No, Avon fans, our twisted favorite is not paired with either Blake or Vila. And no, this tale is not sweetness and light. The wee Scot has remained true to her vision of the *Blake’s 7* universe. She knows, as does Avon, that love never conquers all—what is needed is a brilliant mind of dark power, psychology, and intellect.

This, he was beginning to realise, might yet turn out to be an idea worthy of Vila—or even Blake, on a truly mind-wiped day. It had seemed such a good prospect at the time, an opportunity to both one-up Blake and to actually do something about this all-too abortive Rebellion they were supposedly fighting. Information, that was the carrot on the end of the stick that had lured him here, information that promised to be cuttingly effective. Information, he thought, pivoting slowly to survey the vulnerability of his position, that also promised to be nothing more than the seductiveness of wishful thinking. The atmosphere of this place was weighing in upon him, the silence the breathless peace of death.

Everywhere he looked were pillars and pyres of destruction, charred memories of lives lost here, buried under tonnes of débris and decay. There was a lingering smell that taunted him, defying him to recognise it, but he could not, at first. Slowly, though, as he crunched over the tilted remains of buildings, he placed the odour.

Death. Hovering, lingering, pathetic death. Judging by the encroachment of sickly weeds into the crevices of the fallen, the fleshly remains had long since decayed into compost, but still, the smell clung, an unnerving combination of richly fertilised soil and the ashes of the dead. It was, he realised, staring around at the tortured landscape, nothing more than an enormous graveyard, where none of the dead were actually buried in graves, for there had been none of the living left to inter them.

He shuddered then, with the instinctive distaste of one who has too many of his own dead unburied, and walked on, scrabbling over crumbling piles of concrete-like slabs and cloying weeds that erupted in puffs of foul-smelling pollen or sweet smelling bouquet that dusted a bitter-sweet beauty to this long-forgotten charnel house.

There was a hill, of a sorts, just ahead of him, and that was where he would wait, specific co-ordinates be damned. He could see all he needed to from there and with such forewarning, he would be well fore-armed. Definitely an advantage he thought, cursing under his breath as he reluctantly holstered his weapon to leave both hands free for the climb, considering what it was he fully expected to meet here.

The hillock had once been a tall building, perhaps beautiful, but now it was merely a mouldering monument of rubble...
that slithered and slid under Avon’s feet, threatening to topple him, to send him cascading back down with all the myriad clatterings of tiny pebbles that echoed his every step. But despite his year of living in a spaceship and a lifetime in the Domes before that, he managed to reach the top relatively unscathed. Weapon once more in hand, he raised his right hand to suck on the blood that was dripping from the scrape on his palm.

Slowly, with well-learned care, he systematically catalogued the room he found himself in. Faded remnants suggested that this had once been either a roof-top garden or some sort of balcony, for here and there, glittering white as skulls amidst the profusion of plants gone wild, there were carved balustrades of what might have been this planet’s version of the Muses—or simply shapely female forms to prop up the façade. The paving under his feet was uneven and disintegrating, weeds and tubers thrusting up between the cracks, chunks of wall and roof tumbled as if the ground had yawed under them and thrown them, willy-nilly, to land here. There was, as far as Avon could tell from his current perilous perch on the very rim of this island of rubbed stability, no sign of his assignation.

Assignation. He smiled at the thought, thinking of how wildly inappropriate it was to use such a word when all he was here for, hopefully, the words of a traitor which could then be used to betray an entire government. An entire society...

A crunch, there, behind him. He whirled, but not—quite—quickly enough. There was a weapon pressing into his throat with malevolent intimacy and a voice whispering softly malicious glee into his ear.

"Careless, Avon, oh, very careless. I expected better from you."

"I really do like that about you, Avon."

"What? That I know good manners when I see them—this, obviously, not being one of those times?"

"No, I admire the way you stay defiant, even when a blind man could see that death was only inches away."

