



Zero Sum Game

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A spy for the Typhon Pact—a new political rival of the Federation—steals the plans for Starfleet’s newest technological advance: the slipstream drive. To stop the Typhon Pact from unlocking the drive’s secrets, Starfleet Intelligence recruits a pair of genetically enhanced agents: Dr. Julian Bashir, of station Deep Space 9, and Sarina Douglas, a woman whose talents Bashir helped bring to fruition, and whom Bashir thinks of as his long-lost true love.

Bashir and Douglas are sent to infiltrate the mysterious species known as the Breen, find the hidden slipstream project, and destroy it. Meanwhile, light-years away, Captain Ezri Dax and her crew on the *U.S.S. Aventine* play a dangerous game of cat and mouse with a Typhon Pact fleet that stands between them and the safe retrieval of Bashir and Douglas from hostile territory.

Zero Sum Game Details

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From Reader Review Zero Sum Game for online ebook

C.T. Phipps says

Star Trek: Typhon Pact: Zero Sum Game is a spy novel. A very unusual spy novel. The premise is something which, adjusted to an Earth setting, could be the basis of a James Bond movie. The Typhon Pact (Soviets) have stolen the secrets of the Slipstream Drive (submarine plans) and are assembling their own prototype in a secret shipyards (unchanged). Julian Bashir (Bond) is recruited by Starfleet Intelligence (SIS/MI6) to sabotage this project.

Furthermore, because the Typhon Pact killed Federation citizens in their theft, Bashir (Bond) has carte blanche to use lethal force in the process. Bashir is even allied with a beautiful female agent for the duration of his mission. About the only thing which doesn't happen during this mission is Bashir sleeping with the beautiful silver-haired dissident.

One of the early misapprehensions of the Typhon Pact was that it was going to be the Legion of Doom or a kind of Reagan-era view of the Soviet Union. The Tholians, Tzenkethi, and Breen have been portrayed as nearly universally evil while the Gorn and Romulans have had some pretty solid roles as Federation antagonists. Given Star Trek Online's transformation of the Klingon Empire into an Axis of Evil (including the Orions, Nausicans, and Gorn), you will forgive me if I assumed there would be some nod towards this. Can you do write about an alliance of totalitarian dictatorships, murderers, and terrorists without making them villains?

Yes, yes you can. Because, that's where things get interesting. David Mack takes the stereotypical "us vs. them" spy story with all its moral certainties about its immoral activities necessity and turns them on their head. Star Trek has played around this before using Section 31 but, arguably, failed since so many fans embraced the evil organization as antiheroes as opposed to well-realized villains. Zero Sum Game, by contrast, takes a seemingly binary situation to illustrate why the Federation way is better.

Zero Sum Game is an interesting story about humanizing, for lack of a better term, the alien races gathered together in opposition to the Federation. What I liked about the book is it managed to keep the fact the Breen and Romulan governments are lead by vile people whose ideal world includes a boot on the face of humanity forever but more or less rebuttals a lot of the inherent xenophobia in spy fiction.

The Breen are a federation, themselves, consisting of many races formed together into a single body. Unlike the Federation, however, they enforce a mono-culture which attempts to stamp out diversity and dissent. They could have very easily been cast a communist parable but are, instead, depicted as the most capitalist group outside of the Ferengi.

The thing is, the Breen aren't a singular entity. We get a nice look at Breen civilians and they're more or less identical to the ones you'd find anywhere on Earth. The most powerful moment in the book for me is, unexpectedly, a scene where Bashir just sits down and listens to the Breen wandering around a marketplace. They talk about their jobs, kids, supervisors, and spouses. It's a powerful moment, reinforcing what Star Trek is all about.

Given I'd been thinking of the Breen as walking experience points from my time fighting them in Star Trek: Online, I was momentarily ashamed. Of course, even Star Trek: Online had a Breen officer disgusted by the actions of his crewmates. So, really, my treating them as walking experience points was my failure rather than the games' own.

Meeting Breen dissidents who don't want to necessarily overthrow their governments but, simply, want more freedom was another way of showing the Star Trek Noveline's races aren't necessarily like Dungeons and Dragons species. There's no such thing as, "Always Chaotic Evil."

