



Star Trek: New Frontier: Stone and Anvil

By Peter David

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Fans of Peter David's bestselling *New Frontier* saga have been eagerly awaiting a new adventure featuring Captain Mackenzie Calhoun, Captain Elizabeth Shelby, and the crews of the Starships *Excalibur* and *Trident*. Now at last, Calhoun and Shelby return in an exciting page-turner that explores the past of both captains -- while simultaneously confronting them with a perilous dilemma in the present. A crewman has been murdered aboard the *U.S.S. Trident*, and all evidence points to Ensign Janos of the *Excalibur*. Calhoun is reluctant to accept that Janos, a powerful non-humanoid whom the captain has known and trusted for years, could be a killer and immediately launches an investigation into the crime. But this troubling murder mystery soon escalates into a full-pedged diplomatic crisis that threatens to pit Calhoun and Shelby against the entire United Federation of Planets -- and the *Starship Enterprise*TM.

Meanwhile, the turmoil involving Ensign Janos forces Calhoun to recall his own tempestuous past, his rocky relationship with a young Elizabeth Shelby, and a long-ago exploit that may have everything to do with the deadly emergency that now confronts them all!

Stone and Anvil is exactly the kind of compelling and original *Star Trek* adventure that Peter David's thousands of fans have come to expect from *The New Frontier*.

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Editorial Review

Review

Dreamwatch [Peter David] effortlessly makes the most of his own characters while developing some from small-screen *Trek*.

About the Author

Peter David is a prolific *New York Times* bestselling author whose career, and continued popularity, spans more than two decades. He has worked in every conceivable media—television, film, books (fiction, nonfiction, and audio), short stories, and comic books—and acquired loyal followings in all of them. In the literary field, he has had more than a hundred novels published. He lives in New York with his wife and four children.

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Chapter One

Now

On the *Trident*, Captain Elizabeth Shelby shook her head in disbelief as she and her husband, Captain Mackenzie Calhoun, walked down the corridor leading to the turbolift.

"So McHenry's gone?"

"That's right," said Calhoun.

"And Soleta's returned to the ship."

"Feeling very bewildered and, I think, rather embarrassed," Calhoun told her. "And the effects of the ambrosia are wearing off the rest of the Danteri as well. They've already been imploring Si Cwan to come back and take another stab at beginning a new Thallonian empire."

"Let me guess," said Shelby. "He doesn't want any part of it."

"No. The Danteri were no joy to work with even before the Beings got involved with them. Si Cwan is interested in keeping a safe distance from them. I think he's still enchanted with the idea of a new Thallonian empire, but he's convinced the Danteri aren't the way to go."

"Our remaining problem is the Tholians," said Shelby. "Fortunately enough, Ambassador Spock is with us. The Tholians are on their way, but we're thinking the ambassador will be able to forestall any problems. Especially when he explains that the downside of ambrosia is that it makes anyone who takes it extremely peaceful. I doubt that's going to be very attractive to the Tholians." She paused just before they got to the turbolift, turned, and said to Calhoun, "I'm very proud of the way you handled everything. I really am."

"Thank you. That means a lot, coming from you. And I love you."

She laughed softly. "You don't initiate that statement very often. And I love you, too."

"Tell me," he said, "do you think they'd miss me back on the *Excalibur* if I was gone for, oh...another half hour or so?"

"Even if they did, they'd probably figure out why and have the good taste not to comment on it."

"Your cabin?"

"By all means."

They walked forward into the turbolift, the door hissing open, and Shelby jumped back and barely stifled a shriek.

The ripped-up body of Lieutenant Commander Gleau tumbled out of the lift, staring with lifeless eyes up at them.

"This might take longer than a half hour," said Calhoun.

The offhand tone of Calhoun's comment didn't even register on Shelby. She was staring, goggle-eyed, at the corpse that had fallen out of the lift.

