Blake stood on the cliff overlooking the great ocean, watching the last rays of sunlight as the swollen, orange orb dropped below the horizon. The breeze picked at his clothes and tousled his curly hair. The rebel reminded Avon of some tragic character out of a pulp novel, standing alone, facing his destiny in the same way. Darkness fell swiftly and the air turned damp and cold driving Blake back to the bonfire Avon had going. They hadn’t said two words to one another since Jenna had called down to say the Liberator was temporarily leaving orbit to avoid pursuit ships. Except for the frequent arguments they’d been having, this was the norm for them.

The rebel pulled a piece of meat from the bird Avon had killed and cooked for them. The lean-to shelter they’d built would keep them warm enough for the night...if it didn’t rain. Minutes had drifted into hours; Blake continued to eat slowly and when that was done he stared silently into the fire. Avon took the opportunity to study the surroundings Blake was so pointedly ignoring, and when he got bored with that, the constellations in the night sky occupied his mind.

“Has it come to this, Avon?”

Blake’s soft voice came as such a surprise it caught the tech momentarily speechless. Still, he recovered quickly, “Are you being deliberately obtuse, Blake, or have I missed something? Has what come to this?”

“You and I.”

Avon frowned and shook his head, honestly confused, “I’m afraid I still don’t understand. You and I?”

Blake turned and his eyes locked with Avon’s dark chocolate ones. “You know what I mean. Have we come to this point? Haven’t you noticed that the only thing we do now is argue?”

“Well, now, if you would listen to reason from time to time instead of risking life and limb—my life and limb in particular—for your pathetic cause, we just might have more to be civil about.”

Blake shook his head and turned his attention back to the fire. “You know very well that’s not the reason. It’s a coverup, Avon, a blind to throw the others off. But not only do I know what you are doing, I know why you’re doing it. Unfortunately,” he sighed, “I also know there’s nothing I can do or say to stop you except to let you know I’m on to you.”

Avon laughed harshly. “Well, now, this I have got to hear. Do tell, Blake, what ulterior motives have I for arguing with you?”

Blake braced his elbows against his knees and rested his chin on his laced fingers, not bothering to look at his cohort. “You want to destroy the seed we planted that night. You, Avon, are afraid.”

Avon’s head dropped back against the rock he was using as support. “Afraid! Of what? One drunken night of lust. Too much celebrating with Avalon and her group which allowed something that should never have happened.”

“But happen it did, Avon,” Blake’s words flowed from him with deliberate slowness. “And…”

“And,” Avon interrupted, “we both said some things we quite frankly didn’t mean.”

“I meant every word.” Again, silence hung heavy between them. Blake took a small stick and poked at the fire, stirring the embers, making tiny hot ashes take flight and watching them die in the cold, night air.

“Do you want to know what I most remember?”

“I’m certain you’re going to tell me whether I want to hear it or not.”
Blake continued to stir the fire. “I remember the warm patch you left on your side of the bed.”

Intrigued, in spite of himself, Avon raised his head and glanced curiously at the man by the fire. “Pardon?”

“When you left in the middle of the night you thought I was asleep…but I wasn’t. I listened while you got dressed and it took all my self control not to smile when you kissed me on the forehead before you left.” Blake tried to smile then, but missed. “When I heard the cabin door close, I turned over. I sleep better on my back and that ended me up on your side of the bed. It was so warm…warmer than my side and it smelled like you. I shall never forget that…the warm patch.”

Avon looked away trying to hide his discomfort at hearing the pain in Blake’s voice as he related his memories of their one evening together. He’d left the rebel’s cabin that night firmly resolved there would be no repeat of the incident because it had evoked such feelings in him…feelings he had long ago buried. And, he wanted them to stay that way, but Blake had shown him that night that he could draw them out, make them come to the surface where any well placed shot could hurt him. He was tired of pain. He knew any kind of relationship with Blake could only have one ending and that kind of agony would be too much to bear.

