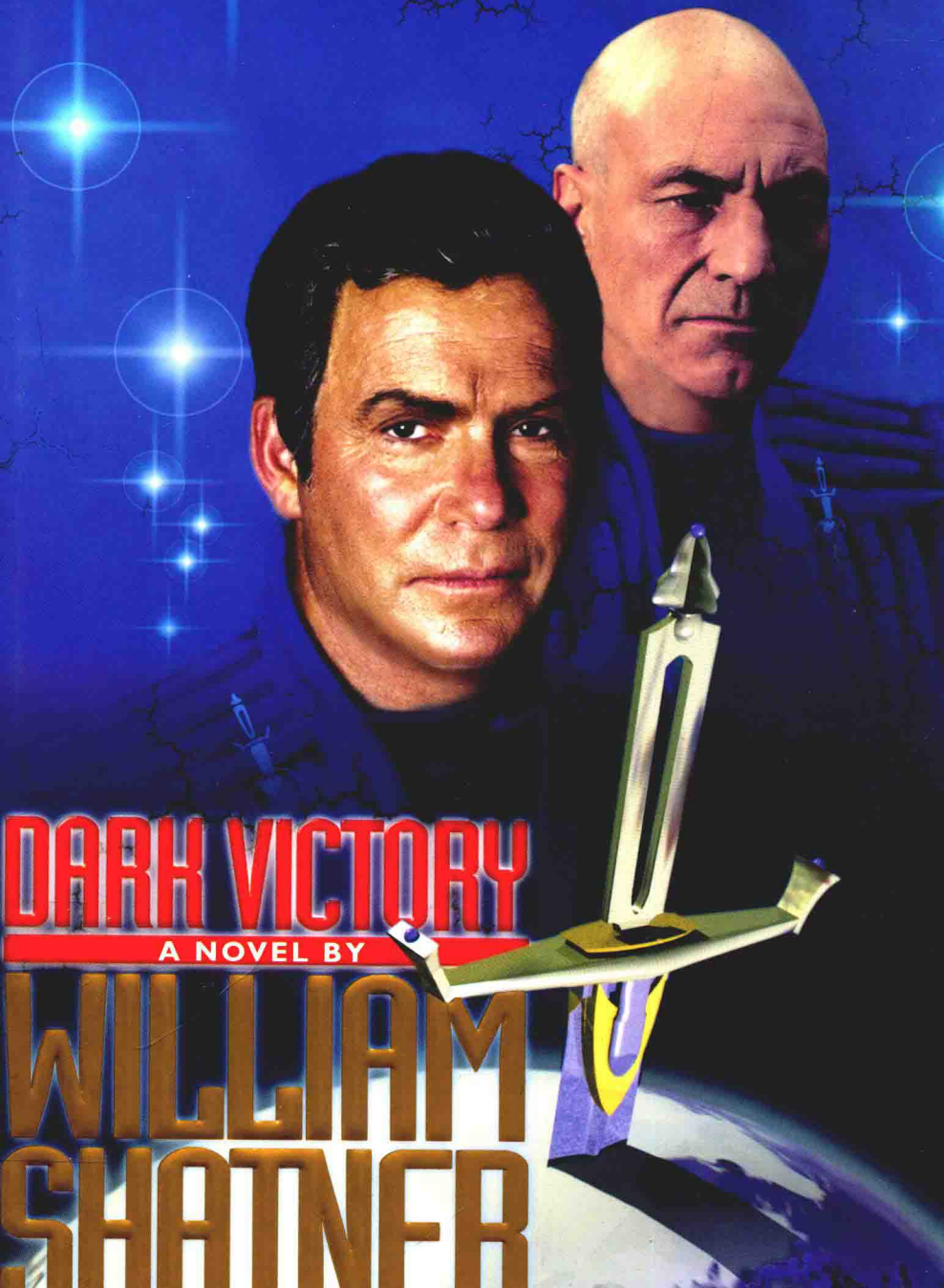


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STAR TREK[®]



DARK VICTORY

A NOVEL BY

WILLIAM SHATNER

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STAR TREK[®]
DARK VICTORY

with
Judith Reeves-Stevens &
Garfield Reeves-Stevens



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I have a dear friend who has been
steadfast and loving and kind and perceptive.
She is a woman of the soil and of the spirit.
Her looks are glamorous and her work makes her sweat;
her name is Donna Moore and I love her dearly.
I dedicate this book to this grand woman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Judy and Gar Reeves-Stevens, without whom this book would not have been written.

To John Ordovery, without whom this book would not have been written.

