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STAR TREK

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A NOVEL BY J.M. DILLARD
BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY BY DAVID LOUGHERY
STORY BY WILLIAM SHATNER
& HARVE BENNETT & DAVID LOUGHERY



A novel by J.M. Dillard

**Based on the screenplay by
David Loughery**

**Story by William Shatner & Harve Bennett
&
David Loughery**



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Prologue

THE WATCHER CALLED SOFTLY at the door of the stone chamber.

T'Rea rose from her bed—nothing more than a double layer of thin handwoven fabric spread across the hard floor. She had lain awake, expecting the summons, for some time now. On the floor beside her slept her young son. He stirred fitfully as T'Rea stood and pulled her neatly folded cloak from a nearby ledge, but he did not wake.

T'Rea slipped on her cloak in the darkness, aided by the bright starlight entering through the open window carved from black rock. She navigated carefully around the shadowy, still figure of her son, then moved with soundless steps to the door. It stood slightly ajar; T'Rea pushed it open farther, and went out into the cavernous hallway.

Lean and dark-haired, the Watcher waited in the flickering torchlight. Beside him stood T'Sai the adept, the woman T'Rea had long suspected would replace her. The hood of T'Sai's robe had been raised, shadowing her face, but T'Rea recognized her carriage.

T'Rea knew what would come next. She felt an almost physical stab of pain at her betrayal, but her training as a kolinahr adept was consummate; no shadow of emotion crossed her face. She could almost hear the words before the Watcher spoke them, but there was nothing to do now save to listen and endure it.

"The kolinahru have reached a consensus," the Watcher said. His eyes were opaque, as cold as the night wind on the desert. "A decision has been made."

Without me, T'Rea finished silently. The faces of T'Sai and the Watcher, Storel, told her that the decision had gone against her. She was already stripped of her title and power. For that, she felt pain . . . but what gripped her heart was the fear that her child might be taken from her. Remarkably, her expression remained serene.

T'Sai lowered her cowl, revealing a pale, sallow complexion framed by black and silver hair. "I am now High Master of the kolinahru," T'Sai proclaimed in a voice that was strong and free from any taint of T'Rea's shame. "You are High Master no more. But we will grant you this: Upon your death, your spirit will be enshrined in the great Hall of Ancient Thought." Her voice dropped as she switched to the familiar form of address. "It is enough that thou art

dishonored in life; we will not dishonor thee also in death."

"What more?" T'Rea asked. T'Sai would understand what she meant; there was the question of banishment from the desert mountain retreat of Gol.

The new High Master returned to the more formal pronoun, the one the kolinahru reserved for strangers, outworlders . . . and heretics. "If you wish, you may remain on Gol. But you may not live as one of us; you must remain apart."

"And my son?" T'Rea struggled to keep the anguish from her voice.

"He may remain with you."

T'Rea closed her eyes.

"With one provision. The boy is most talented in the mental arts. Such untrained power is . . . dangerous. He must be instructed by the kolinahru in the proper use of his power . . . and in the proper Vulcan philosophy."

In a way, this was a slap in the face to T'Rea, an intimation that her methods of training the boy were suspect, her philosophy improper. Yet had she been in private, she would have smiled. Let the kolinahru do as they wished to indoctrinate the boy with "proper" philosophy. He was already too much hers. He was barely eleven seasons old—not quite five years old, in Terran terms—yet he had already mastered the elementary mind rules customarily taught to children thrice his age. The child was a prodigy, as intellectually gifted as his father, as telepathically adept as his mother, and T'Rea had taken full advantage of his gifts. She had offered her knowledge to him as freely as she would an adult initiate.

For the boy would be a savior of his people.

He was his mother's only child, and much beloved. T'Rea had borne him in secret and had kept news of the child's existence from his father. She named the boy Sybok, an archaic word that conformed to the pattern of male given names but was rarely used; it meant "seer," "prophet." In private, she often called him *shiav*, a term from a long-dead religion, which had no counterpart in the modern Vulcan tongue: "messiah."

He was only three seasons old when T'Rea, High Master and adept of the highest degree, received illumination and began to speak out against the imbalance of Surak's teachings of nonemotion. In her role as High Master, T'Rea often entered the Hall of Ancient Thought and consulted the *katras*, the spirits, of the enshrined Masters; thus, she had received illumination and the understanding that, in order to receive spiritual knowledge, one must transcend logic. To be truly free, the adept needed to find the balance between reason and emotion.

From the most ancient Masters, she had learned also of the existence of Sha Ka Ree.

Her scholarly training was in history, specifically prehistory, with a focus on Vulcan's earliest religions. The boy was brilliant, and she had shared as much as she could of her knowledge with him, telling him of the old beliefs: of warrior Vulcan deities, fierce and loving by capricious turns, satisfied with nothing less than blood sacrifice . . . and of the ancient legend of Sha Ka Ree, the Source of all creation, the paradise where all gods and goddesses of Vulcan and alien pantheons merged into the One.

