



Star Trek: Vanguard #4: Open Secrets

Dayton Ward

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'Open Secrets' reexamines the classic era of Kirk and Spock, uncovering hidden secrets about their infinite and perilous universe through the eyes of all-original characters.

Star Trek: Vanguard #4: Open Secrets Details

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John says

A very good ST book. One complaint: it's been WELL over a year since the LAST book in this series was released. It was really hard for me to get back into it after that long. There was a cast list at the front of this book, but a more thorough synopsis of what has happened in the previous three books would have been much better. As it was, I found myself have to go back to the last book and read some sections of it to remember more details about what had come before.

Looking forward to the next book in this series. Unfortunately, it won't be out for 6 months!

Joe says

I just finished book 4 of the Star Trek Vanguard series, Open Secrets, and I was really pleased. The book is a jumping off point for the second part of the Vanguard story. At the end of the last book the Federation learned of the terrible threat posed by the alien Shedai after several members of Starfleet, and one down-on-his-luck reporter, witnessed the destruction of the Jinoteur system.

Most of the new plots in this book were introduced at the end of the previous volume, what I had described as an extended epilogue. Commodore Reyes' trial is a big part of the story, as is the battle being waged within T'prynn's mind. We learn more about the Federation's bid to learn about Shedai artifacts and the book is interspersed with interludes from the point of view of the Shedai Wanderer.

I thought this book had a nice mix of action and storytelling, especially after the rapid pace of the last book. I guessed at a twist ending that I envisioned, and while I was right about what happened I was way off on how it happened. I'll let you read what it is for yourselves. If you've never read a Star Trek book before I think the Vanguard series would be a good place to jump in. It's fun and doesn't require you to know what's going on in the tv sites or other books first.

Patrick says

A transitional book in this series

I find Ward's prose style off putting, but the story introduced interesting elements. I will continue reading to find out what happens.

Adam says

While "Reap the Whirlwind" was always going to be a hard act to follow, Ward manages to advance Ming Xiong's storyline quite nicely with the welcome presence of a rogue Klingon commander and his scientist wife. The introduction of Nogura also works well, and there are some nice nods to continuity - especially the shout outs to the Gorn (TOS: "Arena") and Nimbus III (Star Trek V).

Unfortunately, this volume loses a lot of momentum being bogged down in the Reyes court-martial saga and T'Pol's ever-raging battle against her former betrothed, Sten. The T'Pol storyline seems to have been stuck in the same place for almost 4 books now, and I quickly grew tired of the seemingly endless depictions of her "mind war" against Sten.

Nevertheless, the Vanguard saga continues to entertain, with enough clever characterization and page-turning suspense to keep me interested.

Adam says

I thoroughly enjoy this series, but Ward simply isn't as engaging or compelling an author as David Mack.

Nicky2910 says

Following up after the excellent Reap the Whirlwind, Dayton Ward's plate was quite full - but he more than delivered.

This novel is neatly divided in different plotthreads, so I'm going to comment on those individually:

*** Reyes' court-martial**

First of all, I appreciated the fact that the trial wasn't about refuting the charges but for Reyes to explain his motivation. From a by the book point of view he's guilty, he willfully disseminated classified information and went against orders. But he's a man of conscience who could no longer stand idly by and watch people get killed because they don't know the truth. Maybe he could have found another way to warn people off, maybe he could have influenced the higher-ups to get off their fat asses and actually do something about the situation in the Taurus Reach. Maybe. We don't know, and Reyes has got to live with his decision. As do the judge and the prosecutor who didn't seem to be too happy with the harshness of the sentence.

I have to admit that up to Reap the Whirlwind Reyes didn't make much of an impression, neither did Desai to be honest. Perhaps that's due to the fact that up until this novel the Vanguard-series has been one event after another. There was no time for contemplation, for second-guessing... and for facing the consequences. Open Secrets offers plenty of time to do just that which I truly enjoy. After all, action is good and well, but I need to know the driving forces behind those events, their motivations, their passions. So it was very good to actually see the relationship between Reyes, Desai and Fisher, to see them come to terms with the trial and the verdict - and Reyes' apparent death. There were quite a few genuine emotions which made this book come alive more than the others before it.

*** T'Pol, Pennington**

As with Reyes, T'Pol only came to life for me when her actions hit her in Reap the Whirlwind and her barriers finally came crumbling down. Before that... well, her actions didn't really speak well of her character, to put it mildly. I guess it will be interesting to see how much the fact that her internal battle with Sten's katra is now over will change her. What's her path going to be from now on?

Getting a glimpse into Vulcan society is always interesting, especially how fractured it is. Having a kind of Amish People splinter group offer the help that no one else could provide was a nice touch. I like the fact that the issue of mind-arts are still largely unexplored. After all, it was but a century earlier that simple mindmelds were forbidden (as evidenced by Enterprise). And since the ritual is about getting a katra out of one's mind - who is to say that it isn't some kind of derivative/precursor of the one that helped guide Spock's katra back into his body at the end of Star Trek III?

