

STAR TREK: THE AMBERGRIS ELEMENT

The Plot

Captain's Log. Stardate: 5499.9

THE Enterprise is orbiting the planet Argo, the surface of which is almost completely covered by water, the result of violent seismic disturbances. The mission is to study the effects the quakes and other phenomena on Argo's surface. This knowledge may save millions of lives on a Federation planet identical to Argo which will soon undergo similar transformations.

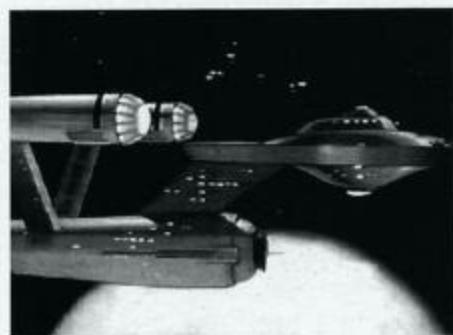
An aqua-shuttle is launched, carrying Kirk, Spock, McCoy and Lt Clayton down to Argo. Landing near to some rocky outcroppings. Spock says they represent the peaks of submerged mountains.

The shuttle is attacked by a gigantic red sea serpent. Kirk orders phasers and the stunned creature sinks to the bottom. The shuttle submerges to study it. McCoy discovers the creature has lungs and gills.

Suddenly, the creature regains consciousness and batters the shuttle.



Phasers are knocked out and the shuttle is critically damaged. Kirk contacts the Enterprise requesting an immediate beam up to the ship, but the serpent flings the ship high into the air, sending it crashing onto the rocky shoreline. The landing party are all flung clear, but Kirk and Spock are separated from McCoy and Clayton, who are finally rescued.



"Ship's Log. Stardate: 5504.2. Lt Commander Scott in command. Captain Kirk and First Officer Spock have been missing for almost five days. Search parties can find no trace of them or the aqua-shuttle. Dr McCoy and I are continuing the search at a greater distance from the attack point."

Scott and McCoy sweep the area. Finally, the crushed remains of the shuttlecraft are found on a rocky outcropping. Kirk and Spock are alive, but their bodies' metabolisms have been altered so that they are now water breathers, and they cannot survive on land. They also have no memory of what has happened to them.

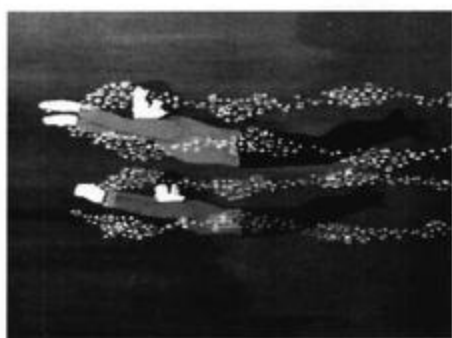
Kirk and Spock are necessarily confined to a large water-filled tank on the starship. McCoy theorizes they have been mutated by a hormone, deliberately infused into their bodies. Even the medical computers cannot offer a cure.



Spock suggests there must be intelligent life on Argo, but sensors cannot identify anything. Spock believes sensor readings are incomplete and perhaps have been affected by underwater pressure forces. As oceans are less turbulent at greater depths, perhaps the intelligent beings live there.

However, since the aqua shuttle has been destroyed, the only way to explore deeper is for Kirk and Spock to go personally. Despite the fact that the planet is almost totally unexplored and conditions are probably hostile, Kirk cannot see any other course of action. Neither he nor Spock can carry on their lives and Starfleet careers confined to a water-filled tank. Kirk hopes that if they can be mutated once, the knowledge must exist to change them back to normal.

From the launch, Kirk and Spock dive deep into the ocean.

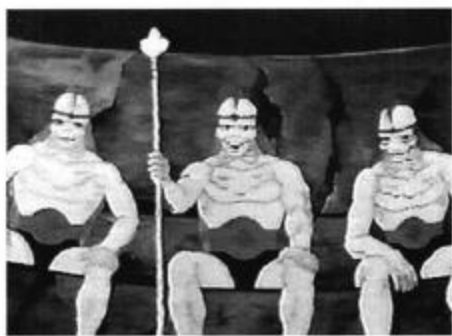


Finally, they find intelligent humanoids, who inexplicably seem to want nothing to do with them, branding them as 'air-breathers'. They are reluctantly told that the water-breathers' young saved their lives and are warned to go no further.

Baffled, the two officers follow the frightened people, assuming that they will return home. Finally they discover a beautiful underwater city, comprising several orange coloured domes and sweeping sea-shell-like buildings.

Kirk is puzzled that such an obviously advanced race should be frightened of them, but Spock surmises they may find them grotesque and ugly.

While swimming towards a large building in the centre of the city, Kirk and Spock are captured and brought to face the ruling tribunal of the Aquans.



