

**Star Trek (#08) – “World Without End”**  
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Back Cover:

*Chatalia... a fantastic artificial world, inhabited by furry winged creatures with awesome powers. Here Kirk, Spock and their Enterprise mates, trapped, face terrifying death. And if by some miracle they escape, they will confront the roving killers of the Klingon Empire!*

Summary:

The Enterprise, nearing the end of a benchmark survey of Sector 3, is treated to a rare sight - the occulting of Deneb by Antares. For an instant, red and blue fires of the two brightest stars in the galaxy appear as one. While this event brightened up the crew's morning, the rest of the day had thus far been uneventful; therefore, Kirk joins Spock and Lt. Larousse in the officer's lounge, where they are engaged in a word game - placing the sound "op" in front of each vowel. Lt. Larousse attempts to trip the Vulcan by making him pronounce "uranium hexafluoride" and Spock does so - "Opuropanopiopum hopexopaflopuoporopide" without skipping a beat. Their reverie is interrupted when Uhura's voice pages a yellow alert.

On the bridge, a remarkable discovery is made after the ship crosses an extremely strong magnetic field: an unknown space vehicle the size of a large asteroid (some 217 km in diameter). When scans report sentient beings inside, a team of over 20 science and engineering specialists are called to an emergency meeting in the briefing room. Discussing their findings of the new world, it is determined to be a hollow planetoid that spins to create its own artificial gravity, and operates on a Bussard ramscoop drive system. At first the team believes they have discovered *The Forty Families*, a Human generation ship launched from Earth around 2019. Unlike previous vessels before her, the *Forty Families* was the first manned interstellar vessel to be equipped with Bussard ramjet engines (as the newly discovered "ship" is equipped with. Soon after the *Forty Families* was launched, all contact was lost with the vessel and she was declared lost.

But this new finding was not the *Forty Families* ship.

Its point of origin lie some 3,000 light years distant at the center of a tenuous globular shell of gas; remnants of a supernova that exploded circa 750 BC. The ship appears to be on an undetermined course and slowing. Projecting ahead, the crew determines if the ship remained on its present course and reduced speed, it would be placed two parsecs away from the nearest star. Certainly not the planned destination, they summarize. So, to solve the mysteries of this world, Kirk, McCoy, Larousse, security chief B. "Tuck" Wilson and Ensign Moore beam over.

The landing party immediately came upon the ships' inhabitants, a slightly humanoid bunch that was more than a bit odd-looking: their eyes, a bright yellow and twice the size of a human's, bulged out and blinked sideways. The nose was two red holes. The mouth was fixed in a grinning U; the upper lip fixed while the bottom jaw gaped open and shut, exposing rows of tiny sharp teeth. Their heads were elongated almost to a point and bulged out behind. Their hair was silky and short, brownish-red, but missing in various places - elbows, knees, feet, hands and the points on their heads - and where skin showed it was dead fish-belly white, as were its lips, eyelids and the insides of their mouths. For the most part these aliens ignore the landing compliment until Captain Kirk attempts to make contact through the universal translator - all hell breaks loose. The aliens scatter to be replaced with what the landing party can only take as this world's police officers.

Kirk and company attempt to reason with the police officers, but after experiencing universal translator difficulties (and discovering they can't beam back to the Enterprise), the entire compliment is taken prisoner, but remain in contact with Spock on the Bridge.

Since the landing party looks nothing like the native species, they are immediately mistaken for that world's "magician" class, and are detained until one of "their kind" came come repatriate them. Kirk attempts to get their captors to understand they are not of this world, that they come from "outside", but the inhabitants have no concept of this. In fact, they have no word for "starship" and thus appear to be unawares of their current situation. Understanding this, Kirk plays along and tells their captor they are "new" magicians, delusional, and do not yet understand. Thus their captor explains the way of the world: the tall aliens are called "lan-Chatalia" and live in the country. City-dwellers are called "ven-Chatalia". Magicians, who reside in "Below" are called "ela-Chatalia". Every individual belongs to a family and has a caste level assigned to him. That individual can only speak to members of his own caste, or those immediately above or below him. Isolation is further intensified by the fact that each family has its own dialect; therefore, one of the largest families is the Interpreter family and almost every transaction requires one. The magicians are the only ones exempt from the caste restriction. Furthermore, the population is strictly controlled; when an individual dies, a fully-grown replacement is delivered to the lan-Chatalla, who train and eventually deliver them to their families.

