

Star Trek (#05) – “Vulcan!”
Bantam Books | September 1978

Back Cover:

Spock beamed down to a murderous planet in a dangerously shifting universe... A universe where a series of freak ion storms has changed the boundaries of space... where Arachne IV, inhabited by a strange race, may be lost forever to the Federation... where Spock is sent on a death-defying assignment into a war of ant-types along with a brilliant, beautiful, bigoted scientist who hates Vulcans! Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock and the crew of the Starship Enterprise daringly journey on another thrilling mission toward the perils of unknown worlds.

Summary:

The Romulan Neutral Zone, also known to the Romulans as the Outmarches, is an area of space between the borders of the United Federation of Planets and the Romulan Star Empire as established in 2161 at the conclusion of the Earth-Romulan War. The Treaty of Gamma Trianguli called for a 1 light-year area between both powers, with neither side allowed to cross into the zone without prior agreement from the other, or war would be declared. Any vessel found to have crossed into the zone would be impounded and its crew sent home after they were processed. Both Starfleet and the Romulans established a number of outposts along the border which would monitor activity in the zone.

But in late 2269, violent ion storm activity in the vicinity of the Zone was changing the magnetic field markers that designated its boundaries, thereby shifting them in favor of the Romulans. While this held no major problems for the Federation as a whole, the planet Arachnae would soon find itself inside Romulan space. Captain Kirk and Commander Maximus Thrax of the ChR Decius were dispatched to monitor the planet's vote to join the Romulan Star Empire.

Moreso, in order to determine whether Arachnae was a worthy fight, the Enterprise is dispatched to seek out intelligent life there and, if it exists, offer full Federation protection. To help the Enterprise complete the necessary surveys, the Federation's foremost expert on the exobiology of the region – Dr. Katalya Tremain – is assigned to them. Upon hearing the news of Tremain's assignment, both Spock and Dr. McCoy are elated and become engrossed in an ever escalating “war” over her comfort. But when she beams up and declares her hatred of all things Vulcan upon sight of Spock, both men are taken aback and the mission takes a turn for the worse.

With Spock out of the picture, McCoy begins his mission of woo, but his curiosity is piqued too: what could have caused such a hatred of Vulcans? McCoy becomes torn between his feelings for Tremain and his professionalism. Overcome by his sense of professionalism, McCoy begins the long, hard process of trying to understand her. As part of his quest for knowledge, McCoy attempts a Sigmund on her.

Every reporting crew member had to go through a Sigmund program (a psychoanalytic device) upon reporting on ship. This device was named for Doctor Sigmund Freud and used drugs coupled with hypnosis to analyze and “fix” mental problems before such problems could pose issues on board a starship. Such personality quirks were quite dangerous to a normal, tight-knit crew. The booth had a low ceiling, was pink, and resembled a human womb. There was a couch and a talking computer present as well. This soundproof device worked in three stages, analyzing a personality by layers, like an onion. However, McCoy’s use of the Sigmund was incomplete and botched as he later found out, didn’t dig deep enough. Deterred, he used the Sigmund to help mend rather than “fix” her Vulcan issues, but that too didn’t work as planned. When she is still paired with Spock, she deduces that the planet isn’t big enough for both of them.

“Captain's log, Stardate 6459.2. We are now in orbit around the planet Arachnae, and the situation aboard the Enterprise, while tense, is not nearly as difficult as I had assumed it would be. My only problem is making it quite clear to Dr. Tremain that she and Spock are co-leaders of the expedition to the planet's surface. According to Dr. McCoy, Tremain still insists that she could carry out the expedition on her own with a picked team of technicians, while Mr. Spock remains aboard ship to co-ordinate. This plan is totally unacceptable to both myself and Mr. Spock. It will become necessary for me to speak to Dr. Tremain before she and Mr. Spock leave for the planet's surface. I am not pleased that such a conversation is necessary.”

Both Spock and Tremain beam down to the planet’s surface and set up camp. While scouting the surrounding hillsides, Tremain finds what she believes is the mouth of a cave. Considering it worthy of further study, Tremain and Spock explore it together. But while away the insectoid life-forms of the planet attack the settlement, brutally killing one and biting another, sending potent poisons into his body. The crewman shortly succumbs to the poison rather painfully, leaving Spock and Tremain alone. To further complicate matters, an unexpected anomaly in the ion storm has moved the Neutral Zone boundary ahead of schedule, placing the planet firmly in the Zone. With it came a Romulan cruiser, which forces the Enterprise to place its shields on high alert, stranding Spock and Tremain alone on the planet – utterly dependent on each other for survival.

Not wishing to waste time in determining whether the Arachnians are intelligent creatures, Spock and Tremain located one of the creature’s tunnels (apparently "dug" by a Horta-like creature) and traverse below ground. There they find an amazing city of stone, created and carved with meticulous care. Spock believes this is a sign of intelligence but Tremain is not so sure citing examples on other worlds. On their way back to camp, the duo is attacked and Spock is bitten! Now Tremain is forced face her demons by caring for Spock, but Spock will not let their argument over the Arachnians’ intelligence rest. When she goes out to find comfortable bedding for Spock, he retreats back down the tunnel in order to mind-meld with the creatures. The two have talked about this before and Tremain has dismissed it outright – not only is she afraid of the Vulcan technique, she’s also concerned that if the creatures are feral, Spock will turn so as well. And she may be forced to kill him.

Her concerns are well founded as Spock mindmelds with one of the creatures and find its mind simplistic; its impulses invade Spock's mind and drones away his sense of self. Tremain finds him and pulls him away from the meld, but not before the damage is done. Now she is faced with a question: shoot Spock before he becomes like the insectoid and endangers her life or attempt to help him by allowing him to do the one thing she fears the most: allow a Vulcan to penetrate her mind. Despite protests from the Enterprise and her own internal sense of defense, Tremain musters up the courage to tell Spock to attempt a mind-meld.

Spock does so and the meld not only brings Spock back to himself, but brings the reason of Tremain's hatred to light.

She was married to Jeremy Tremain until his unfortunate demise on board the USS Calypso, a Hermes-class Federation scout in service under the command of Selik, a captain of Vulcan lineage. The Calypso was destroyed after being infected by a colony of parasitic creatures that had been taken aboard following a stop-off at Bellaea. Selik, believing his ship lost (and not wishing to inflict the parasites on a potential rescuing vessel), ordered a self destruct. For his actions, Selik received the Medal of Honor posthumously.

The death of her husband at the hands of an unfeeling Vulcan captain alone might cause some resentment, but Spock knew that both her parents had also been stationed on board ship (as Science Officer and Chief Medical Officer) and she all but admitted that her relationship with Jeremy had virtually ended by then. And even if that too might cause some of the outbursts but was still more; Spock found it. Selik -- Tremain was secretly in love with him but could not bring herself to let him know. She suffered silently and when the Vulcan perished on board the Calypso, Tremain knew she would never have the chance to tell him how she felt. The pain at losing a love she could never have was too hard; therefore she turned to hatred as a coping mechanism. Hatred, therefore, became a mask for a much deeper pain.

The experience brings Spock and Tremain closer together, and for the first time allows her to face the demons of her repressed emotions. This transforms Tremain, although by her admittance coming to terms with liking Vulcans will take more time. With the Arachnians' intelligence determined to be inferior, and Spock and Tremain back aboard ship (after Kirk gives up and lowers his shields as a point of trust), the planet is turned over to the Romulans without further fanfare.

{fin}