The Trouble with Tribbles (episode)

A dispute over control of a planet brings the Enterprise to a space station, where they must deal with Klingons, edge Federation officials, and a previously-unknown species of small, unbearably cute, voraciously hungry, and rapidly-multiplying furry creatures.

Summary

**Teaser**

The USS Enterprise is en route to Deep Space Station K-7 for assistance with an important assignment regarding a disputed planet. One parsec from the nearest Klingon outpost, "Close enough to smell them," as Chekov puts it, the post is near Sherman's Planet, which is claimed by both sides.

In the Enterprise's briefing room, Captain James T. Kirk, Commander Spock, and Ensign Pavel Chekov review the area's history: twenty-three years after the inconclusive Battle of Donatu V, the Organian Peace Treaty is set to grant control of Sherman's Planet to the party that can demonstrate it can develop the planet's resources most efficiently.

Lieutenant Uhura reports from the bridge that K-7 has issued a Code One alert, which signals that it is under attack. Kirk orders a speed increase to warp factor 6, and Uhura initiates a red alert.

**Act One**

The Enterprise arrives at maximum warp, ready for a fight, only to find no battle. Beaming over with Spock, Kirk demands an explanation from station manager Luray, but is told he was ordered to do so by Nila Baris, a Federation undersecretary in charge of the Sherman's Planet development project.

Baris and his aide, Arne Darvin, fear that the Klingons might try to sabotage the Federation's best hope to win control of the planet—a high-yield grain known as quadratriclute, the only Earth grain that will grow on the planet. Tons of the grain are stored at the station, and Baris demands from Kirk security and protection. Kirk still believes they have misused the Priority One designation, but assigns only two guards to the station, and allows shore leave for the Klingons.

**Act Two**

Kirk beams over with Spock, and the Klingons assert their rights to shore leave under the terms of the Organian treaty. Kirk reluctantly accedes, but sets limits of twelve at a time, with one guard from the Enterprise assigned to render any and all aid that Baris may require. The admiral informs Kirk that the safety of the grain—as well as the project—is the captain's responsibility. Kirk is exasperated, and just as Beaming over with Spock, Kirk demands an explanation from Luray, but is told he was ordered to do so by Nila Baris, a Federation undersecretary in charge of the Sherman's Planet development project.

In the recreation room aboard the Enterprise, Uhura's tribble gives birth to a litter. The sounds the tribbles make seem to have a soothing effect on various rare galactic items, among them, opian flame gems and lurry-Mike creatures that Jones calls tribbles. While they bicker over the price, Chekov notices a tribble has eaten a quadratriclute sample left on the bar and Uhura is enchanted by it. Jones gives the tribble to Uhura, a move the bartender claims will ruin the market but Jones claims will help spur more sales.

**Act Three**

Kirk interrogates the crew involved in the brawl, but none are forthcoming about who started it. Kirk orders that they are all confined to quarters until he determines who started the brawl. After Kirk dismisses his officers, Scott confesses to Kirk in private that he started the fight after Korax insulted them, recalling some of the more colorful examples. Kirk presses further and is perplexed to find that Scott didn't start fighting until Korax insulted the Enterprise—but realizes it was due to an engineer's sensitivities. Kirk requests his officers to do something to calm up on his journals.

In sickbay, Spock and McCoy have a characteristic debate on the aesthetics and utility of tribbles. Spock, in particular, notes to McCoy their one redeeming characteristic—they do not talk too much. The question soon attracts Kirk's attention. There are tribbles all over the bridge, including one in his chair. McCoy reports this is because they are "fond pregnant" and are swamping the ship with their rampant reproduction. Kirk orders Uhura to call for Jones to be
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http://memory-alpha.wikia.com/wiki/The_Trouble_with_Tribbles_(episode)

On K-7, Spock berates Jones for removing tribbles from their natural predators and letting them over-breed. Jones counters with excuses and insists that, at six credits each, they're making him money. Then Baris confronts Kirk on the insufficient security detail for the quadrotriticale. Baris claims Jones is "quite probably a Klingon agent," but Kirk is unconvinced by the evidence and finds that Jones has done no worse than disrupt activities on K-7, which is not unprecedented. "Somewhere, all they need is a title, Mr. Baris," Kirk pointedly concludes, and he and Spock return to the Enterprise.

Back on board, the tribble problem has worsened. Kirk can't even get a meal, as tribbles have gotten into the food synthesizers. Scott reports that the tribbles are circulating through the Enterprise's ventilation ducts, ending up in machinery all throughout the ship. Spock points out that there are comparable ducts aboard K-7 that lead to the grain storage tanks. Realizing the implication, Kirk orders all the tribbles removed from the Enterprise and rushes to K-7, gaining access to one of the storage compartments, but when he opens the overhead door, an avalanche of tribbles burns him.

Act Four

Kirk finally climbs out of the pile of tribbles—a population Spock estimates at 1,771,561—and Spock discovers that they are gorged on the grain. Baris claims Kirk's orders have turned the project into a disaster and that he will call for a Starfleet board of inquiry against Kirk.

But Spock and McCoy notice that many of the tribbles in the pile are dead or dying. Kirk orders McCoy to find out why they died, though McCoy protests that he doesn't yet know what keeps them alive. Kirk assembles all the principals in Lury's office. Koloth demands that Kirk issue an official apology to the Klingon High Command, though Baris says that would give the Klingons the wedge they need to claim Shermar's Planet. Koloth also asks that the tribbles be removed from the room. The guards do so, but they pass Dennis, at which point the tribbles shriek just as they did around the Klingons.

With his medical tricorder, McCoy reveals Dennis to be a Klingon. He poisoned the grain with a virus that prevents its victim from absorbing nutrients, which is how the tribbles died. "They starved to death. In a storage compartment full of grain, they starved to death?" Kirk summarizes. Dennis is arrested, the Klingones are ordered out of Federation territory within the next six hours, and Kirk says he could learn to like tribbles.

