

Star Trek: TOS (#03) – “The Klingon Gambit”
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Back Cover:

THE KLINGONS ARE HUNGRY FOR WAR ... THEIR TARGET: THE ENTERPRISE! When Captain Kirk and his crew are ordered to Alnath II to challenge the deadliest Klingon starship Terror, they're ready for anything -- or so they think. But the defenseless Vulcan crew of a Federation science ship has been wiped out. The remaining members of the Alnath II mission have discovered a fabulous ancient city -- but their report doesn't make sense. The Klingon battle cruiser has the Enterprise in its sights, and is ready to destroy it. But Captain Kirk can't seem to make decisions. Spock has started to throw temper tantrums. And Chekov has disobeyed vital orders. The crew of the Enterprise are losing their minds ... one by one ... all victims of ... THE KLINGON GAMBIT

Synopsis:

The crew of the Enterprise is busy mapping Delta Canaris IV, a new Class Q planet located near the Federation-Klingon border, but before their mission can be concluded, the Enterprise receives a top-priority message from Starfleet Command with orders to investigate a distress call from the Vulcan science vessel T’pau. Upon arrival in the Alnath system, Captain Kirk and crew discover the ship adrift in space at the edge of the system, intact and in perfect working order. Mysteriously, however, each and every one of the seventy-two crewmembers is dead, lying in their bunks with peaceful expressions and absolutely no sign of what caused their demise. The mystery deepens when an Andorian archaeological team that the Vulcans had transported to the surface of Alnath II is discovered to be alive and well, and completely oblivious to the fate of the *T’Pau*.

The Andorians, it seems, aren’t the only ones interested in Alnath II, as the Klingon dreadnought cruiser IKS *Terror*, easily capable of outgunning the *Enterprise*, is soon found to be orbiting the planet. Since Alnath II is a world belonging neither to the Federation or the Klingon Empire the *Terror* has every right to be in orbit. Her appearance and the deaths of the Vulcans, however, immediately cause Captain Kirk to suspect that it is indeed the Klingons who, perhaps using some knew and unknown super weapon, are to blame for the *T’Pau*’s fate. As a result, the crew of the *Enterprise* must find out exactly what happened, and if necessary engage the *Terror* in hopes of destroying her mysterious secret weapon, if in fact it exists.

The investigation starts with Threllvon-Da, renowned Andorian archeologist and head of the team on Alnath II. Threllvon-Da tells of an amazing discovery of ruins on the surface, ruins possibly more than ten-millenia old. And at their heart lies an amazing pyramid, taller than the Enterprise would be if stood end to end; underneath, a vast city of crystal, topaline and diamonds.

But Threllvon-Da is confusing in his recollections about what had happened after the discovery of the pyramid and the vast underground city it sits on, so much in fact that Captain Kirk could hardly keep it straight.

“Let me get this clear. The Vulcans entered the chamber, then beamed back without saying a word to you. Then the Klingons invaded; heavy equipment of an unknown nature being offloaded from their starship.”

“I suppose that sums it up.” (Kirk and Threllvon-Da)

To make matters worse, the crew begins to act just as oddly.

The first sign is the theft of minor items from all over the ship. Then Spock allows his human emotions full control of his faculties and becomes prone to uncharacteristic tempered outbursts; emotions unfamiliar as he falls in love with a young lieutenant. McCoy eschews his medical equipment in favor of catgut and needles; getting “back-to-nature” and distrusting all things mechanical. Other members of the crew begin to do just as they please, disregarding orders that place the ship in danger, assaulting each other, and getting into fights over the most mundane things. Lieutenant Heather McConel, the assistant chief engineer builds an illegal distillery in engineering to make the alcoholic drink. Lieutenant Gordon is found drunk while on duty monitoring the life support systems; the carbon dioxide level on the Enterprise rises to a dangerous level as a result. And Scotty has begun cannibalizing ship systems in an obsessive quest to improve the performance of his precious engines.

McCoy determines that all of these things are the result of some outside force, but unless that force is stopped, the likelihood of the crew leaving the planet is remote. Of course, one can only imagine how this same thing must be affecting the Klingons who are sharing an orbit nearby. Kirk doesn't have to wonder long as Captain Kalan, commander of the Terror, requests to board the Enterprise for an inspection. He believes Kirk is making preparations to beam an armed force down to the surface. A request Kirk grants, as he does not wish to go toe-to-toe with the Klingons and when nothing out of the ordinary can be found, he and his first officer (Kisath) reluctantly returns to the Terror.

