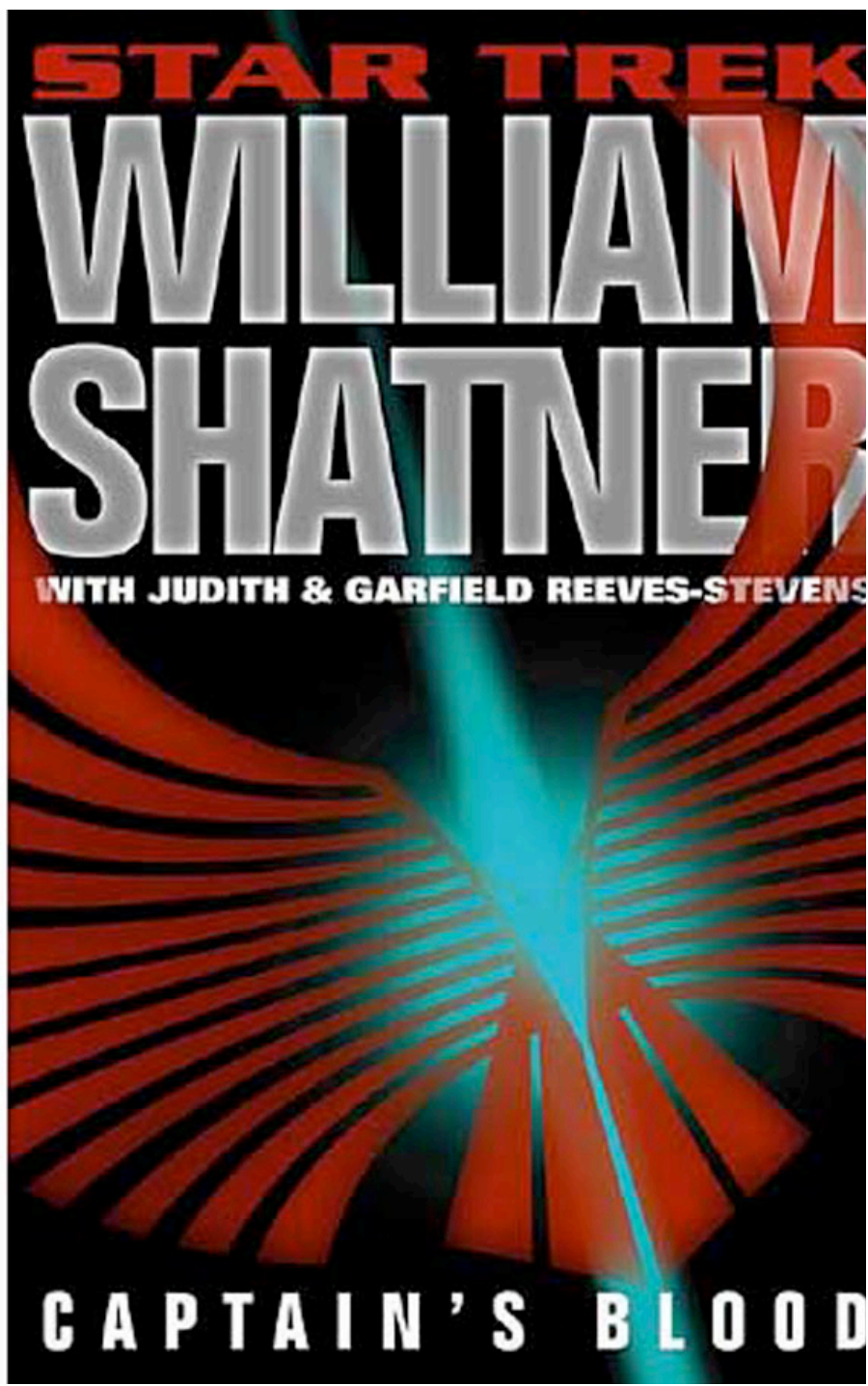


STAR TREK

**WILLIAM
SHATNER**

WITH JUDITH & GARFIELD REEVES-STEVENSON



CAPTAIN'S BLOOD

Excerpt from the novel:

STAR TREK
CAPTAIN'S BLOOD

BY

WILLIAM SHATNER

WITH

JUDITH REEVES-STEVENSON &

GARFIELD REEVES-STEVENSON

Copyright © 2003 by Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.

PROLOGUE

The Galileo Gambit

PRIMEDIAN, ROMULUS, STARDATE 57465.6

Spock remembered heat.

