

## A Man With A Heart Of Oak

Captain Burke was standing on a dock. He looked at the hull of a ship that he had the privilege of being in command of for the past twenty years. He hoped the next twenty would be as memorable. His ship and crew were everything to him, he would stop at nothing to be with them. His light brown hair was getting messed up by the wind. A woman approached him, it was his first officer Kim R'Jor. He quickly tried to fix his hair, but had no success.

Kim smiled "You don't have to do that, I've seen your hair out of wack before."

Burke turned to face her, his blue eyes met her green eyes. "Is she ready to depart?"

Kim nodded, "Yes. The crew is aboard as well as the cargo."

Burke smiled "Thank you commander, let's..." He stopped talking when he noticed someone walking up to them.

The man held out his hand to Burke. "Are you the captain of this fine vessel?"

Burke shook the man's hand "If you are referring to the Arbiter, then yes I am." He paused, looking at the man's face. "I have never seen you before, what's your name?"

The stranger stared back with cold, dark eyes. "My name is Mark Justan and I've come to sail with you and your crew."

Every instinct told Burke to say no to the man, but he didn't listen to it. "Welcome aboard Mr. Justan, what position would you like to serve?"

Mark smiled "Thank you sir, I offer my services as lookout."

Burke nodded "Good, I was thinking of switching to a four shift rotation anyway."

They walked along the side of the ship and stopped when they reached a plank that led from the dock to the vessel. Burke walked up the plank and onto the deck of the Arbiter. An ensign saw him, went to attention and yelled "Captain on deck!"

Burke looked back to the ensign "At ease." He turned to Commander R'Jor and Mark who had followed him. "Mr. Justan, your post is up there." He pointed to a tall mast head that had a lookout station on it. "You will have the first watch."

Mark nodded and began to climb his way to the top of the mast.

Burke and Kim walked to the aft of the ship where the wheel was. From that point, he was in command of the ship. "Gather the crew commander."

Kim took a whistle out of her pocket and blew into it -toooweetooo- it sang out in a loud tone. Everyone stopped what they were doing and walked towards the back of the ship.

Burke looked out at his crew of twenty-five. "Welcome back from your well earned rest. I want to tell you how proud I am of this vessels accomplishments through the past years." He paused, it was time to get down to business. "We have new orders from command. We are to escort a convoy to Eliea Omega. So let's get this ship underway."

After Burke finished, his crew went back to attending to their duties. "Take us out Mr. Douglass." Burke ordered.

A man wearing a lieutenant commander's uniform was at the wheel. He started giving orders that would move the ship from the dock and into the open sea.

Three days later, the S.S. Arbiter pulled into a San Francisco harbor. After the ship was secured, Burke and Commander R'Jor went to find the captain of the convoy they were to be escorting. The harbor was full of many different vessels from around the world. Burke liked a few of them, but felt that his ship was the best.

"What ship are we looking for?" Burke asked.

Kim responded to the question. "We're looking for a ship named the Zanketh."

They stopped at an information booth, an old man was sitting at a desk. "Can I help you?"

Burke nodded "Where is the Zanketh?"

The old man scratched his head. "Zanketh? She hasn't arrived yet, why do you want to know?"

Burke could tell the man was very suspicious of him. He couldn't blame him, they never met formally. "I'm Captain John Burke of the S.S. Arbiter. I have orders to escort the Zanketh." He pulled out a piece of paper to prove his claim, the old man studied the orders and handed them back.

"All right, I recommend you go to the local restaurant. When the ship arrives, I'll have someone find you." The old man said with a smile.

Burke got the same feelings of mistrust as when he met Mark, once again he dismissed the feeling. "Sounds good."

He turned to Kim "Report back to the ship, you're in command until I return." He then walked away towards the restaurant.

Kim looked to the sky In command of a ship that isn't going anywhere. Gee thanks. She thought to herself. She then walked back to the Arbiter.

When Burke made it to the restaurant, he immediately walked in and sat down in a corner booth. He looked around the establishment, a bar was in the middle. Several people were sitting at the bar, he overheard them talking about adventures each had had.

A waitress walked up to where he was sitting. "What can I get for you?" She asked politely.

Burke looked up to her "I'll have an ale."

She took out a pad of paper and wrote down the order. "Can I get you anything else?"

Burke shook his head "Nope, just an ale."