Log entries

- "Captain's log, stardate 4523.3. Deep Space Station K-7 has issued a Priority One call. More than an emergency, it signals near or total disaster. We can only assume the Klingons have attacked the station. We're going in armed to claim Sherman's Planet. Koloth also asks that the tribbles be removed from the room. The guards do so, but they pass Dennis, at which point the tribbles shriek just as they did around the Klingons."

Memorable quotes

- "'This is my chicken sandwich and soda pop.'"
  - "'First, and Cyrano Jones, and second, close that door.'"
  - "'I was making a little joke, as.'"
  - "'Extremely wise, ensign.'"
  - "'The trouble is, lad, tribbles eat a lot of wheat. So what?'"
  - "'Kirk, to Baris, on the matter of the protection of the grain.'"
  - "'Is that an offer or a joke?'"
  - "'That's my offer.'"
  - "'That's a joke.'"
  - "'Cyrano Jones, and the K-7 bartender, as the bartender offers him four credits per tribble'"
  - "'Its titling awere to have a tranquilizing effect on the Human nervous system. Fortunately, of course ... I am immune ... to its effect.'"
  - "'Spock, as he strokes a tribble (before becoming the subject of amused looks from Uhura and Freeman)"
  - "'Kirk, this station is swarming with Klingons!'"
  - "'I was not aware, Mister Baris, that twelve Klingons constitutes a swarm.'"
  - "'Baris and Kirk, as Baris lodges a complaint'"
  - "'Do you know what you get if you feed a tribble too much?'"
  - "'A fat tribble.'"
  - "'No, you get a bunch of hungry little tribbles.'"
  - "'McCoy and Kirk, on a tribble's metabolism'"
  - "'When are you going to get off that milk diet, lad?'"
  - "'This is vodka.'"
  - "'Where I come from, that's soda pop. Now this is a drink for a man.'"
  - "'Scotch?'"
  - "'Aye.'"
  - "'It was invented by a little old lady from Lennegad.'"
  - "'Scott and Chekov, at the K-7 bar'"
  - "'Oh, I just remembered! There is one Earth man who doesn't remind me of a Regular bloodworm. That's Kirk. A regular bloodworm is soft and shapeless. But Kirk isn't soft. Kirk may be a swaggering, overbearing, tin-plated dictator with delusions of godhood, but he's not soft.'"
"Don't be insulting, doctor."
- McCoy and Spock

"I see no practical use for them."
"Does everything have to have a practical use for you? They're nice, they're soft, they're furry, and they make a pleasant sound."
"So would an evil twin, doctor, yet I saw no advantage to having one."
- Spock and McCoy

"They do indeed have one redeeming characteristic."
"What's that?"
"They do not talk too much."
- Spock and McCoy, as Spock compares him to tribbles

"Too much of anything, lairaint, even love, isn't necessarily a good thing."
-Kirk to Uhura, on the love of a tribble

"In my opinion, you have taken this important project far too lightly."
"On the contrary, sir. I think of this project as very important. If it is, you take lightly."
- Baris and Kirk, on the security measures for the grain

"My chicken sandwich and coffee. This is my chicken sandwich and coffee."
"Fascinating."
-Kirk and Spock, after Kirk is served tribbles by the food processor

"I want these things off my ship! I don't care if it takes every man we've got – I want them off the ship!"
-Kirk, determined to rid the ship of the tribbles after discovering them in his food store

"And as captain, I want two things done. First, Cyrannus Jones. And second...?" (A tribble lands on Kirk's head) "...Close that door."
-Kirk, after an avalanche of tribbles falls on him

"They don't like Klingons. But they do like Vulcans. Well Mr. Spock, I didn't know you had it in you."
"Obvious tribbles are very perceptive creatures, captain."
"Obvious?" (Carrying tribbles, Kirk walks over to Baris) "Mister Baris, they like you. Well, there's no accounting for taste."
-Kirk and Spock, using tribbles to uncover a Klingon spy

"I gave them to the Klingons, sir."
"The Klingons?"
"Aye, sir. Before they went into warp I transported the whole kit and Kaboodle into their engine room, where they'll be no tribble at all."
-Kirk and Scott, discussing what happened to all the tribbles that were aboard the Enterprise

Background information

Story and script
- The script, one of Star Trek's most popular, was David Gerrold's first professional sale ever. His working title for the episode was "A Fuzzy Thing Happened to Me...". Writer/producer Gene L. Coon had heavy rewrites on the final version of the script. (Inside Star Trek: The Real Story, p. 333)

- While the episode was in production, Gene Roddenberry noticed that the story was similar to Robert Heinlein's novel, The Rolling Stone, which featured the "Martian Flat Cat". Too late, he called Heinlein to apologize and avoid a possible lawsuit. Heinlein was very understanding, and was satisfied with a simple "mea culpa" by Roddenberry. (Inside Star Trek: The Real Story, pp. 333-334)

- According to Briggs Tymbler, the story for this episode is based upon the short story, Pipa in Pigs. ("Bo Bigly Go...", Season 2, TOS Season 2 DVD special features)

- The line in which Spock says that Kirk heard what Baris said, but could not believe his ears, was lifted directly from a TOS script by Roddenberry. (Trials and Tribble-ations when Jadzia Dax and Julian Bashir's questions his rank insignia.

- William Shatner recalled the great enjoyment all the cast had filming this episode. He noted, "The trouble we had with 'Tribbles' was to keep your straight face. It was just a lot of fun." ("Bo Bigly Go...", Season 2, TOS Season 2 DVD special features)

- Guy Raymond (the bartender) also played a bartender in beer commercials during the 1970s, in which he commented on the strange occurrences in his bar.

