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Andy Mangels , Michael A. Martin

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Investigating the disappearance of a secret Romulan fleet, the *U.S.S. Titan*, commanded by Captain William Riker, is unexpectedly propelled more than 200,000 light-years into the Small Magellanic Cloud. One of the Milky Way's satellite galaxies, the Cloud is also home to the Neyel, the long-sundered offshoots of Terran humanity, with whom the Federation has had no contact in over eighty years.

Nearby, Riker's uncertain ally, Commander Donatra of the Romulan Warbird *Valdore*, rescues a young Neyel, the survivor of a mysterious cosmic upheaval that seems at times to be both unraveling and reweaving the very fabric of space...the fulfillment of an apocalyptic vision that has already claimed millions of lives. *Titan's* science team soon finds evidence that the ravaging of Neyel space is the work of a vast and powerful intelligence: the stirrings of a dormant consciousness that is maintaining the existence of the Small Magellanic Cloud -- and all life within it -- from one moment to the next. And if it should awaken, the consequences are unimaginable.

As Riker considers his options, his new crew struggles with the scientific and philosophical implications of what they've discovered...while the young Neyel in their midst forges a bond with the captain, conjuring old ghosts Riker has yet to lay to rest.

The Red King Details

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From Reader Review The Red King for online ebook

John Cipolla says

I really liked this one. The crew begins to form. LT Christine vale becomes Riker's first officer. Promoted twice to become commander. She doesn't like the idea that deanna is part of his crew. Vale is promoted twice just to take the first officer spot. Admiral Akkaar is on board as well to see how Captain Riker adjusts to command and making command decisions. He does not like the fact that Wil picks humans for his command staff citing the fact that he has mostly a non human crew. Though he does note how well his crew has gelled as a team with him in a short space of time when normal crews take years.

Lance Schonberg says

The second book in the Star Trek: Titan series picks up as an immediate sequel to the first, and it is a separate story even though the set up for it does occur in the last few pages of *Taking Wing*.

It does, however, tie in with events in previous books by the authors, in particular dropping the Titan out in the Small Magellanic Cloud to hang out with the Neyel as their local piece of the universe is not-so-slowly being disrupted by an emerging proto-universe.

The Neyel, introduced in the Lost Era novel, *The Sundered*, are a human offshoot very fond of manipulating their own genes and enslaving other races for fun and profit. If you haven't read *The Sundered*, don't stress too hard. There's enough background info dropped into the story that you can work out the basics of what went on without much difficulty.

The Red King was a quick and easy read, though still suffering from New Crew Syndrome to a certain degree, and a lot of points of view for story of this length. It does get us a little further into the relationship and personalities of Riker and Troi, though not as much as I'd like as I kind of see this series as their adventures and there's some good characterization of the pre-existing friendship between Tuvok and Admiral Akaar (remember the baby in the TOS episode "Friday's Child"? Same guy.) as well as a couple of members of the new crew.

I don't know if it's a trend in recent Star Trek books or not as I've been away too long, but in the Titan books so far, there's a lot of picking up bits and pieces of various story lines from different series, books, and eras. It's a little less pronounced in *The Red King*, or would be if the entire premise wasn't drawn from another book. In some ways, the presentation makes it seem like almost a direct sequel to *The Sundered*.

It's hard to call the ending a happy one, exactly, though it works in context and makes sense given the events of the story. From here, the Titan gets to follow its original mission of exploration so we might get to see some new places and species from here.

We do finally get the Titan's dedication plaque though, which is pointed out as lacking a very large number of times in the first book so it's obviously critically important for any ship. Spoiler, it fits the Titan's crew, comprised of more different species than has ever been attempted before, nicely, and will resonate well with Trekkies of any age.

John says

The sequential follow-up to "Taking Flight," the U.S.S. Titan's maiden voyage, "The Red King" takes place in a whole other galaxy, specifically the Small Magellanic Cloud, where the Titan was thrown after falling into a subspace fissure (or some such techie term).

Being by the same authors, this book continues the same trends established in the first Titan novel. Not a good thing.