Gleau had always been one of the most strikingly handsome of the ship's crew. That had not simply been part of the Selvian charm called "the Knack," which he wielded with such effortless -- and occasionally divisive -- results. By any Earthly standard of measurement, he was exceedingly good-looking. That was no longer the case. The front of his body had been completely torn up. Because of all the blood, it was hard to distinguish between uniform shreds and shreds of skin. The upper portion of his face was hanging half off the front of his skull.

It took herculean effort on Shelby's part to steady herself, and she started slightly when there was an unexpected pressure on her right shoulder. It was simply Calhoun's hand and he said from behind her, "Are you all right?"

Part of her mind could scarcely conceive it. He sounded so calm. Wasn't there *anything* that fazed the man?

But she didn't say that. She'd be damned if she'd let Calhoun see how affected she'd been by the abrupt discovery. If he could take unexpected corpses in stride, so could she. She managed a nod, then tapped her combadge and said, "Sickbay, this is the captain."

"Villers here, Captain," came the perpetually irritated, no-nonsense voice of the ship's CMO. She always seemed mildly perturbed to be distracted from whatever it was she was involved with at that moment.

Shelby didn't care. Without going into details, she said briskly, "Full medical team to deck seven, forward section nine, turbolift. Gleau is apparently dead."

Instantly Villers was all business. "On my way," she said.

"Hurry," said Shelby.

"All things considered, I don't think the doctor's attempts to 'hurry' are going to be a major factor," said Calhoun.

Shelby closed her eyes and counted to ten, as her mother had always suggested she do. "That's what I love about you, Mac," she sighed. "No matter the situation, you always know just what to say."

Then

M'k'n'zy of Calhoun had no idea what to say.

M'k'n'zy, a warlord of nineteen summers in age, had just witnessed a meeting with a representative of the Danteri that was likely going to result in the freedom of his people.

The young Xenexian had no idea what to think about that, no idea how to feel. For as long as he could remember -- and sometimes, it seemed, past the point where he would have liked to forget -- M'k'n'zy had been leading his people in a bloody and brutal civil war. Now it appeared as if it was coming to an end. Bragonier of the royal house of Danteri had just been summarily dismissed, sent back to the Danteri with his metaphorical tail between his legs. He'd be returning to them with a message they were not going to want to hear, but would be forced to accept: Xenex would tolerate no further attempts to be ruled by them. The Danteri domination of Xenex was in its death throes.

As was M'k'n'zy's importance.

He knew in his heart that he shouldn't be feeling that way. His own concerns, wants, and desires were secondary to the needs of his people. He had always known that and been eminently comfortable with it.

But if the Xenexians were not going to be at war...

...of what use was a warlord?

These notions had always floated around in the back of his head. He'd always been of a dual mind: fighting for a time of peace, and secretly dreading what would happen to him if that peace was achieved. The latter concern had never caused him to hesitate in his pursuit of the former. Now that it was confronting him, however, it dominated the entirety of his mind rather than allowing itself to be shoved to the deepest recesses.

Part of what had brought it to the forefront was the gentle, probing questions of the thinning-haired man who was standing before him. He had the odd, nearly unpronounceable name of "Jean-Luc Picard." M'k'n'zy couldn't begin to handle "Jean-Luc." The combination of vowels and consonants tripped up his tongue and teeth. The last name he said after a fashion: PEE-cahd. It was as close as his normal pattern of speech would allow.

This PEE-cahd was from something called "Starfleet," which was, as near as M'k'n'zy could determine, the military arm of something else called the "United Federation of Planets."

M'k'n'zy had heard tell of the Federation when he was younger. His late father had made it sound very important. Assorted planets, uniting for the common good, to seek out new life and new civilizations. As for M'k'n'zy, he'd never given much consideration to planets. They were far too esoteric a concern for someone whose worries were so completely bound to the reality of the ground beneath his feet. Still, he had to admit that the name of the organization sounded very powerful, very important. It was the kind of name that put opponents on notice that they were dealing with a force to be reckoned with.