She nodded and walked away to get the drink.

A few minutes later, she brought him the ale. He thanked her and threw some money on the table, she pocketed the coins and went to attend to another customer.

Burke looked into his ale, he often looked into his drinks believing he would be able to tell what would happen on upcoming missions. It never worked, but he felt it brought good luck. His thoughts were interrupted when several people started singing a song he knew rather well.

"Come, cheer up, my lads! 'tis to glory we steer, To add something more to this wonderful year: To honor we call you, not press you like slaves For who are so free as the sons of the waves?" Sang the crowd joyfully. Burke had sang the song many times with his crew on several occasions. He couldn't help but smile at how happy the people were.

An ensign walked up to where Burke was sitting. "Sir, sorry to bother you. The Zanketh has arrived."

Burke looked up from his drink. "Thank you ensign." He stood up and followed the man to the door. As he walked out the door, two men grabbed him by the arms. Both men were very strong, Burke couldn't shake them loose.

"What do you want with me?" He yelled at the top of his lungs. His heart started to pound very fast and loud. He couldn't bear the sound of it, it almost felt as if the organ would jump out of his chest.

One of the men brought out a club and struck Burke in the head. Burke's body went limp as he lost all consciousness. The ensign that had been with Burke gave the two hit men orders to take the captain to a designated rendezvous point. They obeyed his orders and walked off with Burke in tow.

The ensign then walked back to where the Arbiter was waiting. When he boarded the vessel, he walked up to Commander R'Jor. "Commander" he began, "Captain Burke told me to inform you to carry out the mission without him."

Kim was shocked, the captain never let the ship leave without him in command. "What? Did he give you a reason why?"

The ensign nodded "He was called off on a priority one mission." He pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to here. "Here are the written orders."

The document was forged, but R'Jor didn't realize it. "All right, station." The ensign left the aft of the ship and went to his position.

"Commander, is everyone on board?" She said looking at Dougless.

Dougless turned his head "Yes sir, and the convoy is already underway."

Kim nodded "Take us out of here and bring us withing twenty feet of the Zanketh."

Dougless did what he was told and the Arbiter was once again on the open sea, with one problem. Her commanding officer was not with her.

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Three hours later, John Burke woke up in what appeared to be a detention cell. The cell had four walls, and a door. No furniture of any kind was present, there were also no windows in the room. He was laying on a cold cement floor in the dark. His hands and feet were bound with ropes that cut into his skin.

Three men walked in carrying devices that made the room light up. They weren't candles, yet they still made light. Burke was starting to get a little scared.

"Who are you?" Burke demanded, he tried to sit up but couldn't manage to push himself off the ground because of the restraints.

The man in the middle stepped forward and shined his light in Burke's eyes. "My name's not important." He turned to the two people standing behind him and dismissed them. They left the room, closing a large door behind them.

Burke tried again. "Who are you? I demand to know your identity!"

The man shook his head and sighed "If you really must know, I am Commander Dubor." Burke slowly made his way to the wall and used it to help him sit up.

Dubor turned off his light and looked to the ceiling. "Computer, lights." The cell suddenly lit up. Burke didn't understand how Dubor made it happen. But that didn't matter, he needed a way out of the cell, he needed to be back aboard his ship.

He asked the question anyway "How did you do that?"

Dubor came closer, he was wearing what appeared to be some kind of uniform. It was grey on the shoulders, and black down to his feet. He was wearing some kind of red shirt underneath. He had blonde hair and had spots running from the temples on his head down to where his neck met his clothing. "You don't need to know that information captain, at least not yet." He paused "Would you like your restraints removed?"

Burke nodded.

"Computer" Dubor said again "remove the restraints from Captain John Burke."

Burke still didn't understand how Dubor was doing those things. What's a computer he thought to himself. He felt the ropes around his hands and ankles disappear. He looked at his wrists, there were no marks on them.

Dubor walked to the door and opened it, a young woman brought in a plate of food. She walked up to Burke and placed it down next to him. "Would you like something to eat?" She smiled at him as if they should know each other.

Burke shook his head "I'm not hungry" it was a lie, he was indeed hungry, but he didn't know who to trust at that moment.

The woman noticed that Burke didn't recognize her at all. She turned to Dubor "He doesn't know me?"

Burke stared at Dubor and thought why would I recognize her? I've never seen her before in my life!

