

Star Trek: TOS (#40) – “Time Trap”
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Back Cover:

In a remote area of Federation space, the Enterprise picks up an urgent distress signal – from a Klingon vessel! Tracking the S.O.S., the crew finds the Klingon cruiser Mauler, trapped in a dimensional storm of unprecedented power. Yet paradoxically, the ship refuses both the Enterprise's call and the offers of help. Determined to discover what the Klingons are doing in Federation space, Kirk beams aboard their ship with a security team, just as the storm flares to its highest intensity. As the bridge crew watches in horror, Mauler vanishes from the Enterprise's viewscreen. And James T. Kirk awakens... one hundred years in the future.

Summary:

“... Klanth, commanding. Failure of vessel structure accelerating. Destruction of Mauler imminent. Crew conduct exemplary. Request commendations to be sent to the clans of all. I personally commend all of us to the gods. Survive and succeed!”
(Klanth, broadcasting the Mauler's distress call)

As a weary Enterprise crew returns from a patrol along the Tholian border for a much needed R&R leave at Starbase 17, they pick up a Klingon distress call within Federation space and divert for assistance. When the Enterprise arrives on-site, they find the Mauler, a D-7 type cruiser, trapped within a violent storm-like phenomenon. With the Klingons refusing the Enterprise's overtures of aid, and unable to beam the Klingons to safety due to the storm elements, Kirk leads a security team over to the Mauler to effect direct rescue using a special transporter transponder link recommended by Mr. Soctt. In the midst of the attempt to save the bridge crew, the storm flairs, violently tossing the Klingon ship; Mr. Spock, on board the Enterprise, can only watch as the Mauler disappears before his eyes – Kirk and the security team lost.

Or are they?

While the Enterprise also becomes absorbed by the storm and takes heavy damage, Spock replays the incident within his head. He's suspicious – why were the Klingons in that particular sector of space, space belonging to the Tholians who are hostile to both the Klingon Empire and the United Federation of Planets, to begin with? Were the Tholians responsible for the Mauler's disappearance, or did the same spatial conditions exist that caused the Exeter's destruction and Kirk's disappearance the last time the Enterprise was in Tholian space? (See: “The Tholian Web”, TOS Episode #64). Spock ponders the possibilities as the Enterprise reluctantly returns to Starbase.

Kirk awakens after the explosion to discover that he is one hundred years in the future, a future predicted by the transcended Organians (See: "Errand of Mercy", TOS Episode #27) as The Great Peace, a time when the two empires would become friends and allies. In this time of Roj tIn, Klingons are members of the Federation and serve proudly in Starfleet. Kirk is greeted by Kalrind, a female historian, and Morith, the base's leader. They explain they mean him no harm – he is not a prisoner; in fact, the thought of meeting him in person excites them. His rehabilitation, however, will take some time and they hope the infamous Captain would be able to fill them in on historical events that took place during the 23rd Century and to that end, Kirk tells them about his adventures and in turn they advise him of all the historical developments.

As the weeks go by, Kirk learns that these Klingons, called New Klingons, had always been around in the Empire but it took time for them to come to power and overthrow the old imperial lines and create a new race, believing more in co-operation than conquest. Known as thlIngnan chu' in the Klingon language, The New Klingons are a group within the natural society known for their more peaceful ideals and calmer natures that conflicted with the warrior conquering ways of the Empire at the time especially due to the tense relations between the Klingon leaders and the United Federation of Planets. Due to the Tholian Incident (a meeting of fleets in which Kirk participated), however, the Great Peace was allowed to flourish. But there is more to the story than the Klingons are letting on.

In true Kirk style, he falls passionately in love with Kalrind (and questions his sanity – how could he make love to a Klingon woman?); she finally tells him that he is the key to a predestination paradox that will bring about the Great Peace. With a fleet of retrofitted ships at their disposal, the New Klingons intend to ensure that history carries on the way it was meant to by traversing time and participate in the Tholian Incident first-hand. As he prepares for the journey at hand, events transpire to make Kirk question the sincerity of the New Klingons. First are his fainting spells, which come at alarming irregularity. Second are the actions of Morith, which become increasingly non-New Klingon, as interactions with him continue to occur. And then there are the Klingon guards aboard the "old-style" ships who are most decidedly not New Klingon and restrict access to certain areas of the ship from Kirk's exploratory tendencies. But a freak meeting with Ayelbourne, the first Organian he ever met, re-affirms the New Klingons are telling the truth.