Again, the look was one of mockery fed by braggadocio. "Inches? Travis, take a deep breath and I shall be wearing your jacket."

"Or you’ll have my fist down your throat."

Such a déclassé threat garnered the amused smile it deserved, and a glance down at the leather-gloved hand with its power crystal. “And what a waste of technology that would be. But then, I suppose ramming your fist down someone’s throat would be more in keeping with your intellectual… gifts."

“Sneer all you want, Avon,” Travis muttered at him, sneering rather offensively himself, “but I’m the one with the gun hand.”

“Literally,” a sudden lithe twist of sinew and Avon was free, his own gun grabbed from Travis and aimed, quite calmly, whilst Avon went on speaking, “but not, I’m afraid, figuratively. Careless, Travis, oh very careless. But then,” and he grinned, wickedly, “I certainly didn’t expect better from you. Life is far too short, especially if you insist on making such stupid mistakes.”

There was a shiver of adrenalin tumbling through him, his heart beating faster, blood pounding harder. “Now that we have the social pleasantries out of the way,” he went on, seating himself comfortably on the weather-smoothed stone of bygone people, his gun still aimed as unwaveringly as his eyes, “let’s get on to business, shall we? You say you have some information for me?”

"Information? Did you actually fall for that old trick, Avon?" Dark head, thrown back in mocking laughter. “What will you do for your next trick? Sit up and beg?"

A flare of light, and there was a smear of blackness where the ground between Travis’ feet had been burned. “I’m the one who has the gun hand now, and if you want to get out of here with no more spare parts than you already have, then I suggest you give me what I came here for.”
“Information, you say? Is that what you came here for, Avon, or is that just a convenient excuse to hide your cowardice behind?”

He knew, of course, exactly what Travis was trying to do, knew it to the most precise millimetre. Which only made him smile ever more dangerously, eyes glittering with the excitement of the hunt. “What else would I come here for? There’s nothing else you could possibly offer me.” And his scorn was picture perfect, pleasing him as he watched it burn its way right into Travis’ heart.

“Nothing? That’s what Blake has to offer you. That’s what that snivelling worm Vila has to offer you. Or perhaps you enjoy the way he squirms. Is that it? Do you like worms, Avon?”

An insolently measuring glance travelled body-warm leather, and then Avon whipped the lash of his gaze over Travis’ face. “I’d have to, were I to settle for you.”

“It takes a better man than you to make me lose control. And it takes—”

“More time than you’re worth. Information, Travis. Now, or by the time I’m finished with you,” the slightest move of his gun, sights beading, “you won’t even have a worm to call your own.” There was a thrill of power in him now, watching this man, this man half the Galaxy feared, standing in front of him, fighting the instinct to protect his fragile privates with his hand. He stared, licking his lips, the merest whisper of tongue whetting him. A betrayingly nervous swallow, and his attention flew up to Travis’ face again. His pupils dilated, devouring the warm brown of his eyes, leaving only the hot black of arousal.

“You want me, don’t you?” Travis said, his voice—aquiver. “Do I? Well now, I might just be able to find some use for your body, but you? Oh, I don’t want you at all.”

“Do you honestly expect me to believe that? Where do you think you are—still among the morons and misfits on the Liberator? But you’re not, and you can’t hide how much you want me. Your body’s begging for me.”

A quintessentially arched eyebrow, Avon’s negligently waved hand drawing attention to strained leather at Travis’ groin, and: “You betray yourself. So you want me on my knees, do you?” Another grin, his enjoyment palpable. “For a worm? I’d sooner crush you beneath my heel.”

“I always knew you would enjoy pain.”

The smile that greeted that was pure Avon charm. “Only that of others, Travis, so there’s no need for you to look so cheerful at the prospect.”

“I could make you like pain, Avon. I could give you pain so exquisite that it is pleasure. I can give you pleasure so extreme you will be in agony.”