The Typhon Pact is everything I wanted out of the series when I heard it was first announced. A rip-roaring Cold War adventure between a twisted country which hates freedom, a heroic nation which loves it, dashing super spies, and a narrative which rips to shreds the binary dualism that usually underlines such stories.

The Breen and Romulan governments may be evil but their citizens are not, leading to the serious question as to who war would benefit should the Typhon Pact go to war with the Federation. The answer? Absolutely no one. Zero Sum Game is a ruthless deconstruction of the spy genre while remaining entirely a part of it. The best approximation I can think of is The Prisoner, by Patrick McGoochan, who wrote one of the seminal works of espionage by taking an utter ***** on the Cold War's values. By recognizing the fundamental value of "our" enemies, we may defeat them more conclusively than through force.

This is one of the reasons David Mack remains my favorite Star Trek author alongside Christopher Bennett. While I don't always agree with their decisions in their books, I believe they have a strong grasp on at least one element of Star Trek that makes their books resonate with me. In David Mack's case, he manages to insert the fact peace and understanding are the forefront of all of the Federation's conflicts as a desired goal. This is not the case in Babylon Five, Star Wars, or other rival franchises. Victory is. Trek has peace being more desirable than victory, even if it means not getting everything you wanted.

Julian Bashir's characterization in this book is great and I would love to see David Mack do further spycraft adventures with him. I, honestly, prefer Secret Agent Julian Bashir over Doctor Julian Bashir. Still, both sides are always in play during this book. Seeing the conflict inside him over the necessity of killing is great and we get "necessary casualties" examined when the aftermath of his actions are examined by a Breen engineer.

Captain Ezri Dax was kind of underwhelming in this book because I am more invested in her relationship with Julian Bashir than her role as a badass starship Captain. She's become the Kirk-lite of the post-Destiny world and that's great for her but awesome starship tactics as well as radical plans just didn't really move me here. I suppose it's because I was one of Ezri's fans when DS9 was on the air and would have preferred more attention paid to the vulnerable side of her Julian brought out.

Another character from DS9 makes a surprise return this book, surprising me as a reader. I won't spoil their identity but their role in this story makes an excellent contrast to Julian. This character attempts to portray the "ends justify the means" spy role "straight" while Julian subverts it at every turn. The book was so effective at this characterization, a latter revelation made perfect sense.

I'm not sure if the Noveline will use the ending of the book to its full effect but if they back off from it, I'll be disappointed. Thematically, David Mack has created Julian's ultimate nemesis who I would love to see him face in life-and-death struggle. This may be a contrast to my earlier praise of peace and understanding, but just because Captain Kirk made peace with the Gorn doesn't mean I don't like seeing him blow the reptile Captain up.

In conclusion, kudos to David Mack for creating this novel and his role in developing the Typhon Pact. You should definitely read this novel.

9.5/10

Oleg Ryzhikov says

Zero Sum Game is a little cheesy, but nevertheless fun spy story, with some nice starship action and rather fascinating background on Breen species.

Robert W. Walthers Jr. says

I loved the story but I am a star trek can . Can't find a bad star trek novel or episode .

Krista D. says

Well, this is the lowest marking I've ever given a David Mack book and it was tough to do. Don't get me wrong, I liked the book, but I found I was able to put it down and go a few days before I picked it up again.

With that said, good story arc of Julian and looking to see more development there. Ezri? I didn't feel anything new was developed there. She was just filler, and really dragged the story down for me.

Lance Schonberg says

Having said I'm not particularly fond of the multi-series crossover books in the past, I still seem to have picked up the Typhon Pact books as part of my journey back into written Trek for 2013.

DS9 was my least favourite series (which is not to say that there weren't some great episodes), so I wasn't expecting to like this one as much as I did. I know I keep complaining that I'm tired of the fate of the universe, or at least the Federation, hanging on the plot, and maybe that's why I enjoyed it as much as I did. This was a simple, straight forward covert operations mission. Find and infiltrate the enemy stronghold, get back the stolen plans, blow up the prototype, and get out.

