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Typhon Pact #2: Seize the Fire



Par Michael A. Martin
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Description : Description du produit PRAISE FOR MICHAEL A. MARTIN'S STAR TREK NOVELS 'Blowing the canon to pieces, [The Good That Men Do] sets up a whole new backdrop for Enterprise adventures' Total Sci-fi 'An unputdownable romp' SFX 'Glorious' SFX (4.5 stars) 'A strong start for a new series' (The Needs of the Many) Star Trek Magazine

Prsentation de l'diteur SEIZE THE FIRE Shortly after revealing its union with the Federations newest adversary a coalition of galactic powers known as the Typhon Pact the Gorn Hegemony suffers an ecological disaster that destroys the hatchery world of their critically important warrior caste. Fortunately, the Gorn had already been investigating traces of an ancient but powerful quick terraforming technology left behind by a

long-vanished civilization. This technology, should it prove controllable, promises to restore their delicate biological and social status quo. But when a Gorn soldier prepares to use the technology to reshape the planet Hranrar into a new warrior-caste spawning ground, threatening to extinguish the native Hranrarii, he draws the unwanted attention of a mad Gorn trooper determined to bring the military caste into dominance. Meanwhile, as the U.S.S. Titan embarks upon a search for this potent technology in the hope of using it to heal the wounds the Federation sustained during the recent Borg crisis, Captain Riker must balance his responsibility for his crews safety against the welfare of the Hranrarii and his duty to the Prime Directive. With a menacing Typhon Pact fleet nipping at his heels, Riker must not only stop the Gorn warriors but also plumb the secrets of an ancient terraforming artifact. But of everyone serving aboard Titan, Commander Tuvok may be the only one who understands how dangerous such planet-altering technology can be, even when used with the best of intentions. . . .Extrait1U.S.S. TITAN, DEEP IN THE VELA OB2

ASSOCIATION, BETA QUADRANTThe aquamarine world that turned serenely on the main viewer had seemed hospitable enough when Captain William Riker had first looked upon it from orbit. It had seemed so when he had first set foot upon one of the small rocky continents that punctuated a planet-girdling, highly saline ocean. Other than the prevalence of strong winds, and the clouds of grit and dust they kicked up, the place had been very accommodating to Titans survey teamsit offered breathable air, middling-warm temperatures, and fair-to-tolerable humidity levels. But the sometimes all-but-invisible fabric that nearly always accompanied such humanoid-compatible environmentsan oft-taken-for-granted little thing more commonly known as lifewas conspicuously absent from this place, from pole to pole and meridian to meridian. William Riker leaned forward in his command chair, resting his chin on his fist as he regarded the dead world that even now Titans planetary-science specialists were still busy trying to understand. Deanna, what do you think about naming this place Doornail? he said, turning to his left just far enough to see an amused smile split his wifes face. Doornail, repeated Commander Deanna Troi, Titans senior diplomatic officer, chief counselor, social-sciences department headand beloved Imzadi of the captain. She pitched her voice low, as if to be audible only in Rikers immediate vicinity. Thats a curious choice, Will. He repaid Deannas grin with interest. After spending the past six hours down on that sterile, rocky world, he was grateful to be back aboard Titan and in the warmth of her presence. Doornail, he said, matching her sotto voce delivery. As in dead as a. She shrugged. I understand the idiom, Will. My father came from Earth, after all. But you dont seem to be falling in love with it. No, its a fine choice, she said, though a slight wrinkling of her nose belied her endorsement. Besides, assigning names to new worlds is one of your prerogatives as captain. Commander Christine Vale, who was seated in the chair to Rikers immediate right, chimed in quietly, At least until the Federation Science Council settles on something a little more, um, dignified. Ouch, Commander, Riker said as he turned his command chair so that he faced Vale. Way to show loyalty to your captain. Vale answered with mock solemnity. I wouldnt be much of a first officer if I didnt point out the captains mistakes, sir. Touch. But as I recall, you were quite a bit more eager than I was to get away from that dustball. I was just more vocal about it, Captain. After all, a healthy set of lungs and a lack of hesitancy to use same are the main keys to success in this job. So . . . an execs job amounts to either arguing with the captain, or just bellowing the captains orders to the crew at the top of her lungs? Vale smirked as she pushed several strands of her shoulder-length auburn hair from her eyes. I learned from the best, sir aboard two ships called Enterprise. That reminds me of another nice thing about the planet: good acoustics. Riker heard Deanna snicker behind him. It sounds to me as if you like the planet a lot better now that youre safely back aboard Titan. Places like that always look better in retrospect, Vale said, gesturing toward the bluish orb that hung in the viewscreens center. Not to mention from nearly five hundred kilometers away. Besides, it could have been worse. At least there werent any mosquitoes. With an almost Vulcan-like calm, Deanna said something that Riker belatedly recognized as Incoming! Simultaneously, Vale interrupted herself by letting out a yelp accompanied by a brief chorus from Lieutenant Sariel Rager at ops and Lieutenant Aili Lavena at the conn that startled the captain into turning toward the section of the bridge at which his execs eyes had been directed: the main viewer. An apparition had suddenly appeared directly between the screen and the forward helm and ops consoles, where it rapidly took on solidity or at least the appearance of solidity. In the space of a few heartbeats, it had become recognizable as the high-fidelity holographic avatar of Lieutenant Commander Melora Pazlar, even as it continued to hover several centimeters above the deck directly in front of the wide central screen. I dont think Im ever gonna get used to that, Vale said. Nor will I, said Lavena. The Pacifican flight controller shuddered as though something had gone wrong with her hydration suits temperature controls. The suit made a barely audible sloshing sound in response to her brief startle