STAR TREK[®]
DARK VICTORY

PROLOGUE



The Enterprise hung dead in space, surrounded by the floating ruin of the crossover device, like an ancient sunken vessel shrouded in kelp and debris.

The mighty ship's running lights were out. Her nacelles were dark. But she was intact, and her batteries were keeping life-support at minimal levels.

Kirk and Picard stood together before the Voyager's main screen. Spock and Teilani were with them.

"Jean-Luc, I'm sorry," Kirk said. And he meant it. Among a handful of beings, he truly knew the force that bound a captain to his ship. He knew what must be in his friend's heart as Picard gazed upon the battered hulk before them.

"Don't be," Picard said. He flashed a smile at Kirk. A small one, but one that said he could see light shining through this dark hour. "I still have her. We saved her."

Kirk went to give Picard his hand, but both men stared awkwardly at the bandages that protected Kirk's damaged flesh. Picard put his own hands on Kirk's shoulders instead. "You saved her," he said. "And I thank you."

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Then La Forge spoke up from an aft sensor station. "Captain?"

Both Kirk and Picard turned as one and said, "Yes?"

La Forge smiled. "Captain Picard. Scotty and I have completed our structural analysis. She's not showing any sign of transporter misalignment."

"That's a relief," Picard said. Kirk understood why. The subspace shock wave generated by the Sovereign's warp-core explosion had shut down the transporter effect intended to beam the Enterprise to the mirror universe. If the shock wave had hit too late, while transport was already in progress, the huge ship might not have been properly reassembled when she had rematerialized. But all was well. Another victory to add to all the others.

But Spock, apparently, did not think so. "Curious," he said. "I was certain I detected a full transporter-field effect before the warp-core detonation."

Kirk smiled at his old friend. "We've never seen a transporter this big before, Spock. There're bound to be engineering differences we know nothing about."

"Perhaps," Spock said, but he didn't sound convinced.

Picard looked down at his Klingon armor, as if suddenly realizing he still had it on. "I suppose I should clean up. The relief vessels will be here in two hours and . . . I imagine there's a great deal of work to be done over there."

Picard walked back to the turbolift, that small smile still on his face.

Kirk watched him go, pleased his friend still had his starship but glad that he himself had other missions to attend to now.

Then Teilani hugged him. "And I want to get you down to Dr. McCoy to get those dressings changed."

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Kirk looked at his bandages. Still the least of his concerns. "I'll be fine," he said.

"You'd better be," Teilani told him. "I'm not going to change all the diapers by myself."

Kirk grinned at the thought of that one new mission in particular. He couldn't wait for it to begin. Then he saw Spock look back at T'Val, and knew his friend was also distracted by thoughts of children and parents. Of paths not taken. It pained him to think that Spock might be in distress. Kirk changed the subject.

"Spock, just when the Voyager came in on the attack, you said you and your counterpart had worked out what made the two universes diverge."

Spock returned his attention to the here and now. "Not the event," he clarified. "The time period. Approximately three hundred years ago. About the time of First Contact between humans and Vulcans. Kate Janeway gave us a clue when she referred to Lake Sloane on Alpha Centauri IV being called Lake Riker in her universe."

"One name made the difference?" Kirk asked.

"No, but it is one of the earliest signs of divergence my counterpart and I could identify. The fact that the lake was named by Zefram Cochrane, following his move from Earth to the colony he founded on that world, made us focus on the time of First Contact."

"There was First Contact in both universes, though?" Kirk asked.

"Yes. And to the best of our abilities to recall history, that event in both universes was the same. Cochrane's first warp flight attracted the attention of a Vulcan ship, and the next day, contact was made." Spock's long face took on a thoughtful expression.

"But . . . ?" Kirk prompted.

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"It is the events after First Contact that somehow seem to be at odds in the two universes. There is nothing conclusive. No key document or incident we can point to. But in one universe, our universe, humans and Vulcans shared an optimistic dream of combining their resources to seek out new life. In the mirror universe, the same cooperation followed, the same early expeditions took place, but there was a decidedly military aspect to their nature. Almost as if, somehow, those responsible for First Contact believed some grave threat was waiting for them among the stars. As if they had secret knowledge of the future and the conflicts to come."

"What kind of conflicts?" Kirk asked.

Spock folded his hands behind his back. "Again, the differences could just be an artifact of how history is recorded. None of this might be true. But . . . in the mirror universe . . . when the Borg were first detected, far earlier than they were in our history . . . it was almost as if the Terran Empire had been expecting them. The Borg did not remain a threat there."

"How could that be?" Teilani asked.

