

The book cover features a teal and blue color palette. The background is a photograph of a suspension bridge at night, with a person's silhouette walking away from the viewer on the bridge deck. The city lights are visible in the distance. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

WILLIAM SHATNER

STAR TREK
ACADEMY
COLLISION COURSE

WITH JUDITH & GARFIELD REEVES-STEVENSON

If you think you know how it all began... think again!

Young Jim Kirk wants nothing to do with Starfleet, and never wants to leave the Earth. In the summer of 2249, he's a headstrong seventeen-year-old barely scraping by in San Francisco, haunted by horrific memories from his past.

In the same city, a nineteen-year-old alien named Spock is determined to rise above the emotional turmoil of his mixed-species heritage. He's equally determined to show his parents he has what it takes to be Vulcan – even it means exposing a mysterious conspiracy at the heart of the Vulcan Embassy, stretching to the farthest reaches of the Federation's borders. There, a chilling new threat has arisen to test the Federation's deepest held belief that war is a thing of the past and that a secure future can be forged through peaceful means alone. But it is in San Francisco, home to Starfleet Academy, where that threat will be met by two troubled teenage boys driven to solve the mystery that links them both.

In time, the universe will come to know these young rebels as Captain James T. Kirk and Mr. Spock... two of the Federation's greatest heroes. Yet before they were heroes, they were simply conflicted teenagers, filled with raw ambition and talent, not yet seasoned by wisdom and experience, searching for their own unique directions in life – a destiny they'll discover on one fateful night in San Francisco, when two lives collide, and two legends are born.

STAR TREK: ACADEMY – COLLISION COURSE *sets the stage for an exciting new era of Star Trek® adventure, and for the first time reveals Kirk and Spock as they were, and how they began their journey to become the Kirk and Spock we know today.*

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**STAR TREK: ACADEMY
COLLISION COURSE**

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JUDITH & GARFIELD REEVES-STEVENSON

Sneak Preview

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ONE

THAT FIRST NIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO when it all began was cool and gray and thick with fog. Soft billows of it drifted over the Academy, causing its tall locked gates to phase in and out of visibility for the teenager dressed in black, lost in the shadows across Pacific Street.

His name was Jim Kirk, and he was seventeen years old, plus five months. There was no fear in him, and there hadn't been for three years.

From the safety of a dense bank of juniper, Kirk studied the Academy's Presidio Gate with disdain for what it represented, and with growing confidence for what was to come, based on what he *didn't* see. Blue-white floodlights played over the old stonework, revealing the slow tumble of the evening fog as it flowed unobstructed through ironwork. Beyond, low streetlamps picked out the curving path of Presidio Boulevard, their halos fading with distance into the night and the glowing mist that enshrouded the Academy's vast campus.

Just as he'd expected, there were no signs of guards or other watchers. After all, this was a perfect world. How could Starfleet even conceive of someone like Kirk doing what he planned to do this night?

"This is such a bad idea," Elissa Corso whispered.

Kirk turned to his girlfriend and grinned to reassure her. As far as he was concerned, this was the best idea he had had in weeks. But there was just enough fog-filtered light falling through the branches to reveal the worry in her eyes.

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“Elissa, there’s no one there.”

“Not at the gate.”

“So we’ll be fine.”

Elissa frowned, not convinced. Kirk took her hand. “Look, they’ve got no right to go after you, and you know it. Their system’s at fault.” He held up his homemade override, a jury-rigged homebrew concoction of transtator filaments mounted inside an old tourist translation device. To the untrained eye, it was little more than a dented metal tube, not much larger than a finger. But Kirk had been bashing transtator kits since he was four. The old dented tube had a few surprises inside.

Elissa reached out for the override. “No – you’ll set off an alarm or something.”

Kirk teasingly held the device behind his back, hoping to bring her just close enough for him to steal a kiss.

Elissa refused to play but Kirk knew he’d won. She couldn’t resist his smile. Never had been able to. Her eyes were bright now, forgiving.

She slapped a hand against his chest. “What am I going to do about you?”

“Love me. What else?”

Elissa rolled her eyes, and laughed because he was right.

He kissed her and this time she didn’t pull back.

“Hsst! Jimmy!” It was Sam. His timing, as always, was awful.

Kirk waved one hand dismissively, used the other to sweep Elissa closer, not releasing her, until a hand clamped on his shoulder.

“Give it a rest,” Kirk’s brother said. “I found one.”

George Samuel Kirk was four years older, his sandy hair was longer, and he was thicker in the middle, running to fat. But tonight, clad in the same type of dark jacket, jeans, and boots that Kirk wore, most people

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would have a hard time telling the brothers apart, their resemblance was that strong, each his father's son.