Dubor returned the stare and looked back to the woman. "No Kathy, he doesn't recognize you, at least not yet. Give him time, he will remember who you are. I promise." Kathy turned and headed out the door.

Dubor turned his attention back to Burke. "You really should eat something captain."

Burke stared down to the plate and decided to eat, it was no use to him to die there. He picked up the plate and started eating the food that was on it.

Dubor walked up to the door and opened it. "I will return in a half hour. Enjoy the food." He exited the room.

All Burke could think about was his ship and crew, he needed to be with them again, he didn't care what it would take. I need to be where I belong he thought to himself, on my ship with my crew in the open sea!

The time passed slowly, Burke had tried to fall asleep but found it difficult. He thought that if he fell asleep he would wake up on the Arbiter and the bad things that had happened would be a dream. He was very disappointed when he started to think of the possibility that he would never see his ship or crew ever again.

A moment later, Dubor returned with a note taking device in his hand. "Well captain, shall we start?" He said with a smile.

Burke was confused. "Start what exactly?" He was expecting to be tortured, he had heard many stories of people being tortured by unknown races just to retrieve valuable information.

Dubor's smile faded away "I'll show you." He looked up at the ceiling "Computer, give me a conference table with two chairs." A large table appeared with two chairs, one on each side. Dubor sat down on the side closest to the door, Burke stood up and walked over to the table. He sat down across from Dubor.

Burke looked into Dubor's eyes "Would you mind telling me how you do all those fancy things with the voice commands?"

Dubor hesitated for a moment, deciding whether or not to give the information. "This isn't going to make much sense to you now, but hopefully it will later on. We are on what is known as a holodeck, I can basically create whatever I want and the computer provides it for me."

Burke was still confused. "What's a computer?"

Dubor sighed and put his hand to his head. He decided not to address that question at the moment. "This is even going to sound stranger to you. Captain Burke, what year is it?"

Burke started to laugh "What kind of question is that? The year is 1736."

Dubor leaned back in his chair "Captain, I've got some interesting news for you. This is not the eighteenth century, it's the twenty-fourth. The current year is 2374. You are Captain John Burke in command of the Federation Starship U.S.S. Fresno."

Burke shook his head, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Right name, wrong vessel. I'm Captain John Burke in command of the S. S. Arbiter." He paused "I don't know where you're getting this starship stuff, and it's not the twenty-fourth century, it's eighteenth century. You're a crazy person if you ask me."

Dubor put some notes down on the Personnel Access Display Device (PADD) he had taken with him. "Captain, I am telling you the truth. You have been in the holodeck for the past month. It seems that you got so caught up in the story that you forgot who you are and started believing that you are the character you were playing."

Burke was getting a headache from lies he thought he was hearing. He shook his head "No, no, no! You are telling me lies. You're just trying to get information out of me!"

Dubor made some more notes on the PADD. "I'm going to try and prove it to you. Please put your hand to your neck for a moment."

Burke did as he was asked.

"Now, put your fingers below your right ear and move them down until you reach an abnormal bump."

Burke felt the bump, it was about an inch below his ear. "Ya, so what."

Dubor smiled "That bump you're feeling is a device that allows you to know what character you are playing when you're in the holodeck."

Burke felt the bump again, he still couldn't believe what he was hearing. "That's absurd, the bump you are referring to is a cancer spot I've had for several years." He was starting to get irritated by all of the nonsense that Dubor was telling him.

"Well, I'm going to deactivate it now and hopefully it won't fry your brain." Dubor said, "This will only hurt for a second. Hold still."

Dubor pushed a few buttons on the PADD, Burke's neck started to tingle and then sting for a moment. Then the pain went away.

"Do you remember now?"

Burke shook his head "What? The lies you've been telling me? That's all they are by the way, lies. You're trying to get information from me about the convoy and my current mission. Well, it isn't going to work. I suggest you let me go back to my vessel." He was almost on the verge of yelling.

Dubor picked up the PADD and stood up. "We'll talk again soon."

Burke watched him head for the door and yelled after him. "Let me go back to my ship and crew! Just let me out of here!"

Dubor ignored him and walked out the door. On the other side he met up with Kathy, Burke's wife.

"How's he doing?" She asked.