- Michael Pataki is another actor who guested in two series of Star Trek, appearing as Danny in TNG, "Tale of Two Cities:"

- Some of the extras in the bar are wearing uniformed uniforms from "The Cage" and "Where No Man Has Gone Before," another couple of extras are wearing colored jumpsuits from "The Devil in the Dark." The gentleman who seems to be enjoying watching the fight and another man are wearing "Aurelan Kirk's costume from Operation - Annihilate!"

- Ed Ramas, who plays Ademor Flieghlinch, was the TV spokesman for Allstate Insurance in the 1930s. In a funny quip, he catches a tribble thrown at him from offscreen and, proffering it to the camera, says, "Oh, and captains: you're in good hands with tribbles." (play on the Allstate motto, "You're in good hands with Allstate.")

- William Schallert later guest starred as Veren in DS9, "Sanctuary.""

- John Doan insisted on doing his own stunts in the barroom brawl. Jay Jones only doubled for him in a few brief fight sequences."

- This is one of the few episodes in which Doshan's missing right middle finger (lost due to injuries sustained during the invasion of Normalcy in World War Two) is apparent. It can also be noticed as he carries a large bundle of tribbles to Captain Kirk, complaining that they have infested Engineering.

- This is one of the few times in the series that Scott and Chekov have a conversation with one another. However, in "Friday's Child," when Scott remarks, "First foe me once, shan't you, too? me twice, shan't you, me;" Chekov quips that Scott's saying was inverted in Russia."

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- William Campbell and another man are wearing uniforms of the Green Berets. Some scenes written for Teller were switched over to Walter Koenig. ("Bo Bigly Go...", Season 2, TOS Season 2 DVD special features)

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Remastered information

The next remastered episode to air was "Mirror, Mirror."
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- **Day 6 – 29 August 1967, Tuesday – Desilu Stage 10. Int. K-7 Bar**

- **Score recorded:** 5 October 1967
- **Original airdate:** 29 December 1967
- **Rerun airdate:** 21 June 1968
- **First UK airdate:** 1 June 1970
- **Star Trek Fotonovel #3:** 1973 – ISBN 055312689X
- **The Trouble with Tribbles: The Birth, Sale and Final Production of One Episode paperback:** 1973
- **The Trouble with Tribbles: The Birth, Sale and Final Production of One Episode paperback release:** 12 April 1987 – ISBN 0345347889
- **“Trials and Tribble-ations”, incorporating “Trouble” footage:** 4 November 1996
- **Remastered airdate:** 4 November 2006

**Video and DVD releases**

- **US CED LaserDisc release:** 1 April 1982
- **Original US Betamax release:** 1986
- **US LaserDisc release:** 11 October 1986
- **UK VHS release (two-episode tapes, CIC Video): Volume 22, catalogue number VHR 2357, 2 April 1990**
- **Japan LaserDisc release:** 25 March 1993
- **US VHS release:** 15 April 1994
- **As part of the UK VHS Star Trek: The Original Series - Tricorder Pack collection: catalogue number VHR 4373, 3 June 1996**
- **UK re-release (three-episode tapes, CIC Video): Volume 2, 5 May 1997**
- **UK LaserDisc re-release:** 11 August 1997
- **As part of the US VHS Star Trek - Tribbles Gift Set 6 October 1998**
- **As part of the TOS Season 2 DVD collection**
- **As part of the Star Trek: Fan Collection - Klingon DVD collection**
- **As part of the TOS-R Season 2 DVD collection**
- **As part of The Best of Star Trek: The Original Series DVD collection**
- **As part of the Star Trek: The Original Series - Origins Blu-ray collection**

**Links and references**

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<td><strong>William Shatner</strong> as Capt. Kirk</td>
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<td><strong>Leonard Nimoy</strong> as Mr. Spock</td>
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<td><strong>DeForest Kelley</strong> as Dr. McCoy</td>
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<td><strong>William Schallert</strong> as Nilz Baris</td>
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<td><strong>William Campbell</strong> as Koloth</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stanley Adams</strong> as Cyrano Jones</td>
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<td><strong>Whit Bissell</strong> as Lurry</td>
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<td><strong>James Doohan</strong> as Scott</td>
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<td>** Nichelle Nichols** as Uhura</td>
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<td><strong>Michael Patala</strong> as Korax</td>
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<td><strong>Ed Reimers</strong> as Admiral Fitzpatrick</td>
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<td><strong>Walter Koenig</strong> as Chekov</td>
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<td><strong>Charlie Brill</strong> as Arne Darvin</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>David L. Ross</strong> as Galloway (as “Guard”)</td>
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<td><strong>Guy Raymond</strong> as K-7 Bartender</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Richard Antons</strong> as Klingon (unconfirmed)</td>
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<td><strong>Dick Crockett</strong> as Galloway (as “Guard”)</td>
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<td><strong>Steve Hershon</strong> as security officer</td>
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<td><strong>Roger Lemli</strong> as Roger Lemli</td>
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<td><strong>William Knight</strong> as Moody</td>
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<td><strong>Joe Paz</strong> as Sciences division lieutenant</td>
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Stunt doubles

- Phil Adams as stunt double for Michael Pataki
- Jay Jones as stunt double for James Doohan
- Jerry Summers as stunt double for Walter Koenig