“Careful, Blake, you’re becoming maudlin in your old age.”

Blake’s expression never changed; he simply stared at the fire watching it grow weaker. “I meant it when I said I loved you, Avon.”

“Spare me. I don’t want to deal with this right now…or ever. It’s over, let it go. I have.”

“I can’t, because I don’t believe you. I felt something that night and so did you, whether you care to admit it or not.”

Avon’s fingers scratched up a small rock. He tossed it at the dying flames. “I know you, Blake, you won’t let this matter rest until I convince you that our little assignation meant nothing. An insignificant entry in the story of my life.”

“If it meant so little to you then prove it. Make love to me again tonight then tell me to my face that you don’t care.”

Avon shook his head, exasperated, “How can I make love to you again when I’ve never made love to you before? I fucked you. I had sex with you, but that was all. If you want me to do it again, all right.” Avon stood and started to unhook the fastenings at his shoulder. “Your technical expertise was adequate and since I obviously have nothing better to do, I might as well spend my time relieving a little stress.” He dropped his tunic on the ground and started to undo his leather trousers. “Well?”

Blake looked up at the tech. The sadness in his eyes was almost overwhelming. Slowly, the rebel stood and stripped. He stepped up to Avon and ran his hand across the tech’s slightly furred chest and around until he held him in a gentle, but firm embrace. He rested his head on the other man’s shoulder, drawing in a long, shaky breath. “Make love to me, Avon. Don’t be afraid. Trust me as I trust you. Let me into your heart. There may be no tomorrow for either one of us and tonight may be all that we have. But if we’re lucky, I’ll be given more time to show you that I’m not lying to you. That I’m not trying to trick you into loving me then turn on you when you’re no longer useful. I swear I’ll never betray your trust. Please, Avon.”

Blake’s strong hands moved down the narrow back to cup the leather encased, muscled buttocks and to pull the tech closer. Raising his head, he bore down on Avon’s parted lips. Greedily, he took them, plundering the tech’s mouth with his tongue. Avon responded with equal fervor, pressing his swollen groin against Blake’s, the rough leather only exciting the rebel more. Blake gasped and pulled back slightly. Placing his hands on both sides of Avon’s face, he gazed down into the now ebony eyes. He felt himself falling into their great abyss as he searched for the thing…the emotion he knew Avon kept hidden there.

Avon broke the rebel’s trance by drawing him back down into an ever deepening kiss. He rubbed himself against the larger man, inflaming him until Blake dropped to his knees, his fingers tearing at the metal zip of Avon’s trousers, feverishly helping Avon remove them. Avon’s cock jutted out proud and firm, challenging Blake to take it. The rebel teased the underside of the shaft with his warm, wet tongue, circling the glans, forcing a low moan to escape from Avon’s lips.

Blake looked up at his lover’s flushed face. A fine sheen of sweat reflected the light off his skin, making it glisten. “I love you, Avon. I’ll give you what you want. I love you…love me.” His words didn’t go unnoticed. Blake could see the tech’s jaw tighten, but he never said a word in reply.

Long, narrow fingers wove their way into Blake’s tight curls and gently drew him closer. He bent his
head and took the firm shaft in his mouth, sucking hard. He let Avon guide the rhythm: slow and even at first, then growing more frenetic.

The fingers tightened as if frightened Blake would change his mind and leave Avon cold and alone as so many others had. He thrust deeply into the heat. Throwing his head back, mouth open, eyes staring unfocused at the stars above, Avon groaned and exploded into the overwhelming warmth. He felt lost as he had that first night; felt Blake’s love bleed through his defences. He screamed his frustration and shoved hard against the larger man, throwing him into the fire. Blake rolled quickly, feeling the sting of the flames as they caressed his naked skin, burning him. He sprang to his feet and backhanded Avon all in one fluid motion. The tech fell back hard against the rocky ground, winded and surprised. Before he knew what was happening, Blake was on him, pinning him to the rough gravel.

