS (#15) – “Corona”**  
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Back Cover:

*An awesome, sentient force of protostars – Corona – has taken control of a stranded team of Vulcan scientists. The USS Enterprise has come on a rescue mission, with a female reporter and a new computer that can override Kirk's command. Suddenly, the rescuers must save themselves and the entire Universe – before Corona unleashes a Big Bang!*

Summary:

On a relatively remote science station on a planetoid in the Black Box Nebula, a group of thirty-four Vulcan researchers reside studying the unusual levels of Ybakra radiation the Nebula produces from its proto-stars. When Starfleet Command receives an interesting distress call from the facility eleven years after it was first sent, it tasks the Enterprise, which has just been refitted at Yalbo, in to investigate.

In tow are the regular crew compliment and some significant additions: One, a new command monitor system – a massive core of six machines with each containing the complete memory patterns and experience of the six best Starfleet Captains in history (with a range of expertise in command and medicine) – with the capacity to override Kirk's decisions if the monitor believes he is acting irrationally, against orders, or simply failing to execute his duties in timely manner; and Two, Rowena Mason from the Federation News Service – a female reporter who grew up on a small planet where prejudice against non-humans was prevalent – who is tasked to report on the ship and crew's interactions with the new computer system.

When the Enterprise arrives at the station their initial scans for life turn up negative; however, researchers T'Prylla and her husband Grake, their two children (Radak and T'Raus), and their two research assistants (Anauk and T'kosa) greet them. It seems that the only “casualties” are a group of thirty who were placed in cryogenic hibernation after their cell structure had been damaged by the Ybakra radiation from the nebula. When further questioned about station status, their research, the distress call and of the condition of those in suspended animation, the other researchers seem rather evasive, and the Enterprise crew begins to suspect something is wrong. McCoy would like to revive the sleepers, but the monitor vetoes the action.

Unbeknownst to Kirk, the Vulcan science team has been taken over by Corona, a sentient force in the proto-stars of the Black Box Nebula. It is the goal of Corona to unleash another Big Bang, returning the universe back to an earlier time, a time in which they thrived. And this is not their first attempt; the creation of Quasars sprinkled throughout the galaxy is the result of their earlier attempts at recreating its universe. Since a new Big Bang would wipe out the previously existing universe and destroying all life in the process, Kirk must now work to stop Corona or face total annihilation.

Unfortunately Corona's control doesn't stop with the science team. Soon it begins extending to the crew of the Enterprise. Using Ybakra shields, first Chekov and then some members of the research team are isolated from the influence of Corona, and the two Vulcan children are also taken through the Vulcan adulthood initiation ceremony to help break the influence. Corona then takes hold on Spock's mind, and through him a female reporter, Rowena Mason, is able to show Corona the diversity of life that exists in the universe, and which would be destroyed if Corona succeeded in its plan.

Of course, the monitors override Kirk at a critical point, as they consider Kirk isn't responding forcefully enough) and the ship begins to attack the station. In fact, much of the storyline is based on whether altering or bypassing the monitors is an accepted command procedure. A particular member of the crew, Vblen, is obsessed with maintaining the functioning of the monitors, even when it is evident that it is not in the best interests of the ship or the Vulcans they are trying to help. Be that as it may, the attack proves futile, although it does delay the Corona by a few precious seconds, during which time it considers the information it has been given about the nature of the universe.

Albeit reluctantly, Corona stops its experiments and postpones its plan to a time when the universe as we know it has run its course, or in more scientific terminology: when entropy has reached its maximum value. Corona also makes a revision to the programming of the Enterprise's monitors, which enables McCoy to proceed with the resuscitation of the sleeping researchers. And all returns to normal.

*“Captain's log, Stardate 4997.54. While I wrestle with some very troubling thoughts, I look back over what's happened... and a sensation of the deepest astonishment overcomes me. My crew, myself - we're all fallible, capable of many different kinds of failure. The Vulcans are... I was about to say 'only human', but I mean in the sense they, too, are limited. Now I look back over Mason's confidential testimony... and though I suspect she has hardly told us everything, I marvel. What other group of human beings has ever experienced a life as broad, as surprising, as full as the crew of this ship? We have seen things, been places, and accomplished missions almost beyond imagining... at least for a staid, romantic fellow like myself. Sometimes, however, I think I would have been just as content to pilot some system craft between planets. At least then, I wouldn't have to live with this ache, this fear that I am not fitted for my task... that if I had been left to my own devices, perhaps the Galaxy... the universe! Dear God... would no longer exist. Can anyone face such a test, such a judgment? What an incredible strange universe this is, that a cry from its very infancy can echo across all eternity... and pose such challenges for me, for us all.”*

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