

= The Pirates of Orion =

" The Pirates of Orion " is the first episode of the second season of the American animated science fiction television series Star Trek : The Animated Series , the 17th episode overall . It first aired on NBC on September 7 , 1974 . It was directed by Bill Reed , and written by Howard Weinstein . The episode was Weinstein 's first professional sale at the age of 19 .

Set in the 23rd century , the series follows the adventures of Captain James T. Kirk (voiced by William Shatner) and the crew of the Starfleet starship Enterprise . In this episode , Kirk and the Enterprise must contend with pirates who have stolen a load of cargo that includes medicine crucial to save a dying Spock (voiced by Leonard Nimoy) .

The story was developed from Weinstein out of a Star Trek @-@ based short story he had previously published in a school science fiction publication . After it failed to be read on the first submission , it was resubmitted and purchased by the production team . The episode featured the first appearance of male members of the Orion species in the Star Trek franchise ; male Orions would not appear in a live action episode until 2004 . Critical reception to the episode was mixed , and it has been released in several forms of home media , including VHS , LaserDisc and DVD .

= = Plot = =

On stardate 6334 @.@ 1 , the Federation starship Enterprise is on its way to planet Deneb 5 when the Vulcan First Officer , Spock (voiced by Leonard Nimoy) , contracts the disease choriocytosis and is diagnosed by Chief Medical Officer Leonard McCoy (voiced by DeForest Kelley) with having only days to live . The Starfleet freighter SS Huron is to rendezvous with the Enterprise and deliver medicine direly needed for the cure , when it is attacked by Orion pirates who steal its cargo , which turns out to be primarily a sizable load of dilithium crystals .

The Enterprise follows back on the rendezvous course and finds the battered Huron and its surviving crew . Analysis of the attack leads Captain Kirk (voiced by William Shatner) and his crew to chase the Orion ship in a desperate attempt to recover the cure before time runs out . The Orions , knowing they cannot escape the Enterprise or best them in a fight , plan to destroy both themselves and the Enterprise in order to protect the lie of " Orion neutrality " . Kirk meets with the Orion Captain (voiced by James Doohan) on a highly unstable asteroid which the Orions plan to detonate to carry out their plot . Kirk and the Enterprise crew realize the Orion Captain is carrying an explosive trigger in his pack and are able to neutralize it . They recover the medicine to save Spock , capture the Orion Captain (who orders his crew to abort the self @-@ destruct , which would now be a pointless loss of life , and surrender) and retrieve the dilithium crystals .

= = Production = =

Writer Howard Weinstein had been a fan of space exploration following the flight of NASA astronaut Alan Shepard on Mercury @-@ Redstone 3 . He recalled that his first experience of Star Trek was in middle school , where he mixed elements of the show up with Lost in Space . He began watching the show and was inspired to write for television after reading The Making of Star Trek by Gene Roddenberry and Stephen E. Whitfield . While in the 11th grade , he had a Star Trek short story published in the fanzine Probe , which was a yearly publication in East Meadow High School . Weinstein also wrote a script for Mission : Impossible , but the script was turned down as it was not submitted via an agent . It was returned with a list of suggested agents , and his father recognised Bill Cooper 's name on the list from their school years together .

Cooper agreed to take on Weinstein , who decided to redevelop his Probe published short story into a script for the animated Star Trek . Cooper addressed the script to D.C. Fontana , who had recently left the show . When it arrived at the production office , it was forwarded to Fontana unread , who sent it back to Cooper as she had left the show . The script was subsequently resubmitted by Weinstein under his agent 's name for the second season of the show . Producer Lou Scheimer contacted Weinstein and informed him that they wanted to purchase the script if the ending could be

modified , which Weinstein agreed to . Weinstein was 19 at the time and staying in the dormitory at the University of Connecticut , and Scheimer was surprised to find out that Weinstein was so young .

The script sold in April 1973 . It was Weinstein 's first professional sale and credit as a writer . He found out later that year that it would be used as the opening episode of the second season . Weinstein organized a get together in his dormitory to watch the episode when it aired , which some thirty people and a dog attended . After the script was used , Weinstein found that it enabled him to write the Star Trek novel The Covenant of the Crown for Pocket Books ; he said in a later interview that it gave him " instant credibility " with the company . He also began to appear at science fiction conventions and later wrote several further Star Trek books and comic books . Weinstein received a " Thank You " credit on Star Trek IV : The Voyage Home after introducing that film 's director , Leonard Nimoy , to the idea of including whales in the film .

This episode features the first appearance of male Orions . While a surgically altered agent who appeared as an Andorian in the original @-@ series episode " Journey to Babel " was speculated to be of Orion origin by Spock , the only members of the race which had previously been represented in Star Trek were the Orion slave girls . Male Orions would not be seen in a live action Star Trek production until 2004 with the episode " Borderland " in the fourth season of Star Trek : Enterprise .

= = Reception and home media release = =

" The Pirates of Orion " was first broadcast on September 7 , 1974 on NBC . Several reviewers watched the episode after the end of the series . In Trek Navigator , a book by Mark A. Altman and Edward Gross which reviewed every episode and film of Star Trek up until 1998 , Altman gave " The Pirates of Orion " a score of two out of four , while Gross gave a score of three out of four . Michelle Erica Green watched the episode for the website TrekNation , saying that it included " precisely the sort of character interaction that made the original Star Trek such a success " . She felt that given the ability of The Animated Series to show things that couldn 't be seen in The Original Series due to the budget restrictions , that the appearance of the Orions could have been increased and if the attack on the Huron had been shown then it would have given " a stronger opinion as viewers of the relative evils of the Orions , whether they are an honorable enemy or mere vicious thugs . "

" The Pirates of Orion " was released on VHS cassette alongside " The Practical Joker " during the initial release of tapes by Paramount Home Video in 1989 . It has also been released on LaserDisc as part of the series set . The first release of Star Trek : The Animated Series on DVD was through fan made productions . The official DVD release was on November 21 , 2006 in the United States , which was a single release containing all episodes from both seasons of the television show .