And of the *shiav* who would come to unite all religions and all peoples, and lead them to the Source, to Sha Ka Ree.

Sha Ka Ree is no legend, T'Rea had told him. She had written an academic paper on the subject and had saved it for Sybok to read when he was a little older. The paper had caused her to be the recipient of much ridicule; it had been one of the major factors in her downfall as High Master. *I tell you, child, that it exists*, she had said. *And you are the shiav, the chosen one. One day you will lead others to Sha Ka Ree, but now it is too soon to speak of this to anyone.*

Where is it? the child had cried, enthralled. *Tell me, and I will take you there with me!*

T'Rea had smiled mysteriously. *When the time is right, my shiav. When the time is right.*

After her illumination, T'Rea had restricted her consultations to those Masters who had lived before the pacifism of Surak caught hold of Vulcan and transformed it. Shortly after publication of the paper on Sha Ka Ree, word had spread among the adepts that T'Rea had abandoned her ethics and was actively pursuing the study of mind control—not of self, but of others.

She thought she had been careful. Neither she nor the boy displayed emotion in public . . . yet, in retrospect, this confrontation had clearly been a matter of time.

In the dim, shadowed hallway, T'Rea gave her answer to T'Sai.

"I accept," she said. The new High Master nodded and, along with the Watcher, withdrew into the shadows.

T'Rea stepped back into the room and gently closed the door. She had known this was inevitable; yet her pain was not lessened by it. She let it fill her soul, then rested her forehead against the warm stone of the door and wept silently, bitterly.

She turned to see her son sitting up, staring owlishly at her in the starlight.

"What is it, Mother?"

She sighed. He was too brilliant, too empathic, too telepathically gifted to be put off by a simple denial that there was anything wrong. Better to be truthful now.

"I have been silenced for my heresy, *shiav*. I am no longer High Master."

"They cannot do it!" the boy cried.

"They already have." T'Rea went over to him and sat down. "*Shiav*, they mean to train you as a *kolinahru*."

"I will not do it!" The boy's eyes seemed to sparkle with hate.

"You will. But you will not allow them to change what is hidden deep within your soul. And you must never forget your destiny."

"Never!" the child swore passionately . . . and then his voice began to tremble in a way that wrenched her heart. "Will they make you go away, Mother?"

"No." The thought brought T'Rea a grim momentary satisfaction; the *kolinahru* were embarrassed by her. Rather than let her go out into the world to preach her heresy, they preferred to let her remain among them and keep silent. "I will remain here with you."

In the starlight, she saw the outline of Sybok's

narrow shoulders against the dark wall as they rose and fell in a sigh of relief.

T'Rea hesitated, oppressed by the weight of what she now had to say. "Child, there is something I must share with you. I have had a vision from the Masters. It is the only way to win your heart, to be sure that the kolinahru can never corrupt you."

He clutched at her with a child's desperation, catching hold of the fine white fabric of her robe. "Share the vision . . . only do not go away. I swear to you, Mother"—his childish voice rose higher—"I swear to you by the Masters, I will take you away, to Sha Ka Ree, where we can be happy together."

She stroked his hair and laughed softly—her heart was not in it, but she wished to reassure the child—then took his hands in hers. "I will not leave, Sybok. I will *not* leave. And I pray that someday, we shall see Sha Ka Ree together, not in a vision, but as it truly exists."

"I will take you there, on my life, I swear it!" the child cried.

T'Rea smiled sincerely this time, touched by his loyalty. "Dear *shiav*, that is a promise I only hope you can keep. And now I must do something that will be hard, something I have learned from the ancient Masters. It will ensure your loyalty forever. Only then can I share the vision to you."

"I am ready," the boy said.

She released his hands and put her fingers against the warm flesh of his temples. "Share your pain, Sybok. . . ."

Chapter One

A STORM GATHERED on the desert horizon.

J'Onn paused in his work to stare beyond the wavering black bands of heat at the growing cloud of dust. Normally he would have headed back for the ramshackle shelter that served as home and waited the storm out there; today he did not care if the dust cloud swallowed him whole.

He looked back down at his work, at the small auger sunk into the scorched ground in a pathetic attempt to find water. This hole, like all the others, was barren; there was an utter lack of moisture in the soil. J'Onn no longer thought of it as such. To his mind, soil supported life, but this bleak, parched sand supported nothing—not his life, not Zaara's.

After Zaara's death the night before, he had wandered out to the field—once fertile, now no more than

an extension of the desert—and begun to dig. Now the sun was overhead, and the field around him was dotted with hundreds of holes, many of them a few years old, made in happier times when water was not such a precious rarity. But most had been made during the gentle insanity that sustained J'Onn through the night and well into the day.

It was afternoon now, and the sun shone with unforgiving fierceness. The ground was hot enough to blister the skin beneath the fabric of J'Onn's ragged clothes as he knelt next to the auger, but he registered no pain. It was madness to work during the worst part of the heat, madness not to take cover from the duststorm . . . and he was mad, mad with grief and anger.