*"That's the craziest social setup I've ever heard of!" (Uhura)*

As the bridge crew consider the complexities of Chatalian society, as reported by the landing party, the discovery of a hundred-year old Klingon shipwreck on the surface of Chatalia diverts their attention. Interests piqued, Sulu leads a spacewalk to investigate. The crew manages to transcribe a translation of a Klingon ship's log, describing the honorable suicides of the Klingon crew after being ensnared by the planetoid via a fine net of super strong metal. And just Spock think's it is probably a good idea to back-off so the Enterprise doesn't fall into the same trap, it's too late. Ensnared, the Enterprise begins loosing precious power...

Meanwhile, Kirk and company meet their interrogators - a magician - who complicates matters for them... by speaking ancient Klingon.

This magician believes beyond any shadow of a doubt the new comers are Klingons, and having lived through their previous invasion force, he isn't about to let up on Kirk. While the landing party is being interrogated, a team of magicians are investigating their weaponry in a room several floors below where they're being kept. Unfortunately one detonates and kills the entire investigative team. Spock, who had been monitoring the interrogation in the hopes of gleaning further information about the Chatalia, immediately, arranges for a beam over; he arrives just in time to stun four guards and, taking advantage of the ensuing pandemonium, renders the interrogating magician neutral with the Vulcan neck-pinch. Taking W'Chaal, their ven translator, and the unconscious magician with them, the landing party plus Spock flee the confines of their cell.

*"First one to find a path gets shore leave." (Kirk)*

On the surface, the landing party begins their long, exhaustive trek to the land of the magicians: crossing rivers, battling Chatalians, and traversing forests full of strange creatures hell-bent on eating them - to a floating island 169 kilometers from their present location. In space, contrary to the fears of Uhura and Spock, a distress signal did manage to penetrate the planetoid's magnetic field well enough to be picked up by a vessel. It might have been better if the vessel had belonged to the Federation. Captain Kulain of the *IKS Korezima*, who had been trailing the Enterprise on their own benchmark survey, intercepts up the signal, and after deciding they can destroy the asteroid-ship and the Enterprise in one go, launch a very powerful "nova" bomb toward their coordinates, which will reach the Enterprise in two days time. And since the Enterprise can't move, Scotty and the rest begin preparations for evacuating to the planetoids inner surface in the hopes of surviving the blast.

Two days come and go without luck of restoring the Enterprise's fuel (or in getting the nova bomb to detonate before it approaches); therefore, Mr. Scott orders everyone down to the surface, save for himself. The time comes and the bomb detonates... but rather than destroying everything within a million-mile radius, the energy is simply absorbed by the planetoid in much the same fashion as the Enterprise's fuel. When the landing party and the new survival party realize the time has come and gone, each attempt to contact the Enterprise -- but the ship doesn't have enough power for communication (much less heat and anything else), so unless Kirk can get to the magicians soon, Scotty will freeze to death and the ship will spiral down and crash-land just as the Klingon ship had done a hundred years previous.

Using wings fabricated for low-gravity flying, Kirk and the landing party reaches the floating magician's island, and is immediately captured. It turns out that the real sentient life force on the ship is a giant plant, known as the Father Machine (a.k.a "The Oracle"), and the other inhabitants are creations it has made and have no real sentience themselves. After Spock mindmelds with the plant/creature, it realizes the Enterprise crew is not a real threat and allows them to leave.

It is not so kind to a new group of Klingons who have arrived with a second nova bomb, determined to blow the entire ship to pieces. The Oracle is hungry for Klingons and thus has his attendants to bring them to him. And when Kirk and the rest of the landing party return to the Enterprise, they find quite a mess in the emergency bridge - a smoldering campfire, a couple of uprooted trees, food containers scattered everywhere, a couple of empty brandy bottles, and...

*"Captain Quirk, I prezhume?"* (Kuilan)

... A drunken Klingon who got more than he bargained for when he beamed aboard the Enterprise.

With just enough power to take the ship to nearby Starbase, the ship resumes its course as the Klingons prepare to invade Chatalia, and most likely perish.

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