HE'D BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THEM, WONDERING WHAT THE HELL THEY WERE UP TO, A HORRIBLE SUSPICION GNAWING AT HIS GUT.

Mutiny. Rebellion. Abandonment. Call it what you will, it all added up to Avon undermining Blake’s leadership, the incessant arguments wormholing the support the others had once given him. Even Jenna’s support was less than guaranteed and Cally had needed persuasion for every decision, unless it had been a direct attack under discussion. And as for Vila… Well, it was becoming blatantly obvious that if Avon decided to jump ship—or take it over, which sounded far more likely, knowing Avon—then Vila would be right there at his elbow. Complaining, no doubt, but still with Avon and not Blake. So, sitting there having his midnight snack, sitting there alone in the wonderfully quiet calm of his ship, it occurred to Blake that this was the perfect time to…run a reconnaissance. Not to actually spy on them—he wouldn’t call it that—but just a surreptitious visit to find out what was going on behind his back; that would probably do it. At least then he’d know the worst.

Oh so quietly, he crept up towards the flight deck, knowing that Vila would be up there keeping Avon company as usual, even though it wasn’t her watch. The two had gradually, over the time they’d all been on the ship together, become closer, one larcenous nature gravitating towards another. Thick as thieves had certainly taken on an entirely new meaning since whatever the hell it was they had got up to on Freedom City. Careful to be as silent as space, Blake reached the adit to the flight deck, keeping to the shadows where he could see without being seen.

But he heard them before he saw them.

Sounds he recognised, sounds he remembered, sounds he had heard coming from his own throat last night fantasizing about Jenna. The bastards weren’t plotting insurrection—they were having sex. On the flight deck. In public. And Blake realised he was getting hard just listening to them. He sneaked forward to get a good look at them.

They were standing right in front of Zen, seemingly oblivious to the fact that an intelligence—albeit artificial—was watching them. Definitely oblivious to the fact that an intelligence—positively human—was also watching them. With bated breath, lest they hear him and stop what they were doing.

Blake had never seen two people kiss with such quiet intensity before, had never seen such depth of feeling displayed by so simple a gesture. It drove it home to him just how emotionally deprived he was and had been, that it took a cold-fish like Avon to show him this much affection.

But then, didn’t a cold façade often hide the hottest of natures? Just as Avon’s cynicism hid a man willing to risk his life in the attempt to defuse a bomb to save the lives of a planetful of strangers? The way he was cradling Vila’s head whilst his mouth caressed Vila’s made Blake weak at the knees. It had never occurred to him that it could be this. Never occurred to him that the sniping slagging-off could be smokescreen for this kind of unity.

For this kind of love.

That was what this was, surely, whether the stubborn Kerr Avon would ever admit it or not. Blake had felt love often enough to recognise it when he saw it and what he was looking at now was a veritable work of art. The two of them were pressed together, so closely that Blake couldn’t even distinguish where Avon’s black leather left off and Vila’s beige fabric began. They looked fused together, perfectly matched as they clung to one another, neither one leaning, both supporting. Then they eased apart, far enough for Blake to see Vila’s erection tenting the soft cloth of his trousers before Avon’s hand came down to fondle and cradle him there.

“If we don’t pack it in now, Avon, I won’t be able to and you know what’s guaranteed to happen then, don’t you?”

Avon seemed more interested in what was presently happening under his right hand than
in any threat of a nebulous future.

"I'm serious, Avon. If we don't stop now, we'll end up on that bloody settee again and you know what that means."

"I'll end up with my back out again?" Avon questioned absently, licking a droplet of sweat from Vila's temple.

"Apart from that. Blake'll walk in on us."

"Don't be stupid. Fearless Leader is safely tucked up in bed like the good little boy he is."

"We should be so lucky. He's been having a bit of bother with his insomnia again, you know. And that means he'll be down in the galley having a bite to eat before he goes back to bed."

Now that got Avon's interest. "Are you positive?"

"As positive as you'll try to do me out of my share of the money."

"That serious, then. Well, I suppose that means we shall have to postpone this until Cally comes to relieve me."

