



## Once Burned

*Peter David*

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There's a bar called "The Captain's Table," where those who have commanded mighty vessels of every shape and era can meet, relax, and share a friendly drink or two with others of their calling. Sometimes a brawl may break out but it's all in the family, more or less. Just remember, the first round of drinks is always paid for with a story...even in Thallonian space. Six years ago, long before he took command of the Starship Excalibur, a young Starfleet officer named Mackenzie Calhoun served as first officer aboard the U.S.S. Grissom. Then disaster struck, and Calhoun took the blame. A court-martial led to his own angry resignation from Starfleet...or so it appeared. At long last Captain Calhoun reveals the true story behind the greatest tragedy of his life.

## Once Burned Details

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Author : Peter David

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## From Reader Review Once Burned for online ebook

### **Kathleen says**

I really liked this book. Yes, the constant hinting about the horrible thing that happened on the *Grissom* in M'k'n'z's secret past was somewhat intriguing/annoying, but this is just about the best answer that question could get.

Because yeah, sometimes bad things happen. Everyone has a breaking point. Knowing that and not being horribly disillusioned by it are two different things. I like Mackenzie Calhoun a lot, and this is a great piece of backstory that really fleshes out his character.

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### **Mark says**

The title is a mouthful, but Peter David comes through with this first-person tale told by Captain Mackenzie Calhoun. The Captain's table format gives both David and his character an opportunity to tell a very personal story. I found it entertaining. You can find PAD among the crowd of the cover art.

Published in mass-market paperback by Pocket Books.

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### **Leland says**

3.5 stars. Peter David is one of my favorite Star Trek writers. This was a good adventure story. The "Captain's Table" concept, however is really kinda dumb and forced throughout the whole series.

This was my first Mackenzie Calhoun book, but I'd be willing to read more of the adventures of Captain Calhoun and the starship Excalibur.

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### **Jacque Hodges (Carter) says**

I'm not familiar with McKenzie Calhoun but I enjoyed his story. Kind of brutal in places (that's not the reason I liked it:-). I've been sucked in to all the Star Trek penned by Peter David, so far.

Calhoun quoted Kirk a lot and seemed to try to emulate him but in a no conscience sort of way. He was a rogue, but not a likeable one, in my humble opinion. I'll have to read more about him. Maybe I'll change my opinion of him.

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## **Daniel says**

Perhaps the best of the "Captain's Table" that I've read so far, this one didn't play around too much between the tale told by the captain vs a separate tale centered around the bar and the telling of the first. Also it helps that this captain doesn't exist as an actor on TV or film, so when you have his POV you don't have an established interpretation and seasons worth of material playing in your head looking for consistency. Finally, Peter David simply can write well for this kind of no frills adventure novel.

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## **Craig says**

This is how you use the Captain's Table to its best potential. It's a rarely interrupted narrative, unless Calhoun went off on a rabbit trail which he sometimes did, and a good story to boot told from the Captain's perspective and stuck to his end, and his interpretation, of the events. It helps that Calhoun is a creation of the author but this didn't fall into the usual pit that the New Frontier series often did which was getting mixed up in the stupidity of the nonsense on board the Excalibur and allowed the larger story to unfold. Here the focus remains squarely on Calhoun before he is given his command and where he learns a valuable lesson. I enjoyed the story and only was annoyed here and there by 20th Century style of situations/humour. Other than that I was quite happy with it!

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## **Scott Miller says**

While it's no surprise I enjoyed this--Peter David just gets better and better with each New Frontier novel--I am surprised that I enjoyed it as much as I did. I don't generally enjoy the fantastical sort of stories that sometimes happen in Star Trek books or series, especially any that occur on a holodeck, and the Captain's Table concept fits with those. However, Mackenzie's re-telling of the story of his first time killing and his time on the Grissom was the focus of this, so the setting wasn't front and center.

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## **Markus Korpela says**

I'll be damned, if this just wasn't one of the best Star Trek books I've ever read. Loved the dark tone of it, and just loved how these books (and later series) keep shattering that over-optimistic utopia, that Gene Roddenberry envisioned. Make no mistake, I consider Roddenberry genius, and love TOS, but let's be honest. UFP and it's people would never be perfect. There would be grief and suffering. Just like in this book.

Best of New Frontier so far. And then, unto the next one.

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## **Jerome Maida says**

Excellent Trek book by Peter David.