Dubor had a frown on his face. "Not too good I'm afraid." He looked to the ceiling "Exit." A door appeared and opened. Dubor and Kathy left the Holodeck and walked down a grey hallway.

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The bridge of the Fresno was everything but simple. Every station could be configured to act as another in time of crisis. In the middle of it was the captain's chair. The Flight Control and Operations consoles were directly in front, hooked together as one unit. On both sides of the captain's chair approximately five feet away stood two stations, Tactical One and Tactical Two. The aft section of the bridge housed the Science, Environment, Mission Operations, and Engineering control systems. Two doors on the sides of the bridge led to the Ready Room and Conference Lounge. The Ready Room access was on the right of the captain's chair and the Conference Lounge was on the left.

Dubor exited a forward turbolift near the front of the bridge. He walked up to the Conference Lounge access and tapped his comm badge. "Senior officers report to the Conference Room." He exited the bridge.

Twenty minutes later, the senior staff was seated around a conference table. Commander Dubor was in charge of the meeting. "I have called this meeting because our captain doesn't remember who he is. His mind has somehow made him believe that he is the captain of a wooden sailing vessel in the eighteenth century."

The crew looked to the commander in shock. There was a cold, dead silence in the room. Commander Dobson, the ship's Chief Medical Officer broke the silence. "How bad is the condition? Does he have any recognition whatsoever of anything?"

Dubor shook his head. "No, I had his wife take him some food, he didn't even recognize her." He looked to the officers in whom he had trusted his life on so many occasions. If anyone could help the captain, it was them. "I deactivated the device, I'm hoping the effects will wear off, but for now it hasn't done a thing, except prove his point. I want you each to go to your department heads and ask them for ideas about how to make him remember. Bring every idea to me, no matter how crazy. Dismissed." At his command, the room emptied.

Commander Dobson stayed behind. He walked up to Dubor. "I was hoping to get some scans of the captain, to see if there is any brain damage from this whole ordeal."

Dubor nodded "Yes, I was just thinking of that. Maybe you could put him under hypnosis to help him remember his true identity. I don't want to lose a great captain." He turned and walked to the door.

Dobson followed him to the door and exited. "Let me go to Sickbay and get some equipment, I'll meet you there in a few minutes."

Dubor nodded "Holodeck three." He then headed for a turbolift that would take him to where Captain Burke was being kept.

In the simulation of the holding cell, Burke was still sitting at the desk. He had been thinking of how to escape from the place. Maybe if I asked the computer how to get out of here, it might tell me, he thought to himself. "Computer, is there anyway to get out of this place?"

Silence.

He tried again. "Computer, are you there? Hello..."

Nothing.

Hmm Burke thought, so much for that idea. His thoughts were interrupted when the door opened allowing Commander Dubor to enter.

"I see you tried to use the computer, I should have told you that I've disabled all of your voice access from the system, until we get this cleared up. I didn't want you to get yourself hurt."

Burke smiled, "Gee thanks. Tell me, what is that clipped to your belt?" He pointed to a hand held device at Dubor's waist.

Dubor looked to his waist, seeing what Burke was talking about. "Oh, this? Um..." He tried to lie to Burke. "It's a scanning device."

Burke nodded ya right, probably some kind of weapon, he thought. "So, what's next?"

Dubor sat down at the desk. "I've asked Commander Dobson to check your brain, to make sure you're all right."

As he said that, Dobson walked in the door. "Hello captain, how are you doing?"

Burke jumped from his chair and pointed at Dobson "Hey, I know you. You're Mark Justan, the man I hired just before that mission. What are you doing here?"

Dobson didn't understand what Burke was saying. "What? My name's Dobson, not Justan. You've known me for years John."

Burke shook his head. "You were the one who probably arranged the kidnaping, did you have that old man at the dock in San Francisco help you? Or did you do it all by yourself. I tell you, I'm not the crazy one here. You guys are the crazy people. Now tell me the truth!" He yelled at them, he couldn't control his anger. It was loose and he didn't want to contain it anymore.

Dobson walked up to Burke. "If you'll calm down, I'll explain the whole situation to you." He took out a tricorder and started to make scans of Burke's frontal region of his brain. "There seems to be nothing wrong with your brain wave patterns." He moved the instrument down to where Burke's heart would be. "Your heart is racing, of course that's normal for a person in your condition."