"Which is when we get to go down to your cabin and you get to relieve me, right?"

"To begin with, anyway." Avon pulled Vila in close against himself, kissing him hard, both hands clasping Vila's buttocks, pressing their bodies closer and closer, until Blake couldn't see how they could possibly still be able to breathe. Judging by the deep, shuddering breaths they both took when the kiss was over, neither had Avon or Vila. The reluctance to part was palpable, their bodies almost adhering as they each stepped back.

"Suppose we should just sit down on the settee, then," Vila said, as if suggesting having his toe-nails pulled out by red-hot pliers.

"In separate rooms would probably be safer," Avon's voice was as wry as his expression.

"Can't help it if you're the fanciablest man I've ever met, can I? Anyway, I'm a Delta and you know we're not supposed to have any will power. I'll leave all that up to you Alpha types."

Blake had to cross the doorway to keep them in sight as they went over to the settee and was so engrossed in not being seen, he lost track of what was being said. When he was safe to look at them again, Avon and Vila were sitting a decorous distance apart, Avon with a look of smouldering sexuality on his face, Vila with a pout of such 'come hither and make me a very happy man' proportions, it would try the patience of a saint. And no-one had ever accused Kerr Avon of sainthood.

Blake's hand disappeared into his trousers the same instant that Avon's tongue disappeared into Vila's mouth and Vila's hands delved into black leather.

Blake was sure that this time they weren't going to stop and had to stifle his breathing to quiet it when Vila leaned downward, head disappearing down where Blake couldn't see him. It was obvious what he was going to do.

And then Avon, the bastard, stopped him.

"Not on the flight deck," he muttered, straining Blake's hearing the same way Blake's cock was straining his trousers.

"Never bothered you before," Vila muttered back, bending down again.

Avon pulled him back up, to the extreme frustration of them all. "But then, I've never had the threat of having Blake walk in on us before, have I?"

"Bother you, would it?"

"Only in that it would be so damned awkward. As for Blake seeing us..." he paused for thought, then grinned suddenly, snatching a kiss from Vila, "with the fantasies you and I have discussed—don't be so bloody stupid, Vila. Even if all he did was watch, I certainly wouldn't complain."

"Would you really like him to join us, Avon?"

Another pause, then the truth coming out amidst the habitual banter. "Honestly? Well, everyone's entitled to one really severe bout of bad taste, so yes, I must confess I would." A second, then Avon asked the question that Blake hadn't dared wish to hear answered. "And you? Do you 'fancy' Blake enough for him to join us occasionally?"

"Blake? With us?" Stalling then, and obviously, a twist of grey dulling his voice, drawing Avon's and Blake's eyes to him, two men joined in the sudden rain of melancholy.

Avon obliged Blake by asking his questions for him. "What's the matter now, idiot?" And it was a wonderment, how Avon could turn an insult into endearment.

"Nothing's the matter. What could be the matter anyway then? You're fed up with me and need a bit of spice, I can understand that. Can see how a man'd need a bit of variety. Could do with an added extra meself."

"A brain, in your case." Avon leaned forward and Blake took a step forward, the need to see
outweighing the risk of discovery. Fingers curved elegantly, Avon was stroking the back of his hand down Vila's cheek, his own face so very close to the thief's, their shadows mingling until Blake couldn't discern their features any longer, nothing to give them away but the indulgence of Avon's voice. “A bit of spice, as you put it, is all it would be. Come on, Vila, can you honestly see me falling head over heels in love with Blake?”

The silence was deafening.


“Is it?” Blake would never have had the gall to actually ask that, not of Avon. “Why else d'you stay with him, if it's not for that?”

Avon looked at him with genuine astonishment. “Every bounty hunter in the Galaxy is after me for the money the Federation will pay them. Half the crimos in the Galaxy are after me for that same money. The Terra Nostra are after me because of the whole Shadow incident. All the Federation forces are under orders to kill me first, ask questions later. Travis is after my head on a platter and I dread to think just precisely what Servalan has in mind for me. And you ask me why I stay with Blake? I'm caught between a rock and a very hard place, Vila and this ship is my only chance to survive. Now, what was that crap you were spouting about my heart beating only for our illustrious leader?”