“You,” Avon said, reclining a little more superciliously relaxedly, “can give me the information I came here for. And then you can run off and cry on Servalan’s shoulder.”

“She doesn’t know I’m here.”

He felt the greed consume his belly. “This information—it’s something she would rather I didn’t know?”

“She’d rather,” Travis replied in Alpha-esque echo, “know what you know. She wants the teleport, Avon, and she’s willing to pay for it.”

The gun was lowered, caressing, briefly, the soft leather that covered Avon’s inner thigh, touching his body as he wished he had hers. “How much?”

“Five million.”

“Five million wouldn’t buy a third of the baubles on Liberator. You shall have to do better than that. And,” as Travis took a step forward, “you shall have to stand exactly where you are, otherwise I will take great pleasure in making it a rather moot point whether you are a mouse, the gun nodded intimately towards Travis’ groin, “or a man.”

“Empty threat, Avon. If you harm me, then you have no one to negotiate with Servalan for you. No one to guarantee you safe passage out after you get your money.”

Now that surprised Avon. “You’re suggesting a partnership? That’s the information you had me cross half the Galaxy for? That’s why you had me lie to Blake—to make excuses, to Blake? To offer me a paltry five million and partnership with you? For once, Vila’s actually right. You are insane.”

“I’ve never been more sane. And why turn me down out of hand? Surely it’s at least worth thinking about. You and I, Avon, stealing
Servalan’s own cruiser, one of the best in the Galaxy, going after the best in the Galaxy.”

Interested, the devil looked out of Avon’s eyes, permitting Travis to come closer, one step, another, yet another.

“Just think, Avon. Five million to start, but the real treasure would be the ship and a crew of mutoids. Then we could go after Liberator, they’d be delighted to welcome you back on board. They needn’t know anything about me, need they? And once we were on the Liberator, you could do it.”

“And what, precisely, is...’it’?” Making the pretence, playing the game, as if he had no idea of the sweet sin being proffered. His hand itched with the desire to snatch it and clench it close.

“Destroy Blake.”

“Kill him?” The insidious pleasure was there in his voice, the ultimate fantasy making him lustrous in the gathering night. The ultimate fantasy, the ultimate freedom, the ultimate crime. Kill Blake. Which meant: kill his conscience. Kill his idealism, and the guilt that lived crowded in with failure. Kill every obligation he ever had to be human, or humane. The ultimate freedom. To be without a soul...

“Yes!” And now Travis was there, hovering over him, a fraction of a breath away, closing in as slowly as a glacier, but not so cold. Oh, no, not cold at all. Hot. So very hot. Even across this distance, Avon could feel the heat. But then, it was probably nothing more than the fiery temptation of his own fears. Kill Blake. And after he could go off somewhere, anywhere in the Galaxy, build himself a lab, living quarters, stock it with the best vintages, the finest foods, the rarest books. Shut himself off from the world and the pain it brought him. Somewhere all alone...

“The two of us, Avon, we could do it. You know we could. Partners. You and I.”

Eyes sharp as shattered glass, Avon looked up. “Just like old times, really.”

“Yes,” Travis whispered, going down on one knee, one hand—the hand that was human temperature, not hot with stored energy and active circuitry—tracing the long seam from the lip of Avon’s boot to the crux of Avon’s legs, lingering, warmly, there.

“Just like before?” Avon whispered, as if dreaming, “Like the old days, at school. The two of us. Inseparable.”

The bitter irony of that last word demanded answer. “I had no choice about ending it, you know that. My father forced me into it, else he’d have had you imprisoned on sexual deviancy and endangering a child.”

“You were older than I, and we neither one of us were children. I don’t think we ever were.”

“But we did have dreams, didn’t we? Remember in our room, after lights out? Whispering in the dark...”

“I always preferred the fucking in the dark.”

