



And now the tables are turned. 'The Night Watch' pairs Avon and Blake once more, or perhaps that should be Blake and Avon, as it is the former who dominates this story and gets what he wants. Ah, but what hell will Blake endure now that he's tasted of an addictive, forbidden pleasure named Avon?

lake walked slowly through the shadows of the corridor, surrounded by the quiet of ship's night. In his mind something whispered, an awareness of Avon like a faint sound that grew louder as it drew him on. At the entrance to the flight deck, he paused, rolling the bottle he held between his hands. Illumination spilled into the corridor; the flight deck was brightly lit, as Avon preferred when he was working.

THE NIGHT WATCH

ERSZEBET BATHORY

He looked inside. Avon was standing at the weaponry station, his back to Blake, head bent in concentration. He was resplendent in solitude, clad in a black leather tunic, his trousers closely fitted to his long, slender legs and tucked neatly into black boots just below the knee. Blake's hand tightened on the neck of the bottle.

As he strolled onto the flight deck, Avon looked up.

"This is my watch, Blake."

"So?" Blake found a clean glass someone had left on a table. He went down to the couch and poured himself a drink.

"So I'd like the flight deck to myself, if you don't mind."

"You spend too much time by yourself, Avon," Blake said genially.

"That's your opinion, is it?"

"Very much so." Blake raised the bottle.

"Cerastean brandy. It's quite good, and quite rare. Care to join me?"

"I like to keep a clear head." Avon seated himself at the console. "I shouldn't think you'd want to corrode your mind any further, after what the Federation has done to it."

Blake shrugged and sipped his drink. "No harm in relaxing a bit now and then."

"Is that what you call it?"

"You might try it some time," Blake said. He stretched out on the couch. "You might enjoy the novelty."

Avon smiled at him as if greatly amused. "I wouldn't concern myself if I were you. I have my own ways of relaxing."

"I'm sure of it."

"An uninterrupted night watch can be very pleasant, for example." Avon turned his attention back to the weaponry controls. He set aside a cover

plate and examined the circuitry beneath, then picked up an instrument and began to make delicate adjustments.

Blake rested his drink on his knee, rubbing a thumb over the soft weave of his brown trousers. His mouth burned a little from the aromatic brandy. As he watched Avon, the careful movements of his hands, the calm intentness of his face, Blake barely noticed the whispering in his mind.

"What are you working on?"

"I am fine-tuning this launch relay for quicker response. The reflexes of humans are slower than those of the aliens who built this ship. As you insist on manning the weaponry stations with half-wits, it would be a good idea to adjust the computers to compensate."

"A faster response is a good idea no matter who is operating the systems."

"I'm glad you approve."

"Will it take much longer?"

"About half an hour, if you let me get on with it."

Blake sat up and pulled off his green leather tunic, draping it across the back of the couch. He loosened the cord fastening the neck of his brown shirt and lay back again, taking another sip of his drink.

A short time later, Blake glanced up at the sound of Avon's voice.

"Zen," Avon rapped out, "confirm that the battle computers have integrated the new launch relay settings."

"Confirmed."

Avon nodded his satisfaction. He leaned back in the seat and gazed at the main screen with its display of deep space.

"All finished?" Blake asked.

Avon went on staring at the screen. "For the moment. We'll need to test it, of course. The others should be present for that."

"Why don't you come down and sit with me, then."

"I prefer the view from this position," Avon said coldly.

"Avon, come and sit with me," Blake repeated, lowering his voice slightly. He waited. Avon rose slowly to his feet. "That's it. Come down here."

"No." Avon looked at Blake, startled. He staggered and grabbed the edge of the console.

"Blake, what are you doing?"

"I'm not doing anything."

"The hell you're not. Whatever it is, stop it *now*."

Blake was smiling now, his voice still low and rich. "Avon, you sound frightened."

"Only disgusted." Avon's body quivered and he gripped the instrument panel as if to steady himself against a wave of vertigo. "It must be some sort of telekinesis," he said with difficulty, "since whatever it is you're doing, it's not affecting my mind."

Blake felt the whispering grow stronger, awakening every nerve, as it touched what it had been seeking. He focused again on Avon.

