

Star Trek: TOS (#23) – “Ishmael”
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Back Cover:

The U.S.S. Enterprise is on a peaceful mission at Starbase 12 when a bizarre cosmic phenomenon causes a Klingon ship to suddenly vanish -- with Spock aboard for the ride. Spock's last message from the Klingon ship is cryptic and frightening. The Klingons are traveling into the past, searching for the one man who holds the key to the future. If they can kill that man, the course of history will be changed -- and the Federation will be destroyed!

Summary:

The Enterprise is on a visit to Starbase 12, set up to study the nearby Tau Eridani Cloud, through which a white dwarf star is passing. A Klingon ore transport is also present and the Klingon cruiser Rapache is nearby. The transport, however, is giving off unusual power readings and has more crew than is usual for such a ship. Spock goes aboard to investigate, but does not show up for a scheduled rendezvous later, apparently because he is still on the transport. This suddenly accelerates to a high warp speed and vanishes into the cloud. Spock has time to send a cryptic message “White dwarf. Khlaru. Tillman's Factor. Guardian” and another consisting of a series of numbers (18, 60, 7) before the transport vanishes.

The scene shifts to the Pacific Northwest of the United States around Seattle, a primitive logging town. The time is apparently the mid-nineteenth century. Spock is found, unconscious and showing signs of having been tortured, in the forest by Aaron Stemple, a prominent local businessman. He recognizes that Spock is an extra-terrestrial and that he would probably be done to death if taken back to human society of the time. He takes Spock to his isolated cabin at Eagle Head Point, intending to nurse him back to health. He is visited there by Lottie Hatfield, proprietress of a saloon bar in Seattle, with whom he shares the secret of Spock's existence and extraterrestrial nature. Returning to her saloon, Lottie sees two Klingons. She recognizes them as alien and evil, but wrongly concludes they and Spock must be the same species. She decides to go back to Eagle Head Point and warn Stemple, but is prevented from doing so by bad weather.

Spock regains consciousness, suffering from amnesia, but surprising Aaron with his command of English. He seems to be sinking into a malaise from which he may die, but Aaron more or less forces him to cheer up. His damaged memory tells him that he came from the stars. Stemple offers him an accounting job in his mill.

Back in the 23rd century, Kirk discusses Spock's message with Maria Kellogg, Commander of Starbase 12. They theorize that the "Guardian" he mentioned was the Guardian of Forever and that Khlaru refers to a place of that name on Klinzhai, the Klingon home world. She then realizes that there is also a Klingon historian called Khin Khlaru currently at Starbase 12. Tillmann's Factor is a mathematical constant to do with

acceleration past light-speed. Maybe the Klingons have used the cloud and the white dwarf to create a time slip. The numbers in the second message might be a date. They consult with the Vulcan historian Trae, who is also on the station. He tells them some Klingon history. The Klingons were conquered by a race called the Karsids centuries ago. Karsid strategy was to locate preindustrial societies and offer them economic and other help. This would lead to increasing interference on their part in those societies until they took over completely. The Klingons succumbed to this, but later rebelled and succeeded in overthrowing the Karsid Empire around the late 19th century, Earth time.

Aaron brings Spock to Seattle and introduces him to Lottie. They agree to pass him off as Aaron's nephew, giving him the name Ishmael Marx. We learn that the women living in a dormitory near Lottie's saloon have been brought from the East Coast by the Bolt brothers – Jason (the oldest), Joshua, and Jeremy (the youngest) – to provide wives for the loggers. Jason and Aaron have a bet on regarding the title to Bridal Veil Mountain. If not all the women, among who are Candy Pruitt and Bidy Cloom, are married within a year of their arrival, title to the mountain passes to Aaron.

Ishmael/Spock has been accepted by everyone in the Seattle community. One evening at the cabin on Eagle Head Point, Jeremy Bolt asks Candy Pruitt to marry him. Wrongly thinking that he is not sincere and is only asking her as part of Jason Bolt's campaign to marry off all the girls, Candy furiously refuses and storms out, despite the very heavy rain falling at the time. Jeremy follows her. The two do not arrive in Seattle and a search party, including Ishmael/Spock, goes looking for them. Ishmael/Spock's superhuman hearing enables him to hear them singing and they are found where they had taken refuge in an abandoned mine. Since none of the humans could hear the singing, Aaron has to explain away the fact that Ishmael/Spock could, to calm suspicions about him. Ishmael/Spock worries, despite Aaron's reassurances that he may have inadvertently done something to cause an unremembered mission to fail.

Kirk and Maria Kellogg consult with Drelb astrophysicist Aurelia Steiner. She confirms that it would be possible for the Klingons to use the Tau Eridani cloud to affect time travel and begins work on how the Enterprise could do the same. Kirk and Kellogg agree that 1867 in Spock's message most likely refers to that year in the Christian calendar, since other possibilities yield no meaningful results.

Aaron and Ishmael/Spock are in San Francisco with Joshua Bolt, staying at a boarding house run by a Mrs. O'Shaughnessy. One of the other guests is Sarah Gay who reveals a quick and precise intelligence during a complex logistical game played over tea. The same evening, Aaron is assaulted by two men. Again thanks to Ishmael/Spock's superhuman hearing, he and Joshua are able to intervene in time to prevent Aaron from coming to any harm beyond a sprained ankle. Sarah, who works as a nurse at St. Brendan's Hospital, provides medical attention.

Returning late at night from shore leave on Starbase 12, Sulu and Uhura interrupt a Klingon attempt to kill the Vulcan historian, Trae. Kellogg tells Kirk that Khin Khlaru

has left the base, bound for the Klingon Empire, having been kept incommunicado for some time before his departure. Trae concedes that this and the Klingons' attempt on his life have given away that something is afoot. He agrees to help Kirk and the others discover what it is.

