

Star Trek (#03) – “The Price of the Phoenix”
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Back Cover:

Captain Kirk is dead -- long live Captain Kirk! Spock, Doctor McCoy and the other crewmen of the Starship Enterprise experience a stunning double shock. The first, painful blow is Captain Kirk's tragic death. Then, Captain Kirk's miraculous rebirth reveals the most awesome force the Enterprise has ever encountered. Spock is forced into a desperate gamble for Kirk's human soul against Omne -- the ultra human emperor of life beyond life, and death beyond hell. A nerve-shattering voyage into unknown terror with the Starship Enterprise!

Summary:

Captain Kirk's dead body is beamed aboard the Enterprise after a house fire on an unnamed planet in which he has died trying to save a baby. Spock beams down to the planet in order to confront its ruler, Omne (also known as Omnedon and Black Omne). Unexpectedly, Omne reveals that Kirk hasn't died at all and offers the man to Spock. Spock has reservations as to the authenticity of this supposed Kirk and is given leave for a brief mind meld. Although Spock verifies that it is indeed Kirk's mind he is melding with, he is still unable to dismiss his reservations and so calls this Kirk "James", in contrast to the form of his captain's forename that he usually uses. Even so, Spock accepts Omne's offer of this resurrected Kirk, although Omne makes it plain that his price will be extremely high and in effect require Spock to betray the Federation.

It soon transpires that Spock was right to be suspicious regarding James' identity, as the Original Kirk is indeed alive and well, having sustained only minor though visible injuries in the house fire before being beamed to safety and replaced. Omne boasts that he has pioneered the "Phoenix Process", a modification of transporter technology, to create a duplicate of a living person. Spock is determined to rescue both Kirk and James, and in this endeavor he has the assistance of Di'on Charvon, the female Romulan Commander whom Spock and Kirk bested previously by obtaining her cloaking device.

Omne brutally beats Kirk, attempting to break his spirit, but Spock, James and the Commander, who locates Kirk through Spock's mind-link with Kirk, discover Kirk. After a chase through Omne's labyrinthine complex, Spock fights Omne barehanded and defeats him after a brutal battle in which both parties are gravely injured. He forces a mind meld on Omne in order to purge him of all memory of his experiences with Kirk; but before this psychic surgery is complete, the crippled Omne succeeds in shooting himself in the head. (One of Omne's affectations is that every visitor to the planet, barring a few privileged Romulans, may go armed only with locally manufactured gunpowder weapons after the fashion of the Wild West.)

Watching all this transpire via viewscreens, Kirk rushes to Spock via a subconscious link. He finds the Vulcan unconscious, broken, but alive. Kirk tends to his wounds using Omne's "sickbay in a can" technology. When Spock is revived, a tearful reunion ensues. Realizing that Omne would have done this only because he trusted the Phoenix device to resurrect him, Spock and Kirk located James and the Commander and the four retreat to the Enterprise.

After giving Dr. McCoy a start (and an emotional outburst to end all outbursts), they hastily draw up plans both to establish a new life for James and to deal with Omne's inevitable reappearance. James is surgically altered to pass for Romulan and is to accompany the Commander back to the Empire. She explains that there are colony worlds where men are "very properly considered the weaker sex and not permitted to fight", and he is to be represented as one of these.

However, before James and the Commander depart, Omne transports himself aboard the Enterprise. The Phoenix device has indeed recreated him, and he is in perfect physical condition. A short fistfight follows in which Omne beats everyone present, Spock still being injured despite earlier recourse to the Vulcan healing trance, and captures James, holding him hostage with a gun at his head. He announces his intention to return to his planet with James, where it will be impossible to pursue him. Surprisingly, Kirk chooses this moment to warn Omne to mend his ways, which Omne dismisses with incredulity and scorn. Kirk then gives the signal for Mr. Scott, supposed by Omne to have been unaware of his presence, to transport the weapon out of Omne's hand, and using this moment of surprise the Commander snatches James away and Kirk, equipped with one of Omne's own guns, outdraws him.

Killed a second time aboard the Enterprise and supposedly out of range of his Phoenix device, Omne is supposed to be dead; but there is ample room for doubt in view of the technology Omne has already shown. There is, however, no more to be done for the present. Omne's planet is for all present purposes impenetrable, and if he will come back from the dead yet again, that eventuality must be addressed when it arises.

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