

Star Trek: TOS (#47) – “The Kobayashi Maru”
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Back Cover:

A freak shuttlecraft accident - and suddenly Captain Kirk and most of his senior officers find themselves adrift in space, with no hope of rescue, no hope of repairing their craft, or restoring communications - with nothing, in short, but time on their hands.

Time enough for each to tell the story of the Kobayashi Maru - the Starfleet Academy test given to command cadets. Nominally a tactical exercise, the Kobayashi Maru is in fact a test of character revealed in the choices each man makes - and does not make.

Discover how Starfleet Cadets Kirk, Chekov, Scotty, and Sulu each faced the Kobayashi Maru...and became Starfleet officers.

Summary:

When communications with the Venkatsen Research Group’s main facility on Hohweyn VII is lost, Captain Kirk and the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise is sent in to investigate, but getting to the facility proves most harrowing: Venkatsen is sitting in the middle of a 47-planet solar system! With the ship’s transporter system rendered non-functional due to gravimetric interference, Captain Kirk, Mister Sulu, Scotty and Dr. McCoy are forced to traverse the system via shuttlecraft. The situation becomes even more distressing when the shuttle strikes a gravatic mine en route, injuring Kirk and Sulu and rendering the craft’s communications and navigations systems inoperable. Now drifting alone in space with nowhere to go and nothing to do, Sulu is reminded of the no-win scenerio exam. Interest piqued, Doctor McCoy convinces them to tell their tales about beating the Kobayashi Maru scenario to pass away the time.

As we know, the Kobayashi Maru test is one of the most revered and most feared amongst Starfleet Academy exams. The scenario plays out with the cadet at the command of one of the Federation’s most important starships, testing his resolve and action against all odds when he receives a garbled distress call from a fuel freighter adrift in the Neutral Zone between Federation and Klingon territories. Regardless of the initial actions taken, an attack by three Klingon cruisers ensues, heaping heavy damage upon your own ship. Despite any further actions taken on the part of the cadet, your starship and the freighter succumb to the powerful Klingons – thus there’s no way to win.

Kirk’s tale – “The No-Win Scenario” – runs through what was previously established about Kirk’s solution: he reprogrammed the simulation so he alone could win. While devoid of dramatic flair (we already know the outcome), we learn exactly how he reprogrammed the simulation and exactly what he did. The outcome proves to be not only ingenious but quite hilarious – the Klingons become afraid of Kirk at the mere

mention of his name! Thus the Klingons allow him to rescue the freighter and beat the no-win scenario. When asked why he went through the trouble to cheat on the test, Kirk's response is classic – there was a reputation to uphold – therefore demonstrating not only original thinking but showing he had what it took to be a starship commander.

Checkov's story – “How You Play the Game” – shows that not everyone is up to the task. Checkov dreams to be just like the great and infamous James T. Kirk but he loses the no-win scenario not once, but twice. His first action at the command of a starship is to evacuate his crew and ram his ship into the Klingon attackers. The action not only destroys all four space vessels, but he also ends up killing those he was sworn to protect: his crew. In his second attempt, Checkov outwits the computer scenario by “killing” his fellow cadets, leaving him the last man standing. The rest of his tale focuses on survival exercises he undertook on the moon base.

In “Crane Dance,” Sulu relays a trial about his great-grandfather Tetsuo that he undertook during the first few days at Command School, as a Level 3 tech on Menak III. Sulu adamantly refuses to speak with Tetsuo after finding out that his great-grandfather is discontinuing treatments for a life-ending illness, but it's a decision Sulu ultimately regrets after learning of Tetsuo's death upon returning from routine a field exercise there. At the command of the scenario, Sulu makes a decision to not come to the aid of the distressed freighter, ascertaining the call for help is nothing more than a Klingon ruse to lure the Federation across the border.

Scotty's attempt, entitled “In Theory”, also begins with stories about his early years at Command School; how difficult they were for him as his love for all things engineering drowned out every other important subject. In his test, Scotty uses unorthodox solutions to fight off the Klingons resulting in no less than 3 waves of ships (in a series of 3, 5 and 9 vessels.) At first, Scotty's innovative solutions are surprisingly effective; however, continued use of the on-the-fly tactics leads to a premature shutdown of the scenario, as it is clear no matter what Scotty does, more and more Klingon ships will attack. Subsequent review of his performance disqualifies Scotty from the command track because he used the Perera Field Theory – a mathematically possible but physically impossible (as proved by a 16-year-old Scotty) set of maneuvers. The results produce the miracle worker we know today.

Eventually a plan is enacted to turn the damaged shuttle into an electromagnetic black hole, which lets Spock track their location and rescue them.