

Star Trek (#02) – “Spock, Messiah!”
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Back Cover:

A defective mind link turns the logical Mr. Spock into a fiery revolutionary who sets out to convert the planet Kryos with fire, sword and a forbidden philosophy. Captain Kirk and the Enterprise crew must summon all their skill and cunning in a race against time on a hostile planet. Can they destroy the fiendish mind that holds Spock captive before it destroys them?

Synopsis:

The crew of the Enterprise is surreptitiously observing the inhabitants of Kryos, a primitive planet in the Kyr star system, using a new implant device that allows each member of the landing party to be in constant contact with a native of similar temperament. The native, referred to as a “dop” which is short for “Doppelganger”, has their emotions and other mental patterns channeled through this implant, which allows the observer to understand the language, interpret the culturally significant gestures, in general to blend in and avoid all social and cultural faux pas.

However, eight days into the mission, something goes terribly wrong and Spock appears to take on the persona of a religious madman. He claims to be a powerful revolutionary, descendent of the gods and given a momentous mission: conquer its cities to unite the nomadic tribes; to bring gods to the godless; to purge the Kryosians of sin. In his madness, Spock beams to the Enterprise and steals the Trilithium crystals, which seriously disables the ship (by shutting down the Enterprise's warp drive). Now unable to leave orbit without them and tracking a powerful wave of energy coming their way, it's a race not only to save the inhabitants of Kryos from a theocratic dictatorship, but also to save the Enterprise from becoming a radioactive hulk!

“No longer the void. I have been touched. I have been anointed. I have seen. The gods move in mysterious ways: the strangest of these is that they should select a poor human-Vulcan hybrid as the agent through which their will is to be done. Kryos reeks with sin: flame and sword shall cleanse it.” (The Messiah, once known as Spock)

And thanks to Spock's all-too-logical mind the crystals are rigged to explode upon manifestation of phaser energies or detection of certain energy patterns given off by ship's communicators; therefore, the crew must do it the old fashioned way – beam down, blend in, become Androsian.

An investigation into how the new implant devices could have failed leads Kirk and McCoy to Sara George, a ship's ensign. Sara, who previously had been one of the most prudish females Kirk had ever known, had, over the previous few days, turned into a “sexpot” – becoming more and more uninhibited. After questioning her strange change in

persona, Sara admits to not only deliberately altering the person who was to be her dop, but Spock's as well. Rather than use the selected native with a non-emotional personality that would be compatible with Spock, she changed it to someone who is a lecherous, scheming madman – a man known as Chag Gara. The powerful flood of emotions overwhelms Spock, which begins the ascension of the messiah. Her reasoning was that she wanted Spock to experience more emotions, become more human and in turn fall as madly in love with her as she was with him.

Rather than court-martial her, Kirk requires her to use her new-found charms (thanks to Sara's own dop) to help put right what she set wrong. Therefore, Kirk, McCoy and Ensign George beam down to Andros, the capital city of the planet Kryos, to begin the search for Spock, the Messiah. Their first hope is to locate the whereabouts of Chang Gara; if they can find and sedate him, the connection between he and Spock fused via the implant might be broken, enough to release Spock from the madness. Their flop is located in the same plaza as the Speaker's Block, a raised platform which Gara has frequented on a regular basis. They spot him but when Sara goes to Gara to work her feminine wiles upon him, she becomes spooked; Gara seemingly has recognized her. But that can't be? Kirk and McCoy reason that the person in the plaza was Spock. Now that he knows they're on the surface, it's a race to find Chag Gara. However, Spock beats the party to Gara and has him spirited away to the Messiah's encampment.

This leads the landing party to a native named Ker Kaseme, a healer.

By changing this man's fortunes for the better, McCoy and Kirk gain a new-found friend and ally. Kaseme opens a clinic in a large house near the central square and gives the Enterprise crew complete access, unquestioned. The back of the clinic is reserved for Kirk's use and because of the constant flow of patients in and out of the clinic, they can enter and leave without Question. McCoy and Kirk both become implanted and pass as native healers and members of Kaseme's staff. And it's through Kaseme's contacts that the location of Spock's headquarters had been found. Unfortunately the compound is so well guarded by his hill followers that any direct assault is out of the question. They know Spock is up to something, as a number of hill chiefs have visited with the Messiah recently, but they cannot think of how to breach the compound in a way that wouldn't alert Spock in time for him to carry out his threat to destroy the trilitium modules.

“Unless we can recover the crystals in the next five days, we will be forced to abandon the Enterprise.”