- Blocky prose still reigns free. X character asks Y character a question. The authors spend several paragraphs yapping. Y character finally answers, leaving the reader scratching his head at the sentence fragment that has seeming come out of nowhere, until he remembers that Y character was actually engaged in a conversation with another character.

- Plot holes and unlikely storylines abound. The Neyel, the civilization Titan encounters in the SMC, is descended from the survivors of an early human space mission that fell into a similar fissure. They struggle for survival, but somehow manage to become a full-fledged totalitarian empire in just a century or two. Then there is the mutual loathing going on between Tuvok and Admiral Akaar (the latter perhaps the only redeemable character created by the authors). The authors make up a rather contrived story to explain it, and an even more contrived one to explain how Akaar comes to his senses. It comes across as nothing but filler space, and isn't really adequately resolved.

- The atmosphere of this novel, as well as much of its predecessor's, thrums with left-wing propaganda. Most noticeably, the Neyel protagonist, Frane, is uber-guilty about his ancestors' enslavement of the SMC's native beings, so he hopes all his life that his people will be destroyed as punishment. This is too similar to the modern-day concept of "white guilt" to ignore. Of course, Frane had absolutely nothing to do with his ancestors' actions, but that doesn't matter. Sound familiar? Other notables include a chapter devoted to a gay character's relationships, commentary on Titan's "human supremacy," and a wholly infantile jab at Christianity. For real, people!

- Made-up words for the Romulan language and a bunch of others. Plus, garbled English words in the Neyel vocabulary! Maybe this isn't such a big deal but to me it's quite annoying.

On the whole, the novel did a pretty lackluster job at keeping my attention. Many sections of chapters are devoted solely to characters' thoughts, and seem quite useless. What does it add to the book to write about what x weird alien thinks about what he or she is seeing on the viewscreen for three paragraphs with little or no dialogue, then go to the next one? Filler space! It seems that Mangels and Martin tried way too hard to make these novels character-driven. With the crew of the Enterprise, that might be doable. But since M & M decided to make Titan's crew an unrecognizable grotesquerie of outlandish creatures, it is extremely difficult to take seriously.

The authors of the following Titan books no doubt had quite a challenge to continue on with the convoluted groundwork Mangels & Martin laid here; I'm curious to see where it went.

Crystal Bensley says

The second in the Titan books has our new crew stranded far from home. It is great fun to see such a diverse cast of characters and meet some new alien races. Interesting to see where the Titan goes next!

Steve says

I found this an interesting take on the whole new crew, new challenges thing that Star Trek has missed of late. I take slight umbrage at White/Red for chess, rather than the usual Black, but the action built up nicely with some interesting plot twists. The climax was a little telegraphed, but I did really enjoy the drawn out resolution.

Chris says

I had the hardest time finishing this book. Honestly, I had to just kinda slog through it until the very end because I absolutely had to be a completionist. Where to begin?

1.) This series so far suffers really badly from "make allusions to things that happened in other books that we wrote and that you probably didn't read!" Seriously, if one more character's inner monologue makes reference to "the incident at Tezwa a few years ago" or some shit like that, I'm going to throw my Kindle across the room. Just kidding, I love my Kindle.

2.) The cast of characters is simply TOO GODDAMN LARGE. I really appreciate the point of Titan being the most racially diverse ship in the fleet, and I think it's great that the authors really go out of their way to underscore a lot of those points. But you don't need to try to simultaneously develop 30 characters with Futuristic Space Names and Difficult-to-Imagine non-humanoid shapes and sizes.

3.) About halfway through the book, you really start to get a feel for just how badly the authors must have wanted to finish it. Individual scenes take up maybe two-three pages tops. It's almost as if you can hear one of the writers sitting there at his desk, thinking aloud to himself: "just finish this one scene and then I'll be done for the day *scribblescribble* DONE."

The long and short of it is: I don't give a shit about this ship. I don't care about it's crew. There are MAYBE three characters I care about in the entire ensemble cast of about three dozen (Riker, Donatra, and Keru). This series suffers from terrible storytelling, shitty setup, no character development, and just lack of anything interesting whatsoever.