Morale onboard the Enterprise continues to drop; all is relatively quiet until Uhura intercepts an incomplete Klingon transmission requesting the authority to engage the Federation. Mister Checkov, who is left in command while Kirk investigates elsewhere, jumps the gun and assumes the worst - the Klingons are preparing to attack! He immediately calls for Battle stations and orders an attack upon the Terror. Kirk rushes to the bridge and calls off the attack just in the nick of time. A review of Checkov's actions commences, finding him guilty but otherwise unpunished. His actions no doubt caused by whatever outside force that is acting upon them.

But the trouble is not just confined to the Enterprise. Captain Kalan of the IKS Terror nearly loses his command after an attempted mutiny by his crew. This is natural aboard a Klingon ship; advancement by death.

In attempt to thwart off any further action, Kalan beams down and takes the science team prisoner and stakes claim to Alnath II. He plans to secure Alnath II for the mining of its Topaline deposits. Topaline is a rare mineral which is used in life support systems, and has been known to disrupt sensors. It is a highly-prized mineral by the Klingon Empire and the acquisition of the mineral led to several tense engagements with the United Federation of Planets, including Capella IV. Other than Capella IV, Rhyl, Spica IX and Talir are other main Topaline mines for the Federation.

“The sudden disappearance of their equipment - seemingly swallowed by the very planet itself - has precipitated an emergency.” (Kirk, Captain's Log)

Kirk is able to diffuse the situation by allowing the Klingons mining rights, but not near the archeological site. Threllvon-Da and his team have discovered a vast underground city and if the Klingons break through the cavern's ceiling, they will destroy everything. However... the Klingons do manage to break through anyway, causing massive destruction to the city below. Kalan, who only sees the riches within, wants nothing more than to plunder it, but is stopped once again by reason. When Kirk shows that Threllvon-Da isn't looting the city, rather he's studying it, Kalan is forced to withdrawal. But just as the crew begins their observations of this magnificent city, they're attacked -- by Kisath, the Terror's first officer!

Hand-to-hand combat ensues but ends almost as it begins when Kalan corners Kisath, stunning him. Recognizing that the attack upon Kirk and crew was not only unprovoked, but unauthorized, Kalan returns to his ship bent on taking pleasure in interrogating and punishing Kisath; however, moments later the Enterprise is once again comes under attack, Kisath in command. Rather than fight it out in space, Kirk challenges the new commander to a duel on the planet's surface. The Klingon accepts, but nothing is ever as simple; Kalan enters the melee – he lives.

While Kirk stalks Kalan, Kalan stalks Kisath. The three find one another and all hell breaks loose; Kisath is stunned by Kalan but not before squeezing off a round of his own, mortally wounding his previous captain. Kirk, who survives unscathed, has McCoy beam down to tend to his wounds.

“Kalan continues to heal rapidly. He will be able to return to the Terror shortly. But before then, we must conclude negotiations for peaceful occupation and joint cooperation on Alnath II.” (Kirk, Captain's Log)

When Kalan awakens, Kirk has but one question of him: before their arrival, and before the archeological team could completely investigate the ruins, did the Klingons take anything from the city? They had; a rather large, green crystal. While nothing but an oddity to them, Kirk surmises that this object may be the source of their problems. Therefore, Kirk negotiates for the jewel in exchange for Kisath, who would otherwise be sent to a Federation Starbase to await trial. Kalan agrees to Kirk terms, preferring to punish Kisath himself, and transfers the jewel.

An investigation of the Alnathian jewel reveals it is quasi-organic and contains an immense level of internal energy. This energy was acting on the crews of the Enterprise and the IKS Terror by making them lazy, unreliable, and in the Klingon's case, mutinous. To stop the affect, Captain James T. Kirk has the jewel placed inside a box lined with Rodinium, a metallic substance dense enough to thwart the energy waves produced by the jewel.

Once the true nature of the Alnathian jewel was discovered, Spock concluded that while surveying the planet, the Vulcan crew was overcome by the effects of the Alnathian jewel. It compelled them to leave orbit, stranding the archaeological team on the surface. Shortly there-after Sullien, along with the rest of his crew, were granted what they desired most, to become non-corporeal beings of pure intellect. This is the jewel's sole purpose: to grant what is most desired; therefore, the city that Threllvon-Da always wanted to find - the city of diamonds - was also a granted wish.

“Tensions have eased considerably since the jewel from the pyramid was placed inside the roдинium box. The Klingons are amenable to negotiation for the mining concessions on Alnath II, the Enterprise functions at its normal high efficiency and another interstellar conflict has been averted.” (Kirk, Captain's Log)

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