Vila just looked at him, shocking Blake, but Avon was patently more accustomed to a brave Vila than anyone else was. Avon looked away. Vila and Blake didn’t.

“Oh, all right, I confess to having a soft spot for Blake. Right on top of my head, probably. Or in my bleeding heart.”

“So it’s just pity, then, is it?” Blake decided to remember how to get Avon to answer questions that Avon would really far rather leave ignored.

“Yes. Absolutely. Nothing more...” Vila was looking at him again. Avon crossed his arms. Vila kept on staring. Avon crossed his legs, the very image of a man under siege.

“Oh, all right, so I've always liked my men burly. Does that answer your bloody question to your satisfaction, Lord Restal?”

“No.” Even Vila knew better than to try and fight Avon in this mood, that rigid ‘no’ warning him well away.

“All right. So you fancy Blake a bit, cos of his build and you stay with him cos he's got this great big ship that everyone and his granny knows he's on. Oh, yeh, I believe you, Avon. Implicitly.”

They fell into silence then, sitting apart, neither one of them looking at each other, all the warmth and intimacy turned to ashes. And all because of Blake, who was feeling guilt stomping its hobnailed boots into him.

“You didn't answer my question, Vila. How would you feel about inviting Blake to join us occasionally?”

“Do I have a choice?”

“Of course you have a choice—who do you think I am? Our fearless leader?”

“Then...”

Blake didn’t know what he wanted the response to be. He was tied in knots thinking about himself with two men, with Avon and Vila. But if it meant being the bone of contention—so to speak—that split Avon and Vila up... That price was a higher one than he was willing to pay. Especially if Avon’s emotions were as deeply involved as Vila seemed to think.

“I don’t really have any choice at all, you know,” Vila was saying. “You don’t really either, for that matter.”

Outrage enlivened Avon’s face. “Vila, I pick and choose whom I sleep with and...”

“And Blake needs us. You know it, I know it and I think Blake knows it as well.”

“What the hell are you talking about now?”

“I’m talking about the way Blake’s been going over the edge, ever since those Aurons or the Federation or whoever it was took his mind over. He’s not been himself, has he? It’s obvious, isn’t it? It’s what Orac said, not that I’d usually trust that bucket of bolts as far as I could spit it, but they really buggered his mind up, didn’t they? Got him to where he can’t trust people, scared to let himself feel anything. Running away from all of us, he is, and look at where he’s running to. All this rubbish about Star One. Doesn’t make any sense to destroy it, does it? And it’s not like...”
our Blake to not give a flying fuck about killing billions and billions of people, is it?”

Avon was sitting very still now, engrossed in what Vila had to say, wrapped up in it completely. So completely, he didn’t hear when Blake took a stumbling step forward, the words ringing in his head again…

Renounce. Deny. Destroy. That which claims to nurture will only betray. Those who offer trust will stab you in the back as soon as you trust them enough to guard you… We can tell you how to make the pain go away. No more pain, no more pain… Destroy…

But Avon’s voice was reeling him back in, dragging him out of his nightmare…

“…we help? I can just picture his reaction if I suddenly became as solicitous as his maiden aunt.” Avon grimaced at Vila’s grin. “I can just picture my reaction if I suddenly started being as sweet as his maiden aunt.”

“That’s what I’m getting at, Avon. We don’t really have much choice about it, do we? Only language we’ve got that he’d let us close with is sex. It’s the only thing a man like him could accept from the likes of us. I mean, let’s face it, Avon, you’ll never be a Cally.”

“Why can’t we pack him off to Cally?”

“Because he likes her, but he only lets her in as far as he would any other fellow rebel.”

“He’s screwing Jenna, why can’t that be enough?”

“You’ve seen the way he treats her, you tell me. And anyway, if I remember correctly, you were very keen on the idea of fucking Blake. Until it turned into something that would be good for him.”

