

Star Trek (TOS #08) – “Black Fire”
Pocket Books | January 1983

Back Cover:

When sabotage strikes the Enterprise, Spock's investigation leads him into an alliance with the Romulan and Klingon empires against the Tomarii, a bloodthirsty race for whom war is life itself. Spock is declared a traitor and sentenced to the Federation's highest-security prison, and Kirk must choose between friendship and duty, with dire consequences for himself, Spock, and the entire Federation if he's wrong.

Summary:

A massive explosion aboard the bridge of the Enterprise forces a destructive separation of the saucer section from the rest of the ship. The ensuing devastation kills three trainee crewmembers and injures much of the senior officers, including Kirk and Spock. Spock risks paralysis as a result of his injuries (a chunk of metal has pierced his spine) to take command and figure out exactly what happened, but the official inquiry seems to consider the whole affair an accident. To Spock, the cause appears to be sabotage, and through a bit of detective work, he with the help of Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott, discover a star map potentially left behind by the saboteur. Spock presents his findings to both Captain Kirk and Commodore Clark at Starfleet. However, Commodore Clark ignores the testimony and instead has Spock return to Sickbay where he can be treated. Spock refuses McCoy and goes in search of Scotty. Spock persuades Scotty to join him on his investigation and together they “borrow” a Federation AA Class cruiser - the USS Raven -- and head off for the area indicated – a previously undiscovered planet called Tomarii.

On the way, Scotty and Spock meet up with a small band of Romulans and Klingons, all three having been attacked in a similar fashion and led to the same point in space. The grouping is promptly captured by the Tomarii and whisked away. On Tomarii, the prisoners are separated and taken by their captors for a series of battles. Spock and the Romulan Commander are paired with one known as Ilsa . Scott and a Klingon with another, with the rest of the compliment fought over by other Tomarrians. Spock surmises after observing their surroundings that the Tomarrian's are conquerers rather than inventors; they take technology they believe they can use and discard the rest, which is why the civilization appears almost peacemeal. The Federation's, Klingon's and Romulan's part in this matter then is a simple test to see how each performs in battle.

"We are a test sample. Our performance in battle will be an indication of our respective forces' respective strength."

Spock and the complement learn what they can of their captors, but when their escape attempt is thwarted, Spock is further detained. Not wishing to hamper further efforts - as Spock's condition was worsening, he was unwilling to eat the meat offered him and therefore getting weaker, and he knew that Scotty would not attempt another escape if he was living - Mr. Spock took poison to kill himself.

Kirk, not wishing to give up on either men ends up tracking down Spock and Scotty, rescuing them; although both are now wanted men after hijacking the ship and sending a warning about the Tomarii to the Romulans. The result of his actions has Spock incarcerated on Federation prison planet Minos as prisoner M621V. (Scotty, for his trouble, is assigned to Starfleet Academy.) There, he befriends a Romulan inmate by the name of Desus and the two soon hatch a plot to escape. When they do, Spock's Romulan partner in crime reveals himself as a pirate. Soon, the pair masquerades as the now-infamous pirate Black Fire (so named due to the color of a mysterious cape), and a legend is born. But has Spock sacrificed all that he has ever stood for to accomplish the legend? And can Kirk, with a new first officer and science officer, manage to stop Spock and defeat the Tomarii?

After a dispute with other space pirates, Black Fire ends up on Romulus. It turns out that Desus isn't just a regular inmate; he is actually Supreme Commander for the Romulans! Spock joins the Commander on a mission to investigate the disappearance of a Romulan ship in Tomariiian space (and again meets the lady Romulan Commander - Liviana Charvanek / Di'on Charvon - from whom he and Kirk stole the cloaking device). There they come across the Enterprise that is investigating the disappearance of a Federation ship. At the same time a Tomariiian ship of a Klingon design appears. Together the two ships bring the Tomarii into submission by blockading their home planet. Spock rejoins the Enterprise after thwarting a Romulan attempt to capture it, and it turns out that Spock had been acting under cover for the Federation all the time.

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