He had been half mad with frustration even before Zaara's death. Until the Great Drought, the land had been . . . not, in honesty, bountiful, but rather a place of sparse beauty. He and Zaara had made themselves a life—a hard one, lacking comfort, but a life nonetheless. For them there had been no alternative. On their home planet, Regulus, in the Romulan Empire, J'Onn had embezzled money from his employer and been caught. The choice was simple: execution or exile on Nimbus III.

Like thousands of other petty criminals, J'Onn became a homesteader on Nimbus III. A once-fertile planet situated near the Neutral Zone, Nimbus had achieved the dubious distinction of being claimed by three mutually hostile governments: the Romulan and Klingon empires and the United Federation of Planets. At that time, Nimbus had possessed enough

natural resources (timber, some fossil fuels, and a scattering of useful minerals, including dilithium—all quickly harvested) to be worth squabbling about. The dispute was finally settled by a Federation diplomat from Altair: Why not permit all three governments to develop the planet? This, of course, necessitated legislation that—theoretically, at least—would enforce peace between the settlers: no weapons of any type were to be permitted on the planet. Accordingly, Nimbus was given the rather grandiose subtitle, "The Planet of Galactic Peace."

For several years, the concept almost worked. And then, while the three governments were drawn into arguments over details, the settlers—most of whom, like J'Onn, were "volunteers" who had come to escape execution or imprisonment—had decimated the forests, exhausted the mines, and destroyed the ecosystem by farming with the aid of chemical toxins that had long ago been outlawed elsewhere in the galaxy. In less than twenty years after the agreement was signed, Nimbus III was a desert, and the starving homesteaders fashioned homemade weapons and began to fight one another for the dwindling resources.

In a blindingly short time, there was no more water for irrigation. The crops failed, and Zaara seemed to wither with them. There was no money for her medical treatment. Because of J'Onn's crime, she could not return home to her family for help unless she divorced and renounced him. That she would not do, though J'Onn pleaded tearfully for her to do so.

She had died last night, hours before dawn, and J'Onn had stumbled outside, dazed by grief, unaware

of himself or his surroundings, only of his loss. It was midmorning before he came to himself and saw the dozens of fresh holes he'd apparently drilled the night before in his feverish search for water. By then the obsession had hold of him, and he could not stop. With both Zaara and the land gone, there was nothing left. He was vaguely aware that he intended to drill until he found water or died of heatstroke. Considering the harsh afternoon sun, he reasoned he had an excellent chance of accomplishing the latter. He had already stopped perspiring. J'Onn ran a hand across his forehead; it felt cool and dry. His thoughts were beginning to drift randomly. Soon would follow disorientation, convulsions . . . death.

J'Onn let the auger slip from his hands and closed his eyes. Already the delusions had started; he imagined he heard a sound in the far distance, in the direction of the storm. A low rumble, like thunder before a rain.

He had not heard thunder in a very long time.

Oddly, the thunder failed to reach a crescendo and then fade. Instead, the rumble grew steadily, unmistakably louder, as if it were moving closer. Mildly curious, J'Onn opened his eyes.

A rider emerged from the storm.

He rode astride a native creature that Federation settlers jokingly referred to as a "horse." For some reason the term had caught on, though the beast resembled no Earth animal J'Onn had ever seen. Granted, it was a quadruped, but larger and shaggier, with a twisted horn jutting from its snout.

J'Onn was not frightened of horses; he knew the creatures, though homely, were quite docile. But the

sight of the rider made him gasp and struggle to his feet.

The stranger rode like one possessed, spurring his steed onward. His face was covered against the dust-storm, and he wore a white cloak that caught the wind and flared out behind him like the wings of an avenging angel.

Or a demon.

The rider thundered closer. Clearly, his destination was the very patch of ground where J'Onn now stood.

A thread of awe and fear penetrated J'Onn's grief. Because of them—or perhaps because of the force of experience, which had long ago taught him to expect ill of strangers—J'Onn scrambled for the weapon lying next to him. A handmade pipe gun, with stones for projectiles. It was not reliably lethal, but it was the only protection he had.

At the same time that he fired a warning shot in the intruder's direction, J'Onn asked himself, *Why am I protecting myself? I wish only to die.*

Yet habit was strong. J'Onn clutched the gun protectively as the rider reined his mount to an abrupt stop several feet away. Behind him the storm continued its slow but inexorable approach.

The beast stamped its feet while its rider uncovered his face to remove his breathing device. He and J'Onn studied each other tentatively. The stranger's face, half hidden inside the hood of his white cloak, was distinctly humanoid, male, adult; the eyes were shadowed, yet somehow J'Onn perceived that they were extremely intelligent, full of a strange, disconcerting brilliance.

Still clutching the pipe gun, J'Onn gaped at the