“Yes, you did, didn’t you, Kerr?” The hand was stroking again, easing its slow way across the litheness of leather covered thigh, across the hungry temptation of crotch, snaking sensuously towards the supple curve of Avon’s right buttock. “I can still remember every single moment of you and me. I’ve never forgotten you. The way we felt about each other. Even University couldn’t separate us, could it?”

“No. Not even that.” And Avon was leaning forward to brush his mouth slowly, tentatively across Travis’, his tongue laving a moist line on dry lips. “Did you know I’ve followed your career from the day you left?” Another kiss, this one deeper, limber tongue coming to know the sharp-edged smoothness of white teeth, searching for, finding, the one that had been chipped the day they’d almost been caught in the changing rooms by the games master. Still there, a little smoother, a little more rounded than when last he’d known it, but still there.

Then, breathed into Avon’s mouth: “Nothing at all has changed, Kerr, you know that.”

“Yes, I do, don’t I? Which is why,” he said with satin seduction, “if you don’t move your right hand away from the power switch on that abomination you call an arm, I’ll blow a hole in your belly.” And felt the satisfaction of revenge served cold blossom through him as Travis withdrew with exaggerated care.

“I also,” Avon went on in the bedroom voice, “know that your father had nothing at all to do with you transferring to the Academy instead of staying on at University with me.
You were hungry for power, and you were never going to be anything other than a very small fish in a very large pond if you stayed in academia. Anyway, looking back on it, I can see now that all you wanted was men cowering at your feet. Happy now?” he sneered, his free hand flicking negligently at Travis’ leather outer skin. “Plenty of pretty little ensigns willing to lick your boots or your cock to keep you from having them cashiered? Or is it only mutoids you can get to have sex with you now?”

The poison barb hit home, Travis suddenly a bundle of dangerous fury.

“Back away, Travis,” Avon whispered, voice quietly lethal with promise and desire. “Now.”

There was a lick of passion in his belly, watching this former lover, now current hater, slither away from him, cautious fear lighting eyes that he remembered so very, very well. “Kill Blake and set up partnership with you?” he mocked. “Not even the joys of a Galaxy free of Blake is worth having you at my back again. In fact, I think I’d much rather set up partnership with Blake and kill you.”

“Oh, very convincing,” Travis answered, but his voice was too steady, a monotone that was more obvious than any stammer could be. “I’m quaking in my boots.”

“Well now, you’re certainly trembling. But is that fear, or is that because you’re under the muzzle of a gun? Tremendously phallic things, aren’t they?” Avon said, death’s head grin and sultry murmur combining. “But then, I think I’d much rather set up partnership with Blake and kill you.”

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“What’s that supposed to mean, Avon?”

“Avon? Not Kerr? Oh, does that mean you don’t love me any more? I am so heartbroken.” Then the spurious humour died. “Don’t try to pretend, Travis. You know perfectly well what I mean.”

“Do I?”

“Stalling? How very worrisome. Is there an entire cadre of mutoids out there? Your very own toys, how nice.”

The fury in him was blinding, but Travis forced it down, backing away from it, refusing to lose this battle to Avon’s expert tongue. “I’ve been insulted by better than you, Avon. You could take lessons from Carnell for a year and still be nothing but a child compared to him.”

“Yes, but you know what they say about the mouths of babes. Or is that something else you can base on personal experience?”

“No, I left that kind of thing to Blake.” And Travis watched with satisfaction as that jibe found a soft spot. So. It might be true, what Carnell had said about the Avon/Blake relationship. There just might be more to it than a folk hero and cynic would be willing to admit. Or to have come out to the masses. Or, and he remembered back to an Avon of tender years and even more tender heart hidden under a glitteringly glamorous armour of witiness, there might be more there than Avon would ever want to admit to himself.

“Is that why he fancies you?” he went on, lightly curious, keeping the fierce elation of hound after fox from his voice, watching as every word and every implication hit home. “You’ve always been pretty, almost innocent, on the outside anyway. Does he play the schoolboy and the teacher with you, Kerr? Or is it the schoolboy and his Master?”