References

- 20th century; 2060s; 2245; agriculture; air vent; all hands; Antarean glow water; assistant; asteroid; asteroid locator; astronomer; background check; battle stations; Bible; bisexual; board of inquiry; "Bones"; Burke, John; Burkoff, Ivan; Canada; chicken sandwich; code 1 emergency; coffee; confined to quarters; cork; cossack; Deep Space Station K-7; defense alert; delusion; Denobulan slime devil; dictator; diet; dissolution; distress call; Donalda V; Earth; Earther; emirem victim; Federation; Federation law; freighter; French language; food processor; garbage scow; genie; general quarters; grain; Grath (KS); headache; hp; hybrid; iron; jake; Jones' spaceship; Klingon; K'lingon battle cruiser; K'lingon Empire; K'lingon High Command; K'lingon agent; Leningrad; lily; litter; "little old lady from Leningrad"; logic; love; manual; markup; maternity ward; metabolism; milk; Milky Way Galaxy; money; nursery; Old Britain; Organian Peace Treaty; parasitic; parsec; Peter the Great; perrenial; polishing; poult; pregnancy; priority 1 distress call; priority A-1 channel; profit; prospector; pun; quadrant; quadrortricale; radio silence; red alert; Regulan blood worm; rehabilitation colony; reproduction; Royal Academy; Russian; rust; rye; sabotage; Scotch whisky; Sherman's Planet; shore leave; soda pop; solar year; Spacematic; Spican flame gem; station manager; technical journal; tin; ton; tribble; triticate; undersecretary; vodka; volume; Vulcan; wheat

External links

- "The Trouble with Tribbles" at StarTrek.com, the official Star Trek website
- "The Trouble with Tribbles" at Memory Beta, the wiki for licensed Star Trek works
- "The Trouble with Tribbles" at Wikipedia
- "The Trouble with Tribbles" at 80D.com
- "The Trouble with Tribbles" at MissionLogPodcast.com, a Roddenberry Star Trek podcast

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"The Trouble with Tribbles" is the 44th episode of the American science fiction television series, *Star Trek*, the 15th episode of the second season. It was first broadcast in the United States on December 29, 1967, on NBC. The episode was the first professional work of writer David Gerrold, and went through a variety of drafts before it reached the screen. Because his typewriter used a less common, smaller size font, an approved version needed to be reduced by twenty pages before filming. Nichelle Nichols remarked that she had "never seen a script go through so many changes—and stay so much the same".[2] "The Trouble with Tribbles" was directed by Joseph Pevney, who was one of the most prolific directors of the series.

In the episode, the starship *Enterprise* arrives at Deep Space Station K7 to guard a consignment of grain bound for Sherman's Planet. On arrival, a trader named Cyrano Jones (Stanley Adams) gives Lt. Uhura (Nichelle Nichols) a tribble, a small, furry alien lifeform, with dramatic consequences. Captain James T. Kirk and the crew also have to deal with the arrival of Captain Koloth (William Campbell) and his Klingon battlecruiser, but the tribbles unexpectedly reveal a plot to poison the grain.

Around 500 tribbles were created for the episode, with special tribbles created for certain purposes with beanbags or surgical balloons inserted in them. Three additional sets were created for the episode, although there were problems with finding enough matching chairs for the trading post area. The chairs had to be pulled out of showrooms around Los Angeles County, and Pevney was warned to make sure they were not damaged during the episode's brawl scene. William Campbell had previously appeared as Trelane in "The Squire of Gothos" and was intended to be a recurring villain as Koloth. Because of his other work commitments, these plans were not followed up on until he returned as Koloth in the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Blood Oath" in 1994. William Schallert appeared as Nilz Baris, and later appeared as a Bajoran in the *DS9* episode "Sanctuary".

While initial fan reaction to the episode was mixed, it was more popular with the general public. Critical response to the episode was positive, and it was nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation which instead went to fellow *Star Trek* episode "The City on the Edge of Forever". It has since been included in several "best of" episode lists and features, including as part of the Best of DVD collection alongside three other episodes. It has also been
released as part of the season two DVD box set.

"The Trouble with Tribbles" was intended to have a third-season follow-up episode, but it was not completed. The follow-up episode was developed for Star Trek: The Animated Series as "More Tribbles, More Troubles". Gerrold explained that the episode was almost uncut from the original premise. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Star Trek in 1996, the Star Trek: Deep Space Nine episode "Trials and Tribble-ations" used digital techniques to insert the Deep Space Nine actors into the events of "The Trouble with Tribbles". Gerrold appeared on-screen as an extra, and the episode was nominated for three Emmy Awards and also for the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation.

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**Plot**

The Enterprise is summoned to Deep Space Station K7 by a "priority one" distress call, used only in case of disaster. On arrival, Captain James T. Kirk (William Shatner) is infuriated to learn that there has been no disaster: the distress call was ordered by Nilz Baris (William Schallert), the Federation Undersecretary of Agricultural Affairs, who only wants guards for his shipments of quadrotriticale grain bound for Sherman's Planet. The grain is crucial for the Federation's plan to develop the planet and claim it under the terms of the Organian Peace Treaty. Starfleet Command shares Baris's concerns and orders Kirk to cooperate.

As the Enterprise crew enjoy shore leave on the station, Cyrano Jones (Stanley Adams) arrives with goods for sale, among them tribbles. He presents one to Lt. Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), who brings it on board the Enterprise, where it quickly begins to reproduce. The human crew adore the animals and Uhura gives the offspring away.
A Klingon ship arrives under the command of Captain Koloth (William Campbell), who invokes his right under the Organian treaty to shore leave for his crew. The tribbles, multiplying rapidly on the station, disgust the Klingons, and the feeling is mutual. Baris, for his part, is terrified of possible Klingon interference with the grain project, and suspects Jones of being a Klingon agent.

Doctor Leonard McCoy (DeForest Kelley) and Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) are concerned that the increasing number of tribbles threaten to consume all the food aboard the Enterprise. It is discovered that they are entering ship systems, possibly through air ducts. Kirk realizes that they could be a threat to the grain aboard the station. He is too late, however: when he opens an overhead storage compartment, he is literally buried in grain-gorged tribbles. Spock and McCoy discover that many of the tribbles in the hold are dead or dying, suggesting another problem with the grain.