Avon's knees gave way, and he fell against the console. He leaned there, panting slightly. "Blake, stop it."

"Did that affect your mind, Avon?"

Avon glared at him. "You know what it did."

"Straight to the pleasure center." Blake smiled. "Fascinating, isn't it?"

It was easier to reach Avon with his mind now, and Blake watched him gasp as another surge of feeling rushed through him, then dissipated instantly. The whispering in Blake's mind coalesced into pure sensation, a vital, shifting tension. The link had formed.

"It's not—" Avon stopped, shuddering. "It's too focused, it can't be telepathy."

"No."

"Direct influence on brain centers..." He shuddered again, shook his head to clear it. "This has something to do with your visit to Cerastes, doesn't it? I knew you shouldn't have been allowed to go down there alone."

"They did insist that only one man come down. Not surprising, really, for people who sell highly advanced weapons to anyone who can afford them." Blake shrugged. "As I recall, you agreed I should be the one to do the deal for the components we needed."

"You're not psi-developed." Avon eyed him suspiciously. "How are you doing it, Blake? They gave you some sort of psionic amplifier, didn't they?"

"You're stalling, Avon. I believe I asked you to come and sit here."

Blake watched Avon move toward him, step by reluctant step, his eyes black with shock. The light caressed his dark hair and the warmed leather that clung to his body. Blake felt a thrill of arousal along the length of his cock, and deep in his mind. As Avon neared the couch, he suddenly lunged at Blake. Blake made a quick gesture, and Avon fell

heavily, crying out in pain.

"Don't try that again."

"If you're going to kill me, Blake, just get it over with. You said it would be ironic if the next death were mine. I hope you're enjoying the irony."

"Oh yes, you were charming about Gan's being killed. I thought about that while I was on Ceras-tes."

"I thought you were going to confine your attempts at thinking to your cabin."

"Get up and come over here."

"No," Avon said, but even as he said it, he got to his feet and dragged himself to the couch, sinking down next to Blake.

"Look at me."

Avon turned to Blake, his face drained of color.

"What the hell did they do to you back there?"

"It's not what they did, Avon, it's what they *undid*. When the criminotherapists go to work on a man, they implant phobias, distortions, repressions... The Cerasteans simply gave me what I wanted."

"Which seems to be me."

Blake slid closer to Avon and reached out, his fingers tracing the arch of Avon's lips. Avon flinched.

"Cally will pick up what you're doing," he said harshly. "She'll be down here any minute, with the others."

"I doubt it. The techniques I learned on Cerastes have nothing in common with Auron telepathy. She won't notice a thing. Anyway, they're all asleep, and I guarantee they will be for some time."

"So much for your noble façade," Avon spat.

"Be quiet."

Avon tried to speak. He stared at Blake in horror as his efforts failed to produce the slightest sound.

Blake pressed a fingertip against Avon's mouth. The soft lips yielded to him. Wetness, his finger inside Avon's mouth, inside Avon... Blake closed his eyes for a moment. "Don't even try to move unless I tell you to," he murmured. Slowly, he moved his hand to the back of Avon's neck. "You've been pushing at me for a long time, Avon. I've decided to push back." He looked into Avon's eyes, extending fine tendrils into the other man's consciousness, finding the places where a touch would evoke ecstasy or insane fear. Or the most important thing: submission. The places that Avon considered central to himself—these were the places whose invasion would leave him utterly without will. They

were well-defended. Blake thoroughly enjoyed the search and the little challenges of unlocking the doors. And when Avon began to shiver as Blake proceeded with his exploration, Blake sent a silent command through the strengthening mental link, and the shivering stopped.

