



Surak's Soul

J.M. Dillard

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You are alone in the dark reaches of space, surrounded by aliens who do not understand who you are and what you are, and who will not accept your beliefs. Under such circumstances, an emotional human would feel lost, cut off, adrift, but Sub-Commander T'Pol is a Vulcan, and Vulcans control their emotions. However, no other Vulcan has served for longer than a few weeks on a human ship. Has she, as others imply, lost her way? Pulled, once again, into one of Captain Archer's dangerously impulsive attempts to make first contact, the sub-commander finds her life threatened. T'Pol reacts, draws her phase pistol and kills. It was a simple act of self-defense. But is killing ever simple? Has she forsaken the teachings of Surak?

Determined to be true to her heritage, T'Pol forswears violence. She tells Captain Archer that never again will she kill -- even if ordered. Is she, as Archer suggests, endangering the entire ship?

Surak's Soul Details

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From Reader Review Surak's Soul for online ebook

Daniel says

Having finished "Surak's Soul", I am left with the feeling that we've been here before. Having watched "Enterprise" I can say this is very similar to the season two episode "The Crossing." The story in "Surak's Soul" starts innocently enough, answering a distress call of a world with a disease. Once there, they discover a tropical paradise inhabited by a completely pacifist culture, one that will not defend themselves against even the deadliest bacteria. Needless to say, Enterprise arrives during the death throes of the civilization and T'Pol has to make an ethically ambiguous choice involving the last survivor.

Having left the dead paradise, Enterprise encounters a strange energy-based being. It's at this point "The Crossing" begins, instead of many beings masquerading as friends, think a single powerful entity, instead of body-snatchers, think body consumers, instead of hiding in the catwalk, the crew hides in engineering. This energy being also has a special connection with T'Pol who is viewed as being superior to everyone on Enterprise. Ultimately, T'Pol studying the British Empire pulling out of India and Gandhi saves the crew, and Earth, from a rather unpleasant fate.

"Surak's Soul" is not part of the Enterprise relaunch and can be read at any point. What starts off as a potentially interesting mystery involving a never-before-seen alien race, changes into a "Been there, done that" story intermingling aspects of T'Pol and her take on Vulcan philosophy. This is, however, not a bad book in that it does dive into the inner workings of T'Pol's rebellious side and provides context on the Vulcan culture in regards to violence.

Stephanie says

It's pretty clear this author mostly writes for TOS. The plot is very TOS...I could just picture Wanderer as a big glowing orb floating out in space in ridiculous 1960's technicolor, haha. It was also clear that the author did not really know the characters all that well. Sometimes I thought we were just replacing the name "T'Pol" for "Spock". But still, as much as I'm complaining about that it really wasn't all that bad. I think I'm just particular.

Tony says

It was a good read, though I do not think it is as good as the earlier Enterprise book, What Price Honor? While the book felt like it could be an actual episode, the way they resolved the problem was not as satisfying as I'd like. From the cover, you would think this story would be T'Pol heavy. Yes, she does have a larger role, but the book does a good job bringing in the other crew members in and following their perspective.

Overall, a decent read for any fan.

Jason Vargo says

A typical Star Trek story which borrows from a number of previous works; however, the subplot regarding T'Pol and the use of nonviolence keeps the story fresher than one would expect. This is the first original Enterprise novel to capture the characters well, making this adventure feel like something from the series proper.

The beginning of the novel, on a dead planet, is gripping and heartbreaking. The rest of the story, taking place on the ship, uses the established sets and characters to their strengths. Everyone, save Mayweather, gets something important to do in the run up to the final resolution.

Shadowdenizen says

Pre-Read; UGH! A T'Pol-centric book? Really???

Post-Read: I forced myself to plow thru this as quickly as possible. And I have just one word for it.. MEH.

Tabitha says

I am a huge Star Trek fan, though I will admit the reason I started watching Enterprise is I love beagles. T'Pol is an interesting character on the show, and I managed to pick up a used copy of this book for a decent price. Along with an interesting storyline and adorable moments featuring Porto's, this book also raising the interesting questions on how much violence is not enough. The writing style stayed true to the characters as I know them - I'm only through the first season so far - and only one detail required knowledge of the series.

Crystal Bensley says

What a cool Enterprise story! Reads just like a good episode. It's so nice to read a self contained adventure!

Angela says

Enterprise finds a planet where all the inhabitants have mysteriously died. This has a profound effect on the crew, and they wonder whether it is contagious. On top of all that an alien turns up. There's some really good stuff involving T'pol in this novel, just what you would expect from the cover. The plot is interesting, yet sometimes predictable. A good read.

