

**Star Trek: TOS (#37) – “Bloodthirst”**  
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Back Cover:

*A class one medical emergency summons the Enterprise to the Federation outpost Tanis. There, a grisly surprise awaits them. Two of the lab's three researchers are dead, their bodies entirely drained of blood. There are no clues. No records of their research. No remnants of their work. There is only the outpost's sole survivor, Dr. Jeffrey Adams. A man with a secret that will rock the very foundations of Starfleet... and a terrible, all-consuming hunger that will bring death to the crew of the starship Enterprise.*

Summary:

The Enterprise responds to a distress call from the remote and isolated bio-research facility on the planet Tanis, beaming down Dr. McCoy with newly transferred Ensign Stanger as consort (from Security) to investigate the scene and prepare a recommendation for evacuation. Rather than find anyone in distress upon arrival, the pair stumbles upon a horrifying discovery: two lab techs are dead – one with her throat cut deliberately (Lara Krovozhadny) and a second (Yoshi Takhumara) with a self-inflicted knife wound. More alarmingly is their condition: the bodies appear to have been purposely drained of blood. A quick scan alerts McCoy and Stanger to a nearby unknown life-force, leading them to discover the sole survivor lurking in the dark recesses of the facility – Dr. Jeffery Adams – who appears half-crazed and exhibiting all the symptoms of Porpheria, the disease that mistakenly gave rise to the vampire myths on Earth.

When pressed to discover what happened at the facility Dr. Adams is less than forthcoming, nor is he cooperative in discussing the details of the research on Tanis, and whether or not the research conducted had anything to do with the deaths at hand. Although Dr. Adams suggests the research conducted on Tanis was agricultural in nature, McCoy doesn't buy it (there's just too many quarantined precautions) and believes that Starfleet may be conducting microbial experiments down there in the hopes of creating a bio-hazardous weapon, possibly tailored to one or both of the Federation's main enemies (the Klingons and Romulans). Weapons that are illegal according to Starfleet/Federation charter.

This suspicion is further fueled when Admiral Mendez, head of weapons research at Starfleet Command, takes a personal interest in the Tanis affair and orders Kirk to obtain whatever records and microbes may be on the surface before it is allowed to fall into “enemy” hands. He also presses Kirk to have Adams arrested for the deaths of the research team on the planet and to have him ferried to Starbase Nine (not nearby Starbase Thirteen as Kirk, Spock and McCoy had thought) for personal questioning. Not wishing to get on the Admiral's bad side, he has Adams technically arrested in the isolation ward he had been placed in since beaming up from Tanis. Adams takes little notice of this fact, suggesting that he's a dead man regardless.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to fulfill the Enterprise's orders, McCoy, Stanger and Ensign Lamia of Andorian descent, beam down. Stanger and Lamia do not hit it off well as Stanger attempts to pull rank that he does not have. Stanger, who once used to be chief of security on the USS COLUMBIA, was busted for smuggling an illegal weapon aboard ship – a Romulan burning Phaser – which was discovered by accident when it slipped from his bags and blew off a nearby bulkhead. Kirk requested the lad hoping he could get a second chance aboard his ship (his record prior to that accident had been impeccable). Rumors have a tendency to run rampant about ship and Lamia has heard an earful about Stanger to be weary. Unfortunately Lamia has personal problems of her own. Andorians of child-bearing age and capable of bearing children are expected to stay home and raise large families (in Andor's past, infertility ran rampant causing the population to drop to dangerous levels, but no longer), but she decides to attend Starfleet Command against her family's wishes. She has just been disowned by her family and finds herself lost without a home.

While the two complicate matters for McCoy, he's just as good at complicating things for himself by getting himself stuck trying to crawl through a fissure inside the containment room of the lab. No worse for wear, though, McCoy and the landing party come back empty-handed, but a search of the crew quarters there does turn up some interesting things of note, such as a glass containing dried blood in Adams' quarters. Further questioning of him, though, yields little, as the computers suggest he is telling the truth. Kirk and McCoy leave him to his own devices and soon he concocts a method by which he can escape this confinement – goading Nurse Christine Chapel into believing he is choking on his food.