Domar, the High Tribune, accuses them of being air-breather spies from the surface. The elder tribunes hold to their ancient records which warn against air-breathers, but the junior tribunes are more trusting, believing their friendly intentions.

It is quickly confirmed that the junior tribunes deliberately performed the surgery which mutated the two officers. The Aquans do not wish to kill, but had hoped that the surgery and the erasure of their memory would mean they could not return to the city.

One of the elders, Cadmar, still suspects them of being spies, who utilized their

own ancient records to find the city. They are defended by a young female, Rela, who demands they be permitted to speak.

Kirk reveals they are visitors from another world, which excites the young tribunes, but Cadmar declares this a lie.

Spock again states that they only came to reverse the unwanted mutation, but Domar replies that this knowledge is not contained in the ancient records.

Meanwhile, Scott is contacted by McCoy from the Enterprise, who warns him of a sea quake, due in four hours, which will cause complete topography changes in their region. Scott is concerned that Kirk and Spock aren't due to report back until that time and, utilizing a personal force-field, descends into the ocean to search with two crewmen. However, they are quickly seen by an Aquan patrol, which hurries back to the city to report.

Kirk continues to argue their case, suggesting that if the Aquans want further proof they will find it by examining the damaged aqua shuttle, which carries the name of the starship. The patrol reports back, alarming the elder tribunes and confusing the younger ones. Reluctantly, perhaps, Domar orders that the spies should be taken to the surface boulders and left to die.

Trapped on the boulders by a restraining mesh, Kirk and Spock look certain to die of suffocation, but Rela has stayed behind and, having decided to trust the strangers, tries to free them. When she cannot, the weakened Spock asks her to go to the big island and bring back help.

Scott has dejectedly returned to the launch having failed in his search, but is soon surprised by Rela who swiftly leads the launch back to free the prisoners.

With Kirk and Spock freed, Rela tells them of their ancient history and how, when the surface civilization began to sink, many air-breathers were surgically altered to live beneath the sea. Her people do not know how to reverse the process, but ancient records may still exist in the sunken cities.

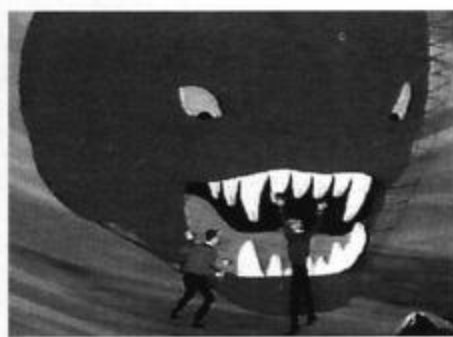


Rela leads them to a narrow passage through the reef and, fighting strong currents, the two officers finally reach the ancient ruins.

In the city, they find the records sealed in watertight jars and they return to the Enterprise.

McCoy soon deciphers the information and learns that the mutation can be reversed, but only from the venom of the sur-snake, the same gigantic creature which battered the aqua shuttle.

Helped by the younger Aquans, Kirk and Spock successfully trap a snake using an Aquan mesh net and gather the vital venom.



Back on the starship, Kirk and Spock suffer a violent reaction to the treatment, but finally revert to normal.



The young Aquans, wearing water-masks, watch from the bridge of the ship while Kirk orders phaser beams to bombard an unpopulated pressure area, thus moving the quake's epicentre away from the Aquan city.

On Argo, the bombardment causes the



star trek: the animated series

sunken city to rise clear of the water. The young Aquans decide to use the ancient knowledge to become air-breathers once again and rebuild the city. Though the elders cannot make the change, they promise never again to lose contact with each other.

Armed with new knowledge, the Enterprise departs to avert the impending tragedy on the Federation planet.

Credits

James T Kirk William Shatner
Spock Leonard Nimoy
Dr McCoy DeForest Kelley
Scott James Doohan
Sulu George Takei
Uhura Nichelle Nichols
Nurse Chapel Majel Barrett
Arex George Takei
M'Ress Nichelle Nichols

Written by Margaret Armen
Directed by Hal Sutherland
Executive Consultant

..... Gene Roddenberry
General Manager ... Rock Benedetto
Special Effects Animation

..... Reuben Timmins
Storyboards Sherman Labby,

..... Paul Fennell, Dale Hale,
..... Jack Miller, Michael O'Connor,
..... Louise Sandoval,

..... Ken Southworth, Dawn Huntley
Art Director Don Christensen
Key Assistants

..... Mike Hazy, Hill House
Key Layout Herb Hazelton,

..... Alberto De Mello, Kay Wright
Director of Colour Ervin Kaplan
Checking Supervision

..... Marion Turk, Jane Philippi
Xerography & Paint Supervision

..... John Rimmell, Betty Brooks
Camera Supervision RW Pope
Editorial Supervision