“What the hell was that all about, Avon? Were you trying to kill me?”

Avon fought like a wildcat. The two sweaty combatants rolled and tussled on the stony surface, rippling their skin in a hundred places, but inevitably, Blake ended up on top. Avon was effectively constrained beneath him, still struggling.

“Are you so frightened of what you’re feeling?”

Avon started to speak, but Blake’s lips crushed down on his, silencing him. “Don’t try to lie to me. I can see it in your eyes. You do love me. I swear to you, Avon. I will never, ever betray your love. What you see is what you get and I’m not bloody likely to change.”

The tech turned his head away, not wanting to look into the pleading eyes anymore. “What am I supposed to do now, Blake? Say ‘I love you’, too? Tell you that I believe every lyrical word just so that you’ll get off me?”

Blake closed his eyes, but a single tear escaped. Avon felt it splash warmly on his cheek and he whipped his head back around. Another fell and with a tremulous sigh, the rebel rolled off his lover, to curl up on his side, not caring what might happen next. Avon climbed stiffly to his feet. He made his way over to the fire. Shaking out his trousers, he slipped them back on and resumed his place by the rock.

“Get up, Blake and get your clothes on. You’re going to catch pneumonia.” But the rebel didn’t stir. Several minutes passed before Avon got up from his spot, took a blanket from the survival pack and went to wrap it around Blake’s shivering body. He pulled the man up into a sitting position. Blake’s pain hung heavily about him and though Avon tried to deny its effects, he found himself crouching down and cradling the wretched man in his arms. “I told you not to love me, Blake. I can’t give you the love you want. It’s just not there, but I suppose…” Avon hesitated, sensing deep inside that one day he would regret the words he was about to say, “I can give you my trust. But I warn you, Blake, betrayal in my book has dire consequences. I will go to the ends of the universe for those I trust, but I will kill anyone who makes me out the fool for trusting.”

Blake looked up; only a little of the sadness seemed to have faded. “So perhaps, then, someday, you will learn to love me.”

Avon smiled, but it didn’t mask the deeper emotions he was feeling, “Don’t hold your breath. Now come on, I’m tired. Lie down here beside me and we’ll conserve our body heat.” Blake nodded and did as he was told. Avon pressed himself against the rebel’s broad back and fell asleep almost immediately.

The next thing Avon remembered was the sound of Blake’s voice. He rolled over, pulling the blanket up closer to his chin, trying to block out the cool, moist early morning breeze. He noticed, with a little grin, that the spot he’d turned on to was far warmer than the area he’d been in. He opened his eyes. Blake was standing by the cliff, dressed, with the teleport bracelet raised to his lips.

“Are you sure there aren’t anymore pursuit ships in the vicinity?”

“Orac and Zen assure me we’re clear now,” Jenna’s voice replied.

Blake rotated slightly and smiled when he saw that the tech was watching him. “All right, but give us about fifteen minutes before you teleport. We need to break camp and get the fire out.”

“Fifteen minutes, see you then.”

Blake came over and dropped down onto the ground by Avon. The tech saw a small burn on Blake’s cheek. He flinched and pulled away when Avon touched it.

“What are there any others?” Avon asked softly, the memories of what had happened between them the night before flooding back.

“Yes,” Blake blinked and looked away. “And some are deeper than others.” They both knew they weren’t talking about the burns.

“I told you last night. I shall trust you.” Avon stood and grabbed his leather tunic, pausing a moment to pull it over his head and fasten the shoulder clasp.
“But I think it best if we end our physical relationship now. We will only hurt one another more...” His eyes locked with Blake’s and said more than he wanted them to. “And I for one, have had enough self induced pain in my life. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m not the martyr type.” He turned quickly away from the rebel and brought the teleport bracelet up. “Jenna, we’re finished here. Bring us up.”