TERMS OF SURRENDER
Sean Charles

The door was unlocked. Blake walked in and saw Avon sitting on his bed, clothed in black and staring at him with dark shattered eyes. Slowly Blake crossed the room and grasped Avon firmly by the shoulder. The dark man pushed him away and stood, backing away to create again that invisible barrier of distance.

“Why, Blake?” Avon rasped. “Why did you do it?” Blake sat on the bed and looked up at Avon. “You could have given them what they wanted.”

“Avon,” Blake pleaded, “I couldn’t. Dozens of lives were at stake, not just yours and mine. I had to keep silent.”

“You just watched while they did it,” Avon said softly, numb with disbelief. Suddenly, the vulnerability was gone from Avon’s eyes. The fragile trust that had taken Blake nearly two years to build was replaced with hatred. “Did you enjoy seeing them rape me? I was impressed, Blake. You showed so much courage as you watched them at their work. You should have a medal for it, hero.” Avon spat the word.

“Avon, what else could I do?” Blake looked away, unable to bear Avon’s gaze. “That information was vital. You can’t really have expected me to just hand it over to Travis.”

“Can’t I?” Avon shot back. “But then, I see I was mistaken.” Avon turned his back to the seated man, then spun on his heel to face him again. “Just remember this, Blake. That was the last time you use me like that. I am not an expendable pawn in your games of revolution.”

Blake stood before Avon, looking into his intense eyes. Avon was nearly trembling from anger. “I have never considered you expendable, Avon, you know that.” He reached out towards him.

Avon backed away quickly. “I would prefer not to be touched,” he said, icily. Especially by you, Blake read in his eyes.

“Avon, you’ve faced interrogators before; that was certainly not the first time. You put up with how many days of it for Tynus, and he betrayed you. And you finally told me how Anna died under interrogation for you. All without giving them what they wanted. I had expected the same from you and I thought you expected the same from me.” He paused, shaken. Avon’s accusation had hit him like a physical blow. Avon had to understand. It was going all wrong. “We won, didn’t we? We’re both still alive and those two rebel groups are safe.”

“Ah, Yes. We were rescued. Enjoy your victory. After this, it is finished.” His voice was very flat and very final. “I am willing, since I have little choice, to continue to fight for your precious rabble, to wade in blood and shoot until I cannot lift my arm; but I am not willing to die for them.”

“You are alive, aren’t you?” Blake snapped, his patience wearing thin.

“Thanks to Cally, who repaired the damage to my intestines. Fatal damage, Blake. I would have died. When that man reached into me with his fist, I could feel him touching my heart, Blake. He tore me on the way out, and I’m certain that was his intention from the very beginning. He was the type who enjoyed it, who would enjoy leaving me with damage that wouldn’t kill me until hours later, and then painfully.” Avon shuddered, the memory chillingly fresh in his mind. “All while you watched him do it through that window. One word, Blake, one word and he would have stopped, or never even have started in the first place.”

“You knew me, Avon. I can’t be anyone but who I am. You can’t possibly expect me to betray the rebellion.”

“Oh, no, never your beloved Cause, your precious masses,” Avon said acidly. “Just me!”

His words stung Blake. “I did not betray you, Avon.” Avon looked unconvincing, and smiled bitterly. “Can’t you understand? By your own admission, Avon, you endured worse for your friends. And Anna. She died for you, and you respected her for the fact that she never gave them your name.”

Yes. and you will use anything to get what you want. Even her, Avon thought.

Blake had a sinking feeling, recognizing that he was handling this entirely wrong. that for all his supposed skill with words, and ability to sway people, he was at a total loss with Avon. Avon was retreating, withdrawing into the cold, solitary fortress of his mind. Blake tried to soften his tone, to remove his own anger from between them. “You never give in. As long as I have known you, I have never known you to give them anything they want out of sheer bloody-mindedness if nothing else. I had no reason
to expect otherwise this time. This was important. Why won’t you see that? Why is this time so different from the others?”

Avon blinked slowly. “You still do not understand, do you? Tynus was my friend. I felt a personal attachment to him. As for Anna, I would have gladly given my life for hers because I loved her. Had it been to save you, or even one of the others of the Liberator, it would have been different, as before. Reluctant as I may be to admit it, I do feel a personal attachment to them, as well.”

If these had been different circumstances, Blake would have laughed. “That’s quite an admission, coming from you,” he observed.

“Now don’t blow it out of proportion, Blake, or bother to try to convince them of that. I would not appreciate being taken advantage of. I have had more than enough of that this afternoon—for the sake of a faceless rabble on a planet I have never seen.”