“I had been rather more interested in whether or not it would be good for me, actually. I don’t know that I really like this ‘sex as therapy’ proposal of yours. Just because Orac’s overhaul of what we laughingly refer to as Blake’s brain, I don’t see…” A sharp look at Vila, then a sharper question. “And if I were keen at first, you were decidedly reluctant. Why the sudden change of heart? And don’t plead altruism, I know you far too well to believe that.”

Vila fiddled with the game pieces littering the table, nimble fingers fascinating Avon and Blake equally, almost as obsessively as this conversation was ensnaring Blake.

“Thought it was pathetically obvious myself. You want Blake and you always get what you want. Doesn’t matter what I do, you’ll go off with him. So all I can do is come with you and keep my fingers crossed you won’t dump me cos you end up preferring him.”

Silken voice, steely warning. “I don’t like being manipulated into protestations of affection, Vila. Nor promises that could be impossible to keep.”

“And I fucking know better than to try that crap with you as you bloodywell know. Or bloodywell should know. I’m not as stupid as all that, Avon. Know what I’ve got with you, know where I stand. Not going to push for more.” A fleeting, wry smile, to leaven the leaden atmosphere. “Not unless I wanted you to run a mile, at any rate.”

A long pause, whilst Avon thought and Blake…remembered. Remembered the chill of the operating table under him, remembered as butchers—or doctors, as the Federation so euphemistically called them—cut his brain up and planted things and uprooted other things. And the warnings that came after, voices so persuasive, so convincing, so unlike the uncertainties he was hearing from Avon and Vila. So convincing, the voices telling him to destroy, to remove the threat before it became a threat…

Convincing. As convincing as the voices at his trial, the voices of boys telling tales of abuse and sodomy, of bribery and buggery. As convincing as the voices over the speaker system, telling tales of happy citizenry.

So. That was the secret then. Trust not that which is ostentatiously trustworthy, for that is the gauze they use to hide the truth.

“Vila…” Blake was listening just as hard as Vila, devouring Avon’s voice and the uncertainty it held. “I doubt if I’ll be able to help it, but…I’ve really no intention of hurting you. Not seriously.”

And the tones of pain were there again, pictures of Vila and Avon kissing and touching bandaging over the seeping wounds, the pain surging up and up, only to be pushed back by that neverending image of Vila being cradled by Avon, kissed by him, the giving of pleasure turning into surcease for Blake, easing the agony, beating the voices from a placid calm to a scream for survival to a whisper of silence…

“Always known that, Avon. But it’s just what you said. You can’t help it.”
Avon stared at him for a moment, the balance sheet of emotions being examined in his brown eyes. Additions and subtractions, pros and cons, sums done. “This time I can. I’ll find some other burly fellow to dawdle with.”

Vila’s face lit up delightedly even as he slithered along the settee to sit close to Avon, one hand disappearing down to where Blake couldn’t see it, could only see the effects on Avon’s face.

“Can’t.”

“What d’you mean, can’t?”

“Blake still needs us.”

“But you don’t want to…”

“Did I say that?” Outrage mingling with laughter, so close to Avon now he was almost in his lap. “All I said was that I was shitting myself that once you had Blake, you wouldn’t want me any more. But you want me enough to not have Blake so that means I can take a chance with you having Blake and even if I didn’t want to, it doesn’t stop Blake from needing us. And it has to be both of us, you know.”

“Oh, is this another pearl of wisdom from Orac?”

“Nah. From me. Want to see it, Avon, want to see you with Blake. Be so fucking sexy, that would.”

“And would just incidentally keep you where you could watch me in case I should become too enamoured of our belovèd leader.”

“What a brilliant idea, Avon! You Alphas, fucking geniuses the lot of you.”

“Why do I feel thoroughly manoeuvred, Vila?”

Because you have been, Blake thought. Vila saw which way the wind was blowing and has quietly just taken care of his immediate Galaxy. Perhaps I should persuade him to take up the Cause a little more seriously…

“Speaking of manoeuvring, Avon, how are we going to get Blake into bed with us?”

“How the hell did we manage to come to the conclusion that that’s what Blake needed, Vila?”