Burke was getting madder by the minute. "So in other words, you don't want to tell me anything!" That's the last time I trust someone that I don't know he thought to himself. "Let me go back to my vessel. I belong there, I don't belong here at all!"

Dubor made some more notes on the PADD "Captain, you are where you belong. Please try to believe me, you are John Burke in command of the U.S.S. Fresno. Here I've even taken the liberty to find your personnel file." He handed Burke the PADD. On it was everything he had ever accomplished in Starfleet.

"No, I don't believe you. You are making up more lies, trying to get information about the convoy from me!" Burke couldn't hold still, he started having convulsions and fell on the floor.

Dobson knelt down by Burke, he assessed the damage and took out a hypospray. "This should calm him down." He injected Burke with a compressed shot of a dark liquid. Burke calmed down immediately. Dobson turned to Dubor "I'll have to take him to Sickbay, he's under major stress and I'd like to monitor him from there."

Dubor objected. "I can't allow that, he can't be allowed to see more of the ship until he remembers who he is. That's why I had him brought into this simulation. I've already given him more information than I should have."

Dobson shook his head. "If you don't let me, he'll die and we won't have a captain at all!" He hoped Dubor would understand, he didn't want to lose a good officer.

Dubor thought about it for a moment. "All right, but only Sickbay, he can't be allowed to roam the ship."

Dobson smiled and looked up to the computer interface in the ceiling. "Computer, prepare to transport three people from Holodeck 3 directly to Sickbay." The computer made a beeping noise and stated that it was ready. "Energize." Thousands of blue lines came out of nowhere and the trio vanished leaving the sound of the transporter beam behind them. As soon as they left, the computer detected that no one was in the room and closed the program. The room went from a detention cell to a black surface with a yellow grid on the walls and floor.

The three materialized in Sickbay a few seconds later. Dobson put Burke on the main biobed and started scans. Dubor walked over and stood by Dobson, he was concerned about the well fare of the captain.

Dobson pressed a button on the table and a bio scanner came up from the sides of the table and covered the captain's body. He went to the top of the bed where Burke's head was and pulled over an instrument from the wall and placed it over Burke's head. "I'll have to induce a coma for a short time or else all of his body's functions will shut down and he will die."

Dubor walked over to a wall and brought a chair over to the biobed, set it down on the floor and sat down. "I'm not leaving his side until he gets better." They had been through many things since their academy days. He remembered when Burke found out what ship he would be posted to when he became an ensign. He was so happy and proud for him, he had a lot of respect for Burke and he didn't want to see him die.

Several weeks passed, Dubor couldn't stay with Burke all the time but he always came and spent his off time with him. He was standing by the biobed talking to Burke. "Well captain, as usual, I've prepared my report of the day's findings, ready for your approval."

Dobson walked up to Dubor and put his hand on the commander's shoulder. "Well, I've finally got all of his functions under control. He shouldn't have any more convulsions. I still haven't found a way to help him remember who he is. The only answer I've come up with would be to totally wipe his memory and begin from scratch."

Dubor shook his head. "He would be the same man on the outside, but he would never truly be John Burke. I won't allow it." He paused looking at a PADD in his hand. "I've spoken with the head of Starfleet Medical, they informed me that they have thought about it for the past weeks and have come up with nothing. He shouldn't die like this, you said that he is okay, right?"

Dobson nodded his head "Yes. Physically he is normal, but mentally is another story. He still believes he is that other man in command of that vessel."

Dubor lifted his head up "You spoke to him?" He was mad that he hadn't been there when Burke had spoken to Dobson.

Dobson nodded his head. "Yes. But I needed to make sure if he was okay. It was only for a couple of moments, he didn't see anything but the medical bay. I'm afraid to report that his condition has gotten worse. He is now pulling illusions from his Holonovel into the real world. He thought he was back in the cell that you first had him in. He didn't notice Sickbay, and he still demanded to be with his crew." He checked an instrument that was monitoring Burke's brain waves and noted his findings in the computer.



Dubor nodded "When did you wake him?"

Dobson checked his computer for the exact date. "I woke him up on Stardate 51472.3."

Dubor looked down at Burke, he looked so peaceful lying there unconsciousness. "That was what, three weeks ago? Would it be possible for you to revive him now? If only for a couple of moments?"

Dobson nodded. "Yes, I believe I can arrange that. Shall I call security?" He suggested the security part only for the captain's protection.