He returned to the pleasure center, and sent the slightest touch of his mind across it like a light breath. Avon's eyelids fluttered, his lips parting soundlessly. Blake leaned forward and kissed his mouth, licking Avon's lips slowly, then battenning on him, thrusting his tongue into the unresisting mouth. He bit into Avon's lower lip, sucked at his mouth, ground against it, his breath coming faster with the rising sensation of his own power. Then he pulled back, eyes narrowed as he regarded the other man. Avon looked back at him, eyes glazed, forehead sheened with sweat. Blake ran a finger over Avon's mouth, traced his cheekbone, then leaned forward and let his tongue follow the track his finger had taken, down to Avon's neck, where he fastened his teeth again and slowly increased the pressure. He stopped just short of breaking skin, and began to suck. A muffled groan escaped the other man. Blake drew back and examined the purpling bruise he had left. Then he cradled Avon's head in his hands and kissed him again, his cock swelling rapidly as he tested the resistance seething beneath the enforced immobility. He exerted just a little more control, sensing the currents of Avon's will and bisecting the delicate links between thought and action as if they were golden threads stretched fine.

He moved still closer, unfastened Avon's tunic, pulled it off him and tossed it aside. Running his palms over Avon's bare chest, Blake forced him flat on his back on the couch. Avon stared up at him, pupils fully dilated, fathomless black. "You know," Blake said casually, "I could make you kneel to me on the flight deck in front of all of the others. How would you like that, Avon? It would be interesting to find out." The dark eyes flickered. Blake sent a small needle of thought to the pleasure center, and Avon shuddered in his hands. "As easy as that," Blake said, moving his hand downward. "You're ready for me, aren't you." He kneaded Avon's cock through the black trousers. It was hard, tight against the cloth. "I wonder how much of this is a result of the...technique," he mused. "I suspect you'd respond even if I left your pleasure centers completely untouched. They're useful for now,

though. As a sort of spice. I like to see you enjoying yourself.”

Again he sent the fine, singing wire of his thought into that subtle dark place in Avon's mind, and Avon's eyes clouded as his cock pulsed against Blake's hand. He opened Avon's trousers and fondled the naked flesh, running a thumb up and down the warm length of it. He tongued Avon's nipple, moved slowly over his chest, leaving a line of small, reddened bites as he went, keeping his hand wrapped tightly around Avon's cock. He felt the fine tremors of resistance in Avon's thighs as he lay across them, the pulse beating rapidly in Avon's neck under his lips. His own cock throbbed painfully; he pressed it against Avon's groin and gasped, his composure suddenly turning brittle. Pulling the other man with him, he sat up. “Get down on the floor,” he whispered.

He watched as Avon slid down and knelt between his spread thighs, and sent the next order without speaking. Avon's hands went to the fastening of Blake's trousers, opened them. Then there was a flare of defiance. Blake sought for the core, where Avon's voice screamed silently *I AM*. The shields around that core had already been torn by Blake's earlier probing; now he pushed at them again, ignoring the waves of terror that came at him from Avon, and broke through. As the barriers gave way, the rapture of penetration into Avon's mind nearly made him lose control over his own faculties, nearly drowned his own senses. He balanced himself carefully, steadying his grip. Then he summoned Avon forward. The dark head bent, and Avon opened his mouth. Blake pushed his cock inside, groaning as the touch of Avon's tongue on the head of his cock sent heat rushing through him, redoubled by the shock of Avon's reaction reflected back to him through his lock into Avon's psyche. He could feel his own mouth invaded, filled with hot flesh that pressed insistently against the back of his throat. For a moment he panicked, lost in a fugue of merging sensations; implacable hands clasped the back of his head, shoving him down onto the thick, rigid cock. Abruptly he was back in his own head, looking down at Avon, and he knew that what held Avon in place was his own focused will; his hands dug into the couch as he forced Avon down with his mind. He felt Avon fight to pull away, felt his desperation as his muscles refused to respond, felt the horror of his utter helplessness. He moved his hands to Avon's

shoulders, his hair, stroking, caressing freely the man who had always held himself so distant. He surged into Avon's mouth, half-aware of his own guttural sounds.

For a long time he kept his cock in that mouth, sometimes resting, then thrusting again, sliding against the back of Avon's throat. Through the link, he could feel a dull ache slowly spreading through Avon as Blake held him still, the sharp pain when Avon tried to resist or move. Each time that happened, his own cock burgeoned further, and his hands clenched spasmodically as he lashed at Avon through the link. From time to time he pricked at Avon's pleasure center, making Avon jerk against his paralysis, keeping his body aroused and sensitized in spite of the increasing pain. The confused sensations were steadily weakening Avon; Blake felt his disorientation, his struggle to retain the ability to think. Blake found the place in Avon's mind that would blot that out as well, and left it untouched. Leaving this much to Avon made things more interesting.