PEE-cahd had shown up, purporting to be captain of a ship called the *Stargazer*. M'k'n'zy was unimpressed by the name. If the tales of the Federation were to be believed, these Federation star vessels packed considerable weaponry. The word "stargazer" was too soft for such a ship. It made it sound as if the ship just sat around staring at the stars all the time. *Killcruiser*. Now, *there* was a name for a ship. *Annihilator* was also acceptable.

Still, for the commander of such an ineptly named ship, PEE-cahd was bearing a potent message. He spoke to the Danteri representative of an "understanding." Of reaching "a compromise," so "the bloodshed will

end."

M'k'n'zy would have none of it, however. He knew there would be no compromising with the Danteri. He could just see it: If the Danteri gave something back, the Xenexians would give something back. Strategic withdrawal, or overseeing the Xenexians in their assembling of their own government. Promises that could be bent or broken as time passed and PEE-cahd and his associates moved on to something else.

Only one option was available when dealing with the Danteri. They were to get off Xenex and never come back. Period, done, end of discussion. When Bragonier balked, M'k'n'zy was interested in hearing nothing more. When Bragonier declared that such as he could not be so easily dismissed, M'k'n'zy dismissed him. Telling M'k'n'zy that he could not do something was the equivalent of telling someone else that he could.

PEE-cahd had chided him, which M'k'n'zy had expected and ignored. The Federation man was an outsider. He had not witnessed *his* father being brutally beaten to death by oppressors. He had not had *his* entire youth swallowed up in pain, blood, and brutality. He had not hated for year upon year upon year. How could he? The Federation, after all, was entirely about cooperation and understanding, or at least so the stories went. How could someone who was a product of such an environment come close to comprehending M'k'n'zy?

He couldn't.

And yet...the things PEE-cahd said to him upon Bragonier's huffy exit made M'k'n'zy believe PEE-cahd was on his side. That he would force the arrogant Danteri to realize that their domination of Xenex was at an end. It gave M'k'n'zy the first flicker of hope he'd had in...well, ever, really. Simultaneously it fanned the flames of uncertainty as to his own future. Would there be a place for him in a Xenex that knew peace?

M'k'n'zy's confusion as to his status was brought home when, in a private moment, PEE-cahd point-blank asked him what would happen to him in the long term. "Perhaps I shall continue to lead my people here," M'k'n'zy had replied.

"Perhaps," the Federation man had said. He sounded agreeable enough about it, but there was a dash of uncertainty and even curiosity in the way he regarded the young Xenexian. "Will that satisfy you?"

That had been the question which had left M'k'n'zy in the rare position of not having the faintest idea of what to say. "I..." He hesitated. It seemed such a simple question. Why did the answer elude him so? "I...don't know," he admitted, sounding confused, hating himself for it.

"Well," said PEE-cahd, sounding reasonable enough, "at the point when you do know...let me know."

The response immediately caused M'k'n'zy's suspicions to flare. What was it that this man had in mind for him? He didn't strike M'k'n'zy as the type to make random comments for no reason. Furthermore, most people that M'k'n'zy encountered did nothing out of any sense of altruism, but rather were driven by self-interest. He couldn't begin to guess what manner of self-interest was motivating PEE-cahd. "Why are you so interested in me?" he demanded.

PEE-cahd shrugged. "A hunch," he said. "Nothing more than that. But captains learn to play their hunches. It's how they become captains."

"I see," M'k'n'zy mused. "So...if I had a hunch...that you were important to my future...that in itself might be indicative of something significant."

"Possibly," said PEE-cahd.

The captain could not possibly know what was going through M'k'n'zy's mind. Couldn't know that not long before, M'k'n'zy had been close to dying in the desert (not that M'k'n'zy was willing to admit to himself that wounds from Danteri slime would have been sufficient to kill him). And during that time, when he had drifted in and out of awareness, he had seen visions. Visions of this man shouting at him, telling him he was a "Starfleet officer," that he had a destiny, and that he couldn't let that destiny slip away by doing something as inconsiderate as dying.