“Orac says that he couldn’t undo all the conditioning and that Blake needs to have it proved to him that what the psychomanipulators said was all a pack of lies and that he really can trust people and we don’t have a whole hell of a lot of time before Blake starts going completely bananas so that means we have to really get a move on otherwise he’s going to go round the twist and get us all killed.”

Avon digested this for a moment whilst Blake was busy admiring Vila’s convoluted way of obfuscating the issue. “Where,” Avon finally said with patience loaded and ready to explode, “does having sex with Blake come in to all that?”

“Easy! We don’t have much time, Blake’s always been as randy as a horned toad so the quickest way to get to him is through his libido. So if we fuck him, that’ll show him that people aren’t all that bad. Simple, isn’t it?”

Avon stared at him for several moments, face completely devoid of expression. “I suppose it’s as good an excuse as any. Now, as you’ve come up with this great and glorious excuse of yours, tell me just how you propose to get Blake to agree to your master plan?”

“Oh, that’s dead easy as well.”

“Ah. That usually means that you reap all the benefits and I do all the work. Are you quite sure you and Blake aren’t related to one another?”

“Don’t be disgusting, Avon, that’d be incest!”

“I’m still waiting to hear how you propose to get Blake into bed with us.”

“Simple, really, to a man of my genius. You seduce him.”

“I see. So, you and Orac believe that Blake needs us to fuck him back to sanity and that I’m the one to seduce him. I preferred my version, Vila.”

“So do it for that then, if you want to. You must admit, he is quite fanciable, all those curls and that smooth chest of his. And he’s just the way you like them—big, and in all the right places, too.”

Unfortunately, Blake never did get to hear Avon’s opinion of that—Avon chose that moment to turn around and see him standing there.

“Yes, you’re right, I have been eavesdropping. And from the very start.”

Avon sprang to his feet, irate. “You dared eavesdrop, on a private conversation…”

“You dared sit there and talk about how ‘big’ I am?”

Avon sat back down again, ceding gracefully. “Touché. Well, now…”

And Blake had the uncommon pleasure of seeing Avon lost for words. Vila, however, was suffering from no such handicap. “So what d’you think of our idea then?”

“Our idea?”
“My idea then. Fancy fixing things our way, or would you rather Orac fiddle with you a bit?”

Blake shuddered, not entirely for theatrical effect. “Perish the thought! No, I rather like the idea of being seduced by Avon.”

“You would, wouldn’t you.”

“I don’t see why you’re objecting now, Avon. You seemed quite keen on the idea at the beginning.”

“I’ve decided to change my mind.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” Vila piped up, grabbing Avon by the hand and dragging him to his feet and off towards the steps and Blake. “Blake can seduce you instead. Can’t you, Blake?”

Instead of answering him, Blake quirked a smile and an eyebrow at the thundercloud named Avon. “Quite the novel experience, isn’t it. Being outmanœuvred by an intellectual flea.”

The right word at the right time can avert even the greatest of disasters and Avon’s sense of humour being what it was... Avon yielded with good grace, following behind Vila, allowing Vila to lead, for once.

“I don’t suppose,” he said eventually as they descended upon his cabin, “that it really matters why the hell we’re doing this, does it?”

“Not a bit, I’m afraid,” Blake answered, Vila being too busy with fussing over bed and covers and lotions and towels and getting his clothes off as quickly as possible. “It’s not for any of Vila’s half-baked notions of saving me from myself, I can assure you of that.” Vila’s attention snapped onto him for that. “My breakdown wasn’t the grand production Orac seemed to think it was. That bloody machine always underestimates the human mind. You should know that by now.”

“Now how could it do a thing like that, Blake? You’ve never been underestimated in your life.” And behind Avon’s back, Vila and Blake sniggered at him.

“Couldn’t agree more,” Vila said cheerfully, sprawled on the bed, watching both his Alphas stripping for him. He was looking forward to this, if it kept Avon happy, if it gave Avon enough spice that he’d let Vila stay with him as well. And if it didn’t... well, he’ve lost Avon soon enough in that case and he might as well enjoy it to the full first.