I haven't read any Star Trek books in ages, and I'm starting to remember why. Maybe I'll take a break from them again for awhile, and when I do finally come back, I'll reread something at least halfway decent (New Frontier).

Christopher Merrifield says

The Red King picks off straight away from the previous book with Riker and Crew of the Titan facing the fact that they have taken a shortcut 200,000 light years out of their way! :D As the story progresses they find themselves, along with some initially reluctant Romulans, up to their necks in a mass evacuation as the Neyel coreworld Oghen is busily being torn about by the same emerging universe that is giving Riker and the Romulans so much trouble! :D

The action is daringly staged throughout with many of the crew engaged in search and rescue operations throughout the book and we get to catch up with them as they engage in this giving all the characters such as Riker, Troi, Tuvok, Akaar, Cethente, Ree etc all a lot more screen/page time! :D This really develops the crew of the Titan even more giving them all much more character development in that we can see that they are all continuing to bond as a crew and to flesh out their backstories even more than before! :D This gives the crew a great feeling of camaraderie that bursts off the page and really works well! :D Riker along with useful advice from Troi really sets the tone for the ship and this really is an expression of how well the whole crew gels and promises much for future adventures! :D We also get to see Akaar and Tuvok mending bridges and with Tuvok moving in permanently so to speak and bringing his wife on board it also opens up another can of worms that will be sure to upset the status Quo! :D

We also get serious exploration with the Neyel coreworld, as well as discovering a plethora of different races throughout! :D We also get the return of Vanguard to boot and at the same time the lengths that the Titan and the Romulans go to is epic! :D Romulan politics still play a part though as you would expect with Donatra taking care of Suran is particularly as is her disposal (allegedly! :D Lol) of Captain Tchev and his entire ship the IKS Dugh! :D This throughout the book gives the Titan and Riker a diplomatic headache as both Riker and Donatra regard each other with respect and the strains that develop really keep both on their toes which also makes it handy when Troi is around that also develops her character and shows how much Riker trusts in her judgement! :D

Throughout the book though the humour really comes through Christine Vales reaction to Dr. Bralik's impromptu party on the bridge to Riker's 'Help Select Titan's Dedication Plague Motto Suggestion Box' is hysterical and when Riker and Tuvok come out the ready room and Riker points out 'Great party Christine!' provides a brilliant topping to the whole scene and serves as one great example of the tone of the book! :D

The Red King is full of humour, character development, the crew gelling together, Troi and Riker getting to know the raw meat eaters, great epic stage action, exploration, neat tie in with the other books Vanguard being only one such example and is action packed throughout! :D Brilliant, highly recommended Crisp high Five and make sure you have the sequel! :D

Jimyanni says

Three characters get significant development in this book: Admiral Leonard James Akaar, Romulan Captain Donatra, and one-shot alien Frane. The development of these three characters is well-done and fairly interesting, but at least one of them is probably not a recurring character, and Donatra may not be as well. So the ONLY Starfleet character who is handled in an interesting way in this book is Akaar; the rest are handled competently but without adding much to their established personae.

In addition, the plot is not the best; apparently, the authors feel that in order to rank as legitimate heirs to the Star Trek legend, the crew of the Titan MUST "save the universe" fairly early in the series in order to establish their chops. Frankly, I got tired of the "Enterprise saves the universe (or at least the planet)" plotline a LONG time ago; I've always considered it pretty dubious and have rarely seen it done well. This story was no exception; it was clearly a deus ex machina, with the engineering staff in the role of demigods who come up with "a plan" for "fixing" a stellar phenomenon that was capable of wiping out parsecs of space. How detonating a couple of dozen warp cores (small potatoes on the scale of something that erased star systems) could accomplish this feat was left as an exercise for the student (because no amount of bafflegab was going to make it plausible.)

The nuts and bolts of the book were moderately well-done; it was written well enough (there were a few more typos of the "those who'd managed to survived" sort than I care for, but not an unforgivable amount for a mass-market paperback; I've certainly seen much worse) but neither the plot nor the characterizations were exceptional. All in all, a disappointment.