“You don’t understand!” Blake roared in frustration.

“Oh, but I do,” Avon said coolly. “I simply do not agree. And I did not agree when I lay on that table and suffered for them. That was your choice, not mine!”

“I had no choice!” Blake emphasized each word. “Did you really think I enjoyed sitting there watching them rape and torture you?”

“Did you? I don’t know, Blake. I know you’ve wanted into my ass since the first time we had sex together. And despite your assurances to the contrary, I am not convinced that you do understand that I do not find that act in any way pleasurable—with anyone. Not even you.” Avon paused, then smiled coldly. “Perhaps you got a thrill seeing it by proxy.”

Blake’s fist travelled half the distance to Avon’s smirking mouth and jolted to a halt? He took a deep breath and slowly uncurled his fingers. “I have always respected your desires, Avon. While I may have hoped that things could be more…mutual…between us, I never have wanted to hurt you nor see someone else hurt you. You must know I would have done anything to stop it.”

“Anything—except give them what they wanted.”

“I couldn’t! I had no choice? Would you have sacrificed all of those people?”

“Yes,” Avon replied simply. “For you I would have; or for a friend. As to choice, well now, you are the one who has said with such monotonous frequency, ‘there is always a choice? There was a choice this afternoon and you made it. If you are too naive to accept the consequences, then I am not surprised. But do not come to me afterwards with your wonderful voice and your pretense of caring. I have learned all too well just whom and what you care for.”

“I can’t help it if you like my voice,” Blake said, taking a step forward.

Avon pushed him away. “It may lure others and inspire them to martyrdom, but it does not work on me. Spare me your speeches and your attempts at justification, Blake. They have never moved me.”

“Would you have rather the Federation knew all they have to do is to capture one of my crew and I will give in to them?” Blake snarled.

“Of course not. You have it right, though. As of now I am one of your crew, nothing more.”

“Oh, you’d rather I let them know otherwise, would you? I’m sure the Major would have gotten a thrill knowing you were special to me, that I love you. I’m certain that he would have thought of something even more inventive to do to you.” Blake paused. “I had to hide my feelings, Avon. To save you.”

Avon conceded that Blake was right on that point. “It didn’t work, though, did it? I doubt there would have been anything more inventive than what did happen.” Avon paused. “But I can see the logic of concealing any particular regard you claim to have had for my life. What I don’t understand is why you continue to do so here. Unless your first justification was the true one, unless you do feel a much stronger attachment to your followers than you do to me. Since that seems to be the case, I am, as of now, temporarily, one of them. I will continue, as I said, to fight for you, to repair your computers, but nothing else, Blake.” His eyes flashed. “Anything else is over with. And when you have found this Star One of yours, it will be over for good.”

“You can’t just walk away from what we had together, Avon. You might be able to set aside your feelings that easily, but to me, I will always be your lover.” He loomed over Avon, his words caring, but his tone harsh.

Avon stood perfectly still? “When all else fails, Blake, try physical dominance. Well, I have had enough of that for one day. You will still have my guns and my hands—but I will no longer be your whore.”

Blake physically recoiled from the words. “Do you really think that is what you are to me?” He stepped forward again and grabbed Avon by the shoulders and shook him hard, nearly knocking him off his feet.
“I want to shake some sense into you? You have to understand? I HAD NO CHOICE!”

Avon’s face paled and twisted with rage. He lashed out instinctively, slamming Blake down to the floor and pinning him there with a strength which surprised him. His fingers were buried in Blake’s throat. “I told you not to touch me,” he said, hoarse and fierce. Then he let go and stood up, backing away from Blake’s supine body. “Do not do that again. You have made your choice and I have made mine. Now get out.”

Blake rubbed his neck as he pulled himself up to sit on the edge of the bed. “I only came down here to comfort you.”

“You have a new and unusual way of doing that,” Avon said, contemptuously.

“I didn’t think you wanted tea and sympathy from me.”

“Hardly.”

“Despite what you think, there was nothing I could do,” Blake repeated. “You should understand, unless your memory of Federation interrogation techniques has become as full of holes as my memory of the past.” He looked up at Avon. “Do you honestly believe that if I had told them what they wanted, it would have stopped? Or would the Major just have given the order anyway, to make me squirm? Once I gave him the information, neither of us would have been worth anything to him. I had to stall for time? I had to do that to save you.”