Kirk reluctantly freed Elissa, who was by this time satisfactorily breathless, dizzy. "Okay... show me."

Sam held up a palm-size bicorder, the kind of commercial sensor anyone could buy in a corner shop – and the kind Kirk excelled at modifying. The device's small screen displayed a quantum interference grid that looked like a random scattering of lurid purple sand. But Kirk saw in it what he needed to see – a repeating pattern.

"Good one, Sam." Kirk turned to Elissa. "What did I tell you? When you think you live in perfect world, you get sloppy."

Elissa only sighed, mercifully forgoing her usual protest to Sam. For some reason she'd been unable to explain to Kirk, his older brother made her nervous. Though Kirk always stood by Sam in public, privately he thought he understood what bothered Elissa. But, tonight, if she'd decided to be cooperative, despite her misgivings and Sam's involvement, then Kirk certainly wasn't going to disagree. After all, everything he was about to do, was for her.

At Kirk's signal, the three of them turned away from Pacific Street and the Presidio Gate to the Academy and moved quietly back through the juniper bushes to the overflow visitor's lot. This early in August, with regular classes still three weeks away and only plebes going through indoctrination at the Academy, almost all the vehicle slots were empty. Almost.

In a lot capable of holding two hundred vehicles, there were fifteen parked overnight. Three were rental groundcars anyone could access with a currency card; four were robotic transports likely waiting until normal business hours to make their automated deliveries. The eight other vehicles were the reason Kirk was here.

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They were Starfleet staff cars — compact, aerodynamically sleek vehicles designed to carry four to six personnel on official business. A few had Academy markings, the rest had fleet designations. All of them, white, of course, gleamed in the lot floodlights. It was the color of truth and purity and all the other self-righteous qualities Starfleet claimed to stand for. But Kirk wasn't fooled. "Which one?" he asked.

Sam showed him. "Fifth one. It's got a K-series navigation interface."

Kirk walked past the other vehicles with the bicorder, feeling no concern about being detected in this lot. The surrounding foliage blocked its view from the streets, and the simple sensor repeater he'd set up on their arrival continued to send out an unchanging signal to the lot's surrounding security sensors, reassuring the monitoring computers that nothing was on the move here.

Kirk focused the bicorder on the K-series vehicle. It was a heavy-duty version of a civilian Sky Rover with four ground wheels instead of landing skids. He couldn't tell how many antigrav plates it had — they were out of sight on the vehicle's underside. But all he would need for his demonstration was one.

He waved Elissa over, showed her the quantum interference grid again. "Here's the problem," he told her. "The car's controller is protected by a Starfleet encryption key. Quantum entanglement algorithms. More possible code combinations than there're elementary particles in the universe. Unbreakable, right?"

"So I've been told." Elissa kept looking around as if she didn't trust his assurances about the sensor repeater. In contrast, Sam stood ready, waiting, his silence and stance conveying complete faith in his younger brother's technical prowess.

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“Smoke and mirrors,” Kirk said. “Maybe that’s what they use on starships – those things are untouchable. But on the small stuff like these cars – *and* the security lockouts at the Academy – look how the complexity of the key has been scaled down. There’s a repeating pattern in there. See it?”

Elissa nodded.

“Ten million possible combinations, tops,” Kirk said. He held up his override. “This’ll sort through all of them in under five seconds.”

Elissa looked at him askance. “If you figured it out, don’t you think someone at Starfleet might have, too? Built in some safeguards?”

“You spent a year at the Academy and you still don’t understand these people.”

Elissa began to object but Kirk acted quickly to cut off the argument he was sure she was about to make. “What it comes down to is this: If Starfleet is so damned perfect, then why are they accusing an innocent person of breaking into the lab?”

His girlfriend’s eyes flashed with indignation.

“Did you steal the dilithium?” Kirk pressed on.

He could see her control herself with difficulty. “You know I didn’t.”

“Okay. So all I’m saying is, their system screwed up and this is why.” With dramatic flair, he pointed his override at the staff car, pressed a single blue switch. “Watch.”

Two small control lights flickered on the side of the override, changing from amber to red faster than the eye could follow. A few moments later, less than the five seconds Kirk had predicted, the staff car’s interior lights switched on and the door locks clicked.

Kirk gave Elissa a quick “I told you so” smile and she grudgingly nodded.

Sam was more enthusiastic, gave his little brother a punch on the shoulder. “*Jim-mee!*”

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“Thank you, thank you,” Kirk said to an imaginary cheering crowd. “And for my encore...” He pressed the blue switch twice and instantly the staff car’s power cells activated and its suspension rose a few centimeters, ready to be driven.

“So much for Starfleet security measures,” Kirk said.

He enjoyed Elissa’s change of expression as she finally realized that everything he had been telling her the past two weeks was right.

