



Brinkmanship

Una McCormack

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An all-new novel set in the universe of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, in which tensions escalate between two powerful forces in interstellar space.

The Venette Convention has always remained independent, but it is about to become the flashpoint for a tense military standoff between the two power blocs now dominating interstellar space--the United Federation of Planets and the recently formed Typhon Pact. The Venetan government turns to the Typhon Pact's Tzenkethi Coalition for protection in the new order, and has agreed to allow three of their supply bases for Tzenkethi use. But these bases--if militarized--would put Tzenkethi weapons unacceptably close to Federation, Cardassian, and Ferengi space. While Captain Ezri Dax and the crew of the *U.S.S. Aventine* are sent to investigate exactly what is happening at one of the Venette bases, Captain Jean-Luc Picard and the *U.S.S. Enterprise* are assigned to a diplomatic mission sent to the Venette homeworld in order to broker a mutually acceptable resolution. But the Cardassian delegates don't seem particularly keen on using diplomacy to resolve the situation, which soon spirals out of control toward all-out war. . . .

Brinkmanship Details

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Author : Una McCormack

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From Reader Review Brinkmanship for online ebook

Preston Pendergraft says

After the two previous two books in the Typhon Pact I found this one to be underwhelming 1. I did enjoy the Tzenkethi plot with the spies, but I found the Venetans to be a little off and their naivety to be a bit much. I understand what the author was doing, it just seemed a bit much for me.

Nis says

Very nice ending to the Typhon Pact series. Exactly the kind of political thriller I expected the series would be full of.

Crystal Bensley says

A good political thriller where you learn alot about the Tzenkethi.

Stephen says

Who's up for the Cuban Missile Crisis....in spaaaaaaace? When an otherwise friendly nation on the borders of the Federation and two of its allies signs a treaty with a hostile power, allowing them bases for repair and refueling along the Federation border, Starfleet is understandably concerned -- and doubly so when news arrives that a fleet is enroute to supply the bases for their new tenants, carrying chemicals that could be used in biogenic warfare attacks on the Federation. While the USS Enterprise speeds to meet with the Space Cubans to work the diplomatic angle, the USS Aventime is dispatched to do a little friendly snooping near the proposed base nearest the Federation border. When the Cardassians -- who, along with the Ferengi are the other two threatened allies -- arrive ready for war, and the Space Cubans catch wind of possible spies inserted in their country, events begin to spiral out of control, heading towards a war that no one wants but no one seemingly can avoid. But the drama unfolding in open view is only the smoke and mirrors for another maneuver, one that is using parties on both sides.

I bought this book a couple of years back, intrigued by the possible historical parallels and interested in a book which includes both Picard and Dax. The primary appeal of the book is learning about the Tzenkethi, who along with the Breen were pretty much black holes before the Typhon Pact series began. Romulans, we know, love, and fear; while the Gorn and Tholians can be wrapped up in primal fears about reptiles and insects, respectively. The Tzenkethi are presented as a very stable, very hierarchical society who have a natural affinity for the Space Cubans, another stable and hierarchical society. The Tzenkethi view the Federation as some kind of chaos monster, however, the epitome of their every social fear: it's all argument, class-and-racial intermixing, cats and dogs living together, mass hysteria! Who can tell what they'll do, what new planet will sudden fall under their spell?

Having read beyond this series, I knew that no epic war between the Federation and the Typhon Pact broke

out, so the drama was largely dampened for me. I assumed the drama would keep ramping up until something happened out of left field to defuse things, and that's more or less what happens. Still, it's nice to see Picard being the commanding diplomat again, and I'll never say no to a story with Ezri Dax and her ship, in part because the Relaunch developed her in such a commendable way -- turning the awkward 20-something shrink of 2000 into the Captain on the Bridge, and in part because the Aventine looks much different than the other Starfleet ships and I'm ever curious about it.