Avon had shot before he even realised he was going to do it, and it was that agonised anger that saved Travis even as it had put him at risk. “Don’t be disgusting, Travis. After all, and the sneer was back, plastering over the cracks of emotionalism, “I gave all that up when I gave up you.”

“But we never did any of that, did we, Kerr?” Travis snapped, diving for the faintly visible weak spots, going for the kill. “We were too young and too sweet for that. Too much—”

and the small smile was pointed enough to draw blood, “in love. Or at least you were.”

“Infatuation.” Snapped back, cracking like a whip, hitting nothing. “Everyone, surely, is entitled to at least one youthful folly. And you, unfortunately, were mine.”

“Really? Is that how you’ve re-written the past? I suppose that means that you’ve erased all those sweet nothings you whispered to me? And all those dreams, and all those promises? And guilts, and fears.” A burst of laughter, a wicked warping of something a young and rose-tinted Kerr Avon had once thought necessary for his very life, but then Travis was speaking again, voice sawing them...
in half, grating on bone. “You think I don’t know why you took up with that bitch right after me? Had to prove that you weren’t just some little fairy, didn’t you?”

And Avon grabbed that, using it to take the power back for himself. “Well now, that is yet another example of how stupid you are. After all we did, do you really think I felt I had to prove my manhood? Surely, considering our little experiences, it would be you, not I, who would have to prove that.”

“As you say,” Travis said, made rapid under the sting of Avon’s words, “everyone’s entitled to one youthful folly, and letting you fuck me sometimes was mine.”

“Sometimes? If memory serves, Travis, it was I who had to persuade you to occasionally reverse our roles. You always,” he whispered, firing over Travis’ head, bringing the other man instinctively to his knees, gloved hand ricocheting loudly against an outcrop of débris, “did like being on your knees to me, one way or another.”

When Travis looked up, he was cradling his left arm, yellow power stone dangling chipped and useless. His eyes were starbright, full of animosity and a lust for revenge. “You bastard.”

“Tut, tut, tut,” Avon sneered, calmly aiming another shot over Travis’ head, forcing the other man instinctively to his knees, gloved hand ricocheting loudly against an outcrop of débris, “did like being on your knees to me, one way or another.”

“Let me up, Avon.”

“Don’t judge others by yourself, Travis—I for one am not that stupid.”

“I’ve hurt my arm.”

“Hurt? Now that is far too human a word, don’t you think? Damaged, perhaps. Scrambled the circuits, shunted the—”

“Shut up! Just shut up!” Outrage, hurt, fury, filling the air, bitter bile in apposition to the soft glory of the sun setting behind them in beauty. “Do you think I wanted this? Do you think I like being half a machine, half a man?”

“It never seemed to bother you before,” Avon replied with devastating calm. “Why should it suddenly start now, just because a part of you is now visibly as lacking as the rest of you?”

“What a vicious bitch you’ve turned into, Kerr. I can hardly recognise you.”

Avon laughed at that, rich, pealing laughter. “Oh, I do hope so. I would hate to think I’m the same fool I was all those years ago. And it is so much pleasant, meeting you once again and yet able to pretend I’ve never even seen you before. You did that rather well, I must admit,” he went on, referring to the recent times when they had once more crossed paths, neither of them willing to admit the weakness of having known the other—not to allow the other the weapon of their shared past. “Of course, had you not, I would simply have denied all of it as Federation propaganda—and I have Jenna and Cally to back me up.”

“But,” Travis said with subtle vitriol, acid etching pain on Avon’s face, “I would have thought you would much rather have had Blake ‘back you up’. Or back up you.”