Dubor shook his head "No, just set up the restraining field. That should be enough."

Dobson walked over to the computer and keyed in a few commands. "Restraining field active." He walked over to a counter that had several hyposprays on it. He chose one and walked over to Burke, when he got to Burke's side, he lifted the device that induced the coma from Burke's head. Dobson then prepared the hypospray and injected Burke with it.

Burke woke up immediately. "What? Why did you knock me out?" He was confused about what was going on. He still didn't understand why he was in the cell. "What do you want from me? Why can't I go back to my crew? Please let me go to my ship. I won't tell anyone what you've done to me, I promise."

Dubor got closer to his old friend. Burke was losing his mind and he couldn't help him. "Captain, how are you doing?"

How am I doing? What does it look like! I'm tied up, and under your control. I wish you were here instead of me. Burke thought, his mind was full of rage and anger. "Oh, I'm doing as well as can be expected being tied up and all. I would really appreciate it if you would kindly tell me what is going on here!"

Dubor shook his head "I've already told you all of that information. You didn't believe me, remember?"

Burke clenched his fists. "Why did you wake me up, and why do you still have me here? You want to know about the convoy right? Well, what would you do to me if I told you about the convoy? Would you let me go?"

Dubor looked down, he wasn't getting anywhere with Burke and he knew it. His fears starting to become true, he knew that he was going to lose his friend. He decided to take a different approach. "Captain, I don't care about the convoy, it's already left without you. It's been several weeks since you came to San Francisco."

Burke stared at the ceiling. "What? Then why do you still have me? Please answer my questions." He unclenched his fists to show that he was calming down. "I promise I won't yell anymore, let's discuss this like civilized men. Could you untie me please?"

Dubor shook his head. My dear friend, I wish I could bring you out of this state of madness. I wish I could make it all better, but I can't, I'm bound by the limits of medical science. We've cured many things in our time, cancer and other things. But we still cannot fix a persons brain to make it work correctly. Dubor thought to himself, he almost started to cry, but he wouldn't allow Burke to see it. "I'll untie you if you'll promise not to run away from us."

Burke nodded his head.

Dubor looked over to the doctor. "Doctor, please release the restraining field."

Dobson walked up to Dubor and protested. "I will not. You don't know if you can trust him. I don't even know if I can trust him and I've known him for ten years."

Dubor stared into Dobson's eyes. "We can trust him, I've known him all my life, he was like a father to me." Come on, just do it! I know we can't save him, at least not now. But just do it! Dubor's thoughts were running wild, he didn't want to see his friend in pain anymore.

Dobson walked up to the computer console and released the field that was restraining the captain. "All right, you may sit up now."

Burke did as he was told. "Thank you doctor. I appreciate it, if you'll excuse us, we have a lot to discuss." Dobson left Dubor and Burke alone and walked into his office.

For a second, Dubor thought Burke was his old self, but as soon as the conversation progressed, he could tell that Burke was still the same way he had been five weeks ago. He decided to be a part of Burke's Holonovel. He had taken the liberty of reading how far the captain had gotten in his adventure. "Captain, do you remember when you were abducted by those men outside the restaurant?"

Burke nodded, "Yes, they grabbed me from behind and hit me on the head. I inquired as to where they were taking me and that's when they hit me on the head."

Dubor nodded. "Yes. That was part of the plan, as I have stated I'm Commander Dubor. I'm actually the head of a training facility in San Francisco. We had orders from Admiral Kelley himself to abduct you to take part in this training exercise. The admiral wanted to see how you would do under stress situations, you know kidnaping, hostage situations. That sort of thing. I shouldn't even be telling you any of this, I could loose my job."

Burke laughed in his face. "Ya right. Sure, you almost had me going there for a moment. I almost bought your story about the whole thing. I still think you want to know about the convoy and you're telling me all of these lies still!"

Dubor lowered his head, "Doctor, please sedate the captain again." He then turned and walked out the door.

Burke watched the doors closed behind Dubor. "Please, let me go back to my crew and vessel. I beg you, please let me go back."

Dobson walked into where Burke was sitting, went up to him and put a hypospray to his neck. Burke tried to fight him off but was too weak. He immediately fell back on the biobed. "So much for talking with him." Dobson said out loud, he walked back into his office and sat down.