Sean O'Hara says

Previously on Star Trek: The Typhon Pact we had the Cuban Missile Crisis in Space.

This time on Star Trek: The Typhon Pact, we have the Cuban Missile Crisis in Space.

So to some extent the series is getting repetitive -- pretty much every TNG era book these days has to involve a show-down between the Khitomer powers and the Typhon Pact which will go right up to the edge of war without actually becoming one. And you know what, I don't care -- the original Star Trek was at its best when it was doing Cold War in Space stuff, something that's been sorely lacking for decades.

Plus, it means every book now is like The Final Reflection, only with the Typhon Pact nations, and exploring alien cultures is what Star Trek is all about (something else that Star Trek lost sight of after a certain point).

John Carter McKnight says

I really should've liked this book immensely. I'm a big fan of diplomatic/political intrigue, and the Star Trek universe has done it particularly well a few times. Unfortunately, this fell flat.

One problem was the lack of distinctiveness in voices: a large part of the appeal of tie-in fiction lies in hearing familiar characters in our heads. McCormack not only miscued on that, but her Cardassians, Ferengi and humans all sounded the same.

One of the subplots involved a deep-cover agent going native, and *almost* pulled off a brilliant tale: all the ingredients were there, but it just missed. The other subplot, involving a failing diplomatic summit, didn't work because of the voice issue coupled with too much similarity in names: it was hard to keep track of who was representing which faction.

There was a terrific book in here somewhere, and maybe stronger editing could have excavated it. Didn't happen, though, making for a mediocre read.

Delray Beach Public Library says

In this exciting edition to the Star Trek Universe, tensions are becoming higher every day. The Venette convention has turned to the Tzenkethi coalition for protection and has allowed three of their bases for the coalitions' use. But if these bases are garrisoned, they would unacceptably close to Federation, Cardassian, and Ferengi space. Captain Ezri Dax and his ship the U.S.S. Aventine are sent to investigate what exactly is

going on in these new Tzenkethi bases.

Meanwhile, Captain Picard takes the U.S.S Enterprise to the Venette to hopefully broker on an acceptable resolution. However, the delegates of the Cardassian have different plans on resolving the situation, and an all-out war is about to break out in the Galaxy.

Will Picard be able to form a peace agreement with the coalition? Or will war break out and potentially destroy the federation.

To learn the ending, pick up a copy today at your nearest library or bookstore.

Other books in the Typhon Pact Series in order:

Typhon Pact Book 1: Zero Sum Game
Typhon Pact Book 2: Seize the Fire
Typhon Pact Book 3: Rough Beasts of Empire
Typhon Pact Book 4: Paths of Disharmony
Typhon Pact Book 5: The Struggle Within
Typhon Pact Book 6: Plagues of Night
Typhon Pact Book 7: Raise the Dawn
Typhon Pact Book 8: Brinkmanship

For more information about the book, visit the authors' websites at:
<http://authors.simonandschuster.com/U...>

Reviewed by Wyatt R., TAB@DBPL Reader Advisor since 2012.

Matt Randall says

As I was reading Brinkmanship, I kept thinking that at the end, everything would come together and there would be a brilliant reason for the Cardassian ambassador's rudeness, Peter Allen's paranoia, and some way of bringing the Cardassian spy into the rest of the events that would all make sense. But that never really happened. Instead, everything was left in a fairly blurry, uncertain state. I'm not sure what the point of the novel was. It doesn't really feel like it moved the Typhon Pack storyline forward. It did give us a look at the Tzenkethi, which was interesting, but that was about it.

Besides the plot issues, I had some problems with the dialogue in places. It didn't seem to flow naturally, and people seemed to say each others names too much. The Federation ambassador, Jeyn, seemed a very pointless character. He didn't do anything, really. The Cardassian serving on the Enterprise, Dygan, was also very under-used. His character was presented as being very important to the story at first, but he really wasn't. Even the interesting Ferengi ambassador was underutilized.