Baris vows to see Kirk punished for the fiasco, and Koloth demands an apology from Kirk for what he considers disrespectful treatment of his crew. Their arguments are cut short, however, when Baris’s assistant Arne Darvin (Charlie Brill) walks into the room, and the tribbles react as if in the presence of a Klingon. Darvin confesses to having contaminated the grain with what McCoy explains is a virus that interferes with an organism’s ability to digest food, eventually killing it.

After Darvin’s exposure and arrest, Cyrano Jones is ordered to remove the tribbles from the station (a task that Spock estimates will take 17.9 years), or he may face charges for transporting dangerous life forms. Just before the Klingons depart, all the tribbles aboard the Enterprise are transported onto the Klingon vessel by Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott (James Doohan) where, in his words, “they'll be no tribble at all.”

Production

Writing

Writer David Gerrold had been a fan of science fiction since he was a child. When Star Trek was first broadcast, he was concerned that it might turn into something similar to Lost in Space, which he described as “one full-color hour of trash reaching into millions of homes.” His first story outline was sent into Star Trek after his agent suggested that he wait until the shows started to air under the theory that the show might drop an existing episode in favor of a better script. The story was entitled “Tomorrow is Yesterday” and was about the Enterprise coming across a generation ship which had descended into a two-tier class system. His agent received a rejection letter from producer Gene L. Coon dated October 3, 1966. The letter stated that the “outline was by no means inadequate. It is, as a matter of fact, very adequate.” It went on to say that it would require a budget larger than that available to television, but would have made a good film treatment. Coon offered to meet with Gerrold and explain what they were looking for, because they were not purchasing scripts at that time.

Coon suggested that Gerrold should wait until the following February to see if the show was renewed for a second season. They also discussed several story ideas, including some small furry creatures that bred too quickly. Coon thought it was a cute idea but would be too expensive as they’d have to build each creature. In preparation for the second series submission, by January, Gerrold had put together five premises to pitch. He had his best hopes on two treatments called “Bandi” and “The Protracted Man,” but decided to submit his fifth story despite Coon’s earlier dismissal of the idea. It was called “The Fuzzies.” The idea was based on the introduction of rabbits in Australia in 1859, who reproduced at a vastly increased rate owing to the lack of predators.
The initial premise placed the story on a space station to avoid the ecological damage that the creatures would have on a planet. However, Gerrold’s agent was concerned that requiring a miniature of the station to be built as well as the additional sets would cause it to be too expensive for a single episode. Because of his agent’s comments, Gerrold modified the pitch to place the action on a colony planet instead. This pitch included the plot points such as the creatures getting into a poisoned grain storage, but omitted the Klingons; and Cyrano Jones was called Cyrano Smith. The five pitches were submitted by Gerrold’s agent in February 1967, and received a response in June. At the time the show had already purchased too many scripts for the second season but story editor D. C. Fontana suggested that they should purchase the story and assign it to a staff writer as it was better than some of the other stories they already had.

At the time that Coon got in touch, Gerrold had just been employed at CBS as a typist working on scripts such as the pilot of Hawaii Five-O. As soon as he got the response, he quit the job. Gerrold and Coon met once more, and revealed that the network had recently made a request for more episodes based on other planets. Coon told Gerrold to work up a further pitch. This version of the story added the Klingons, and moved the action from planetside to a space station. During a visit to the set, Gerrold had the opportunity to speak to Leonard Nimoy and ask his advice on how to write for Spock and was allowed to watch the dailies from each day’s shoot of the episode “The Doomsday Machine” which was being filmed at the time. This version of the story was entitled “A Fuzzy Thing Happened to Me…”, which was purchased by Coon as a plot outline. He offered Gerrold a chance to write the script himself, by promising not to hand it to another writer for a month. However, Coon made it clear that he was not offering Gerrold a script assignment, but was giving him the option of submitting a draft.

Gerrold turned around the first draft script in two and a half days. Both Coon and Associate Producer Robert Justman gave feedback on the script, and pointed out a few gaps such as there needing to be some way in the plot for the crew to discover that Darvin was a Klingon agent. The following draft had Cyrano Jones discover that Darvin was an agent, which Coon thought was not "punchy" enough. It was then re-written so that the fuzzies were allergic to Klingons. Both Gerrold and Coon thought the idea was "trite... shtick... hokey" and "had been done before", but Coon agreed that it was the direction the story should go. The re-write of the script took a further week.

On a further visit to the set, Gerrold was called into Coon’s office. He was informed that he needed to change the name of the fuzzies, as the legal department was concerned about similarities in the name with H. Beam Piper’s 1962 novel Little Fuzzy. He subsequently came up with a variety of alternative names. Through a process of elimination, he ended up with the name “tribble”. He took the name to Coon, who hated it. But after seeing the alternatives, he agreed to it. Gerrold turned in the script on July 17, entitled “You Think You’ve Got Tribbles...?”. While Coon disliked the name of the small furry creatures, he bought the script. Gerrold’s submitted script was within the standard page count for an episode, but, when it was retyped for distribution by the production’s mimeo department, it ballooned from 60 to 80 pages due to Gerrold’s not having used a typewriter with the 10 point pitch (10 characters per inch) Pica standard of the TV and film industry. This meant that some twenty pages needed to be cut from the script.