Finally he allowed Avon to lift his head away. His cock swayed, dripping with Avon's saliva. Blake dragged him back up onto the couch, and roughly pulled off his boots and trousers. He stretched out full length, lying heavily on the warm, naked body; he spat into his hand and closed it around Avon's cock. “I won't *make* you enjoy this, Avon,” he whispered, “but you will enjoy it anyway. All I am doing now is keeping you still. You like that too, don't you. It's the knife-edge, and you're very close. Look at me.” The blank eyes fixed on him as he squeezed Avon's cock in his rhythmically moving fist, his thumb gliding back and forth over the head. Through the link, he sensed Avon's feverish response, felt every wave of compulsion to writhe under the merciless handling, and restrained him utterly, preventing any movement. He experienced the maddening frustration as if it were his own, and he rubbed himself luxuriously against Avon's slender thigh, riding the swells of sensation that rolled back through him, quickening the pace until they were overwhelming. Suddenly Avon's eyes rolled back, and his cum spurted over Blake's fingers in long, slow pulses. Blake shuddered at the agony echoing back through the link.

He scraped up the spattered, milky fluid and slicked it onto his own cock, coated with the half-dried juices of fellatio. Turning Avon face-down, he

stroked the smooth buttocks, probed between them, worked dripping fingers into the small opening until it was slippery with Avon's semen and his own spit. Then he lifted Avon's hips and thrust himself into the paralyzed body in a single hard stroke, letting out a strangled cry as he felt *himself* forced open, as he forced Avon open. He separated his own sensations ruthlessly from Avon's, and his cock gouged into the tight, resisting passage. Raking his fingers down Avon's sides, he drove forward, effortlessly maintaining his hold on the mind and body of the other. His instincts had taken over, and ruled through the fully opened psychic link as surely as his body and his cock ruled Avon now, his hands ranging greedily over the pliant, sweat-soaked form that he clutched to himself. He felt his own orgasm building, and with faint surprise he felt Avon feeling it. He drew his own sensations back through Avon's mind—his own sensations, but distorted, redolent of the unique psyche of Avon as it attempted still to assert itself, however weakly, clinging to its individuality. This was even more precious to him than the chords of his own body—this faint, insistent cry that was Avon. He heard himself panting as he twisted violently, welded to the trapped body, sucking at the trapped mind, a vampire long deprived and starving. "You... I want You... Avon..." and his orgasm ripped through him. He rocked Avon's body against his own as he convulsed, jet after jet of cum going deep into Avon; he struggled against blackout, struggled to keep control over the link. If he lost his hold now, at his most vulnerable, Avon might succeed in throwing him off.

When the spasms eased and died away, he was alone in his mind. He tried to reach into Avon's psyche and found he was exhausted; he could not feel Avon at all, except to sense dully that the man was conscious. Slowly, he lifted himself from the limp body and fastened his clothing. Avon did not move. Blake went down on one knee beside him.

"Look at me," he said softly.

Avon kept his face turned away.

"Avon, can you speak?"

"Yes." The voice was barely audible.

"Can you get up?"

Silence. Blake leaned close. "I enjoyed it, Avon."

"I know."

Blake rose to his feet, looking down at him. It was time to complete the act. "You will not remember any of this," he said, "except that I had you, and you wanted it. You asked for it...you reveled in it."

He took the chain from around his neck, the long, fine chain with its small yellow crystal that had hung, hidden, under his shirt. A Cerastean ruby, pricelessly rare. He slipped the crystal off the chain and weighed it in his hand. Then he dropped it onto the deck and crushed it to fine, shining dust under his boot heel.

As he walked away, the after-effect of the link still reverberated in him, and with it a germinating need to drink again from Avon's mind, a need that promised to grow to a terrible craving. A need that would remain with him, unfulfilled, for as long as he lived.

No thirst his body had known had ever been so bitter.