He remembered the shuttlecraft shuddering around him, the last frantic beats of a dying heart. His own heart, now, he knew.

Dying.

It was the way of things.

No matter that logic had so many times been circumvented. No matter that fate and luck and James T. Kirk had so many times intervened in the flow of cause and effect; inevitably everything must die.

Vulcans were no exception.

"Mister Ambassador?"

Spock opened his eyes. Meditation eluded him.

Even in the shadows of the ground transport's passenger compartment, lit only by the slow green flicker of passing streetglows, he saw the worry in Marinta's expression. Romulans were so free that way. In truth, there was much these lost children could teach their Vulcan forebears.

Spock focused his thoughts on chance—his one last chance to make that transfer possible.

Reunification.

It was all that mattered to him now.

"We're almost there," Marinta said.

Spock knew that wasn't what she meant.

"I am fine," he assured her.

Marinta smiled. "I don't believe you."

Spock raised an eyebrow at the young woman with whom he had worked for almost half a standard year, ever since the dark days of confusion following Shinzon's coup and the slaughter of almost every member of the Romulan Senate. He had no reason to question Marinta's loyalty to his cause of reuniting Vulcans and Romulans after more than two millennia of bitter estrangement. But the respect he had reluctantly come to accept as his natural due as a senior Vulcan ambassador was something she seldom demonstrated. Spock decided it was that refreshing freedom from formality he appreciated most about her.

After more than a century and a half of life lived within the protective cloak of total logic and emotional self-control, Spock craved freedom.

That craving drove him now. Just as he recognized that the war between his two halves—human and Vulcan—had once dominated him before he had achieved his own unique balance. But now that same struggle still continued, unresolved, between the Vulcans and the Romulans. Only the scale was different.

Spock's personal battle ended decades ago, when V'Ger had come to claim the Earth, though the scars of that victory would be with him forever.

Now he wanted—he needed—to bring the same peace of acceptance to his chosen people. That same freedom.

Before he died.

"You're doing the right thing." Marinta spoke quietly, as if she sensed his thoughts. Being Romulan, it was entirely possible that she did. Vulcan telepathic traits were encoded in Romulan and Reman DNA, and not always dormant.

"That is not in question."

"I sense your doubt."

"Not doubt," Spock answered. Then surprised even himself with his confession. "Remorse."

Through the dark windows of the transport, Spock watched as the ancient stone streets of Primedian scrolled by, rough-hewn, black as space, overlaid with centuries of urban soot. And in the shadowed in-

tervals between pools of pale green light, reflected in those same dark windows he glimpsed the faces of the dead.

Lieutenant Latimer. Pierced by an alien spear.

Lieutenant Gaetano. Crushed by alien hands.

Both of them dead and buried on Taurus II.

Because of him.

"There is no need for remorse," Marinta said.

He looked back at her. "Still, it exists."

Marinta's dark eyes flashed. "Mister Ambassador, I submit that reaction is not logical."

But Spock caught the smile she tried to suppress and unexpectedly found himself doing the same. No one else he knew these days, at least not under the age of one hundred fifty, would dare take him on in logical debate. "That is not the issue. Remorse is an emotion. Logic plays no part."

"I thought you believed logic plays a part in...everything."

"The words 'logic' and 'believe' do not often belong in the same sentence."

"Then what you are about to do," she said slowly, "does it flow from logic, or belief?" Marinta, despite her brave challenge to him, sounded confused. Spock couldn't blame her. If he allowed his own constrained emotions to surface, he knew he would betray the same hesitation.

Spock kept his face neutral, his lined features more akin to carved stone than flesh. But with his stark words, his heart, his memories escaped all shielding.

"I once commanded a shuttlecraft crew. The Columbus. Our mission: to investigate a quasarlike object. We were forced down. There were seven of us when we crash-landed. Only five survived to return to the Enterprise."

Marinta was quick to form a conclusion. By telepathy or insight, it didn't matter. She was correct either way.

"That's why you feel remorse. For the loss of those two crew members."

"They were my responsibility. They were not the first to die under my command. Nor the last. But they are the two I remember most clearly."

"Because...?"

Spock glanced out the windows again. The transport was slowing. Like a failing heartbeat.

"They died while I attempted to lead by logic. I, and the others, survived only when I set logic aside." Spock again surprised himself. Though Doctor McCoy had speculated on the motivation behind Spock's decision at the time of the incident, this was the first time Spock had confessed it aloud.