“Which is more than can be said of you. My taste,” he stripped Travis with his stare and found him sorely lacking, “not to mention my…dalliances, have improved considerably since you.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel inadequate?” —this, and in a tone of absolute confidence from a man who was still on his knees, still held under Avon’s gun, laughing in the face of disaster— “It’s nothing but pathetic. Even now, you still can’t face the truth about yourself, can you?”

“Now then,” Avon whispered, “what would you know about the truth? Especially when it involves me?”

“More than you want me to.”

“Oh? Then go on, tell me these…truths that you claim I don’t want to hear.” He made a show of settling down as if for a bedtime story, reclining on a slab of rock turned turquoise and purple by the sunset, whilst his gun lazed negligently acute attention on Travis, defying him to move.

“You,” Travis said, taking Avon’s dare, rising slowly, staring fixedly at Avon’s face, catching sight of the following gun out of the corner of his eye. Stretching the moment out, he stood there, ready to seize the opportunity his revelation would bring. “You,” he repeated,
“are a homosexual.”

And Avon laughed, genuinely delighted, mocking Travis and everything he represented, bringing the other man to the boil of fury. “Homosexual?” he finally gasped out, free hand wiping a tear from the corner of his eye, gun hand wavering not one atom. “Me? Oh, really, Travis, you are going to have to do better than that if you want to overcome me with surprise. I,” he got to his feet, a lithe stretching of muscle and rippling of leather, “am not homosexual. I just,” and he grinned, wickedly amused, “love men. Frequently, and in large amounts. I also,” he lowered his voice to the confessional, “admit to liking women, also frequently and also in large amounts. You can ask both Cally and Jenna about that.”

“And can I ask Blake and Vila about the other?”

“Tsk, tsk, I said I loved men, Travis, not misguided martyrs or Peter Pans.”

“Men? Is that why you loved me?”

And the question was out before he knew it even existed and the opportunity was there in his hands before his brain had even recognised it. A flicker of the eyes, a waver of the gun, and Travis had him, bent backwards in a parody of an embrace, gun twisted from him and held to Avon’s head, Avon’s arm trapped between their bodies, the other trapped in Travis’ hard grip, the two men locked more closely together than since they had last been lovers. “Well? Is that why you loved me?”

“You were a callow boy, Travis. And no-one can accuse you of improving with age.”

“But how could you, when you haven’t tried me? Hmm, Avon? Passing judgement in the face of lack of data? Surely you learned better than that at your fancy University?”

“This,” and he bumped his groin against Travis’, “is one time when ignorance is bliss.”

But the expected sharp retort was different, banked heat, not banked fury. “But not nearly so blissful as knowledge, Kerr.”

“And you want to prove the old adage.”

“Which one would that be?”

Avon stretched and Travis gave him a fraction of leeway. Then Avon’s hand was upon him, insolent as the tongue that whispered, “That little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But you,” and that infuriating hand squeezed, filling him with equal measure lividity and lust, “aren’t even up to proving that.”

At that moment, at the very second those viciously seductive words pierced him, Travis knew that there was only one possible end to this. Knew, that the few other possibilities had been sealed in the sarcophagus of Avon’s cutting wit and sharper tongue, had been sliced up by Avon’s power play. “There is one thing you’re right about,” he said, half surprised by the very normalcy of his voice. With exquisite eroticism, he laved Avon’s face with the barrel of the gun, nuzzling him, muzzling him in an entirely new way, shutting Avon up. “These guns really are wonderfully phallic. Perfectly proportioned, aren’t they? But then, you would know all about that, wouldn’t you? Or would you? You never were very keen on being fucked. Always used to lie there, stiff as a board when I tried to put it up you. And how you made me suffer afterwards.”

The gun trembled through Avon’s hair, tickling sweetly behind his ear, long smooth hardness pressing the nape of his neck, and all the while, Travis kept on talking, whispering, words caressing as the gun did, all threat and lust. “It was you who always wanted me to be the one who took it, and I who had to prove to you how much I loved you. That’s why I got out, in the end.”