Jamie says

A terrific book, loved every minute of it

James says

This is the second book in the Star Trek Titan series, following Captain William Riker and the crew of the U.S.S. Titan. For those lamenting a lack of new Star Trek shows or the fact that the movie reboot seems to have ended the storylines of the old Trek universe, the novels from Pocket Books have been fantastic. They have taken the Star Trek universe in a logical direction and fleshed out ideas started in the different series.

Book #1 left off with a cliff-hanger and this book picks up right where it left off. It is a little annoying at times that this book is also a follow-up to one of the "Lost Years" novels that told a story of the Excelsior. Since I hadn't read that novel, I felt a bit lost at times. It wrote like the reader should already be aware of where we know the alien race in this book, but never fills the reader in on where this race was from. Thankfully, the web is a nice resource and once I was past that, this was a gripping story that deals with a lot of the concepts that Trek deals with well.

This series is packed with a huge supporting cast, so it is sometimes a little rough trying to keep track of who everyone is. However, I love that the Titan has a lot of non-human crew. Novels don't have to worry about make-up and special effects budgets, so the crew feels as diverse as I always felt Starfleet should be and I think one of my favorite things so far in this series has been seeing how the crew deals with such diversity.

rivka says

The science in this one made very little sense. First the forming universe contains intelligent life (ok, plausible, if a stretch) -- and then it itself is alive and intelligent???

Nonetheless, worth a read.

Fiona says

I find it quite hard to rate this book. I think it would be 2.5 stars for me. Tending to 3 but actually I read a lot better Star Trek books

What I liked:
the variety of characters and life forms

that a lot background from TNG and Vanguard was involved
that Tuvok played a role
that racism and superiority of humans within the Star Fleet was reflected

What I disliked:

the plot was actually not that exciting

belabouring on the deep connection between Riker and Deanna and that they sense what the other thinks and feel ALL THE TIME. Take a break, we got it. No need to mention it like 50 times
that the topic of racism, which was so central, then was just wiped away with a mediocre gesture

Derkanus says

Summary: "The Red King" picks up immediately where "Taking Wing" left off, with the USS Titan having been sucked through the Great Bloom and into the Small Magellanic Cloud dwarf galaxy 200,000 light years away.

This area of space is primarily controlled by the Neyel, descendants of Zefram Cochrane's team of scientists and engineers that developed the first warp drive engine; their hollow-asteroid L-5 spacehab was transported to this galaxy when a warp-field test went awry (The Lost Era: The Sundered). Though descended from humans, the Neyel have adapted to this area of space by using genetic engineering, and thus have gray skin, tails, and other non-human features. They maintained a hegemony by conquering and enslaving many of this galaxy's indigenous species, up until Federation Ambassador Aidan Burgess visited a few decades back (she stole a shuttlecraft from the USS Excelsior, the ship Tuvok and Akaar were serving aboard at the time, during the Neyel Tholian war). Burgess taught them to act more like Starfleet officers than conquerors, and was revered by many of the Neyel, but not all...

(In a flashback, we learn that Akaar and Tuvok hate each other because they were stranded on a desert planet and Akaar ceremonially killed himself so Tuvok wouldn't run out of supplies before he could be rescued. However, Tuvok did a mindmeld and resuscitated Akaar, dishonoring Akaar's sacrifice--which is a big no-no in Capellan culture.)

A Neyel convoy is destroyed when Donatra's missing Romulan fleet comes through Great Bloom and attacks them without so much as a courtesy hail. Some of the Neyel survive in escape pods.

A cloaked Klingon ship came through the Bloom as well, though it was much more worse for wear than the Romulan ships. Donatra beams the Klingon captain aboard and ostensibly offers to help--though really she needs supplies and Klingon ships have boobytraps everywhere.

The Romulans notice the Neyel escape pods and beam the survivors aboard. They can't speak the Neyel language, so they use invasive mind probes on the survivor named Frane to rapidly learn the language. After interrogation, Donatra learns that her fleet survived and is here in Neyel space.

A problem soon arises, however: the Great Bloom is causing a sentient protouniverse to form, and it will soon consume the entire Small Magellanic galaxy to make space for itself--destroying everything within.