All in all, not McCormack's best. She created some interesting characters only to make little use of them, and the plot really got away from her at the end.

Maurice Jr. says

I'm enjoying the ongoing saga of the Typhon Pact. This time around, we get the Tzenkethi, whom I find endlessly fascinating.

I enjoyed watching the crews of the Enterprise and the Aventine working together to stop yet another Tzenkethi plot to undermine the Federation and their allies. This time they were using the Venette Convention, a race annoyed with the Federation for what they perceived as ignoring their overtures of friendship. They leased bases from the Venette near the borders of the Federation, the Ferenghi and the Cardassians, and it became clear that they intended to use them to potentially strike at three of the four Khitomer Accords powers at will.

A deep cover Cardassian spy on Ab-Zenketh provided an excellent look at the inner workings of Tzenkethi society. Neta Efheny was implanted awhile back as Mayazan Ret Ata E, a low level cleaning worker who was assigned to clean in their foreign affairs building. Rets are bred not to ask any questions or to pry into affairs outside of their areas of training, which made it easy to get a spy into a position where her implanted audio/visual devices could record sensitive information.

While the Enterprise conducted diplomatic relations with the Venette, the Aventine was held in reserve to extract Efheny from her assignment. Until then, their job was to get Starfleet Intelligence officer Commander Peter Alden close enough to ascertain whether or not the Tzenkethi were bringing the materials to make bioweapons to this base.

I enjoyed watching the Tzenkethi outmaneuver the Federation and allies, and watching them get some of theirs back- the back and forth was exciting to watch, and I enjoyed watching Efheny as Mayazan Ret Ata E working to maintain her cover and to focus past her growing enjoyment of her life as a lower caste Tzenkethi. I look forward to seeing more of the Typhon Pact in future books.

Scott Williams says

I couldn't put this down! I think it's my favourite of the Typhon Pact novels. McCormack does an excellent job of balancing action between Picard on the Enterprise, Dax on the Aventine, and some covert operatives on a planet. I love the espionage and diplomatic stuff and McCormack handles it expertly. Without spoiling anything, I can say that McCormack writes the Cardassians very well.

I think what I most enjoyed about this novel is that it included some exploration of a strange new world, and a new civilization! To me, that's a big part of what Trek should be and many of the novels in this series have left it out.

Daniel says

The next book in the Typhon Pact series takes us to the Tzenkethi and a non-aligned power, the Venette Convention. The Tzenkethi wish to lease bases from the Venetans right on the borders of three Khitomer powers, which include the Federation. Naturally, Starfleet sends representatives to the Venetans in an attempt to stop the leasing process. What ensues is, as the title points out, a case of brinkmanship with one side

accusing the other of various misdeeds while, at the same time, inching closer to war.

This wasn't the best Typhon Pact novel. All of the major powers keep upping their game to the point where pulling back becomes almost unthinkable. Think of this as the Cuban missile crisis in the Star Trek universe. Things eventually come to a head when the Khitomer observers inspecting the starbases discover compounds used for weapons.

This book is effectively split into two storylines, the Picard and Dax paths. The Picard line is all about negotiating with the Venetans and not much else, Dax is about the base inspections and, depending on your perspective, the covert mission on the Tzenkethi homeworld. All of the Typhon Pact novels cover a power in the Pact with great detail. For Brinkmanship, that power is the Tzenkethi from the perspective of undercover agents on ab-Tzenketh.

Frankly, after the last books dealing with Deep Space Nine, this seemed like a bit of a letdown. Most readers will not believe that the Khitomer and Typhon powers will come dangerously close to open warfare this soon in the novels, which makes the crisis seem a bit deflated. But, the ab-Tzenkethi portions were quite fascinating ending with a new, possibly permanent, Tzenkethi character for the Khitomer powers. Overall, it wasn't that great of a book, it certainly is decent, but not as good as the last two in the Typhon Pact.