Avon and Blake were both standing, naked, at the bedside, neither one of them entirely comfortable with the situation, neither one of them quite able to maintain the polite Alpha eyes front and up attitude.

“Don’t suppose either of you two’s ever done a ménage before, have you?”

Neither one was willing to answer that.

“Not to worry, I have. Lots. Course, didn’t usually have any say in it, didn’t usually get to pick and choose who was going to have me, but still, it’s all the same in the end, isn’t it?”

Neither Alpha moved.

Vila sprawled a little more widely, inviting, inciting, two Alpha cocks rising at the sight of him. “C’mon, Avon,” he said, opening his arms wide, the way he’d done more times than he could remember, “c’mon, love.”

With a glance at Blake, Avon went into Vila’s arms, immediately usurping control, kissing him hard and deep, his beautiful rump all the invitation Blake needed. He stroked the firm flesh, the shock of contact setting his hands on fire and throwing his inhibitions out the proverbial window. He kneed on the floor so that he could touch Avon better, the bunk being far too narrow for three of them. So instead of gathering both men into his arms as he wanted to, instead of having the touch of flesh covering every inch of his skin, Blake settled for kneeling to kiss Avon, his tongue tasting every curve of spinal disc, every valley and plane of muscle. Even, daringly, the shadowed cleft of backside. Avon shuddered and Blake felt it on his tongue and against his lips, felt the shudder ripple all the way down to his cock. The hair on Vila’s legs brushed against him as Vila wrapped herself around Avon, pulling Avon in closer and then the thief’s hands were on Blake, pulling him in to join the magic circle of desire. Face pressed against Avon’s back, he could feel Avon’s heartbeat against his cheek, could feel the life pulse and flow. Could feel that simple warmth melt the lingering chill of the conditioning...

But he was hungry, starving, dying from the need to have more, to feel more, to be more, so he tugged at them, voiceless in his desperation, bringing them down on to the floor with him where they could tangle together in a parity of passion, arms and legs and skin and mouths and hands all touching and feeling and hot and alive, all of it filling him with a tremendous charge of eroticism, his cock so hard it was weeping, a jolt of pleasure running through him as it
bumped against Avon’s thigh as they both twisted Vila over on to his stomach. Tacit, the agreement, that they would neither one of them fuck the other, not this first time. Let it be Vila, more than happy to be middle man; let him be the one to receive. They had Vila akimbo on the floor, limbs spread wide, and Avon was licking him, tasting him, whilst Blake kissed him all over: neck, back, thighs, buttocks.

Blake stopped for a moment, hand poised to caress Avon, wanting to, but that unreasonable uncertainty stayed his hand until Vila reached up, grabbing him, using Blake’s hand to caress the back of Avon’s neck, to feel the satin of hair, the sexual tension in the muscles. Then Blake couldn’t get enough, hands and mouth all over Avon in a flurry of excess, setting up a heavenly store of treasure, this knowing of Avon’s body. He was nibbling on a pink ear, tonguing a long jaw; then they were mouth to mouth, kissing, oh, how they were kissing and Blake couldn’t get his fill of Avon. Wanted him, wanted to kiss him until they were both long dead and beyond. But Avon pulled away, gasping for breath, smiling at him, one hand cupping Blake’s nape, the other urging Vila over on to his back to display an erection beautiful in its neediness. One hand still immutable on Blake, Avon pulled him down to join him in tasting Vila, their mouths roving over the silken skin and rigid muscle, their breathing mingling and Vila’s sighs the punctuation for everything they did. Avon was sucking Vila deep into his throat and it struck Blake just how practised he was at it, just how much he obviously adored doing this to Vila.

And then Blake wasn’t thinking at all, was licking and stroking every fraction of Vila that Avon left exposed. As Avon withdrew to suck on the head, Blake laved the whetted length with his tongue, drowning in the taste of Avon and Vila commingled on this hard cock that was burning him with its heat. Almost of its own will, his right hand reached for Avon, finding his cock. The hardness of it overflowed Blake’s palm as Avon thrust up into the tightness of Blake’s hand.

