

Star Trek: TOS (#27) – “Mindshadow”
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Back Cover:

The tranquil planet of Aritani has suddenly come under attack by a vicious and unknown enemy. The USS Enterprise rallies to the scene, only to plunge into a deadly nightmare: Spock is found mysteriously injured, his mental powers crippled and weak, and Kirk uncovers an evil Romulan plot -- with a cunning double agent in the middle. As Spock begins to regain his memory, Kirk strives to expose the agent. But only Spock's knowledge can stop the Romulans...from controlling the universe!

Summary:

The USS Enterprise is asked to investigate the troubles on Aritani, a peaceful, agrarian non-aligned planet that has been repeatedly attacked by space-pirates, destroying their farmlands, killing the inhabitants and destroying entire settlements. As a society, they are reticent about Federation help, as they are not members of the United Federation of Planets, and shun all technology believing it to be destructive to a civilization. As such they are ill-equipped to fend off the attacks but equally uncooperative about relying on the Federation to do so. While Kirk is at a loss to understand why this backward planet is of any interest, he otherwise orders Spock to conduct an investigation. As night falls, Kirk is warned to recall his people, but Spock (who believes he cannot be harmed) stays out to begin his scans. Spock fails to report in an hour or so later and is later found at the base of a cliff, suffering from a horrible accident: a few cracked ribs, cuts, bruises, and other internal injuries, but perhaps most daunting of all, a cracked skull with severe brain trauma.

McCoy can only do so much to heal Spock's internal and external injuries, but is unable to help the Vulcan with his brain trauma. And as was feared, when Spock awakes he is unable to speak, unable to move and unable to determine where he is, let alone who he is. He has lost everything that was himself. Unable to help his friend further, McCoy requests a medical specialist cognizant in Vulcan neuroscience to rendezvous with them as quickly as possible. Soon afterwards a lady doctor, by the name of Emma Saenz, arrives and prescribes treatment, but Spock shows little sign of improvement. Both McCoy and Kirk fall for the specialist, a beautiful young woman, leading to friction between the two. McCoy and Saenz develop a physical relationship throughout her stay on board and seeing her with Kirk in questionable situations makes the Doctor jealous. Even so, they work hard together for Spock's sake and despite their best efforts, McCoy and the Federation dispatched specialist were not able to repair all the damage to Spock's brain, leading them to conclude that Spock is suffering from long term, if not permanent, brain damage.

Kirk meanwhile stays busy with the pirates and the incongruities present in the situation. With Scotty's help, he goes about attempting to stop their incursion and capture a pirate for interrogation purposes by constructing a planetary shield. If Kirk could get his hands on a pirate he could no doubt make it tell them where their base of operations were and thus show the Aritani the Federation can protect them. Despite the planetary shield, however, the pirate ships get through, wreck havoc on a number of farming settlements, and kill. Appalled, the Aritani to rescind their request for help, as it is apparent to them that even with all the technology the Federation has at its disposal, they are just as helpless against the pirates.

Nevertheless, Kirk stays in orbit, determined to complete his mission at all costs. He mulls over the situation – What is the pirate's interest in Aritani? Is the native population hiding something? Are the pirates Romulans? What? Who? Why? While Spock is incapable of reporting on his findings, the planet is discovered to hold a cache of mineral wealth, which no doubt is a very lucrative find for the all-too-close Romulan Empire. This line of thinking leads Kirk to wonder if perhaps the pirates are indeed Romulans, as the ships the pirates are using are of Romulan design. And if the pirates are Romulans, are they using a new cloaking device to penetrate the shield?

Despite the reservations, Kirk agrees to shore leave, allowing a good portion of his crew to beam down to Aritani; however, the pirates attack the surface almost immediately, raining down hellfire upon his crew. This gives the Enterprise its first attempt at capturing a pirate, but it fails miserably as both ships deteriorate under the strain of the Enterprise's tractor beam. The second attempt, however, fairs better, with one Romulan pirate a guest in the ship's brig, but he is later found dead and Scotty comes under suspicion (as he confided in Kirk that he wanted to kill the bastards in retribution for killing a young member of his staff on the surface). When additional incidents of sabotage begin to take place Kirk begins to suspect the presence of a traitor onboard, causing him to look closely at all the new crew members who had recently arrived.

Meanwhile, Spock has been allowed (against Dr. Saenz's protestations) to return to Vulcan to continue his recovery. McCoy hopes that being home with members of his family (not to mention his own kind) will help speed along his recovery, but it does not go well at first. There he meets a new protégé of Sarek's, a young woman named T'pala (who also is part human, part Vulcan). This pairing is both fascinating and distressing to Spock, as it reminds him of his failures where his father is concerned.

The Enterprise too has a new mission: to escort Federation delegates to a council to be held on Vulcan that will decide whether help should be withdrawn from Aritani by invoking the Prime Directive. The voyage to Vulcan does not go well; one of the delegates is murdered. To make matters even more interesting, Doctor Saenz's is actually a Federation intelligence officer, directly reporting to Admiral Komack. Her inclusion on board was two-fold: to determine if Romulans were involved at Aritani, then to make sure Federation assistance was assured. With this new-found knowledge, Kirk doesn't know what to do.

Spock meanwhile gives up taking his medicine (prescribed by Dr. Saenz herself), after getting frustrated at not being able to regain the mind rules necessary to shut out the thoughts of others, but also to collect his own thoughts and emotions. Without the mind rules, emotions can and do flow freely within him. As he expected, the mind rules start to return not long after he stops taking the medication, and he also starts to recall what happened on Aritani. And by the time the Enterprise arrives at Vulcan, Spock has recalled seeing Romulans on the planet (he was injured escaping from them) and when he and the Enterprise return to Aritani, Kirk and Spock are able to locate the underground Romulan base and infiltrate its confines by disguising themselves as Romulans (much the same as Kirk did in the episode "The Enterprise Incident").

When Kirk and Spock infiltrate the base, they find that Dr. Saenz is actually a Romulan, named Sub commander Tanirius. She tells them that she is part of a secret group in Romulan society that wants peace with the Federation, and as such they go to great lengths to thwart Romulan incursions and other activities that go against these ideals. However, as Tanirius is a member of the Praetor's intelligence agency, she must also do things that seem to go against her goals (such as killing those she wants to align herself with) so she can maintain her lofty position. While neither Kirk nor Spock ultimately believe her, she does help the two destroy the base, freeing the inhabitants of Aritani from further pirate attacks.

The inhabitants of Aritani are reluctantly grateful for the help that the Enterprise gave them and request entry into the Federation, acknowledging that they do need a little help if their way of life is to survive. In spite of all that has occurred, Spock makes a full recovery and the mission of the USS Enterprise continues on.