The Romulans, Klingons, and Neyel come aboard Titan to discuss what to do about the situation. Frane says

that it is the prophesized "Sleeper" or "Red King" of Neyel legend, awakening to punish his people for their past enslavement of other races. The Titan science officers theorize that it's possible this has happened before, since this section of space is "downhill" from many others, so the legend may have some basis on past events.

The Klingons and Romulans decide the best course of action is to blow up the protouniverse, but Riker wants to find a less hostile solution, since the "Red King" displays signs of sentience: it has taken control of the fleet of Romulan ships and has begun clearing out solar systems to make space for itself (by using subspace distortions caused by the ships' warp fields close to the star's photosphere).

An away team from Titan and another from Donatra's ship beam aboard the lead Romulan ship and find the crew unconscious, but alive. To regain control of the ship they erase the Red King from the computer's AI; however, this causes the Red King to accelerate its consumption of space; when the intelligence is forced out of the computer, it had to go elsewhere and thus started "reordering" local space even faster.

The massive subspace distortions are set to overtake the Neyel coreworld of Oghen in a few days, and Riker wants Titan, the Klingons, and the Romulans to help evacuate the planet, since this is partially their fault (they think coming through the Great Bloom could've somehow brought the protouniverse here, as something similar happened in Deep Space 9). However, the Klingon ship is too damaged to do much of anything, and the Romulans decide that since they got their fleet back, staying in Neyel space is too risky (the Great Bloom could close back up and they'd be stranded) and they want to GTFO. Riker rebukes Donatra and tells her she has no honor, so she changes her mind and decides to help. Romulan co-Commander Suran says there's no way in hell he's sticking around, so Donatra roofies him and confines him to sickbay.

Titan arrives at Oghen to find that the whole planet is being fucked up: there are massive tsunamis, tornados, hurricanes, etc. being caused by the spatial distortions. The best plan Riker can come up with is to send shuttles down to rescue as many people as possible, then put them on the hollow-asteroid station near the planet. Admiral Akaar saves a bunch of crazy religious people who were trying to commit mass suicide, but they get all indignant about it; Akaar realizes this is exactly what happened between him and Tuvok, so he instantly gets over his 70-year long grudge and forgives Tuvok. Security chief Ranul Keru is forced to leave another member of his team, T'Lirin, behind to die when his shuttle is forced to take off before she can get aboard.

After they get as many Neyel as possible aboard the asteroid, the Romulan fleet tows the asteroid with tractor beams back to the Great Bloom. The only potential solution the Titan science crew could come up with to stop the protouniverse's expansion and to get back home is to fly through the Bloom and have the Romulans detonate a bunch of their warp cores on their way out. The Romulans are obviously not happy about this, but agree to it as long as Riker won't tell the Klingons that most of their fleet will be disabled. This is just about the time that Commander Suran wakes up, pulls a phaser on Donatra, and says there's no way in hell they're going to blow up 12 of their warp cores. Donatra gets the ship's computer to disable Suran's weapon, then stabs him to death with her honor blade.

Since the Klingon ship is too beat to hell to travel through the Great Bloom on its own accord, and since Titan needs all its power diverted to its sensor net to seek out and avoid spatial disturbances during the return trip, it's up to the Romulans to tow klingon ship back through. Donatra gives her word that she won't try any funny business and the Klingons acquiesce.

Everyone flies into the Great Bloom and things seem to going to plan; however, the Romulans break their

word (duh) and use their tractor beams to tear the Klingon ship to pieces, so they don't have to worry about the Klingons learning about all their lost warp cores. The remaining ships all make it through by the skin of their teeth. Riker is royally pissed that Donatra destroyed the Klingon ship, but he begrudgingly agrees not to tell the Klingons, for fear of throwing the Federation's diplomatic mission to Romulus out the window.

The Magellanic galaxy is so far away that it will take many years before they find out if they stopped the protouniverse from destroying it, but everyone's glad to be back home so who fucking cares about that place.

Riker decides to split up Ranul Keru's roles as both Tactical Officer and Security Officer into 2 separate positions, and asks Tuvok to become the new Tactical Officer and Second Officer. Tuvok accepts, with the stipulation that his wife live aboard with him.