Back at Seattle, Bidy Cloom has moved in with Aaron and Ishmael/Spock to help care for Aaron while his ankle heals. Ishmael/Spock tries to convince Aaron that the bet he has with Jason Bolt is unfair to the girls. We learn that not many of the girls are still to be married – Bidy is one. Aaron accuses Ishmael/Spock of being sentimental, which he concedes. Later, during Sunday tea at the dormitory, Ishmael/Spock surprises Aaron and the others by singing a romantic sea shanty.

Kirk, McCoy, Maria Kellogg, and Trae begin investigating what the Klingons were up to. They discover that the Klingon Imperial Representative tried to destroy the relevant records, but was foiled by Khin Khlaru. The records reveal that the Karsids began their attempt to subvert and take over Earth in 1868 or soon after, but their efforts were thwarted by stiff resistance from the first government they contacted, that of the United States. While they were still trying to overcome that resistance, the Klingon rebellions began that brought about the downfall of the Karsid Empire. The resistance was led by one man. Further investigation reveals that the man was the United States representative from Washington Territory – Aaron Stemple.

The Bolt brothers visit Ishmael/Spock and tell him that Aaron has offered to let Jason have Bridal Veil Mountain for a straightforward cash payment of \$50,000. They propose a trip to San Francisco, to raise this money by gambling. Ishmael/Spock agrees to accompany them and to devise a system they can use to win the money. In San Francisco, they begin winning the money and romance blossoms between Joshua Bolt and Sarah Gay. Meanwhile, Jason Bolt is becoming curious about Ishmael/Spock's background and personality, particularly why he never loses his temper. In one of the casinos, he also sees two men he thinks he has seen somewhere before. One evening, after the four of them leave a casino with their winnings, some men attack and try to rob them. Mostly due to Ishmael/Spock's superhuman strength, they beat off the attackers without losing any money.

In a conversation with Joshua Bolt, Sarah Gay reveals that she actually qualified as a doctor on the East Coast, but was not taken seriously in that role on the West Coast because she is a woman. She declines Joshua's marriage proposal. Later, Jason realizes that he had seen the two men he found familiar at Lottie's (they are the Klingons she also saw there). While he and Jeremy are discussing it, Sarah turns up looking for Joshua, who was supposed to be having dinner with her but never showed up. They and Ishmael/Spock set out in search of him. Sarah and Ishmael/Spock encounter an eccentric Englishman who calls himself the "Emperor of the United States" who says he has found Joshua, after he has apparently been mugged. They find he has burns similar to those Ishmael/Spock had when Aaron found him near Seattle. Later, Jason begins winning large amounts of money by breaking with the system Ishmael/Spock devised for him

(while Ishmael/Spock is winning smaller sums at chess). He risks all their winnings so far on what he thinks are a winning hand.

Unfortunately for him, it isn't and he loses all the money. The Bolts and Ishmael/Spock have to work their passage home on a cattle ship bound for Vancouver. Back in Seattle, Ishmael/Spock finds a piece of jewelry worn by Bidy Cloom enticingly familiar, but cannot place it. He again intercedes for Bidy with Aaron, who admits to liking her. He wants to win the bet, but would not mind losing it if that meant seeing Jason having to marry Bidy to win it. Jason later asks Ishmael/Spock whether he intends to ask Bidy to marry him. Ishmael/Spock makes up a story of hereditary insanity in his family to explain why he can't.

Kirk, Kellogg and the others manage to pinpoint Aaron's location in both time and place. They speculate that the Klingons mean to eliminate him so that he cannot lead the resistance to Karsid attempts at intervention, leading to Earth being subjugated by the Karsids. The Federation would thus never come into existence.

At a dance in Seattle to celebrate Jeremy Bolt's marriage to Candy Pruitt, Jason proposes to Bidy, but she turns him down, even though she is the only one of the East Coast girls still unattached. Sarah Gay arrives unexpectedly, having changed her mind about marrying Joshua. Aaron then asks Bidy to marry him and she accepts; this means that since all the girls are spoken for, Jason has won the bet. While Aaron and Bidy are dancing, a message is brought to Aaron to ask him to go to the mill office. Ishmael/Spock then dances with Bidy until he sees two men evidently following Aaron out. He recognizes them as Klingons and the shock restores his memory. Leaving the dance, he is not in time to prevent the Klingons shooting Aaron, who is badly wounded, but not killed. Ishmael/Spock stops the Klingons finishing Aaron off and they leave, convinced he will die anyway.

Ishmael/Spock is tending to Aaron's wounds, keeping him alive with blood transfusions. Sarah Gay marvels at the wounds, which have not healed, and then tells Ishmael/Spock that she knows he is not human. His skin tone and body temperature give him away to people with medical training. She also tells him it doesn't matter.

The Enterprise arrives at Earth in 1867. Spock's life signs are detected and Kirk beams down with McCoy to Aaron's cabin, where they find Spock tending Aaron. Bidy is also there. Ishmael/Spock tells her that he is taking Aaron away for medical treatment. Aaron will return after three days, but Ishmael/Spock will not. Bidy tells Ishmael/Spock that she turned down Jason Bolt because she loves Aaron. They then bid each other a surprisingly tender farewell. McCoy heals Aaron's injuries and Spock says goodbye to Aaron. Later, he fills Kirk and McCoy in on events since his disappearance, revealing that, historically, he was in Seattle in 1867; the Klingons' attempts to change history were actually a part of that history. Returning to his quarters, Kirk calls up Spock's data in the computer and discovers that Spock is descended from Aaron Stemple and Bidy Cloom on his mother's side.

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