..... Joseph Simon, Doreen Dixon
Film Coordinator June Gilham
Background Music

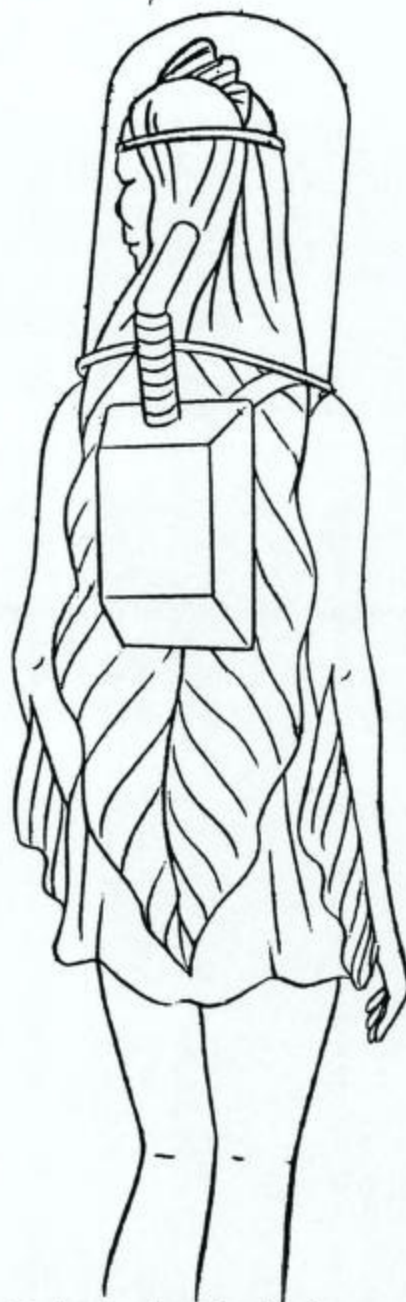
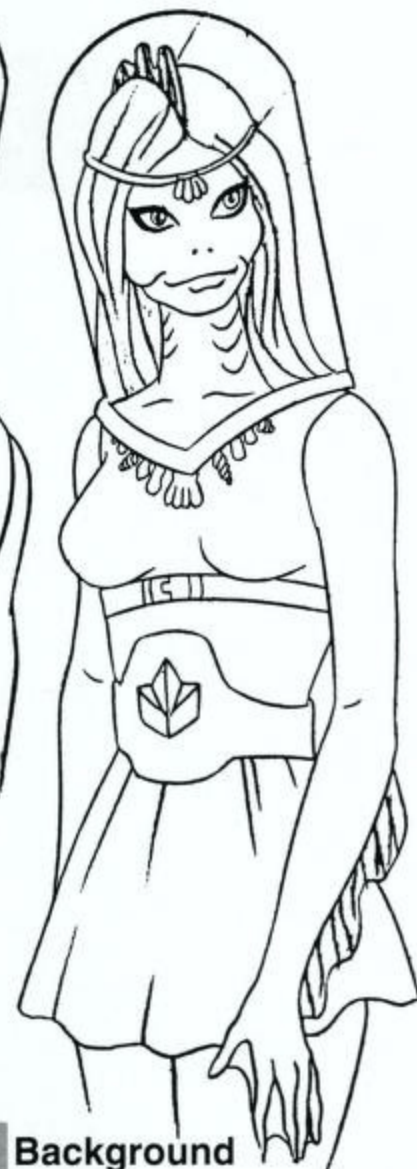
..... Yvette Blais, Jeff Michael
Music Publisher

..... Shermley Music Co, ASC
Color by Technicolor

Associate Producer & Story Editor
..... Dorothy Fontana

Produced by
..... Norm Prescott, Lou Scheimer

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Productions



Design drawings for the Aquans

Background

First US Airdate: December 1st 1973.

Margaret Armen was no stranger to **Star Trek**, having written *The Gamesters of Triskelion* and *The Paradise Syndrome*. She also rewrote *The Cloud Minders* at Fred Freiberger's request from a David Gerrold outline and an Oliver Crawford story. She was one of only two female writers who wrote scripts for the first two seasons of **Trek**. Being an avid Science Fiction fan, Armen was determined to write for the series and her agent kept submitting work until she was finally given a chance.

As one of the few writers to work for both Gene Roddenberry and third season producer Fred Freiberger, Armen noted that Freiberger was mainly looking for action pieces, while Roddenberry preferred more subtle, people-driven stories.

For the animated series, Armen penned *The Ambergris Element* and *The Lorelei Signal*. Both were later novelized by Alan Dean Foster in the *Star Trek Log* series.

For the aborted mid-70s **Star Trek II** series, Armen and Alf Harris wrote 'The Savage Syndrome', a story of an alien device which causes the Enterprise crew to revert to their more bestial natures.

Rod Summers