There's a big party on the bridge for all the senior officers to (finally) celebrate the completion of the ship's dedication plaque. After much ado, Riker ultimately decided to go with a quote from Surak of Vulcan: "Infinite diversity in infinite combinations", which perfectly describes Titan's crew, and acts as a memorial to the Vulcan crewman lost on Oghen, T'Lirin.

With all repairs complete, Titan heads off to explore the Gum nebula.

Review: 2.75 stars.

"The Red King" was OK, but I had a lot of problems with it. First and foremost, it focused way too much on the Neyel race, serving as a direct sequel to the "Lost Era" book "The Sundered" that I've never read and don't really care to (I've ordered a used copy, but I doubt I'll ever read it). What better way to kick off a new book series about a brand new ship, the USS Titan, than to make it a sequel to a book written years before about the USS Excelsior? No thank you. Whereas the first book is all about Federation/Romulan/Klingon/Reman politics--which I found fairly intriguing--this book has almost nothing to do with any of that--and I was not intrigued.

I was onboard with the Great Bloom functioning as a wormhole to the Small Magellanic galaxy (SMG) because it was "downhill" from the Milky Way, and I liked the idea that this caused a protouniverse to come through and start replacing the galaxy to make room for itself--but the protouniverse was sentient? At first I thought sentient life had simply formed somewhere within the protouniverse, so they didn't want to destroy it, but then the "sentience" itself took over the Romulan fleet... This was a really weird concept for me that I just didn't care for--it's unimaginable to me that one day our Milky Way galaxy might suddenly come alive and consciously decide to go to eat another galaxy.

So, they erase the sentience from the Romulan computers, and this causes the protouniverse's expansion rate to increase, because now that it was out of the computers it had nowhere else to go? So if it was slower for this "Red King" to use the ships, then why did it use them in the first place? Did the Red King hitch a ride on the Romulan fleet back when it went through the Great Bloom, and that's how it initially began taking over the SMG? I just didn't think it was clear at all. And did this all happen before or not? It seems that the "downhill" concept, coupled with the Neyel mythology about the Red Sleeper, could mean that this all happened in the past, but that was never really clarified either. I'm not usually one to get befuddled by plot details, but oy vey this plot is convoluted.

It wasn't all bad though. On the plus side, there were some good character moments and ideas: Torvig and Cethente talking about how it's "interesting" that humans are primarily the species in charge on the ship (and in Starfleet in general) was provocative (though it's obviously due to TV budget constraints), and the Neyel

enslaving all the other species in their galaxy shows how much worse it could've been.

I was also glad to see the Reman Mekrikruk get a bit more development, though it still wasn't much. I thought maybe he'd turn out to be trouble, since they broke him out of prison, after all, but he turned out to be a genuinely nice guy--and even saved some girl from getting raped. I actually wish he would've joined the crew at the end (like Tuvok!), so we could learn more about him (and because we still didn't know much about the Remans in general), but that would've been too interesting I think.

Akaar on the other hand, is a total dumbass. He holds a grudge against Tuvok for 70-80 years, then realizes what a jackass he's been when he saves a bunch of suicidal cult members THE SAME WAY TUVOK SAVED HIM. It was so immediately obvious what was going to happen that I actually groaned out loud when it proceeded exactly as expected. And what an outrageous coincidence that two Excelsior crew members who dealt with the Neyel in "The Sundered" just so happened to be on Titan when it gets sucked into the SMG. Give me a break.

Worst of all though was the ending. The ships fly back through the Great Bloom and then!...everything's just fine. All goes according to plan (other than the obvious twist that the Romulans fucked over the Klingons--who could've seen that coming?!) in the most anticlimactic way possible. Even better, we never even find out if blowing the warp cores stopped the protouniverse from taking over the SMG or not. Not that I care anyway.

