



The Romulan War: Beneath the Raptor's Wing (Star Trek: Enterprise Book 13)

By Michael A. Martin

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With nothing left to lose, the Romulan Star Empire engages in all-out war against humanity, determined once and for all to stop the human menace from spreading across the galaxy.

At the start of the twenty-first century, unconditional war swept across the Earth. A war that engulfed the great and the small, the rich and the poor, giving no quarter. Each side strove for unconditional victory, and as battle built upon battle, the living began to envy the dead.

Chastised by the cataclysm that they had unleashed, the governments of Earth came together. Humanity vowed to put an end to war and to strive for the betterment of every living creature. A united Earth created Starfleet, an interstellar agency whose mission was to explore the cosmos, to come in peace for all mankind. It was a naïve wish that was battered by interstellar realities, yet man persists in the belief that peace is the way. Banding together with other powers to form a Coalition of Planets, humanity hopes that the strength each can offer the other will allow for peaceful exploration.

However, the rise of the Coalition strikes dread within the Romulan Star Empire. They feel its growing reach will cut them off from what is rightfully theirs. The Romulans know that the alliance is fragile, that the correct strategy could turn allies into foes. Perfecting a way of remotely controlling Coalition ships and using them as weapons against one another, the Romulans hope to drive a wedge of suspicion and mistrust between these new allies.

One Starfleet captain uncovers this insidious plot: Jonathan Archer of the *Enterprise*. Determined not to lose what they have gained, outmanned and outgunned, the captains of Starfleet stand tall, vowing to defend every inch of Coalition space until the tide begins to turn.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Michael A. Martin's solo short fiction has appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He has also coauthored (with Andy Mangels) several *Star Trek* comics for Marvel and Wildstorm and numerous *Star Trek* novels and eBooks, including the *USA Today* bestseller *Titan: Book One: Taking Wing*; *Titan: Book Two: The Red King*; the Sy Fy Genre Award-winning *Star Trek: Worlds of Deep Space 9 Book Two: Trill -- Unjoined*; *Star Trek: The Lost Era 2298 -- The Sundered*; *Star Trek: Deep Space 9 Mission: Gamma: Vol. Three: Cathedral*; *Star Trek: The Next Generation: Section 31 -- Rogue*; *Star Trek: Starfleet Corps of Engineers* #30 and #31 ("Ishtar Rising" Books 1 and 2); stories in the *Prophecy and Change*, *Tales of the Dominion War*, and *Tales from the Captain's Table* anthologies; and three novels based on the *Roswell* television series. His most recent novels include *Enterprise: The Romulan War* and *Star Trek Online: The Needs of the Many*.

His work has also been published by Atlas Editions (in their *Star Trek Universe* subscription card series), *Star Trek Monthly*, *Dreamwatch*, Grolier Books, Visible Ink Press, *The Oregonian*, and Gareth Stevens, Inc., for whom he has penned several *World Almanac Library of the States* nonfiction books for young readers. He lives with his wife, Jenny, and their two sons in Portland, Oregon.

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TODAY

2155

ONE

Day Thirty-Seven, Romulan Month of K'ri'Brax

Tuesday, July 22, 2155

I.K.S. *Mup'chIch*, near Alpha Centauri

"WE HAVE ESTABLISHED simultaneous control over *both* of the *thhaei* warships, Commander," Centurion T'Vak said in excited tones as he leaned over one of the awkward bridge consoles on the seized Klingon vessel. "The *arrenhe'hwia* telecapture system continues to function flawlessly."

Commander T'Voras sat back in his chair -- a chair built to Romulan specifications, the sole concession to pure comfort he had allowed himself since he had seized this rattletrap battle cruiser from its vermin-infested *klivam* crew. Taking control of a ship operated by those bumpy-headed savages had been far more challenging than today's mission had proved to be so far. He savored the relative ease with which the ships constructed by the Romulan Star Empire's Vulcan cousins evidently could be taken by remote means.

He knew he could scarcely imagine how greatly the Empire's military would benefit from reverse

engineering these highly advanced Vulcan starships. But he understood well enough just how much their acquisition would bolster his own career and the wealth and status of his family.

"Very good, Centurion," T'Voras said, steepling his fingers before him in an effort to keep his thoughts focused and to ward off overconfidence. After all, if the Vulcans somehow managed to recover control over their communications equipment, they could both summon and receive assistance very quickly this deep inside Coalition territory. "Secure our prizes for towing back to Romulus. And make certain that the crews aboard both vessels are dead *before* we get under way. We don't need any mishaps on the way home."

"It will be done, Commander," said T'Vak.