Uncharacteristically, Marinta offered no comment or judgment, as if waiting for him to continue. But Spock said nothing more.

The transport stopped and Spock felt it settle slowly as its wheels withdrew. In this most ancient of Romulan cities, where the planners of the central streets and plazas had been among the first outcast Vulcans to land on this world, old technologies were a tradition.

Spock pulled his ambassadorial robes close. They were lighter than those he usually wore, since he had forgone the traditional jewels and silver embroidery of his office. Spock had no desire to stand apart from his cousins. Much of Romulus was still impoverished in the aftermath of the Dominion War, harsh conditions made worse by Shinzon and the subsequent disruption of government services.

He rewarded Marinta's quiet patience.

"After repairs, the Columbus achieved a decaying orbit. We had, at best, almost an hour before we were forced down again. I chose to ignite all our fuel at once. Not for propulsion, but as a signal. One with little chance of being detected. A signal that meant the Columbus would burn up in minutes."

Spock again felt the heat of that terrible moment. The buffeting of the thickening atmosphere. The acrid bite of burning insulation as the temperature rose. The unspoken accusations of his crew. The approach of death.

"But obviously the signal was detected," Marinta said.

Spock drew a breath, dispelled the past. "The signal was detected." He sat forward in his seat as he waited for the armored compartment door to be opened by the bodyguards outside. "And now I am preparing to commit the same act of desperation. To ignite all the fuel, as it were." He held Marinta's gaze. "It is not logical. But I believe it is my last best hope."

"Our best hope." Marinta's bright smile was undisguised.

Spock nodded. "For both our people. One people."

The door puffed out, then hummed as it slid open.

Primedean's night air was cold, unusual for the season. The musty, layered scent of age enveloped Spock, and for a stifling moment he felt as ancient as the city's weathered blocks and roadways.

Two private bodyguards—Romulan, in drab and featureless civilian garb—stood outside, their stern features harshly shadowed emerald by a single, overhead streetglow that shone straight down. Each guard had a microcommunicator in one pointed ear. Narrow disruptor tubes in magnetic holsters were strapped to their forearms, their outlines almost concealed by the fabric of their sleeves.

"It's time," Spock said, to himself as much as to anyone else.

But Marinta reached out and lightly placed her hand on a fold of his robes, taking care not to touch his arm. "Mister Ambassador..."

Spock looked at her, waited.

"The shuttlecraft. I've read so many accounts of your life. It wasn't the Columbus. It was the Galileo."

In defiance of his self-mastery, Spock felt his stomach tighten. She was right. How could I have forgotten? Have I grown so old?

"Of course," he said calmly, fiercely walling off anything he thought, anything he felt. He had commanded the Galileo, not the Columbus. "I misspoke."

If Marinta sensed anything of his inward struggle, she did not share it with him.

She merely took her hand from his robes. "I'll...wait for you here?"

"That would be best."

Saying nothing else, Spock stepped from the transport, into the night, into what must happen next.

But his lapse of memory tore at him, spurring the unwanted memories of heat and smoke and...

He saw two figures in an alley. Dead eyes locked on his in bitter accusation.

Latimer and Gaetano, both in their antique uniforms. Sodden with fresh blood.

Spock's guards saw his reaction, spun together, disruptors already in their hands as they aimed across the street at...

The empty alley.

Like burrowing snakes, the disruptors slipped back up the guards' sleeves.

"Did you see something, Mister Ambassador?"

Spock answered by walking toward the private entrance to the towering coliseum, robes swirling around his boots.

The bodyguards hurried to match his pace.

No sign of what Spock felt or thought was visible in his demeanor.

But within, he was consumed by doubt and felt the first insinuating tendrils of what any human would recognize as panic.

His decision had been made. His path could not be altered any more than a decaying orbit could escape the siren call of gravity.

But he had commanded the Galileo, not the Columbus.

And just as he was haunted by the mistakes he had made in the past, he feared the mistakes that still remained before him, and already felt remorse for those who could be harmed because what he must do next might somehow be wrong.

Consumed by doubt, displaying confidence, Spock strode into the first coliseum built on Romulus, where three thousand Romulans were waiting to hear his message of peace and reconciliation.

But what Spock felt or how he looked didn't matter.

Because exactly fourteen minutes later, those three thousand Romulans saw Spock die.

[To order from Amazon.com, click here...](#)