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**Alejandro says**

**This is one of the best Star Trek novels that I ever read!**

**GREAT STORIES NOT ALWAYS HAVE A NICE ENDING**

This book is positioned in a solid 5th place, in my very personal top list of *Star Trek* novels that I have read, and I still can't imagine something able to make it to lose its high position.

Sadly, it's very likely that a lot of Trekkers and sci-fi fans haven't read it.

Since it's part of the event *The Captain's Table* (a book event where Star Trek Captains go to a certain kinda-mystical bar and the price for the drink is to tell a story), I think that some people didn't read it or they prefer to read the adventures of the most known captains (the ones from the TV series (since Calhoun is a captain only appearing in prose novels (and in some comic books)) and due those other stories weren't that good (at least in my opinion), when readers would reached this book, they have lost the interest, will and/or confidence to keep reading more novels of this event.

I can understand that, since I was quite dissapointed myself with the book event (in an overall sense).

**BUT...**

...I had already bought the novel, so I told myself: "What the heck, let's read it".

One of the best decisions in books that I ever done.

This novel is easily the best one, more ambitious and far superior than the rest of the ones included in the book event of *Captain's Table* (at least the ones that I have read, since later they published another one and a further anthology (that I want to give them a try in the future)).

It's a strong *Star Trek* book, with a priceless non-traditional ending, but also I think that it's a gripping novel in the general literary sense.

**THE UNTOLD TALE OF MACKENZIE CALHOUN**

Mackenzie Calhoun suffered a downfall, early in his Starfleet career...

Now it's the moment to know what happened...

While it would be advisable to have have read first at least the first 4 books of the book series of *Star Trek: New Frontier*, since in there, you will know who is who in the series, where Captain Mackenzie Calhoun is introduced along with his crew.

Due the narrative, in this novel, is a tale from Mackenzie Calhoun's past, set several years ago, I believe that

any reader, they will be able to enjoy the story quite the same, founding there all the elements and comments that they need to understand the development of this particular story.

You will find there, the harsh consequences of "real life" as real as you would be able to get in a futuristic sci-fi book where not always you have a happy ending, a book so different that, you will find that things aren't as you usually expected in your typical *Star Trek* novel.

Also, as a bonus moment, when Calhoun gets at first, into the mystical and mysterious bar, he will meet a captain of the past, one with another sad story quite well known.

If you are looking for a dark story with strong and believable characters, [this is your novel](#).

This is a stand-alone novel, so you can easily skip the previous novels of this book event, since they aren't particularly good (and besides they are stand-alone stories too), and "jump" ahead to give a chance to this book.

In my humble opinion and honest hope, I believe that you won't regret to read this novel.

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## Dianah says

How unobservant am I? I realized 72 pages into the fifth book in the *Captain's Table* series that each cover has a picture of the author of that book. Does that look like I imagine Captain Calhoun? No, but that *is* a pretty good rendering of Peter David in the background. I double checked this hypothesis with Dujonian's Hoard and that's Michael Jan Friedman hovering in the back. I don't know what the other authors look like, but you can pick out people in the other covers who look like they might be the authors. **Well done!**

If only I could say the same for the words between the covers.

Since I was unfamiliar with Calhoun I took a break from this series and read the first six *New Frontier* books. I found them mostly enjoyable, but not for Captain Calhoun as much as his supporting cast. Having already given up on the 4th book in this series (a Voyager book – Fire Ship) I plowed ahead. Then I couldn't give up because he was going to tell the story of the *Grissom*, a ship Calhoun was First Officer on that is mentioned in shrouded mystery in five of the first six books. Since I plan to go back to the *New Frontier* series at some point I really wanted to know what the *Grissom* story was.

Unlike the other *Captain's Table* books, this entire book is told in the first person as if Captain Calhoun were telling someone about the Captain's Table bar and his various visits. It was an interesting choice and it might have worked with Kirk or Sisko, maybe even Picard. Calhoun is a man of action and few words so to turn around and have him say 68,000 is a bit much. David manages to retroactively fix the problem, but it doesn't stop the style from being at odds with the character and by fixing the problem he makes it more obvious and the solution gimmicky.

I'm underwhelmed by the *Grissom* story and have to say it wasn't worth the trip to get it. Maybe I've read to

many of Peter David's books, but this was very predictable. Die hard Calhoun fans will probably enjoy it, but if this is someone's first exposure to MacKenzie Calhoun I would expect it to be their last.