In his hand, the gun flicked at the fastenings on Avon’s tunic, the pressure-tabs parting, white skin revealing itself amidst the midnight of leather. “You never knew that, did you? You see, I wanted more for myself than just being Kerr Avon’s catamite, Kerr Avon’s perverted little toy, brought out and laughed at whenever there was a party.” Now the muzzle was pressing into Avon’s groin, hard as a cock, rubbing and rubbing until Avon was just as hard, just as ready to shoot. “I wanted to have some kind of life for myself. Can you understand that? I wanted the freedom to do what I wanted, when I wanted to.”

“As if I ever stopped you!”

“No, you never did. Not in so many words. But then you’d look at me with those brown
eyes, making me feel like a bastard for hurting someone who loved me as much as you did. I ended up almost hating you for that."

"Only almost? I suppose that is why you came up with that pitiful excuse to get me here. You had to have me alone and away from prying eyes, because you knew that was the only way I’d ever admit to having seen you before. So that’s what this whole pathetic charade was all about." And despite the gun—or, perhaps, because of it—he slid the last words out as lethal as a knife between the ribs, “Puppy love. Nothing but—”

Before another word could be said, Travis pulled him tighter, putting pressure on his arm, arching his back painfully, almost overbalancing them both together. “It was puppy love only because you’re such a bitch, Kerr. And I’m going to prove that tonight. I’m going to fuck you, Kerr, whether you want it or not.”

"Rape? Well now, no-one’s going to be surprised by that.”

“No, they’re not, not that you’re going to tell them. What would you say, Kerr? Oh, by the way, Blake, whilst I was down there, I met Travis and he raped me. I can see the picture on his face now, Kerr. And then what would you have to say? That Blake’s going to have to do better than he has been, because being raped by me was better than the best fucking he’s ever given you? Because you do let him fuck you, don’t you, Kerr? Big fellow like him, you’d be on your knees in a second.”

With the danger frissoning through him, Avon was aglow, grinning, mind racing as quickly as his heart. “But then,” he purred, “mutoids are hardly known for their good taste, are they now?”

And the gun slid across his face, Travis staring down at him in a fire of fury and echoing pain. Slowly, the muzzle pressed against Avon’s lips and Travis had the thrill of seeing terror replace mockery in those brown eyes. Power and revenge surged through him, and he saw their counterparts reflected in Avon, saw the raw fear, saw the second when it dawned on Avon that Avon might die here, in a travesty of passion, the phallic length of a gun in his mouth. Travis increased the pressure, gloating and glutting himself on Avon’s fear, his cock growing harder and more potent than the gun as Avon’s mouth— that beautiful mouth, never forgotten, always coming back to him in dreams, to whisper words and promise kisses—finally was forced open, portcullis no longer protecting, and Travis’ gun slid home, past the whiteness of teeth and into the softly vulnerable wet heat of Avon.

“I could kill you,” he murmured, moving the gun in and out. “All I have to do is fire it, and you would be dead, your brain charred to nothing. But I don’t believe I shall. Well,” he said, in conscious parody of a voice he’d never forgotten, “not quite at the moment. Wonderful phallic things, guns,” he went on, voice and arms trembling now under the strain and arousal tripping through him. “You never liked it when I fucked you. I
wonder if you’d like it better if it were my gun?”

And Avon, mouth stoppered by the weapon of his own destruction, couldn’t say a word, his own best self-defence aborted. But he was not, quite, helpless. Shoving the panic into the back of his mind where it could simper harmlessly, he put everything he had into survival. Eyes seductive, he started sucking on the gun, wet noises suddenly reverberating around the plateau where night had fallen without either of them noticing. Stars glittered overhead, an enormous gibbous moon strobed through the clouds, and zephyr rose to breeze, dust and pebbles skittering away from it. But Avon stood stock still, back arched over Travis’ arm, as if they had been dancing, or seducing, together. And he sucked, tongue flickering out to caress the gun, throat swallowing, setting Travis on fire. Making Travis lose control to his lust.