They next catch up with Spock in the late afternoon as he prepares to speak to the townspeople. But this is more than a simple introduction to the people of Andros – it's a demonstration of his divine power. Using a concealed tricorder under his robes, the Messiah forces a change in the Enterprise's orbit, thereby making it appear at his will. After bliss, the Messiah calls, a place where the Kryosians would go should they die in battle. After coming to the rallying cry of their new Messiah, Kirk presses forward and shoots Spock with a makeshift dart gun; tipped with a drug to knock the Vulcan unconscious for hours. Kirk succeeds and takes possession of the Vulcan, driving away

from the crowd in a van they earlier obtained. But just as the crew was about to celebrate, Spock seemingly regains consciousness and subdues the landing party. Thwarted, Kirk returns to the Enterprise while Spock slinks away into the night.

“Bridge, this is the Captain. What the hell was the idea of changing orbits?”
(Kirk)

After locating the whereabouts of the Messiah’s encampment, Kirk, McCoy, Scotty, Checkov and Ensign George go undercover as Beshwa, nomadic traders who are generally free to move about but whose status is quite low. By procuring a proper Beshwa trading caravan and neelots (a kind of horse beast) to pull it, they hope to merge with other traveling hillsmen and ultimately slip through the Messiah’s defenses undetected. But their plan is further complicated by unexpected raids on the Messiah’s orders, which dishevels nearby villages and killing off its inhabitants. Kirk’s band comes across one such raiding party whose orders are to kill all strangers, placing them in the crosshairs.

Kirk manages to convince the raiding party leader that perhaps the Messiah’s order did not include the Beshwa, as they were neither strangers nor folk to be feared. Rather than be killed on the spot, the entire company is taken prisoner and transported to Tram Bir’s encampment. It is here they meet Alt, a Kryosian teenager who is the son of Tram Bir’s. After becoming mortally wounded in battle, Kirk and McCoy operate on the wound, saving his life. As a result of working their med-kit magic, the kid is saved sure to earn them good favor; however, they have seen the kid’s face, which is strictly forbidden and warrants instant death. Not wishing to have his saviors put to death, Alt and Kirk become bonded as blood brothers. This action allows Kirk’s team to have leverage against Tram Bir for their lives and in turn gain access to the Messiah as a band of healers.

Politics are at play here as Tram Bir is not a highly regarded clansmen, but if he can please the Messiah his fortunes may improve. Kirk plays upon this fallacy by suggesting their “sister” (a.k.a. Sara “sexpot” George) dance for the Messiah, as she is sure to win over his favor with her feminine wiles. Tram Bir agrees and introduces the group to the Messiah. Unfortunately during the evening’s entertainment, Kirk, McCoy, Scotty, Checkov and George are uncovered for who they really are, become bound and sentenced to death – save for the female. Ensign George, who had up until that time been in control of her dop, seems to lose control and once again surrenders to her lust for Spock. Kirk tries to reason with Spock, tells him of the advancing radiation front and what that will mean, but he dismisses it all out of hand, too warped by his own visions to understand. But all is what it seems and before Kirk and company could be executed, they are rescued by the promiscuous Ensign George, with explanations in hand.

The Messiah was not actually Spock, but Chag Gara himself. Rather than Spock turning to madness, Gara himself gained access to Spock’s logical mind instead, thereby rendering Spock catatonic. He used Spock’s mind to cultivate his ideas and help him see how to execute them more clearly; in this sense Spock became Gara’s “dop”. Sara was able to determine the robed figure in the encampment was not Spock when she caressed

the man's face under the cover of darkness in his tent. Her fingers ran over the man's ears and she found no points upon them. Rendering Gara unconscious through a blunt to the head, she severed the connection between Gara and Spock, reviving Spock, who was able to speak to the populace, urged them to go back to their old ways, and put an end to the war.

Back aboard ship, an embarrassed Spock discusses nothing but scientific endeavors, and determines from where the radiation wave originated and how it came to be so intense in such a short period of time. Epsilon Ionis, a binary star located about 30 light years from the Kyr system had just recently went nova. The radiation was picked up by the black hole, from the nova star, as energy in a gravitational field. Because of the fast motion of the black hole as it approached the perihelion in its ellipse motion, a slingshot effect occurred, propelling parts of a radiation field at warp 10 in the direction of Enterprise. While nothing more than a curiosity at this point, Kirk accepts the report and carries on. The Enterprise is safe and things are slowly getting back to normal.

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