And it wasn’t enough. Blake needed to have his cock encased in a wonderful tightness, as he was sure Avon had with Vila, and he needed more— “More!”

He heard his own voice fade into silence, until Vila answered him.

“I like a man who knows what he wants and isn’t afraid to say it. What d’you want, Blake? C’mon, you can tell me.”

“He wants to fuck you, of course, Vila. With an arse like yours on display, what he hell else do you think he’d want?” A slow caress of Vila’s cheek, a lingering kiss of his mouth. “Shall I get the lotion?”

A way out, even then, even though Vila had made so much noise about wanting this, too. It made Blake feel quite small to realise how well these two knew each other, and how much they cared, Avon willing to back out of something he wanted, if Vila needed him, too. And Vila willing to risk this turning into more than just casual sex, if that’s what Avon wanted. It occurred to Blake that if Avon realised all that, the cynical bastard would probably bugger the whole thing up just on a matter of principle.

“Or you can fuck me,” he heard himself saying. “Either of you,” he added, clarifying it for himself as well as them. And was rewarded by a singularly nice smile from Avon and a huge grin from Vila.

“You’ll excuse me if I don’t return your generous offer, but I think I’d rather wait until you’ve had rather more experience in the fine art of buggery.”

“What he means, Blake, is that it’s all right for you to practice on me, but Avon’s dead bloody tight, no matter what you do to him first, so you’d end up hurting him. And that’s not a wise thing to do, you take my word for it.”

And there wasn’t even an echo of his conditioning as the trigger words were spoken. Not a glimmer, not a glower and Blake felt the weight slough from his shoulders like serpent’s skin. “I’ll do just that. You said something about lotion?”

“Vila?”

“Over there where I always put it.”

Avon brought the lotion over, but rather than handing it to Blake, he set about stroking it inside Vila. Just letting me know that he’s still yours, even if he does want to let someone else fuck him? Oh, I’m not likely to forget what the balance is here, Avon, you’re safe enough. He stroked Avon’s back, long, sweeping grazings, feathering down into the cleft between Avon’s.
buttocks even as Avon’s hands were so busy there with Vila. The skin beneath Blake’s hands was incredibly smooth, marble-pale, as smooth as the hair on Vila’s chest was soft and springy beneath Blake’s tongue. He nuzzled a nipple, his hand never ceasing its slow caress of Avon’s back and bum, his mouth devouring Vila, licking his chest, belly, down to his cock. Blake hesitated a moment then leant down, opening his mouth to take Vila inside himself, sucking him in, discovering that even if his mind didn’t remember doing this, his body certainly did. And loved it. He swooped down, lips pressing into pubic hair, one of Avon’s lotioned hands tracing the line where Blake ended and Vila began. Then the hand was stroking Blake as he had stroked Avon, the touch warm and sensual, calming as well as arousing. He moaned, to show Avon how much he was enjoying the touch and Vila bucked in his mouth, Blake’s pleasure vibrating through him.

Avon’s hands were on him again, but drawing him away this time, persuading him to let Vila go, no matter how reluctantly, no matter how much he wanted to do this until Vila’s cum splashed the back of his throat. Avon’s mouth was on his, Avon’s tongue filling the void left when he’d been forced to give Vila up, Avon’s hands all over him, urging him to his feet, rising with him, plastering them together, body to body, cock to cock, skin to skin, heart to heart, until a third heat introduced itself, not coming between them, but compounding them, enlarging them, pleasure building endlessly on pleasure. Vila was moving them, carefully surreptitious, the only one of them anywhere close to still thinking clearly, manœuvring them as skillfully as he had before. Blake was amused, vaguely, amidst the sweetness of all this hard male sexuality surrounding him, as the Delta ordered the Alphas around without once resorting to anything so mood-breaking as speech. And so it was that he found himself, quite naturally, with his cock pressed against the slickness of Vila’s arse, Vila’s hands pressed against the wall at arm’s length, supporting them both.