Scenes which were cut from the script included the Enterprise chasing after Jones in his vessel, and resulted in the scene where Kirk has tribbles tumbling onto him while in the grain locker. Gerrold felt that this enforced editing process "tightened up the story and made for a better series of gags". Nichelle Nichols said to Gerrold "I've never seen a script go through so many changes – and stay so much the same."
The proposed title “You Think You’ve Got Tribbles...?” had to be discarded after a Shulman short story was discovered with the title “You Think You’ve Got Troubles?” (upon which the third-season *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* episode “Dig, Dig, Dig” was based), which could possibly have presented a copyright infringement. The episode was then renamed “The Trouble with Tribbles”.[35]

Coon’s participation in terms of suggestions and edits was such that Gerrold thought he should have been given a co-writing credit.[36]

The producers liked the resulting script so much that Gerrold was later tasked with re-writing the script for “I, Mudd”,[37] but did not take any credit on the final script as he did not want to take the credit from Stephen Kandel, the creator of Harry Mudd.[30]

Gerrold worked on “I, Mudd” before “The Trouble with Tribbles” began to film. He was surprised one morning when he was handed a copy of the tribbles script and told to sign it for Robert A. Heinlein. The Kellam de Forest script clearance and research firm[38] had cautioned that the tribbles in the episode resembled the Martian flat cats in Heinlein’s 1952 novel *The Rolling Stones*, and suggested that the rights to the novel should be purchased. Gerrold became concerned that he had inadvertently plagiarized the novel which he had read fifteen years before.[39] Coon phoned Heinlein, who, according to Gerrold, only asked for a signed copy of the script and later sent a note to Gerrold after the show aired to thank him for the script.[40]

Heinlein’s own recollections were at odds with this account. In his authorized biography Heinlein said he was called by Gene Coon about the issue and agreed to waive claim to the “similarity” to his flat cats because he’d just been through one plagiarism lawsuit and did not wish to embroil himself in another. He had misgivings upon seeing the actual script but let it go, an action he later regretted: “If that matter had simply been dropped after that one episode was filmed, I would have chalked it up wryly to experience. But the ‘nice kid’ did not drop it; ‘tribbles’ (i.e. my ‘flat cats’) have been exploited endlessly... Well that’s one that did ‘larn me.’ Today if J. Christ phoned me on some matter of business, I would simply tell him: ‘See my agent.’”[41]

The fictional quadrotriticale’s real-world antecedent, the grain triticale, was a fairly new invention at the time of the episode.

### Filming

The use of live animals to represent the tribbles was immediately ruled out. According to Gerrold’s account, the inspiration for the form of the tribble instead came from a fluffy keyring owned by Holly Sherman.[11] Sherman’s Planet in this episode was subsequently named after her.[42] The design came from Wah Chang,[43] but they were individually sewn by Jacqueline Cumeré. She was paid $350 to sew five hundred tribbles from synthetic fur and stuff them with foam rubber.[11][44] Six ambulatory tribbles were made using the mechanisms of walking toy dogs, which were quite noisy and required the dialogue to be looped in during editing.[45] Other tribbles were created by Jim Rugg out of beanbags for when it was required for one to sit on a person or object, and the breathing tribbles were hollow with surgical balloons inserted.[11][45] Some of these tribbles were later displayed at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. in 1992.[46] The sale at Christie’s auction house in 2006 included tribbles from this episode as part of a larger *Star Trek* sale.[47] Because of the synthetic fur technology of the 1960s, relatively few original tribbles exist as of 2010 because the fur fell out over time and they went bald.[48] An original tribble was sold at auction in 2003 for $1,000.[49]

Filming began during the second week of August 1967.[50] Three temporary sets and a portion of corridor were constructed for

During the course of filming, William Shatner was covered with five hundred tribbles on eight occasions.
specific use in this episode, which included the large trading post set.\[51\] The chairs in that set were a problem, as the set designers wanted 24 matching chairs and decided that folding ones would not do. John M. Dwyer sourced them from a local company, but the numbers required meant that they had to be pulled out of showrooms from all over the county. When it came to the fight scene in the episode, Dwyer warned director Joseph Pevney not to damage the chairs.\[52\] That scene was filmed twice after a cameraman with a handheld camera wandered onto the set.\[52\] The scene where Kirk is covered with tribbles in the grain container needed to be filmed eight times, using all five hundred sewn tribbles.\[53\] Gerrold had expected that scene to be cut at some point during production, as he thought that William Shatner would not agree to it. He said that Shatner was the "consummate professional and I believe he was eager to show off his comic abilities".\[54\]

Pevney was pleased with the outcome of the shoot, calling the episode "a delightful show from beginning to end".\[1\] In addition to directing, Pevney also sourced some of the parts to create the tribbles and was directly responsible for the casting of Stanley Adams.\[1\] He had pushed for the episode to be made as he recalled that there was some resistance at the time against making a comedy-style episode.\[1\] These types of episodes were unusual for the series, as only "The Trouble with Tribbles" and "A Piece of the Action" were considered to be comedic episodes from season two.\[55\] Pevney was one of the two most prolific Original Series directors alongside Marc Daniels, and directed fourteen episodes of the show.\[56\] The cast responded favorably to the script. Nichelle Nichols was particularly pleased as it allowed Uhura to be a woman and took her off the bridge.\[45\] It was one of her largest roles in any single episode in the series.\[57\]

**Casting**

William Campbell had previously appeared in the first season episode "The Squire of Gothos" as Trelane.\[58\] In "The Trouble with Tribbles", he portrayed the Klingon Captain Koloth. At various points Star Trek's creator Gene Roddenberry claimed it was his intention to bring back Koloth during the third season of *The Original Series*, as Kirk's recurring Klingon adversary, some internal production documents contradict this story. Although Koloth returned in *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, Campbell did not voice the role.\[59\] He returned to the role in 1994 for an episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.\[58][60\] entitled "Blood Oath".\[59\]