reaction. Sorry, Commander, Pazlar said. Lieutenant. The senior science officer entered a command into the padd she carried; in response, Titans holographic telepresence system gingerly shifted her toward an open space on the bridges port side. Pazlars willowy form was outfitted in an ordinary duty uniform rather than in one of the slightly bulkier contragravity suits she wore when venturing outside the comfortable variable-g environment of her stellar cartography lab or her living quarters. Being an Elaysian born, bred, and raised in the microgravity environment of the planet known as Gemworld, Pazlars body was structurally incompatible with a Federation starships standard one-g environment. Riker turned his chair toward Pazlars floating image. Commander, I assume youre here because the department heads have reached a consensus about the origins of this planet. Yes, Captain, Pazlar said. At least insofar as our current knowledge can take us. Are most of you still convinced that this planets M-class environment didnt come about naturally? Deanna asked. As surprising as you might find this, Pazlar said, the answer is yes. Riker smiled. Huh. Maybe Doornail will stick after all. As dead as they were, even doornails did not spontaneously generate themselves. Pazlars V-ridged forehead wrinkled in puzzlement. Sir? Never mind. As I recall, you were part of the this planets environment is a natural product of planetary evolution camp. I was, Captain. At least at the beginning of our analysis. What changed your mind? Riker wanted to know. Well, to give credit where credit is due, Captain, Eviku and Chamish were the first to notice the patterna pattern that appears to have played out in several other star systems scattered throughout the Vela OB2 Association, and perhaps even much further into deep Beta Quadrant space. Commander Christine Vale, Titans executive officer, spoke up from the seat at Rikers right hand. If anybody aboard Titan was going to find that sort of pattern, it would be our resident xenobiology and ecology experts. Apparently, Pazlar said with a nod. Unfortunately, my expertise in those fields doesnt overlap all that much with that of the biospheric scientists. My specialties are cosmology and big-bore physics. Since we hadnt found a clear-cut footprint indicating intelligence the way we had with the Sentries, I still needed a little more convincing at the outset. Sounds like you got what you needed, Vale said. The Elaysian nodded. Torvig and White-Blue crunched the numberstwicely, I might addand the end results finally made a believer out of me. SecondGen White-Blue was the designation of the eight-limbed artificial intelligence that Riker had allowed to remain aboard Titan a few months back, following the starships harrowing encounter with White-Blues kind, the ancient AI civilization whose members referred to themselves as the Sentries. Although Riker couldnt deny that White-Blue had been invaluable in preventing Titans destruction, both at the hands of White-Blues own kind and via the destructive energies of their extradimensional nemesis, the Null, he was also keenly aware of how much trouble the little AI had brought to his ship. The fact that White-Blue had violated the ships security and privacy protocols on numerous occasions to say nothing of its having briefly uplifted Titans main computer to full sentience left the captain still wary of any judgments White-Blue might care to render. That White-Blues conclusions were supported by calculations run by Ensign Torvig Bu-Kar-Nguva Choblik science specialist whose own sentience depended upon an extraordinary degree of integration between his natural biological form and his bionic components made Riker feel only slightly better. Rikers face felt flushed as he noticed Deanna regarding him curiously from her station at his immediate left. He stood, straightening his uniform tunic as he got to his feet. Give me the gist of it, Commander. Why are you convinced that this planet couldnt have produced its atmosphere on its own the way billions of other planets across the galaxy have? The long and short of it is the balance of gases in this planets atmosphere, Captain, Pazlar said. Youll note that the sensors have corroborated Lieutenant Chamishs early contention that the eighty-twenty nitrogen-oxygen mix we observe here could only have been produced by nonbiotic processes. Are we certain of that? Deanna asked. Couldnt this planets atmosphere have been produced by a thriving biosphere that was wiped out by some catastrophe in the relatively recent past? Pazlar shook her head, her fine white hair following a heartbeat behind owing to her protective cocoon of micro-gravity. None of the scans weve done so far have turned up any evidence that theres ever been any life on this planet, let alone life that was catastrophically wiped out after producing a Class-M atmosphere. Riker was no scientist, but he had enough scientific training to know that all Class-M planets atmospheres were significantly out-of-equilibrium in comparison with those of lifeless worlds. Dead places tended to have atmospheres that were devoid of... Prsentation de l'diteur SEIZE THE FIRE Shortly after revealing its union with the Federations newest adversarya coalition of galactic powers known as the Typhon Pactthe Gorn Hegemony suffers an ecological disaster that destroys the hatchery world of their critically important warrior caste. Fortunately, the Gorn had already been investigating traces of an ancient but powerful quick terraforming technology left behind by a long-vanished civilization. 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