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Weekly **TREK**

Making Sense of *Star Trek VI*: **THE PENAL COLONY OF BURA PENTHE**



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Australia, a piece of land located on the Planet Earth, got its colonization simply because of criminals. In the late 1700s, Britain claimed the territory and used it as a dumping ground for its many criminals. Despite the fact that Australia's roots are based in penal activity, the country managed to thrive, and today it is one of the most beloved and imitated countries on the planet.

In 1991, Star Trek showed the world the undiscovered country, which, metaphorically speaking, included a world where Klingons and Humans could live together in peace.

But let's not give up our backup, the penal colony of Rura Penthe. The colony actually gets its roots from Tolstoy's War and Peace, where the prisoners are sent to the freezing and dark regions of Siberia to slave and die. In The Undiscovered Country, however, the colony is only known as a Klingon prison with no guard tower or electric fence, just extreme cold and a magnetic shield to keep prisoners from beaming out (to date, Captain Kirk and Doctor McCoy are only the second and third prisoners who have

managed to escape the prison, being preceded by Jonathan Archer nearly two centuries before).

Rura Penthe itself is an asteroid mined for its dilithium. The prison serves merely as a means of getting cheap mining labor, and as long as the prisoners keep working, they are allowed to conduct any shady business they care to indulge in. Such was the case with Captain Kirk and Doctor McCoy. Despite having served in Star Fleet for years, the two were unprepared for the bullying and manipulation of the some of the galaxy's hardest criminals.



Siberia, the location upon which the Klingon prison Rura Penthe is based



Penthian guard dogs serve a multitude of purposes, not least of which is to keep rowdy prisoners in line. The dogs bear a great resemblance to the saber tooth tigers of Planet Earth's earliest years. In comparison, however, the saber tooth is as gentle as the domestic house cat.

Penthian guard dogs have massive claws, which they prefer to use for disemboweling their pray

before sinking their large tusks into the jugular vein, bleeding their pray to death.

Klingons, in an almost humanoid fashion, also enjoy pitting the guard dogs against each other in a Michael Vick fashion, hosting gambling rings for their favorite guard dogs. The dogs are also used to punish disobedient prisoners, though they are only allowed to severely wound in these cases.