And there had been someone else...a woman. A blond woman. A naked blond woman. Fair of skin, luminous of eyes, and the way she had looked at him had fairly burned into his soul.

It was said that in the desert strange things could and did happen. Men had often claimed that they'd seen echoes, shades of their past or their future, particularly when they themselves were in dire straits, with possible death drawing near. M'k'n'zy had never given much credence to such claims, but they were certainly sounding more convincing now.

He noticed abruptly that PEE-cahd was heading for the door of the small room. He realized that he'd just been standing there, lost in thought, and PEE-cahd had doubtless thought that the meeting was over. "PEE-cahd?" he ventured.

PEE-cahd turned and looked at him coolly. "Yes?"

"You, uhm," and M'k'n'zy cleared his throat. "You wouldn't happen to have brought a naked blond woman with you...?"

Whatever PEE-cahd might have been expecting him to ask, that certainly wasn't it. "I beg your pardon?"

M'k'n'zy shrugged it off. It seemed pointless, even embarrassing to try and explain it. So instead he just said, "Never mind."

PEE-cahd didn't appear inclined to let it go immediately. "If you don't mind my saying so, that was a rather curious question."

"Yes, well..." M'k'n'zy, seeing a chance to give back a bit in the spirit of what PEE-cahd had said, replied, "Call it a hunch, for what it's worth."

The captain seemed to consider the comment with great deliberation. "Well," he said at last, "I didn't say all hunches were good ones. A captain has to pick and choose."

"I'll remember that," said M'k'n'zy.

PEE-cahd walked out, and M'k'n'zy suddenly had the feeling that he had just made a terrible mistake, letting the man depart. M'k'n'zy had never been one for deep consideration of topics at hand. He was a creature of instinct, operating almost entirely on a gut level. His decisions were not always right. But they were quick, they were decisive, and they were unwavering.

He knew what was running through his head was nothing less than a major life-changing concept. Any other person -- certainly any sane person -- would have looked the notion over from many varied directions. At the very least, they would never have been moved into immediate action.

But M'k'n'zy was unlike any of those others. It was very possible that he was unlike anyone else on Xenex. Because for M'k'n'zy, concept transformed into decision, and decision into action.

PEE-cahd was standing outside several feet away. Passing Xenexians cast furtive glances in his direction, clearly finding him a curious creature, but no one wanted to say anything to him. Perhaps they thought he carried dangerous diseases or some such. He had just tapped his chest and he was saying, "One to beam -- " But he stopped when he saw M'k'n'zy, and the urgency in his face. "Belay that," he continued. "I'll be back with you."

M'k'n'zy didn't have a clue to whom PEE-cahd was speaking. Perhaps he was praying to whatever his deities were. It seemed an odd moment to pray, but M'k'n'zy was fairly generous-minded with such endeavors. He was far too pragmatic an individual to think that some mysterious beings were always listening in, but he was hardly going to tell others they were wasting their time.

PEE-cahd watched as M'k'n'zy slowly, cautiously approached him. M'k'n'zy was annoyed with himself. He was feeling tentative, uncertain, and that sensation repulsed him. If he'd experienced this sort of hesitation when planning strategies or leading troops into battle, Xenex would still be bending under the Danteri yoke instead of standing on the verge of shaking it off forever. Forcing himself to focus on the business at hand, he drew himself up straight and fixed a gaze upon the Federation man. "How would it be done?" he demanded.

"It?"

"Being a CAP-tane. How would I go about achieving it?"

PEE-cahd smiled slightly. "You mean a captain? Like me?"

"Like you?" M'k'n'zy looked at him askance. "Is lack of hair a requirement?"

The captain didn't quite seem to know whether to be annoyed or amused, and opted for a slight chuckle. "No. That's not a requirement. Although there will certainly be times along the road where you'll want to tear your hair out, metaphorically speaking." He paused and studied M'k'n'zy. "Are you sure about this, M'k'n'zy? You haven't had time to give it much thought..."