After rendering Chris Chapel neutral, Adams attempts his escape; however, it's cut short by a) the brightness of the lights (which cause him immense pain) and b) his unknown knowledge of the secondary airlock door (he was able to watch Christine punch the code in earlier). Caught before he could go any further, Adams succumbs and waits to be taken back to his bed. Unfortunately the attempted escape isn't without its consequences: Chapel's injuries are minor (he hit her over the head) but her exposure to Adams has served to infect her with whatever disease Adams is carrying. And all McCoy knows at this point is: without a cure she will surely die. Further questioning of Adams after the attempt yields some interesting facts: he works for Mendez and he's quite sure Mendez wants him dead because of the bio-warfare work they did on Tanis.

So, doing the last remaining thing open to him, Adams requests protection on the Enterprise, but Kirk turns him down... at least to his face. Inside, Kirk is torn by the series of events thus far and the knowledge that Adams' confession brings. Just what exactly has been going on at Tanis, and who else is involved? Could this be a conspiracy that reaches into the upper echelon of Starfleet? While McCoy frantically searches for a cure Kirk begins his own investigations into the origins of the problem. To answer those questions, Kirk turns to long-time friend Quince Waverleigh, an Admiral known for his no-nonsense ways and humorous tall-tales. Quince is an adventurous sort and relishes the chance to get into the thick of things.

Quince agrees to poke around on Kirk's behalf and help get to the bottom of whatever evils are lurking inside Starfleet Command. Kirk worries though that Quince's thirst for adventure may land him in hot water...

A few days later the Enterprise reports at Starbase Nine for the prisoner transfer as so ordered. Mendez is (surprisingly) on base, waiting for Adams. And although Kirk is still suspicious, Mendez does have a reason for hating Adams: his son was Yoshi Takumara, one of the scientists killed on Tanis. Even so, Kirk can't shake the feeling there's something wrong and asks Spock to reconstruct whatever he can of Tanis' computer banks. He does so, with little success, but the effort does give him at least two more pieces to the Tanis puzzle: first, the researchers were working on not one, but two viruses (one that infects Romulans and one mutated later to infect Humans); and second, a researcher of Vulcan descent (Sepek) died as a result of exposure to one of those two viruses. The idea that a Vulcan researcher would take part in these efforts was surprising at least and the trio continues in their efforts.

Adams proves resilient under Mendez's care; he escapes the Starbase's quarantine and makes his way back aboard the Enterprise by way of Lisa Nguyen, a ranking Ensign in Security who just happened to be at a tourist bar alone on the Starbase. She hadn't been alone all night, though, as she was accompanied by Stanger and Lamia, who not only mended their scuffle from earlier, but have a budding relationship blossoming. Unfortunately Lisa buggers off when a conversation the three were having regarding her personal situation blows up. Adams finds her, stalks her, and is able to have the pair of them beamed up to the ship without rousing too much suspicion from the transporter chief. Now in her quarters, Adams renders Lisa incapacitated by slitting her throat and leaving her to bleed to death on her bed. She is later found by Lamia, her bunkmate, and is immediately taken to Sickbay - Nguyen too could now be infected. While she waits for the lab to ascertain her fate, her spirit is effectively broken. She spends most of her time in sickbay going over a decision she made about serving in Starfleet - turning down a suitor (Rajiv) and a group marriage on Earth to seek adventure elsewhere. A decision she is now regretting.

Meanwhile, Quince has gotten his brass into a heap of trouble. His inquiries have caught the attention of Mendez and those who gain to come under serious heat if uncovered. His first encounter is with Admiral Tsebili in personnel who arranged for Quince's assistant to be transferred and replaced by a Vulcan (Sareel) to monitor his communications. And later, as Quince is researching Starfleet records on the Brass Ring incident - a battle between the Romulans and the Federation that almost brought the two powers to war (who's consequence was the death of Admiral Mendez's wife), Sareel attempts to thwart his access. Feeling well and boxed in, Quince takes off and sends Kirk a quick message from a public terminal and then rides off into the night, his skimmer having been tampered with crashes into San Francisco Bay.

*Jimmy: Where there's smoke, there's fire.  
Getting too hot to breathe around here.*

Back aboard the Enterprise, it's not good for Christine. She is effectively left brain-dead by the disease, leaving McCoy dumfounded and with a decision to make: does he pull the plug? After a number of hours deliberating, he and Spock preside over the disconnection of her respirator, watching her lifesigns stabilize at zero. And Adams attacks again - this time it's Stanger, although he is not aware of his infection at first. It seems Adams has been visiting his quarters in the middle of the night to siphon off blood to drink (using equipment he stole earlier from Sickbay). It's not until he attacks his superior officer - Security Chief Lieutenant Commander Ingrid Tomson - that his infection is known. He collapses in Tomson's arms, and dies. Both Christine and Stanger's bodies are placed in stasis pending autopsy, but something strange happens: Stanger attacks Tomson again, shocking the hell out of the medical staff. If Stanger died, but is still alive... does that mean... Christine might still be alive?