Barry says

Whether it is the publishing order, or by intention, this book, the 8th and final in the Typhon Pact series seems to be out of place.

The past two books would have been a much better ending to the series than this book is. That's not to say that the story or writing of this book is in anyway inferior but rather that the impact and conclusion are a much more sombre note.

Una McCormack does a fantastic job balancing two unique societies and the Tzenkethi portions of the book are just fascinating and a real triumph. The Venetans, however, whilst unusual and very 'alien' just come across as naïve.

Picard & co are tasked with trying to resume diplomatic ties with the Venetans, a race that the Federation seemingly forgot about when they were busy fending off attacks from the Dominion and the Borg. In the mean time the Tzenkethi have utilised the gap left by the Federation to their advantage. The potential militarisation of the Venetan bases by the Tzenkethi is a threat that Dax & her team must try to resolve. And it is the resolution that is both too swift and the only reason this didn't get 5 stars.

The real fun in this novel is following the undercover agents on the Tzenkethi homeworld and the glimpse at the entirely engineered society presented is fascinating. So much so, that I'd have liked an entire book devoted to them alone.

The author does an amazing job of enriching the society in which the spies find themselves and my only frustration is that so much more could have been developed and added.

All-in-all, I really enjoyed this book and I think you will too.

C.T. Phipps says

The Typhon Pact novels are an interesting experiment in Star Trek literature. They are, in simple terms, an attempt to create a power to rival the Federation which is simultaneously hostile to the Alpha Quadrant's "good guys" but not something which can be just ignored as long as no one crosses the Neutral Zone. This isn't really all that original of an idea since the Klingons used to occupy this role in the Original Series and the Cardassians/Dominion had it for the period they weren't at war with both.

But it's a good idea.

I've reviewed some of the other novels in the series such as *Zero Sum Game*, *Rough Beasts of Empire*, and *The Struggle Within*. In general, they are highly political books which deal with issues of how the Federation is going to deal with someone who has every bit the same level of power as them but only some of the values.

The books are quite clever in that the very act of the Typhon Pact forming from various "bad guy" Star Trek races results in political change as the powers find themselves altering in regards to the new political reality. Isolationism is the tool of the tyrant and those who depended on it among the Tzenkethi, Breen, and other species no longer have that luxury. The books are good, for the most part, but not necessarily to everyone's tastes. For me, I consider them to be the tool of those who really like deep looks into the politics of fiction.

Brinkmanship is, however, my favorite of the novels so far. It's not a difficult plot, being, essentially, "The Cuban Missile Crisis IN SPACE" but that's actually one of its strongest points. Once you get an idea of what they're going for, the plotline and its potential pitfalls become much more interesting. The short version is the Tzenkethi have made alliance with a close-to-the-Federation race called the Venetans.

The Venetans are harmless enough but have leased three of their bases to the Tzenkethi that puts them in striking distance of the Federation. Worse, there's indications that the bases are being stocked with biogenic weapons. Captain Picard, Doctor Crusher, and some newcomers must work on the diplomatic ends while Ezri Dax works with an old academy buddy on the espionage. There's also a subplot with a Cardassian spy on the Tzenkethi homeworld who is enamored of their totalitarian way of life.

There's a lot of very good bits as the central theme of the Typhon Pact is explored: what does one do with someone who is threatening and antagonistic but not an enemy yet? The Tzenkethi might be intending to make a first strike against the Federation or they might just be preparing for the day they need to (or they might not at all). Also, how much of a war is won by persuading the outsiders the other side is the bad guy? What about those who think the grass is greener on the other side or are paranoid to the point of insanity? All good questions in this *Thirteen Days*-esque adventure.