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### **David Palazzolo says**

Easily the most introspective of all the New Frontier books so far, this 7th entry also suffers from the most problems--not all of which could be anticipated by Peter David at the time of writing. The book's main failures stem in part from the fact that it ran a little long and is somewhat inconsistent with the set up presented in *Fire On High*. Also, as bad as things got, I don't think what happened could inspire such internal angst in Mackenzie Calhoun, particularly when one considers all of Mac's personal history.

The problem that couldn't be anticipated at the time of writing is the transformative power of the internet in general and Google in particular on the the way that information is shared. Granted search engines (and Google itself) existed in 1998, but at that time there were more households with a full set of encyclopedias than an Internet connection. The concept I'm dancing around here is that while it may have been reasonable at the time the novel was written that no one not personally involved (except for Shelby) to have any knowledge of the events surrounding Mac's time on the USS Grissom, today the book seems dated. I find it incomprehensible that what would have to be a series of courts martial prosecuting a ship's First Officer, night time Executive Officer, Security Officer, Ops Officer, and others on charges including mutiny, falsification of Starfleet records and flagrant violations of the Prime Directive, in connection with inquiries into the brutal death of two Federation ambassadors and the suicide of a Starfleet captain could be kept under wraps so well as to not ring a bell with, say, Zak Kebron in the previous book.

However, after saying all that, Peter David conveys well exactly what makes Calhoun tick, making this a perfect jumping on point for anyone not familiar with the series. And yes, despite all my griping, I actually liked the book. The next adventure is the last book of Double Helix crossover novels.

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### **Jim Cooper says**

One of the best of the New Frontier stories so far, and a great Star Trek story over all. Fills in the details of Calhoun's backstory that they've been hinting at in the other books. Parts are similar to TOS "The Doomsday Machine" which is an all-time great episode.

A heads up - the kindle version of this is terribly edited. You may want to try and find the paperback instead.

Minor spoiler:

I think I've decided that my favorite Star Trek stories are the ones about time loops and mutinies and this one has the latter.

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### **Elizabeth says**

This book has a much darker tone than the preceding ones in the New Frontier series. Rather than a flavor of

quirky humor and enthralling action, this book is instead infused with anguish and foreboding. Captain Calhoun here tells the story of what he perceives as his biggest failure, a time when he was caught up in a heartbreaking series of events. His wounds and regrets are still raw years later. But David handles this more brutal tone fearlessly, and presents an honest look at a complex unspooling of actions and motivations.

The author's customary depth of character continues here, in the first crossover of the New Frontier series. His compelling explorations of the themes of strength, power and authority continue to unfold here. And his character Mackenzie Calhoun continues to be very compelling to me, as he reveals much more of his inner life here than he has before.

I am reading the series as close to chronologically as I can, and I am thoroughly enjoying every part of it I can get my hands on.

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### **Chris McCown says**

I really enjoyed this book. I usually enjoy Peter David's books. Anyone who is a fan of New Frontier (and why wouldn't you be?) would like this book. After 6 books of hints and broad statements, we finally learn about Calhoun's past, and the tragedy that happened on the Grissom.

I think the best part of this book is how Peter David handles that tragedy. It's very subtle, and he really builds up the suspense. You know something is going to happen, you just don't know when. It's made even more enjoyable by the fact that Calhoun is trying to warn everyone. Of course you know he's going to be right, so the fun is in the other character's reactions. And Peter David is a fun read.

The only issue I had with this book was the character of Lieutenant Cray. This character covers for Captain Kenyon, even though what the captain is doing is clearly wrong. While you can understand, and even sympathize with Kenyon for doing what he's doing, no reason is given for why Cray does what he does. He viciously attacks Calhoun, and in the end tries to kill him, but why? I would say he's just following the captain's orders, but it's written as if he has personal stake in what happens when no reason is given why he should.

Also, and this is a really small gripe, why is there a first officer and a night watch XO? This might be how the real military does it, but it's something we've never seen before in Trek. Also, the end of this book brings the fact that 3 or 4 of the officers on the Grissom have supposedly been with Calhoun on the Excalibur the whole time, despite the fact we've never heard of them.

All things aside though, this is a fantastic book and is highly recommended. Just ignore the whole Captain's Table aspect. It doesn't make much sense.

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