Jennie Vance says

While this novel started out rather promising, it was ultimately not the story I wanted. It started out as a

simple yet compelling moral conflict: when is it ethical to sacrifice one life form to save another? The fact that this conflict centered around T'Pol made it all the more interesting to me. While she is drawn to somewhat rebellious behavior, T'Pol is very traditional at heart. And for someone as traditional as her, who has been violated by a rogue but trusted member of her own species, forced to relive one of the most traumatic moments of her long life, killed the last of a species in self-defense, and lived among strangers hostile to her culture for a year, it makes sense that she would find solace in the extreme pacifistic code followed by some of her most respected elders.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to see her moral dilemma after about the first third of the book. It quickly turned into a book about Archer and his feelings of inadequacy. While I certainly don't have a problem with that story, it wasn't the one that pulled me into this book. Sure, T'Pol took center stage near the end. But by then it was too late to convince me that her narrative hadn't been dropped in favor of a less complex one.

Kiri says

I expected more from this. The plot premise is quite good but the reactions from the crew were (I felt) simplistic and out of character. They literally walked into the problem without their usual raising of potential problems. I also discovered a distinct christian theology that jarred and felt out of place in the dialogue - the characters were making exclamations they wouldn't have normally done. This isn't a drawback it is just not usual for the ST Universe.

About Surak while the comparison of his teachings and early behavior to a historical earth personage are interesting, I think it might have been better to contrast them in context a bit more and the character who was working out the "internal conflict" over behavior and outlook - has settled this in the series already. I'd rather have experienced Surak's life somehow in this book it would have made more sense.

Dan says

Not entirely what I expected, Surak's Soul doesn't exactly deliver on what the back-cover blurb says it is about. There is some interesting examination of T'Pol's philosophy and the choices it leads her to make, but that exploration is dropped rather quickly for a fairly routine alien threat story. Still, not all bad; there are some interesting elements that remind me a lot of classic Star Trek.

Full review: <https://www.treklit.com/2018/10/SS.html>

David King says

Whilst it is a reasonably well written original Star Trek story, the overall plot isn't that complex, deep or really anything we haven't seen before. It actually reminded me of the type of plot we would have seen on the original series. In fact, I could easily visualise the talking alien energy life form, present within the story, in Technicolor glory like we would have seen on the TV show! It also wasn't helped by the fact that, as with the previous Star Trek books I have read during this challenge, I was able to figure out what had happened

very quickly thereby destroying any suspense that may have been built up.

Anyway, in regards to the story, it follows the Enterprise responding to a distress signal that leads them to a civilization on the brink of extinction due to a mysterious illness. As the crew explores the planet, T'Pol is forced to kill the last remaining survivor to ensure the survival of Hoshi. This leads to a type of identity crisis for T'Pol as she begins to suspect that spending her time with humans was leading her to go against the teachings of Surak regarding non-violence.

As T'Pol tries to get to grips with her thoughts and choices, the Enterprise remains to investigate what happened to the planet's inhabitants. As the investigation progresses, a mysterious energy based life form known as the Wanderer turns up and offers to assist, which is greatly appreciated by the crew. Especially when they also begin to fall foul of the same illness that claimed the inhabitants on the planet below.

My biggest disappointment with the story though was actually the very little attention actually given to T'Pol and her inner struggle to come to terms with what she did and if it is really against Surak's teachings. She just seems to meditate once and then decide that she is going to give up all violence, even if it would save a member of the crew. It was a big let down as the book synopsis had left me thinking it would be a good character driven story exploring T'Pol's character and the guilt she was suffering which it really wasn't.

The little bit that did focus on T'Pol's thoughts was something that I did actually enjoy and it was quite nice to see her comparisons between Surak & Gandhi. However, besides this comparison there is nothing really in this book about Surak at all. It really appears to me that, with this and what I highlighted in the last paragraph, this book should be 'done' for false advertising! Or maybe it was my own fault for reading too much into the title and synopsis.

Now that I have got my disappointments out of the way I will talk about some of the merits. The story does move at a good pace and whilst the story isn't anything special it is entertaining enough. I also think that the author's characterizations were probably the best I have seen so far in an Enterprise novel although I would expect this to be the case as it is currently the latest one that I have read.

Overall "Surak's Soul" was another reasonable Star Trek Enterprise novel that won't win any awards but kept me entertained enough. It was especially nice to see an author really capture the characters from the show well. It is a shame that the book didn't really live up to what I was expecting in regards to really going into T'Pol's soul searching or give us some more information on Surak as I think that I would have really loved the book had this been the case.

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Kris Tell says

So I randomly found this book by my office because there is a Book Crossing location near my office. This is not a book I would have read but I'm glad that I picked it up. It was an exciting murder mystery that was also science fiction genre. It was non stop action from the very first page and I had to know what was going to happen. It was an easy read and really entertaining. You don't have to know any back stories or follow any Star Trek book in order to understand what is going on or in order to enjoy this book. Thanks to this book I would like to read more star trek books.

Seleyia says

**** 3.5 stars ****

This was another interesting read. While this does not feel like anything we have not seen before, hear me out on why I enjoyed it so much. The point of views we get from T'Pol are amazing in this book! As someone who was always interested in the Vulcan culture, this really added some of those interesting things into a story like this. The crew, like always, was spot on, just like the show. Overall worth the read.

Howard Marbury says

Good story.

If you enjoyed the series you will enjoy this book. While it was a stretch of Surak's teachings it was entertaining and a good Enterprise fix for those of us who miss the show.