She is!

The discovery of her status leads McCoy to a breakthrough about the disease itself. Having been engineered it stands to reason that the virus would want to keep the host alive as long as possible and does so by inducing hibernation in humans. And since the virus needs hemoglobin to reproduce itself, it's easier to do so when the host's body is hibernating - it's not going to be active to use the cells. What brings the host out of hibernation is the heme level dropping too low. Since it wishes for survival, the virus awakens the host to go in search of more heme, which the host can get by blood transfusions or, in extreme cases, by drinking the blood of others. It's this peculiar craving that helps spread the disease. While the discovery will ultimately help Christine, Nguyen, Stanger and perhaps Adams himself, Kirk is a little less elated; he's been given news of Quince Waverleigh's death. A death that finally turns the tide for Kirk - now he really wants Mendez to incriminate himself.

To that end he, Spock and McCoy craft a plan. If indeed there were a Vulcan researcher on Tanis named Sepek, then his body must still be there. Should that be the case then logic reasons residuals of the virus that infected him would also still be present within. If they could bait Mendez with evidence and forcing him to join the Enterprise at Tanis, they might be able to get a confession out of him. But there's just one thing against this plan (just one?), they have no hard evidence and hope to beat Mendez to Tanis to find it. Kirk plays his hand by telling Mendez that they've captured Adams and that he's agreed to cooperate, telling Kirk and his crew a number of interesting things about the goings on at Tanis base and offers the Enterprise to go collect the data. Mendez doesn't take Kirk up on his hand, though, and brushes off Kirk's accusations by suggesting his group had been investigating the base on those very claims for quite some time, and the Admiral continues to assert his authority to get the Enterprise to Starbase Nine to drop Adams off once more.

And although Kirk agrees to take Adams to Starbase Nine, he will do so via Tanis base, which is right on the way. First, though, they have to catch him and it's actually Stanger, under the effects of the disease, who finds, corners and brings him in.

When the Enterprise reaches Tanis, and Dr. McCoy beams down, Mendez is waiting for them. He takes McCoy and Spock prisoner and threatens to kill them if Kirk doesn't turn over the last remaining sample of the R-virus, the strain developed to infect and kill all vulcanoids (of which the Romulans are). Adams actually has the sample in a specially created vial around his neck, but nobody knows this as the stakes get even higher - a Romulan warbird shows up looking for the R-virus itself (Adams had with him a tranceiver which contacted the Romulans). With McCoy, Spock, Mendez and his traveling companion captured aboard the Romulan vessel, Kirk attempts to get Adams to give up the virus sample, which he does by threatening to withhold the cure that McCoy's staff was able to distill. That pressure was too much for Adams to withstand and he gives up the sample to Kirk.

Meanwhile, Spock breaks out of his cell onboard the Romulan vessel, and springs McCoy and the others. Taking Mendez prisoner (who is out of his element here), they make their way to the Romulan engine room. If they could lower the shields, which can be done through an override in the engine room, the Enterprise could locate their signals and beam them aboard. They do so without too much trouble and find themselves once again aboard the Enterprise, allowing Mendez to incriminate himself and bring an end to this mission.

Christine Chapel makes a full recovery, eventually returning to duty no worse for wear and oblivious to her "death". Jonathan Stanger also recovers from his ordeal, and is made second in command in Security for his efforts. His on/off romantic relationship with Lamia appears to be back on - it had soured during the ordeal after he felt himself getting too close to her. The issue with the Klingon burning phaser that his consort from the Columbia, Rosa, had placed in his bag (and her subsequent behavior leaving him out to dry for her mistake), kept him from trusting other women. Her feelings come to a head after Stanger's "death". Although Nguyen finds out that Stanger wasn't the man everyone thought he was and came to accept him for whatever mistakes he did or did not do, he confesses to Lamia why he reacted the way he did and the two reconcile. Nguyen's recovery, however, is less than stellar. She takes six-months personal leave before making the decision to leave Starfleet for good.

Kirk salutes his fallen comrade Quince Waverleigh (receiving his last message), and the Enterprise continues about its way to Starbase Thirteen for some much needed R&R.