At the time of casting, William Schallert had just finished filming the ABC sitcom *The Patty Duke Show*. He described himself not as a fan, and had not read any science fiction since 1948. He thought that the role of Nilz Baris was just another guest spot, and the role of a "rather stuffy bureaucrat... [was] not the most appealing character".\[61\] He did not remember the character's name, only recalling it when he first attended a *Star Trek* convention at a hotel near Los Angeles Airport, as the fans called it out when he entered the lobby.\[61\] He was later cast in the role of the Bajoran musician Varani in the *DS9* episode "Sanctuary".\[61\]

Whit Bissell, who played the station manager, Lurry,\[1\] was better known at the time in the main cast role of Lt. Gen. Heywood Kirk in the ABC science fiction television series *The Time Tunnel*.\[62\] Michael Pataki, who portrayed the Klingon Korax, went on to play Karnas in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* first season episode "Too Short a Season".\[63\] Charlie Brill portrayed the Klingon agent Arne Darvin.\[1\] Brill has previously been a sketch comedy artist with his wife Mitzi McCall, and had appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* when The Beatles made their first appearance.\[64\]

**Reception**

**Broadcast**

"The Trouble with Tribbles" was first broadcast in the United States on December 29, 1967 on NBC.\[65\] The initial fan reaction was undecided, but the episode connected better with the mass market.\[66\] This effect was later explained in 2012 when Jordan
Hoffman on StarTrek.com described “The Trouble with Tribbles” as "quite possibly, the first episode of Star Trek you ever saw".[67] It entered popular culture and remained well known to the public outside of the Star Trek community.[68]

Retrospective critiques

The New York Times described the scene with Kirk and the tribbles in the grain container as one of the "best-remembered moments" of the series.[44] Time magazine ranked "The Trouble with Tribbles" as the sixth best moment in Star Trek.[66] IGN ranked it as the fifth best episode of The Original Series,[69] while TechRepublic ranked it as the fourth best.[70] The A.V. Club included "The Trouble with Tribbles" in a list of ten must-see episodes,[71] and USA Today listed as one of the three best.[72] In 1998, "The Trouble with Tribbles" was listed as the eighth best cult moment of all time by The Times newspaper.[73] In a list of the top 100 episodes of the Star Trek franchise, "The Trouble with Tribbles" was placed sixth by Charlie Jane Anders at io9.[74]

Zack Handlen's July 2009 review for The A.V. Club in July 2009 gave the episode a grade of A.[75] Cyrano Jones was Handlen's least favorite part of the episode, and with the exception of that character, it was one of the better scripts seen in The Original Series. He thought that despite the lack of a sense of real danger, the plot all comes together neatly and praised the story's effects on Kirk, saying "The way the episode unfolds means Kirk's constantly dealing with things he does not really want to deal with, and there's a surprising amount of enjoyment to be had in seeing him complain about it to Spock."[75]

Michele Erica Green, writing for TrekNation in March 2006, said she thought that the episode would have dated, but found it was "as funny as ever." She thought that Scotty's lines were "unforgettable" and the scenes between McCoy and Spock were "priceless".[76] Eugene Myers and Torie Atkinson reviewed the episode for Tor.com in April 2010. They described it as "easily the most celebrated episode of the entire original series (if not the whole franchise).[77] They went on to describe it as a 'perfect episode', and both gave it maximum scores of six out of six.[77] Jamahl Epsicokhan at "Jammer's Reviews" said that the team behind Star Trek were "at the top of their game" with this episode.[78] He gave it a score of four out of four, saying that "'Tribbles' is perhaps the best, most enjoyable comic piece the franchise has ever put out."[78]

Awards

The episode was nominated for Best Dramatic Presentation at the 1968 Hugo Awards.[79] All of the nominees that year were episodes of Star Trek, with the award instead going to "The City on the Edge of Forever".[79] From the number of votes, "The Trouble with Tribbles" was placed second.[80]

Home media release

"The Trouble with Tribbles" was one of the first episodes to receive an official release by Paramount Home Entertainment. In 1980, it was released on VHS on a two episode tape alongside "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield".[81] It was re-released towards in 1991 as part of the first full season release on VHS.[82] This was re-released in 1993,[83] and was released on laserdisc.[84] In 1998, a "Talking Tribble Gift Set" was released which contained both "The Trouble with Tribbles and "Trials and Tribble-ations" on VHS.[85] The first DVD release was in 2000, when all of The Original Series episodes were released in individual releases of two episodes per disc.[86] The first season set that the episode was included in was as part of the season two DVD set released in the United States on November 2, 2004.[72]

In 2009, it was included in a best of collection with three other episodes of The Original Series alongside "Amok Time", "The City on the Edge of Forever" and "Balance of Terror".[87][88] The re-mastered DVD sets were also re-launched to coincide with the release of the film, Star Trek. The Blu ray release included the un-changed scenes as alternative angles. Disc five of each set contained only "The Trouble with Tribbles" from The Original Series but otherwise contained tribble related extras. These
included both "More Tribbles, More Troubles" and "Trials and Tribble-ations".[89]

## Legacy

### More Tribbles, More Troubles

"The Trouble with Tribbles" was originally intended to have a follow-up episode during season three, but after Gene Roddenberry stepped back from the production of the show after a time-slot change and further cuts in the budget, the idea was scrapped.[77][90] In 1973, Gerrold had become friends with D. C. Fontana from their time spent on the Star Trek convention circuit together. He had heard about Star Trek: The Animated Series, and offered to do an episode. Fontana responded that she wanted the tribble episode that was cut from season three.[90] This episode was entitled "More Tribbles, More Troubles".[76][77] The episode introduces the natural predator of the tribbles and genetically engineered tribbles which no longer reproduce but instead grow much larger.[91] As with his other Animated Series episode "Bem", he later explained that almost nothing was cut from the original pitches for the third season of The Original Series as animation played out quicker and so everything still fit into the episode despite the reduced running time.[92] Both of Gerrold's Animated Series episodes were novelised by Alan Dean Foster, and Gerrold later said that he thought that he did "a fine job".[92]