All the bad aside, I really loved the scene at the very end when they unveiled the dedication plaque; it was a touching and appropriate character moment where all the senior officers finally got a little chance to shine--and something finally went right for a change. Maybe if you gutted all the middle out about the Neyel and just left the very beginning and the very end, there might actually be a decent novella here. As it stands though, it's a shame that the excellent first Titan book will be forever bogged down by this disappointing follow-up. I definitely won't be re-reading this one any time soon.

Tyler says

I was so disappointed! I really had hoped for a solid bit of Romulan Empire/Federation intrigue from, and at the end of the last book we were just flung into another part of the Galaxy (the moment Tuvok gets aboard the Titan!). I was immediately disengaged from the plot, as I felt it was a real bait and switch. I hear they get back on track after Articles of Federation. We shall see!

Sinn says

Die meisten Serien-Bücher sind ja nicht auszuhalten. Die Sprache ist mies, die Charaktere (gegenüber den im Fernsehen ausgestrahlten Folgen) verflacht und das Thema meist ein mäßig interessantes. Gut ... auch "Der rote König" ist in diesen Kategorien kein Branchenführer. Trotzdem lohnt es sich - zumindest für jeden Trekkie - dieses Buch zu lesen.

Wenn auch der Holzhammer der Methode beider Autoren näher liegt als das Skalpell, so blitzt dieses gelegentlich doch durch. Mit für Reihen-Publikation ungewöhnlichem Geschick kehren Andy Mangels und Michael A. Martin zu dem zurück, was Science Fiction eigentlich sein sollte: Ein Zerrspiegel für die Welt, in

der wir leben. So thematisiert "Der rote König" Probleme, die eine soziologische "Pluralität" mit sich bringt; sind doch die Mitglieder der Besatzung der "USS Titan" ein wild aus allen Völkern der Föderation zusammengewürfelter Haufen. Bei soviel Vielfalt (Wasseratmer, Arachnoide, ...) ist es kein Wunder, dass die Missgunst nicht tief unter der Oberfläche schlummert. Selbst in einer so "aufgeklärten" Gesellschaft wie es das Planeten-Konglomerat nach G. Roddenberry ist.

Alles beginnt damit, dass die USS Titan, nach gelungener Operation im romulanischen Raum, aus bekannten (wenn auch ungewohnten) Gefilden in einen Bereich des Weltraums stürzt, der sonst nahezu unerreichbar ist. Durch einen Raumpalt nämlich, von den Romulanern "liebevoll" die "Große Blüte" genannt, reist die Besatzung der Titan (und jene eines romulanischen und eines klingonischen Schiffes) in ein Gebiet, in dem die Neyel nehmen. Neyel sind aber nicht einfach eine weitere Spezies im ST-Universum, sondern nicht weniger als Nachfahren von Menschen, die (nach einem Unfall, der sie vor Jahrhunderten verschleppt hatte) eine Anpassung ihres genetischen Codes nicht der Evolution überlassen wollten. Sie nahmen diese selbst in die Hand.

So sind die Neyel zwar optisch klar von Menschen zu unterscheiden. Ihr Greifschwanz, die lederne Haut und auch deutlich robustere Körperbau sind dabei ganz gute Anhaltspunkte. Was sie aber viel mehr von ihren Verwandten im uns bekannten Universum unterscheidet ist ihre Lebensart: Denn die Neyel haben ein Imperium aufgebaut, das Sklaverei und gewollte Hegemonie erst vor kurzem überwunden hat.

Konflikte, die nie wirklich beigelegt wurden, brechen auf, während die größte Bedrohung für diesen Bereich des Raums - der "rote König" - das Überleben aller gefährdet. Und erst im Angesicht eines Feindes von Außen scheint es möglich eben diese Konflikte zumindest auf später zu verschieben.

Die Crew der Titan tut ihr Bestes um zu helfen - aber ist die Föderation tatsächlich so immun gegen Spezies-Missgunst, wie sie das gerne verlauten lässt?

Ich empfehle dieses Buch all jenen, die gerne Science Fiction lesen, allen Trekkies (Hey! Wer wollte nicht schon immer wissen, was mit Riker, Troy und Tuvok noch so alles passiert?) und jenen, die guten Science Fiction auch im Gewand mäßig guter Sprache nicht scheuen.