The book suffers, in my opinion, by making the Venetans too naive for their own good. For example, the concept of spying is considered to be a taboo thing for them to do and the equivalent of a war crime. Finding out the Federation inserted them into the Tzenkethi homeworld is almost enough to derail talks. The fact the Venetans can be worried about this and not about the fact the Tzenkethi are eugenics-obsessed Machiavellian schemers (and Starfleet doesn't bother pointing this out) strains credibility. The Federation could easily destroy the Tzenkethi in any argument where they just pointed out what a complete bunch of bastards they are. But they don't do that because, I dunno, negative campaigning is bad? Maybe the Venetans like totalitarian eugenicist societies.

I also had a bit of an issue with the fact the issues were allowed to reach their boiling point by a faction which had their own agenda. Their agenda is a valid one but given how close things got to intergalactic war, I can't help but think the parties involved deserved to be drug out of their offices and tossed on the street. You'd think the parties involved would have learned their lesson about screwed up backdoor dealings. It's the equivalent of the CIA setting up the Cuban Missile Crisis to catch a ring of KGB agents bribing members of Congress. Yes, it's a big deal but if the result is nuclear annihilation then there better be some arrest warrants issued thereafter.

I will say this novel has a lot going for it with the intricate dealings, world-building, and the stories about people trying to deal with bad faith actors in politics. Doctor Crusher really shines in this and I think the writing for her is top-notch. I also loved the scenes on Tzenkethi and how the two kinds of spies deal with their situation in drastically different manners. I also liked the depiction of Tzenkethi culture and how they've managed to create a society which is thoroughly toxic but its members seem to largely think is a good deal for themselves. The fact they're not 100% successful in this, however, is hope for the future.

I wasn't quite sold on the depiction of Ezri Dax, however, now a starship captain and a character far removed from the bumbling counselor she was on Deep Space Nine. Much of the book is devoted to her being suspicious of a Starfleet Intelligence agent and his conclusions, believing them to be paranoid delusions that might lead to an act of terrorism. The book more or less makes it clear the Tzenkethi are perfectly capable of everything he fears and there's even a moment where Ezri is left gobsmacked when she finds out one of his insane-sounding theories was perfectly sound. Ezri never changes her attitude, though, and I found that to be rather annoying. It's as if she's never heard of the phrase, "just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Overall, I really recommend this for those who love their Trek-politics. Others may find it a bit dry since it's not an adventure novel.

9/10

Nicky2910 says

Star Trek: Typhon Pact: Brinkmanship by Una McCormack While Crusher and Picard attend a conference over the offer by the Venetans to the Tzenkethi to use some of their starbases (those close to Federation, Cardassian and Ferengi space respectively), Dax is joined by SI commander Peter Alden, visiting one of the starbases in question and trying to determine the Tzenkethi motive.

I think the red thread holding this book together is distrust - distrust of enemies in a cold war, distrust of old friends who might have changed too far, distrust of new allies etc. And in the end, a part of the solution which returns a threatening outbreak of open warfare to the cold war situation, is to sow distrust into a people who are blunt and not used to subterfuge and lies. The Tzenkethi are a fascinating people and McCormack spends some time introducing their culture and the makeup of their society. And quite frankly, open slavery and subjugation is one thing, but genetic engineering and "(re)conditioning" so that everybody is happy with the small place that they're granted and not willing and/or able to look beyond is quite the devious scheme.

This book also introduces Peter Alden, a high-strung intelligence officer on the verge of a breakdown, and Corazame, one of said naive Tzenkethi who gets pulled into a spy-extraction plot. We'll see both of them

again in "The Missing" and "Enigma Tales" (only Alden).

Overall, an entertaining novel, which unfortunately takes a bit of time to really get going. But once it does, it's hard to put it down... And I said it before: I like Alden, he's an interesting, multi-layered character that I wouldn't mind reading much more of.

Armen says

["You are making a mistake," she said, "if you're still thinking of me as Ezri Tigan. I am Dax. I'm the sum of many parts. I've been a mother, a father, and the lover of both men and women. I've been a diplomat, a legi