In the Ready Room, Dubor was sitting at a desk, Captain Burke's desk. Why did it have to happen to him? He thought to himself, he switched on his desktop terminal and called up a file that he had been reading. It was about cases similar to what happened to Burke. There hadn't been any kind of treatment for the illness that had been designated Ellegria Four-Seven. The only thing doctors had come up with would be to put the victim of the disease back in the Holonovel and live out the rest of their lives with an I.V. feeding into them. Could I do that to the captain? Dubor thought, could I live with the consequences? He hit his comm badge. "Dubor to Dobson, I've come up with an idea to help the captain."

Dobson came on the other end of the line "Let me guess, you want to send him back to the Holonovel?"

Dubor nodded "Yes. It seems to be the only cure for this disease."

Dobson's voice was saddened "I know. I came up with the same answer over a month ago. All right, come to Sickbay. Bring his wife to sign the papers."

Dubor stood up and exited the Ready Room.

A few moments later, he arrived in Sickbay with Kathy at his side. She had been crying, it was hard living without her companion of twenty years. She walked up to Dobson "Commander Dubor said you had something for me to sign?"

Dobson handed a PADD to Kathy, it had a medical release on it stating that he could put Captain Burke back into the Holonovel to 'cure' his illness. It wasn't a cure but it was the only thing that he could do so the captain's body wouldn't vegetate and die.

Kathy read over the papers and pressed her thumb to the PADD to record her thumb print. "What exactly are you going to do to him?"

Dobson started to explain the procedure. "Well basically, we are going to take the captain back to Earth where we will admit him into a hospital that specializes in these cases. They have several machines set up that will make his holodeck life become real, in his mind that is. They will hook him up to a machine that will register the feelings and sensations from the holonovel. If he dies in the Holonovel, he will die in the real world. It's not something Starfleet has become happy with, but it does help the person. By doing this, his body won't die off by having his physical functions break down.

Kathy nodded and handed the PADD back to Dobson. "All right, let's do the procedure."

\* \* \*

Dubor sat in a hospital waiting room. He decided to record a log entry for the day.

Captain's Log Stardate 51822.7:

I have been advanced in rank to captain after Captain Burke was admitted to the hospital on Earth. It pains me deeply to report on the exact procedure that Captain Burke had to go through, it is never easy when one of your best friends goes mentally unstable. End Log.

Captain Burke's life among the stars died the day that he was hooked up to the machine to continue his life in a Holonovel. But his sailing days had started to continue. He was standing on a dock in an English port. He was told that his ship had just pulled in. He longed to be aboard her again, he wanted to see his crew once again, to shake their hands and sing with them. He walked up and down different sections looking for his vessel, the S.S. Arbiter. He stopped as he usually did when he found her, looking at the ships hull. Thinking of times past, of the adventures that he had had on the ship with his fine crew. He walked on board and made his way to the aft section. No one seemed to remember him as he walked through the ship. When he got to the wheel, he saw Commander Kim R'Jor.

Kim's face lighted up at the sight of him. "Captain!" She exclaimed, "I see you're back from that mission. It's so good to see you again, welcome aboard." She saluted him and he saluted back.

He looked to Kim "I assume my ship is ready to leave?"

Kim nodded "The crew is ready, all you have to do is give the word and we're on our way."

Burke almost started to give the order to pull out, but he looked at some of the faces on his crew. They were down, none of them were smiling. "Commander, what's wrong with the crew?"

Kim frowned "They haven't been the same since you left us."

Burke smiled "I haven't been the same either. Sing with me commander."

Kim walked up to Burke, he put his arm around her, they started singing the song that his crew new so well. "Come, cheer up, my lads! 'tis to glory we steer, to add something more to this wonderful year."

The crew looked up to who was singing, they cheered at the sight of their captain, back where he belonged. Many yelled "Welcome back" to him. They all started singing along with him through the song. "To honor we call you, not press you like slaves; for who are so free as the sons of the waves? Heart of Oak are our ships, Heart of Oak are our men: We always are ready: Steady, boys, steady! We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again."

The S.S. Arbiter sailed off from the port into the sunset that day, Captain Burke had never been so happy in his life. He had told the story of his abduction and of the treatment he had received. He never got his memory back of that prior life to the holodeck, never remembered the U.S.S. Fresno or it's crew.

The End