"I do not know," Spock said. "And even if it is true, the explanation of that truth might always elude us."

Kirk looked back at the screen and the Enterprise. There were enough mysteries in the universe for him to struggle with. He would leave the mirror universe to others. Janeway and T'Val would return to their war with all the technical information that Kirk could provide them. The mirror Spock would be treated for Bendii here and given sanctuary until T'Val judged it was safe for him to return. And then, Kirk would return to his own life.

"What are you thinking, James?"

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Kirk smiled at the woman with whom he had created life. "Will you marry me?" he asked.

Teilani looked at him with eyes that saw into his soul. He could have no secrets from her and he was glad of it.

"What are you going to do about that stump on Chal?"

"Phaser it out of existence," Kirk promised. "I'll borrow one from Memlon's mother."

Teilani laughed. The sweetest sound Kirk had heard in weeks.

"And then what?" she asked. "After you've planted the clearing and built us a house?" She looked to the screen, past the ship and the storms, to where the stars waited. "What about . . . out there?"

Kirk looked out as well, not through space, but through time.

He could have no secrets from her. He could tell her no lies.

"I don't know," he said. "Maybe I'll farm. Maybe we can breed that horse Jean-Luc sent me. And maybe I'll buy a starship and we can find out how many other Chals are out there. You, me, and our son."

"Or our daughter."

"All our children," Kirk said with a smile, and he pulled her closer to him, so she could rest her head on his shoulder. "I don't know what I'll do, Teilani, or where I'll go. But what I do know, without question, without doubt, is that whatever waits for me, I'm going to face it with you."

Teilani smiled at him, and in the love she shared with him, Kirk knew he had found what she had sent him out to discover.

His place in the universe.

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It was not a world. Not a time. Not any physical place at all.

Instead, it was every place and every time. As long as he was at her side.

"I love you," she whispered, next to his cheek.

"I love you," he whispered back.

A perfect moment.

And then an alarm blared on the bridge.

Instantly Kirk and Teilani broke apart.

"What is it?" Kirk demanded.

"Weapons lock!" T'Val said.

Janeway was on her feet, reading the tactical boards.

"It's the Enterprise! All systems . . . they're coming back online."

"What?" Kirk said. "How can that be possible?"

"We're being hailed," T'Val called out.

"Onscreen," Janeway said.

All eyes went to the main screen as the image of the drifting Enterprise winked out, to be replaced by a transmission from that ship's bridge.

It was fully staffed. All consoles lit and active.

But none of that mattered.

Because of the man who sat in her center chair.

If there were gasps on the bridge of the Voyager, Kirk didn't hear them.

If Teilani grabbed his arm in fear, he did not feel her grip.

His heart thundered in his ears.

His breath caught in his throat.

Every thought in his mind was banished, replaced by a primal dread that lived deep in the darkness of his mind.

Because when he looked at the man in the center chair—

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—the face he saw was his own.

And that face laughed at him.

“James T. Kirk,” the man in the center chair said. “I’ve heard so much about you. I owe you . . . so much more.”

“They are powering phasers,” T’Val said.

Kirk struggled through his shock to find his voice.

“Who . . . are you?” Though he already knew the answer.

The man in the center chair leaned forward, and the smile that split his face was the grin of the devil.

“You can call me . . . Tiberius.”

Kirk leaned against the helm console for support.

“Why are you here?”

His mirror counterpart answered as if it were the most obvious question ever asked. “You stole a universe from me, James. And now I’m here to do the same to you.”

“Never,” Kirk said.

“The choice is yours. Lower your shields and surrender. You have ten seconds to comply. Or you will die.”

Emperor Tiberius sat back in the center chair of the Enterprise.

The waiting began.

ONE



The waiting was over . . .

“Ten,” the emperor said.

It was the number of seconds James T. Kirk had to live.

Behind him on the mirror *Voyager's* bridge, Kathryn Janeway lunged for the conn. Kirk knew her well enough to understand her intention.

Once, it would have been his as well.

“Nine.”

Kirk turned from the viewscreen, from the man in the mirror, and shouted at the *Voyager's* captain. “No!”

Spock, following his captain's lead, now pushed ahead, one hand extended, fingers ready to remove Janeway from the equation of this moment.

But he was blocked by T'Val, the young, drawn Vulcan woman who haunted him, the ghost of a possibility unexplored, child of his mirror counterpart and the mirror Saavik. The follower of Janeway.

“Eight.”

T'Val's mechanized hand swung up to divert Spock's attack. Janeway reached the controls. Kirk felt the ship's