"That's not true," replied M'k'n'zy. "I've given a lot of thought to my place in the world once we're free. I just...haven't come up with anything I liked. Perhaps that's because my place is somewhere else. At the very least, it's something I'd like to try."

"All right," PEE-cahd said gamely. "It...wouldn't be something that could be arranged overnight."

"That doesn't concern me," replied M'k'n'zy. "I've spent my entire life looking toward gains years down the line rather than immediately. I can wait." He paused, then asked, "What...exactly...am I waiting for?"

"Well..." PEE-cahd scratched his chin thoughtfully. "As I'm sure you can guess, Starfleet doesn't simply tap you on the head and say you're a captain."

"Why not?" said M'k'n'zy. He was genuinely surprised. Although he hadn't given much consideration to precisely what was involved, it certainly seemed straightforward enough. He'd been a leader of men for most of his life. Being a captain, why...that simply involved leading other men while wearing some sort of uniform.

"To start out," said a clearly amused PEE-cahd, "you have to learn your way around a starship. That's a rather daunting undertaking."

"Daunting? Why? How long could it take? A day?"

"It's a *starship*, M'k'n'zy."

"So." M'k'n'zy shrugged. "How big could it be, PEE-cahd?"

PEE-cahd studied him for a moment, then tapped his chest again. "Picard to Crusher."

"Crusher here, Captain," came back the voice of the man who'd earlier been standing near PEE-cahd when he'd first arrived on Xenex. M'k'n'zy was taken aback. It seemed almost magical to him.

"Jack...send down the *Columbus* to these coordinates, would you? Unmanned. Autonav should suffice, I'd think."

"You're not simply beaming up to the ship, sir?"

"I'm taking the pretty route...or as you'd call it, the scenic route."

"Not much scenic about this route, sir, with all respect."

"Oh, you'd be surprised. Picard out." He smiled at M'k'n'zy and there was something challenging in his look. "Would you care to go for a ride? If you're reluctant to, I'd understand -- "

M'k'n'zy looked at him defiantly. "What, PEE-cahd, you think I'm afraid? I'm not afraid. Of anything."

"Good. By the way, it's 'Picard.' Short 'i,' accent on the second syllable."

By the time the *Columbus* arrived, M'k'n'zy more or less had down the correct pronunciation of Picard's name. He heard the vessel arriving before he saw it, the engine's roar alerting him. He looked up and saw it descending from the sky. Other Xenexians had stopped to watch as well. They weren't entirely primitive as a people; they'd seen flying ships before. Still, it wasn't all that common a sight. And when they did see them, more often than not it was in the form of troop transports for Danteri soldiers. So there was understandable tension in the air as a crowd gathered, and M'k'n'zy noticed that more than a few were reaching for weapons. Immediately he calmed them, assuring them that there was no threat nor did Picard pose one.

The ship settled to the ground and a door opened in the side. Picard stepped in, turned, and gestured for M'k'n'zy to follow him. The Xenexian did so cautiously and, once inside, glanced around the interior of the ship. Picard settled himself in at helm and glanced over at M'k'n'zy. "Take a seat," he said.

M'k'n'zy did so, and suddenly his stomach was jolted as the vessel eased into the air. Picard glanced back at him. "Ever been off the ground before?" M'k'n'zy shook his head, a bit more frantically than he would have liked. A thin smile crossed Picard's face. "It can be quite disorienting for the uninitiated."

"I'm fine," M'k'n'zy said immediately.

"I'll take it easy on you. I'll minimize the barrel rolls."

"Fly however you want. I can handle it."

"You know...I suspect you could."

The ship moved skyward. Surreptitiously, M'k'n'zy gripped the underside of the chair, digging his fingers into it. *Grozit, what the hell have you gotten yourself into?* M'k'n'zy demanded of himself silently. After a minute or two, however, his initial, albeit unspoken, fears eased up. He began to relax into it. He discovered

that he liked the relative quiet, broken only by the gentle humming of the engines.

From his seat, he looked around the interior of the vessel. There were lights and panels and all manner of things that he couldn't comprehend. But he knew he was a fast learner. He was confident that he could pick it all up pretty quickly.