Pennington's perhaps a bit the weak spot in this novel because he only serves as identifying point for the audience to who all the obscure Vulcan rituals are explained. Otherwise, his motivation to accompany T'Pol to Vulcan comes across as a mixture of obsession and infatuation. Except for the one scene where T'Pol apologises to him, there was no real point to his inclusion in this plotthread - in fact, I'd rather have seen him on Vanguard covering the trial which would have made sense due to his being a reporter after all... I guess Ward was aware of that weakness in his novel. Otherwise he wouldn't have felt the need to fill Pennington's chapters with reiterating again and again that Tim should feel angry at T'Pol...

* What else is going on?

I really appreciated the fact that Reyes' trial was separated from what happened otherwise on the station. Especially that his replacement Admiral Nogura was portrayed as competent (if so far rather bland) and not as the villain only keen on placing blame on his predecessor was a real joy. Otherwise it would have distracted too much from the story.

And of course, the main story heated up quite a bit. The Klingons are now provoking the Federation wherever possible and are eager to get up to speed on the Shedai-technology. Sometimes this made for a bit of frustrating read because I couldn't help ask myself why all the different factions don't all come together and explore the Shedai united - after all, the threat posed by the Shedai is much bigger than any of the factions can individually dream to counter. But, of course, the desire to have just a little bit of an advantage over your neighbours wins every time... to the detriment of all. Weaving nods to TOS-episodes (such as Balance of Terror with mentions of xenophobia and Enterprise's Terra Prime-movement, Arena or Errand of Mercy) added to the depth of the political conflicts - and planted the seed to Nimbus III and the events of Star Trek V. And General Chang makes his appearance as well - what's his agenda? Is he already working with the Romulans and certain Federation officials? Or is he still loyal to the Klingon empire? And what are his plans with Reyes? I definitely enjoyed that part of the novel very much.

* Where does that leave us?

Open Secrets sets up the stage to the second phase of the Vanguard operation just as much as it puts an end to the first phase with Reyes' trial and subsequent removal from the station and the end of T'Pol's inner struggle. The Organians might have prevented open war for now, but there are other ways of confrontation. And let's not forget the Shedai and the "voice" that even they are afraid of. The game is certainly on.

David King says

“Open Secrets” by Dayton Ward is the 4th novel in the Star Trek Vanguard series which continues the various plotlines kicked off in the previous novels. A prime focus of the narrative in this book is the investigation and trial of the station’s commander, Commodore Reyes who was arrested at the end of the previous book for allowing classified information to be published by a reporter. In addition, the reader gets to follow the further deterioration of relations with the Klingon and Tholian Empires, the ongoing search for information on the Shedai technology and the fallout of T’Prynn’s mental breakdown which results in her return to Vulcan.

This book is another enjoyable chapter in the Vanguard series although it didn’t wow me as much as its predecessor, “Reap The Whirlwind”. The storyline developments were interesting and the characters continue to entertain me but there were just no real surprises or twists involved. Everything pretty much progressed as you would expect and there were no elements there that really struck me as being gripping or memorable.

One of the real issues I had with the novel however is in regards to the pacing which at times reduced my reading progress to a slow slog. I think the basic problem was that the novel is overly wordy at times to the point of distraction. Ward is basically using 20 words when 10 would have sufficed and for some reason the editing process has failed to rectify this. It is a shame as some competent editing could have dealt rather easily with this issue to ensure the pacing was better.

A nice element to the story is in regards to Ward’s ability to link various events into the wider Star Trek universe. I enjoyed seeing both the tie in to the Original Series in regards to the peace between the Klingons and Federation that was imposed by the Organians and the inclusion of Carol Marcus’ involvement with Shedai technology that hints at the future Genesis project seen in Star Trek II. Sometimes I think these links to the wider universe can be rather brutally shoehorned into a novel but with “Open Secrets” it all felt rather natural and subtle which I did appreciate.

Overall, this is a novel which competently continues the plots started in the previous Vanguard novels but doesn’t really provide any genuinely memorable or exciting parts. For fans of the series there is more than enough here to provide some entertainment but when you hold it up against the previous novel it seems rather lacking.

Terence says

I’ve mentioned in my reviews of the *Vanguard* series how Mack is the visibly better writer than his collaborators. I’ve offered no examples to illustrate my contention, which is poor form. Partly, that’s because this is my brain-candy reading and I’m not picking over it like a grad student studying Horace’s use of adverbs.* But I’ve also recently finished volume five of the 13-volume Chekhov short-story collection, which featured some of his best stories so far (IMO), and it got me to wondering what’s the difference? *Why* is Chekhov considered a master and *why* do I intuitively grasp that Mack is the better writer?

I make no claim to a definitive answer but an element in such an answer would be that Chekhov (and Mack to a lesser extent) is able to establish a character’s distinctiveness early on in a story, and subsequently

doesn't have to rely on clunky adjectives & adverbs or tedious asides to explain actions. We *know* that Character A sneered when he said "X," it's inherent in the character, as is his decision to do "Y."