To complicate matters, Kalrind falls ill with what is described as Qong-Hegh, a hereditary genetic disease that afflicted certain Klingons. It was commonly associated among the lower classes within the Klingon Empire and was considered a shame by those who were affected by it. As such, there was no cure for the disease. Furthermore, New Klingons suffering from it were quite embarrassed due to the social stigma involved with it despite the fact that they abandoned the class-based system. While the disease is incurable, the Klingons learned through great pharmaceutical advancements how to counter-act the effects with medications, which Kalrind was on and had been neglecting to take. But with Kalrind on the mend, Kirk forgets about his suspicions and spends more time with his new Klingon lover.

Meanwhile, Spock continues investigating his suspicions by returning to Earth, enlisting the help of a researcher named Elliot Tindall. Elliot is influential in helping Mr. Spock find and detail a conspiracy within Starfleet itself. As Elliot's behavior begins to slowly deteriorate from a nice, humble man into – for all intents and purposes – a Klingon, Spock realizes that the medication that Elliot so desperately takes were not vitamin supplements but really a behavioral suppressant, which his tissues were rejecting after years of continuous use. After a full medical scan, Dr. McCoy determined the man known as Elliot was really a Klingon in Disguise: Kol, a Commander in the Klingon Imperial Fleet. Cross-checking Elliot's background turned up both alarming and disturbing facts: he was part of a planetary colony that was all but wiped out and other high-ranking Federation officials with similar coincidences also shared that fact, such as The Devon Disaster, the nuclear power station at Archangel, the matter-antimatter explosion on Centaurus - Great disasters with great loss of all life.

When the Klingon fleet approaches Federation space at Tholia, a Federation fleet is sent to meet them, including the repaired Enterprise. Spock is enlisted as fleet-wide negotiator with Kirk and the New Klingon leader, Morith. Initially, Morith won't let Kirk off the Klingon flagship, for fear he will be captured and the Great Peace forever lost; however, he does allow McCoy to transport over to confirm the man everyone though had been killed – Captain James T. Kirk – was indeed genuine. And through the use of code wrapped in Shakespearean overtures, Spock manages to beam Kirk and Kalrind onto the Enterprise. There Spock convinces Kirk that there had been no time travel, and that elaborate cloaking devices had been used to stage the disappearances and re-appearances of vessels. Furthermore, that the Klingons had been (and are) using drugs to change their temperament.

Angered, Kirk allows the now-confined Kalrind to relapse as her drugs are the very same ones Elliot had been taking; as predicted, she returns to her natural Klingon state, cursing at Kirk and decrying what she had been put through in order to execute this ruse. When confronted, the Klingons back down in the face of what is now a larger Federation force, but had it not been for Spock, the elaborate ruse may have actually succeeded. The discovery of infiltration at the highest levels within Starfleet sets the Klingons back even further, cutting off a vital artery of intelligence.

Kalrind, also a Commander within the Klingon Imperial fleet, is returned to her people no worse for wear. Her pride may be wounded, she may have cursed her calm existence and love of Kirk, but both know the feelings were genuine. Especially when Captain Kalrind saves Kirk's life after he faints in the transporter room, seeing her off. And thanks to those actions, Dr. McCoy is able to save Kirk's life, which had been in danger all the while he was with the Klingons. His fainting spells? Caused by the shoddy surgery the Klingons performed on him and the drugs (antiseptics and anti-inflammatories) they pumped into him.

With the Federation once again safe from the Klingons, the Enterprise returns to Starbase 17 for much needed rest and relaxation, but it will take Kirk some time to recover from his ordeal; physically, mentally, and romantically...