“Avon, do you think I could stand seeing you abused like that?” Blake shook his head. “I’ve never felt so helpless before. I know it was you they hurt and not me. You were helpless. But can you see how it must have affected me as well? Put yourself in my position, Avon, and give yourself reason not to relent and then see how you would feel.”

“You gave a very convincing portrayal, then. You convinced them, you convinced yourself, and you most certainly convinced me.” The chill within Avon grew and thoughts refused to leave his mind. The first thing you said is likeliest to be the truth, not all these hit-and-miss attempts at comfort.


“That is the trouble,” Avon replied coldly. “You do not particularly seem to value yours, either. You belong to the vast masses who follow you and you will give them every last drop of your blood. That you would also give them mine is no comfort. Remember that some of us are revolutionaries by chance rather than choice. I do not believe in it, and I am not...”

Blake cut him off. “Political. I know. You always tell me. But somewhere inside of you is an idealist—buried, I admit, but there nonetheless. As to your assertion that you are not political, I have seen evidence to the contrary. Your great crime for which you were sent to Cygnus Alpha has been variously described as stealing something between five and five hundred million credits—you never deign to confirm the amount. Yet, when you described it yourself, you said you were attempting to ‘undermine confidence in the Federation banking system? Rather a strange way to describe a simple computer swindle, don’t you think?” Blake smiled. “And other things, as well. I don’t think they routinely teach demolitions and weapon use to children at ACS along with their computer skills.”

“All right, I have, in the past worked with other fools who were themselves political. But I was a mercenary, Blake. I sold them my skills. For a high price, I might add.”

Blake was relieved that his accusations had distracted Avon, even momentarily, form the issue. “I have no doubt that you did. Just like your friend, Del Grant. Rather exactly like your friend, Del Grant.
You can never convince me, Avon, that you do not believe some things are worth fighting for. You are a fraud, Avon. You do care."

"And you have quite an imagination," Avon said sarcastically. "Your motives seem to change every minute. If it did save your life, this afternoon, I am glad of that anyway. Otherwise, that is the end of it."

"Would you like me to call up the nearest Federation base and transmit to them the list?" Blake shouted. Avon had returned to the same stuck point in the argument. "Would that prove to you that I care more for you than them?"

"That would be pointless now, Blake. It is just a little too late."

Blake took a deep breath. "I admit I had mixed emotions at the time, damn it? It is a bit disconcerting to watch your lover being raped. I had to save you and I had to save them. The same thing accomplished both. You lived—and the Federation did not get the information they wanted. It was a high price for winning, and one I wish you would believe that I'd rather not paid, but we did succeed."

"You paid? You? Spare me your bleeding heart. But that still doesn't explain this invasion of my cabin, nor the way you've behaved since coming here."

"Avon," Blake said, almost pleading. He stretched out his hand again, but Avon remained well out of reach. "I couldn't stand it. I had to sit there and watch them damn near kill you and not let it show, not let any of it show. It was the only chance you had and I knew it. When we did get out, when I brought you back up to the ship..."

Blake paused a long time, the memory washing over him. "Avon, haven't you ever seen a mother who almost lost her child, to an accident or something, suddenly get angry at the child? I lashed out because I do care about you too much and there wasn't a damn thing I could do to save you any of it." Blake buried his face in his hands. He could no longer bear the pain of the memories or of Avon's anger.

"I never appreciated that response in my mother, either," Avon said drily.

Blake looked up at him. "Take it out on me if you must or if it would make you feel better. I don't care what you do to me. But do try to understand, Avon. You're not the only one with complex motives here."

"I don't think I should, Blake." Avon turned his head a little to the side. "I might enjoy that too much." Blake sat down again. "There is something in me, Blake, that is a little too much like that torturer."

"No, there isn't." Blake's voice was rich and warm, almost hypnotic, almost comforting in its sincerity. "You could never be like that."

"Couldn't I?" Avon tried to deny the truth of Blake's words.

"No, you couldn't." Blake's denial had the ring of the absolute to it.

"Besides, your allowing me to would take the fun out of it." Avon stepped closer to the seated man. He would not admit that no matter what was said or done in anger, Blake was right—he did not want to hurt him. Still, what he wanted had rarely mattered—he certainly had not wanted Anna to be killed, though he had feared it might happen, nor had he wanted his friend, Tynus, to sell him out, though he had planned for that eventuality. "Don't take any more chances with me, Blake," he said, softly, not entirely sure what he meant by it.

Blake looked up to Avon, longing in his eyes. "Avon..."