Beyond these general reflections, *Open Secrets* is a decent entry in the series. It gets bogged down in an extended period when Dr. M'Benga tries to cure T'Pol (who fell into a coma when her Klingon lover was killed in the third novel) and Reyes' court martial. The pacing is definitely off.

But, otherwise, it's OK.

* This is an example from life: One of my grad school profs wrote his thesis on this very subject. And, no, I haven't read it.

John Mosman says

The Vanguard adventures continues - Commodore Reyes is convicted, the Klingons are closing in, there is a diplomatic opening with Romulans and the Federation is closer to deciphering the alien technologies. Good stuff for Star Trek Fans with a series that does not concentrate on the TV series characters or stories.

C.D. Reimer says

I read the previous book in this series several years ago. When I started reading this one, I jumped right back in as if it was only yesterday. (The glossary of major events and characters in the front helped a bit.) Although set in the ST:TOS universe, this series isn't about Captain Kirk and crew but all the people who are present in the background. The political intrigue of all the great empires (i.e., Federation, Klingon, Romulan, etc.) scouring a remote region of deep space for technology left behind by an ancient civilization is fascinating.

Wes O'Dell says

Ward's latest contribution to the Vanguard saga is both gripping and elegantly presented. Beginning with a flash-forward--the long-awaited Klingon fleet action against the station--the novel quickly backtracks to tell the story of Commodore Reyes's imprisonment and trial as well as continuing to unfold the story of the Shedai. All the while, escalating tensions with the Klingons dominate the background. The plot develops well and does a great deal to lend the Vanguard story the "epic-ness" for which it seems so well suited. There's a lot going on here, but it all connects.

This book's best features are the elements that tie everything together--often tidbits that only the fans will appreciate. The mention of Saladin-class destroyers, a class going all the way back to Franz Joseph's Star Fleet Technical Manual, and other elements relating to Starfleet's deployments against the rising threat of a Klingon war all add depth and a sense of thought-out complexity to the story. The story of the Romulans and Nimbus III likewise. Most of all, the occasional mentions of Kirk's crew and how the happenings in TOS episodes affected politics on a galactic scale is especially helpful. By showing how things all connect, Ward goes a long way toward making the TOS universe a more unified, understandable, and enjoyable whole for the reader.

Elements of the book that didn't seem to work as well included Pennington's storyline and the Shedai interludes. Pennington's Vulcan trip seems somewhat non sequitur. Why would he, after finally getting his big break back into journalism, go on a months-long personal trip to care for a comatose T'Pol? The action is back on Vanguard and I wish the story could've stayed there as well. Similarly, both the Shedai interludes and T'Pol's mental battle against her betrothed seemed stale by the end of the book (as indeed they have since the end of Harbinger).

That said, the book is an enjoyable read and a worthy continuance of a great series.

Jimmy says

This book was a good read, an interesting continuation of the over "Vanguard" story as told in the previous three books. If you've read them and enjoyed them, you'll certainly want to read this one, particularly if you intend to read the next offering in the series. If you haven't read the previous three, however, this book will not stand on its own; it has no real plot of its own, but is simply a continuation of the various subplots already established. Some of those subplots are quite interesting, and provide plenty of action and character development in this book. But none of them start here, and none of them truly end here, although some do reach viable break-points. Enjoyable and well-written, but this book is not a story within itself. It is simply a part of a larger story; as such, it is misleading to call it a novel. It's just the next 426 pages of the story.

Sean Park says

The fourth book in the Vanguard series, Open Secrets is a wonderful edition to the original series universe. This book follows multiple characters throughout the Taurus Reach as the conflicts in the region begin to heat up. While more light has been shone on the Shedai, the ancient race that controlled the Taurus Reach before the federation, these aliens still remain somewhat of a mystery. Similarly, the goals of the Klingons, Tholians, and Romulans are not entirely known either. The book leaves the reader with a variety of cliff hangers that lead into the next novel. All in all, this book was another great edition to the Vanguard series with all the same plot twists of the other books. The characters are complex and the plots they are entwined in are just as interesting. If you have not read the other books in the series and are a fan of Star Trek, these books are for you. Other sci-fi readers will also enjoy these books, however it is recommended that you watch a few episodes of the original series to get a bearing.

John R. Goyer says

The series continues well with this volume - lots of intrigue and adventures, some storylines closing, while other new surprises give us more to look forward to. All in all, a very satisfying book which makes me look forward to the next and further revelations.

Bryan Williams says

Open Secrets takes an "off day" from the Vanguard series, but again, it is important to read this book to

move the story arc along. I wish the publisher insisted that David Mack be the only author of this series. I don't see why they insisted on asking other authors to join the fray. Also, these Vanguard books are hard to find. They must have had one run at the publisher, because I have had to buy used copies, or very expensive trade paperback versions from Amazon - they aren't available to order from the actual book store.

This book took the longest amount of time for me to finish because the story lines were so disjointed, and there was a lot of "fluff" in between the juicy parts that were just not important. I also didn't like how Mr. Ward wrote a lot of the best characters off (at least for this book).

Oh well...I've already ordered the 5th book of the series, "Precipice," and anticipate a great adventure since Mr. David Mack returns to helm this book.