He looked down at the curving arch of Vila’s arse and remembered Avon’s hands on him there, saw Avon’s hands reach up once again, one to grasp Blake, making him gasp, guiding him firmly, one to spread Vila’s cheeks, opening him up to both Avon and Blake as Avon used Blake to fuck his lover, as Avon joined his lover to another man, put another man in him. Intense, once-familiar heat engulfed Blake and he thrust forward, hard, riding Vila, wrapping his arms around Vila’s middle, his chest pressing into Vila’s back, shoulder-blades excitingly hard against his nipples, his mouth buried in the side of Vila’s neck, tasting heat and sweat and Avon’s kisses.

Avon’s hands roved all over him, hands parting Blake’s buttocks, fingers coming in to the secret darkness there, a single finger pressing into him, pushing past the ring of muscle. Despite it all, there was a flash of fear, of memory barely buried in time before it sent him screaming and he could feel the clammy tension writhe up his spine and...

Avon was kissing him, where he had been kissing Vila, was whispering to him, as he had no doubt often whispered to Vila. “It’s all right, don’t worry so. I won’t force you. It’ll wait...”

Then he was gone and Vila was arching up against him, high mewling noises of ecstasy arching from him, bright and clear. Blake caressed his belly, lower, down to his groin, but instead of a delectably hard cock to fill his hand with its power, he felt instead the gossamer of Avon’s hair. Felt the hollow and fill of Avon’s cheek as he sucked Vila in, making the circle complete. Blake cradled Avon’s head with both his hands, pulling Avon forward every time he thrust hard into Vila, the rhythm drowning their senses in pleasure. He could feel Vila buck once, twice, his stomach muscles rippling with the spasms of his orgasm, then Vila’s arse was clutching at him, and he could hear Avon swallow wetly, taking Vila into him as Blake held his head so tightly.

They allowed Vila to collapse to the floor and Blake eased his cock from flaccid flesh to tumble into the tangle of limbs, fastening his mouth to Avon’s as they lay on the floor together, Vila sucking Avon’s rose-dark cock into his throat, his right hand pumping hard on Blake. And Blake was lost in the kissing. Was lost to that talented, generous mouth as he listened to Vila sucking Avon. Was lost as he felt Vila stroking and squeezing his cock so utterly perfectly. He heard a new noise, Avon, whimpering almost, deep in his throat, the sound breathing into
Blake. Avon’s body was suddenly fraught with passion, Avon’s hand clasping Vila to him, the other clutching Blake to him to kiss him deeper, deeper, as orgasm shook him, the trembles sending Blake off, his cum bathing Vila’s hand and Avon’s belly as Avon’s cum splashed against the back of Vila’s throat.

He couldn’t believe it was over. Couldn’t believe that after all that, the floor seemed cold, his muscles aching. Couldn’t believe that he’d have to get up and leave, for he was the intruder here, he was the interloper, the bit on the side... He was unnecessary, unwanted.

Until he realised that Avon and Vila had been whispering together whilst he had still been floating off on a cloud of afterglow. Avon was crouched over him now and Blake was struck by a consuming hunger to touch the hair on his chest and to lick his nipples and suck his cock and do a million other things he hadn’t had a chance to do. And might never get a chance to do. This had been a once off, probably, despite what they had said. Wasn’t safe for him to hope for more...

Avon was shifting him, muttering under his breath about taking monolithic heroism too far and couldn’t Blake at least help?

“Help do what?”

“Get you out of the way so that Vila can get the spare bedding out, that’s what.”

So he moved, still rather dazed, a happy glow suffusing him as it began to dawn on him that he wasn’t going to be thrown out. A pillow appeared under his head, a duvet covered him, then Vila was tucking himself, using Blake’s chest for a pillow. Avon lay down beside him, one arm stretching across Blake’s smooth chest until it was touching Vila. Blake felt movement against his skin; he looked down and watched as Avon carefully interlocked his fingers with Vila’s and rested their joined hands over his heartbeat. He meant to stay awake and talk to them, honestly he did, but sleep dusted his eyes closed and he drifted off to the feel of two warm bodies pressed close to his and the feeling that perhaps destroying Star One might not be quite so devastatingly important...

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
—Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream—

Pæan to Priapus II