T'Voras decided then to allow himself one luxury in addition to his padded chair -- a small, triumphant smile.

Early in the month of re'Ti'Khutai, Year of ShiKahr 8764

Tuesday, July 22, 2155

Vulcan Defense Directorate Vessel *T'Jal*, Near Alpha Centauri

The main bridge viewer abruptly succumbed to a wash of static, failing along with the main bridge lights. Despite the suddenly dimmed illumination, Captain Vanik could see the young subaltern's eyes widen momentarily in an unaccustomed display of emotion.

He could hardly blame the young officer, of course, considering that circumstances -- not to mention Vulcan's commitment to defending her Coalition allies from alien attack -- had just forced her to take part in firing upon Vulcan vessels that had been hijacked by an extraordinarily pernicious and lethal adversary.

"Our life-support functions have just shut down, Captain," Subaltern T'Pelek said, recovering her equanimity as her training reasserted itself. "Along with the helm and the propulsion and tactical systems. I can access neither the backup systems nor the tertiary redundancies."

It was a most vexing and logic-defying problem. Vanik had planned to solve it from a safe distance after the *T'Jal*'s sister ship, the *Toth*, had experienced an apparently identical shipwide systems failure only a few *lirt'k* earlier. Unfortunately, whatever effect had just immobilized both vessels had a far longer reach than Vanik had realized.

"Contact the rest of the task force," Vanik said, swiveling his seat toward the comm station. Most of the task force had already gone to warp, bound for Vulcan, but they could be recalled very quickly to render aid.

"Captain, the communications grid is not responding either," Communications Officer Voris said a moment later after checking his board. "The subspace bands are presently unavailable to us."

"Another vessel has just appeared on the sensors," Altern Stak reported from one of the forward science-monitoring stations that was apparently still functional. "It fits the profile of a Klingon battle cruiser."

Another Klingon vessel, Vanik thought, not surprised to find that the threat that the *T'Jal* and the *Toth* had been dispatched to address still lurked nearby, like a hungry *le-matya* stalking the sunbaked plains of Vulcan's Forge in search of prey.

"Why did we not detect this vessel earlier?" Vanik asked, his tone measured.

"It is difficult to tell, Captain," said Stak, still staring into his hooded viewer. "The orbits of a number of

dark, icy cometary bodies intersect this vicinity. Perhaps the Klingon vessel was concealed behind one of these bodies."

And deployed its weapon against both us and the Toth from that place of concealment, Vanik thought. It was reasonable to assume that this was the very same weapon that had just induced a pair of *D'Kyr*-class Vulcan ships to wipe out a peaceful human convoy near the Alpha Centauri system, leaving the Vulcan Defense Force no choice other than to destroy two of its own vessels and crews.

"The Klingon vessel is changing position, Captain," Stak said. "Accelerating toward us."

"Helm and propulsion remain off-line," T'Pelek said.

"Is there any way to contact the *Toth*?" Vanik asked, addressing Voris.

"Negative, Captain."

It occurred to Vanik only then that he had never experienced quite such dire circumstances, either during his earlier tenure as commander of the science vessel *Ti'Mur* or during his six preceding decades of service to Vulcan's space-exploration efforts.

"Continue attempting to raise the *Toth*, Subaltern," he said. "I need to confer with Captain L'Vor to learn what countermeasures she is taking to prevent the capture of her ship."

At that moment a transitory burst of light brightened Altern Stak's side of the bridge. It had already faded by the time Vanik had turned to face the young science officer, whose features were frozen in a curiously un-Vulcan expression of dismay.

Vanik realized exactly which countermeasure Captain L'Vor had employed even before Stak said a word.

"The *Toth* has exploded, Captain. And the Klingon vessel has not yet opened fire."

Logical, Vanik thought. *If their desire is to capture rather than merely to kill.*

It was also logical to assume that L'Vor would not have acted out of panic, but merely out of the prudent necessity of preventing an enemy from acquiring sensitive Vulcan technology.

"Altern Stak," Vanik said as he arrived at a decision that was as unfortunate as it was both logical and inevitable. "Prepare our log buoy for launch."

"Immediately, Captain," Stak said.

The air was beginning to smell dank and stale to Vanik, although he knew that the failure of the life-support system had occurred far too recently to have allowed the ship's atmosphere to degrade significantly. But he also knew that the *T'Jal* would be a silent, life-hostile flying tomb soon enough if Stak failed to carry out his next order.

"And try to determine whether we can activate our autodestruct system," Vanik said, quietly grieving for every *katra* lost this day. "As the commander of the *Toth* just did."

Users Review

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