Then he looked out the front viewscreen. The stars were so much closer, and he gazed with wonderment and awe.

"Impressive, isn't it," said Picard as if he could read the boy's mind.

"They're not twinkling. Why aren't they twinkling?"

"Because you're seeing them without an atmosphere between you. There's no refraction of the light."

"Oh," said M'k'n'zy, acting as if he understood. He paused and then went on, "When I was a child, there were stories that the night sky was a solid object -- a screen that stood between us and great and terrible gods. And that no one could venture near it lest they tear a hole in the sky and the great and terrible gods come pouring through it to wreak havoc upon us."

"You'll find no screens nor fearsome gods up here, M'k'n'zy. Although there is the odd hole or two, but you can learn about that later."

"Learn how? Where?"

"Well, there's an academy. A school, back on the planet where I was born. The best, the brightest, the most gifted of young people attend it to learn and grow and, ultimately, see if they have what it takes to be a Starfleet officer."

"Are you in charge of it?"

"No, no." Picard smiled. "I couldn't exactly see myself running a school for gifted youngsters. Not sure I'd have the patience. But there are excellent people in charge of it. It's called Starfleet Academy."

"How long would I attend it?"

"Four years."

"*Four years?*"

"If it's of any consolation, that's Earth years. I believe each one is a few days shorter than a Xenexian year. Oh, come now, M'k'n'zy. You said you always looked toward the long term."

"Yes, but..." He shook his head. "It just seems such a waste of time. Four years to learn about a ship like this? I mean, yes, we have nothing like this on Xenex, but -- "

"A ship like *this*?" Picard laughed.

M'k'n'zy bristled at the response. "What's so funny?" he demanded.

"It's not your fault, M'k'n'zy. It's mine. Obviously, I didn't make it clear to you. This ship...it's called a shuttle. It takes us to the actual ship...which, as you can see on the screen, is just ahead, orbiting your world."

M'k'n'zy stared at the vessel they were approaching. "Well, that doesn't seem..."

They drew closer.

"...so..." he finished, but he could barely form the words.

The closer they got, the more gargantuan it became. All the blood drained out of M'k'n'zy's face. "*Grozit*," he said softly. "It's...it's huge! You...you gave me no idea...it's gargantuan!"

"Well, I don't like to brag," said Picard.

They drew to within one hundred kilometers of the vessel, and it took up the entire viewscreen. Slowly Picard piloted the shuttle around the *Stargazer*, pointing out various sections of the ship such as the engines, the bridge, and other highlights. M'k'n'zy only partly took it all in. He was busy trying to comprehend what he was seeing, and being only marginally successful. "Can I go inside?"

"No," Picard said firmly.

"Why not?"

"Because frankly," he said, "I'm not quite sure you're ready for it, M'k'n'zy. My concern is you might find it so overwhelming that it could prove a disincentive for you to pursue studies at the Academy. That would be unfortunate. I think you have vast potential."

"Potential? To rule one of those?"

"We prefer the term 'command,' although the monarchist in me finds your description entertaining," admitted Picard.

M'k'n'zy wanted to argue the point with him but decided against it. He was beginning to sense that this man, this Picard, had great wisdom to him. And if he said he felt it would be counterproductive to bring M'k'n'zy aboard now, then he would abide by that.

"Can we go around it again?" he asked.

"Why not?" said Picard, and continued the shuttle on its circular course.

"It's..." M'k'n'zy shook his head. "It must be the biggest spaceship in the galaxy."

Picard again chuckled. "Actually, it's not even the biggest ship in the fleet. There are others far larger, with crew complements of over a thousand. The *Stargazer* has just over six hundred people aboard."

M'k'n'zy stared at Picard, stared at the ship, stared back at Picard.

"I'm starting to think," said M'k'n'zy, "that four years of schooling may not be enough to learn everything."

"It's not," Picard assured him, as the stars shone temptingly in the sky. "The actual learning starts when you graduate."

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