The problem being that Dr. Bashir is one of those covert agents. Genetic enhancements notwithstanding, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me to send a doctor on a mission to kill and destroy, regardless of how impressive his capabilities might be. Sure, we've paired him with someone who has the covert ops training, but that someone also happens to be a previous love interest who he's still in love with and it almost seems like he's just going along with everything in order to impress her. I never quite believe that he's into the whole secret agent thing, and I don't think he does, either.

Still, it's a quick read and helps push the envelope towards the next big war we're supposed to think is coming.

Tyrone Wilson says

I'd give it 2.5 stars, but only because I'm a big Star Trek fan, and that's what kept me going with this book. Parts of the action was pretty good, but other parts were hardly credible ... even for science fiction. The time

frame for the mission and the "winging it" during the mission made it even more suspect, particularly the latter stages of the mission. The interpersonal stuff at the end was both unexpected considering what happened during the story and appalling (not to give anything away).

John Scott says

Loved the book, bit of a weak start to the Typhon Pact series, given how important it is to the Star Trek universe as a whole. Loved seeing Bashir back in action, though. He was always one of my favourite Deep Space Nine characters, and my favourite of the doctors of all the series (movie, series AND novels). Already reading Seize The Fire!

Rob says

At points during this book I wonder who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. Not your usual Trek saga. I think that was maybe the point.

David Mack books are usually well written and this one was no exception. I didn't find any reason to hate it except it doesn't make sense to send a Medical Doctor in where more than likely he would be forced to do things against his principles but that's kind of what it was all about. If there were a real Starfleet and they needed such an operation done, I'm sure they would not take such chances on sending in an untrained operative like that. His genetic enhancements didnt seem to help all that much except for picking up the Breen language quickly.

The Dax character doesn't really line up to what I remember from DS9 but that's OK. The character could have been any Starfleet captain for all it mattered to the story really.

Scott Williams says

I enjoyed the exploration of the Breen and their culture. I was a bit uncomfortable with the body count in this book. I prefer my Starfleet heroes to be squeaky clean. It will be interesting to see where Bashir's character goes from here.

Crystal Bensley says

Really loved this first entry in the Typhon Pact series. The BREEN are an interesting species and David Mack does an excellent job as usual.

Preston Pendergraft says

Really enjoyed this book. Reminded me a lot of Abyss.

Nathan says

Excellent incite into an alien race we really haven't seen before - the Breen. Liked having Bashir back into the action, as well as Ezra Dax. Overall, a great start to a new series. Just wished they would have explained a little more about what the Typhon Pact is near the start of the book, but by the end you understand.

Alex says

There's a point toward the end of the book where first officer Bowers, confronted with the next crisis, half jokingly asks "never a dull moment, eh?" and the Amazing Captain Dax replies: "not if we're doing this right". I could see this doubling as an exchange between David Mack and his editor, because Zero Sum doesn't have dull moments either and very few of the quiet variety: mostly the nice introspection into Bashir's character, now that his DS9 "family" is all but shattered, with his friends and colleagues all gone into different directions and career paths.

Bashir is the focal emotional point of Zero Sum, the book that kicks off the new crossover miniseries Typhon Pact set in the Trek universe that Mack himself has reshaped with the Destiny trilogy. If you've been following the various relaunch titles of the 24th century shows (Deep Space Nine and The Next Generation especially), this book is a no-brainer: you have to read it, it's where the story goes next and it's an entertaining read that seems to set up nicely the stage for the next three books. The same goes if you've only jumped back on board Trek lit with the Destiny Trilogy (and his excellent coda, A Singular Destiny by Keith R. De Candido). As a book to pick up with only the tv shows under your belt, though, this might work less well, leaving such a reader scrambling to adjust to a different galaxy, with new characters and the old ones weighted down by much more backstory.

For the faithful, though, there's plenty of treats: Captain Ezri Dax and the Aventine crew, Federation's president Nan Bacco, the return of the "Jack Pack", a close look at the Breen and Breen society (something the tv shows never got around to), the first consequences of the new political landscape emerged after the Destiny events and the beginning of a new (and perilous) journey for Julian Bashir that draws deeply from the character's history and traits.

Paul Bowler says

A fun read. Not one of the better Star Trek novels but it was fun to catch up with Bashir again. And learning so much about the Breen was interesting.

Mrsculpepper says

big wow ending! and pretty cool to learn more about the breen.