"You know where I stand now," Avon interrupted. "I am not willing. For you, yes. Even for the others. But not for them." I am tired, Blake, he thought. Tired of fighting the Federation, and tired of fighting with you. You have not convinced me."

He stepped closer. "I will forgive you," he said calmly, falsely, knowing that Blake would believe him because Blake needed to believe him. "This time. But stop trying to justify it to me. You never can. Not for them."

He stood between Blake's knees and rested his hands on the large shoulders. Is there room there for me, Blake? Are these shoulders large and strong enough to carry the masses and still leave room for me to touch you? Avon leaned forward.

"Only for you." He kissed Blake slowly, feeling angry at his sudden urge to run away. No, Blake is not the enemy. I do not fear him, he tried to convince himself. Blake's arms went around his waist suddenly large and warm and familiar. Avon felt himself pulled to sit next to Blake and Blake's hand stroking the back of his head, lowering it to the large shoulder. Strong fingers gently ran down his back, easing the tension slightly. The embrace was comforting, but claustrophobic. Still, Avon submitted to it, letting the larger man hold him tightly and touch him gently all over. Blake needed that, needed proof that he was alive. And that need was more reassuring to Avon than the caress itself. What he wanted, he kept to himself. He wanted not to be touched or gentled or comforted; what he felt was an intense desire to assert himself, express
his own dominant, primitive urges. He wanted to throw Blake back hard onto the bed, and plunge recklessly into him, to feel Blake’s strong body yield to him. What he had said to Blake was true in part, except for the sadism. He had no desire to cause Blake pain, and revenge was not what he had in mind. Still, despite his thoughts, he lay quiescent on Blake’s broad chest and felt Blake, not himself, shaking with emotion.

“Avon…” Blake whispered his name. Blake’s need comforted him and he began to relax. “Avon.”

Blake crushed him closer and Avon began to feel aroused. He lifted his head suddenly and kissed Blake deeply. Blake moaned. Avon slid out of his trousers and boots in a smooth movement and reached for Blake’s hand. He firmly brought it where he wanted it and leaned against Blake so that they fell on the bed.

Blake broke the kiss, his arm still encircling Avon’s shoulder. “Isn’t it too soon?” he asked, warm and concerned.

“No Blake. Just do it. The damage was bloody and painful, but essentially superficial. The tissue regenerator worked fine.” Avon put Blake’s hand back from where he had removed it. “Let me be the judge of my own body.”

Blake took him at his word. Now was not the time for yet another argument. If he were wrong, then the medical unit would undo any minor damage caused. What was more important was that Avon wanted him, and he would not deny him. Blake began stroking Avon’s hard cock, feeling him shudder slightly with the excitement.

Avon pressed his body hard against Blake, gasping slightly. He had misjudged the intensity of his own passions, and was very close to release. Blake kissed him and stroked his shoulder. Avon shivered and began to feel his come rising uncontrollably, seeping out just a little at the tip. Blake’s warm palm slid over the drops and slicked them down Avon’s shaft.

He was nearly there. Blake stroked him faster, whispering his name into his ear. Avon felt his cock strain, the pleasure so strong that it was almost pain. Feelings began to well in Avon that he could not understand: a strange mixture of terror and excitement, attraction and repulsion. To him, Blake’s hand felt possessive, confining, even while it was giving him pleasure. It seemed almost as if coming would be some sort of surrender. Avon wanted to scream. He was trapped in the intensity of his emotions. Blake could not be ignored or forgotten or cut off or gotten over. Avon groaned and arched his back, straining to escape, as his come gushed over Blake’s strong, compelling fingers.

Blake touched Avon gently after he came, pulling him again into his embrace. As always, he was amazed at the depths of passion his cold-seeming lover revealed. Avon seemed almost racked with pain, and Blake felt again the terrible pang of having nearly lost him. He squeezed Avon’s cock, not crushing, but holding him, feeling the vital pulse of that organ. It seemed for that moment the most precious thing Blake had ever touched. It was Avon, and he was alive.

Avon lay back, exhausted, on the bed as Blake gently toweled him clean then lightly stroked his side. He loved to see Avon like that, enjoyed stroking the loose, unstrained muscles, holding him close. Those moments had seemed rarer since Gan died. Avon was so often guarded, nervous, careful…even when they made love. But not this time. Blake stroked his soft, dark hair. I don’t ever want to lose you, he thought, and his fingers transmitted the thought as they curved around his head.

You never will let go of me, Avon thought, feeling Blake’s warm, possessive touch. Not until we both lie dead at the feet of your cause.