### Trials and Tribble-ations

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Star Trek in 1996, producers of both Star Trek: Voyager and Star Trek: Deep Space Nine decided to incorporate elements of The Original Series into episodes. The Voyager episode "Flashback" showed events on board the Excelsior under Captain Hikaru Sulu during the period in which Kirk and McCoy were imprisoned in Rura Penthe in Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country.[83] However, the Deep Space Nine homage used the original footage from nineteen scenes in "The Trouble with Tribbles" and other episodes in order to digitally insert the actors into the events of the episode, entitled "Trials and Tribble-ations".[77][94] The episode was nominated for three Emmy Awards and as with the original episode, the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation.[95][96]

As the 30th anniversary approached, Gerrold had heard rumors of a tribble-sequel in the works but had only heard denials from executive producer Rick Berman.[97] Following an interview request from The New York Times,[97] he telephoned Berman once more to ask what was happening as he did not want to say he did not know about the sequel episode and embarrass anyone if it actually was going to happen.[98] Gerrold suggested that an acknowledgement of the creator of the tribbles might be in order and asked if he could be an extra.[97] He was cast as a security redshirt.[99] While Gerrold was on set, he also advised director Jonathan West on the integration of new scenes into "The Trouble with Tribbles".[98] Gerrold later said that "Trials and Tribble-ations" "turned out beautiful. I think it was the best episode of Deep Space Nine ever and possibly the best episode of Star Trek after the Original Series."[98] Charlie Brill returned as Arne Darvin to film new scenes set in the DS9 timeframe.[100]

### Erroneous claims

On the 2016 home video release The Roddenberry Vault, in a commentary track for the episode Gerrold states of the episode: "This was the first time the word 'pregnant' was used on TV." This is false. While the very first use of the word on American
television is not known, the word was in fact spoken over five years earlier in "Never Name a Duck," the first episode of the second season of the Dick Van Dyke Show in September 1962.[101][1] (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jLau3wIdss&t=875)

Further appearances and parodies

Tribbles have been further seen in other Star Trek episodes and films, including Star Trek III: The Search for Spock and the JJ Abrams-helmed films Star Trek (2009) and Star Trek Into Darkness (2013).[77][102] While on a visit to the set of Star Trek, Gerrold was told by Abrams that the tribble had been deliberately "snuck in" to the scene.[97] It appears in the scene where Kirk (Chris Pine) and Spock Prime (Leonard Nimoy) meet Scott (Simon Pegg) on the Vulcan moon.[103] "The Trouble with Tribbles" was also re-imagined in that timeline's comic book series by IDW Publishing and entitled "The Truth About Tribbles".[68][104]

In 2003, tribbles appeared in the Star Trek: Enterprise episode "The Breach". In that episode, Doctor Phlox (John Billingsley) uses them as food for his medicinal pets in sickbay.[105]

Gerrold has been in discussions with the fan-created series Star Trek: New Voyages to bring back the tribbles for a further Original Series era episode.[97] Both his Original Series pitch "The Protracted Man" and his Star Trek: The Next Generation script Blood and Fire have been turned into episodes of New Voyages.[44][97]

Tribbles have been parodied in a variety of other television shows and types of media. Futurama featured a parody in the second season titled "The Problem with Popplers", which included several Star Trek jokes. These include a reference to "Roddenberries" and features Zapp Brannigan, whom the Futurama staff have said is intended to be a parody of Captain Kirk.[106]

In the 2003 video game Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, the player’s ship becomes infested with a frog-like species called Gizka, prompting the player to receive the quest “The Trouble with Gizka” in order to remove the pests.[107]

Merchandising and adaptations

Gerrold published a book describing his experiences in the creation of "The Trouble with Tribbles". Entitled The Trouble with Tribbles: The Birth, Sale and Final Production of One Episode, it was published in 1973. The book was well received by the former cast and crew of Star Trek and was used as a textbook for teaching screen-writing.[50]

A variety of tribble replicas have been made over the years,[108][47] with the most recent licensed product coming from QMx, released in 2013.[109] A plate to commemorate the episode was the first to be launched as part of an eight plate Star Trek: The Commemorative Collection in 1986. It featured an image of Kirk with the tribbles in the grain compartment created by artist Susie Morton.[110] The first Original Series expansion for the Star Trek Customizable Card Game was launched in 2000. It was entitled "The Trouble with Tribbles" and was based on this episode and the associated episode of Deep Space Nine. It also introduced the Tribbles game which used only tribble-related cards.[111]

In 2010, two movie posters for “The Trouble with Tribbles” featuring Uhura and Spock being slowly covered in tribbles were created by Justin Ishmael for the art boutique attached to the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema in Austin, Texas. It was a follow-up to earlier posters created for the episode "Space Seed". Juan Ortiz later created a 1960s-retro style poster for each of the eighty episodes of Star Trek. The “Trouble with Tribbles” poster made it appear that the warp nacelles of the Enterprise were sprouting tribbles which then bred rapidly as the ship flew on, creating a cloud of them behind the ship.[113]

Footnotes
"If that matter had simply been dropped after that one episode was filmed, I would have chalked it up wryly to experience. But the "nice kid" did not drop it; "tribbles" (i.e. my "flat cats") have been exploited endlessly... Well that’s one that did "larn me." Today if J. Christ phoned me on some matter of business, I would simply tell him: "See my agent."

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The Trouble with Tribbles - Wikipedia


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External links

- “The Trouble with Tribbles” (http://www.startrek.com/startrek/view/library/episodes/TOS/detail/68744.html) at StarTrek.com
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