She looked from the waiting staff car to the override. “It’s really that easy?”

“It helps if you’re a genius,” Kirk said.

“And modest,” Sam added with a laugh.

“Can I show the override to my conduct advisor?”

“That’s the whole idea. You’re innocent and this is the proof.”

Elissa launched herself at Kirk and wrapped both arms around him in gratitude. “Thank you!”

Kirk winked at Sam, but Sam wasn’t paying attention to his brother’s sweet moment of victory. Instead, he was looking across the almost empty lot.

“Sam... ?” Kirk began.

That was when the floodlights brightened and an amplified voice blared, “*You! Stay where you are!*”

Elissa jerked away from Kirk. “You said we’d be safe! I believed you!”

Kirk saw three dark figures running across the lot toward them, palmlights slashing through the fog. It didn’t matter, though. He’d already done what he’d set out to do. “We’re still okay. They can’t catch us.” He turned in the opposite direction. “Let’s go!”

But from the opposite direction, two more figures ran at them, rapid footfalls like an approaching avalanche.

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“Oh, crap,” Sam said.

Elissa was furious. “That’s it. I’m expelled.”

But Kirk refused to admit defeat. He never would. He grabbed Elissa by the shoulder. “I said I’d help you and I will!”

“How, genius?”

Kirk aimed the override at the activated staff car, jammed his thumb on the blue switch. The doors slid open. “Get in!” He pushed Elissa into the back seat of the car. His brother stopped him before he could jump into the driver’s seat. “I’ll drive!”

Kirk quickly moved Sam aside. “You get picked up again, they’ll cancel probation, remember? I’m the one they’ve never caught.”

Kirk slipped into the driver’s seat, Sam beside him. Behind them, Elissa stared out through the rear windshield, pulsing halos in her hair where the flashing palmlights played over her.

“*Get outta the car!*” the amplified voice boomed.

“Seatbelts,” Kirk commanded, then punched the door control to close them as the car lurched forward, tires squealing.

Now shafts of light flashed through the staff car’s front windshield as Kirk swerved around the first three figures who’d charged them.

Sam turned in his seat as they sped past. “One of them’s on a communicator!”

Kirk swiftly checked the console navigation screen. “Ten blocks... see that overpass... we can dump the car there, grab a magtrain.” He glanced back at Elissa. “Then hit Chinatown for some pizza. Is that a plan or not?”

An even more powerful light blazed through the back window. “Apparently not,” Elissa said.

The staff car’s emergency-alert speakers leapt to life. “*Unauthorized vehicle – this is San Francisco Protective Services – pull over at once!*”

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Elissa slapped the back of Kirk's seat for emphasis. "Do what they say. Now. Don't make this any worse for me."

"I made a promise," Kirk insisted. His hand moved to flip three red switches on the console.

Elissa leaned forward, panicked, knowing what the switches were for. "No!"

"Oh, yessss," Kirk said. Then he pulled back on the steering yoke and the staff car soared into the air, leaving the SFPS patrol car on the road.

Sam whistled. "You have any idea what you're doing, Jimmy boy?"

Kirk savored the thrum of the car's Casimir emitters as it climbed over the fog-smearred lights of San Francisco. "Always," he answered.

He banked into the night, punching through the fog layer until the stars suddenly filled the night sky above him. And for all the adrenalin and excitement of the moment, for all the thrill of flying, the glimpse of stars inexplicably swept him with regret.

"Always," he said again, shaking off the odd feeling, then whooped with the sheer joy of free flight as he barrel-rolled the car and dove back into the sheltering fog, turning his back on the stars once more.

Just as he had three years ago.

TWO

THERE WAS NO LOGIC TO IT, but as he made his way down the steep and narrow street to the waterfront, the Vulcan felt that everyone he passed was watching him.

His name was Spock and as time was measured on Earth he was just older than nineteen years. By other Earth standards, he was painfully thin, though that was a matter of genes, not choice. Vulcan was a desert world, and life there had adapted to extreme conditions and limited resources.

But then, in addition to being a child of Vulcan, his father's world, he was also a child of this world, his mother's.

A human might have hated that accident of chance and circumstance that had brought so much confusion and heartache to his childhood. But Spock had risen above such petty emotions because he had realized that, with his Vulcan abilities, he could will himself to be whatever he chose to be.

Thus, he had chosen to be Vulcan and only Vulcan. His intellect and force of will could easily overcome any weakness of the flesh brought on by his human heritage. So he walked the streets of this city as a stranger, though his black cloak and long black hair reduced him to only a shadow in the atmospheric haze, indistinguishable from other pedestrians in the night.

And yet, Spock still couldn't shake the feeling that every human stared at him as he passed and judged him out of place.

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