

Star Trek: TOS (#48) – “Rules of Engagement”
Pocket Books | February 1990

Back Cover:

A sudden revolution on the planet Dekkanar brings Captain Kirk and the U.S.S. Enterprise running to evacuate Federation personnel trapped there. But their orders from Starfleet are quite clear; the U.S.S. Enterprise is to assist in the evacuation, no more. No weapons are to be displayed, no shields raised, no shots fired. Meanwhile, halfway across the galaxy, an experimental Klingon warship sets forth on a mission of its own, a warship with hidden -- and heretofore undreamed of -- capabilities, commanded by a warrior who will stop at nothing to bring glory to his Empire -- and restore his own lost honor. The Klingon ship's destination? The planet Dekkanar...

Summary:

Dekkanar: a Federation protectorate and a crisis-wrecked, overly troubled world. Nestled within a volatile pocket of space on the border between the Federation and Klingon Empire, it is one of seven planets in the 4725 Cancri system (the fourth) and home to two important secrets: the first, inhabitants are off-shoots of the Imperial Klingon race, long diverged from the bloodline; and second, the system is home to a unique (and highly secretive) base of operations for surveillance of the Klingon Empire. But when a revolution sparks governmental change on the planet, Captain Kirk and the USS Enterprise are ordered in. Their mission: with the USS Sir Richard (NCC-2382, under the command of Captain Cyntha North), and the USS Vanguard (NCC-2360, under the command of Captain Nic Farey), assist in the evacuation of Federation personnel there. It sounds easy, but there's one caveat: the mission operates under General Order 20 of the Rules of Engagement: show of force, no matter how small, is prohibited unless otherwise provoked. And the PDI are going to make every moment a living hell.

The mission becomes further complicated when Captain Kasak sutai-Khornezh of the Imperial Klingon Navy absconds with the IKS Hakkarl (KL-1017), an experimental Klingon K'tinga-class battle cruiser, specifically modified to run in multi-vector assault mode on complete automation, controlled from a detachable command ship, the B'rel-class Bird-of-Prey scout IKS Tazhat (KL-1018), that he was supposedly taking for a test flight and appears in the Dekkanar system. His hopes: to get the Federation to take action against him that would cause the Organians to cede Dekkanar to the Klingon Empire. Kasak's mission becomes personal, however, when he realizes he is dealing with Kirk of the Enterprise, with whom he'd tangled before.

Kasak sutai-Khornezh (formerly known as Vasak) has a dark past. During his cadet cruise, Midshipman Vasak served onboard the IKS Gr'oth as an engineer during the incident with the tribbles at Deep Space Station K-7. When Imperial Intelligence sought to lay blame on someone for the incident, they placed it at Vasak's feet, as he was an

Imperial race Klingon and they were of the opinion that he should have known better. He received a permanent black mark in his record, but because of his connections in the High Council he was spared from execution and instead promoted - requiring a change of name to Kasak.

As his career progressed, Kasak achieved the rank of Captain and was given the task of commanding new vessels in their shakedown cruises, commands that would be terminated at the end - the vessels being given to someone more "politically sound". One of the vessels he tested was the IKV Hakkarl, the first of the K'tinga class. He would be given the chance to test it once again, when it was refitted with automation technology that would allow the vessel to be controlled from the bridge of a Bird of Prey, the IKV Tazhat.

Upon receiving the orders to test Hakkarl/Tazhat, Kasak invested his personal fortune and connections to create a civil uprising on the planet Dekkanar, forcing the evacuation of Federation personnel. His plan was to somehow provoke the Federation into taking action against him as he arrived at Dekkanar, thus forcing the Organians to cede the planet to the Empire. To that end, he chose his entire crew - officers who had served with him before, and benefited from his patronage - and took Hakkarl without authorization from drydock, then set a course for Dekkanar running on the pretext of a system malfunction (which had in fact happened on the journey from spacedock to Dekkanar).

What Kasak had not counted on was that one of the ships sent to expedite the Federation evacuation was the Enterprise, flying under the command of James T. Kirk - the man and the ship that had been responsible for the black mark in Kasak's record. At first attempting to deceive Kirk into thinking he was a defector, events ground into a confrontation between Enterprise and Hakkarl, in which the Klingon vessel - not requiring a crew, being remotely run from the Bird of Prey Tazhat - had the upper hand. It was the intervention of a Klingon squadron sent to intercept Hakkarl that turned the tide in Kirk's favor. Although initially accusing Kirk of stealing the experimental vessel, Kirk manages to convince admiral Korzhnan that he was not involved in its theft, which Kasak now has cloaked. With Hakkarl damaged and his crew turning against him, a mortally-wounded Kasak tied his free hand to his command chair and input his last order to the brain-damaged Hakkarl - to destroy Tazhat, and him with it, sending him to The Black Fleet (the Klingon afterlife).

And after seeing that they would have to deal with the Klingons if the Federation left, the governing authority on Dekkanar reopens negotiations with the Federation. The Organians never interfered with the events but had been observing, as the treaty did not cover personal clashes between the two races. Encouraged by the way Kirk and the Klingons cooperated in thwarting Kasak's, they leave Kirk to continue his mission.