“You think that’s going to work?” Husky, rusty from rampant arousal, but still in perfect control, the tremble all but gone now. “Oh, no, my lovely Kerr, you won’t win this one. Not this time. But if you want to turn this into a charade of lovemaking, then you’ve come to the right man, haven’t you? After all, I had the best teacher,” he snarled, wrenching the gun from Avon’s suckling mouth and shoving him, hard, to land sprawled on the moon-stippled slabs, “didn’t I?”

The gun was pointed at Avon’s belly, promising a lingering and vile death if he pushed Travis too far. “Get your clothes off.”

Avon opened his mouth to speak, took another look at the expression in Travis’ eyes and changed his mind. In total silence with only the slither of leather on flesh to punctuate his obedience, he stripped, skin white as virginity in the dark night, all muscles and planes and secret shadows when the moon showed its face. Perhaps the moon heard the indrawn hiss of breath that came from Travis, but Avon didn’t. All Avon knew was that which should have turned to plain lust by now was still a corruption of violence and pleasure. And that, he knew, left only one possible path. Unless, of course, he were able to either overpower Travis or get hold of the gun.

Travis grinned at him, devouringly, overwhelmingly. He was going to have Avon, was going to possess him, was going to show him who was in control here. And prove who was in control over Travis’ entire life. He transferred the gun to his left hand knowing that Avon would appreciate the irony of his gun replacing the weaponry in Travis’ damaged arm. A minor damage, to the controls rather than the arm, but even that would have to be paid for. Just as, it slithered through his mind, this new thought, he could make Blake pay for the original ruination of his arm. And the deformity of his face. He had been handsome, once. Beautiful enough to be a match for Kerr Avon, the two of them strolling around the quads, causing heads to turn and sighs to be sighed, entrancing enough that even those who should have reported them used the Avon and Travis families’ power as an excuse not to.

But he had lost that, all of that, power and family and control, because of this man and later, because of Blake. And now, he could almost see the two of them, Avon on his knees under Blake, Blake’s prick pounding into him. He knew what Blake looked like, knew how big Blake was when aroused, knew what talents Blake had in the bedroom—although he had made those discoveries in a cell. Not that Blake would remember it, not after the mindwipe and the conditioning and the planting of new memories. It had been Travis’ idea, sweet vengeance, to make the crime one of abusing little boys, marking Blake with eternal stigmata. Now he had Blake’s new love, Blake’s new hope right here in front of him, in the body and form of a man whom Travis himself had once loved.

There is, perhaps, nothing so cruel as love turned to hate, of hope turned to despair. So now there was Avon, spread out before him, a cornucopia of revenge. And he was going to take it. One handed, he undid the fastenings on his trousers, tugging the leather open, pushing the clinging skin down and out of his way, silken briefs ripping under his scrabbling, desperate hands. All of a sudden, he was free, cock kissed by the coolness of night air and the chill fear in Avon’s eyes.

Avon stared up at him from his bed of
concrete, swallowing hard. “Perhaps,” he said, admirably steadily, “in the interests of protecting your knees,” and, it was obvious, his own body, “we should move over there. You see the area that is covered by what looks like some kind of moss?”

“How considerate of you,” Travis said, low and deep, softer than the moss, harder than the gun. “Why not? But you, dear chap, can go first.”

Walking across those few feet, Avon cursed himself for allowing his fear to rule him. Now, he was leading himself to an area where the lee of the wall had protected spores and seeds until the entire area was overgrown—and thus, not a single loose stone to be used as a weapon. His boots, even, were now out of reach, and he was utterly naked, more aware of Travis’ eyes staring at his backside than he was of his overall predicament. He knew what was coming: subliminally, he had known what was probably coming from the second he had seen that message and told his lies to Blake. But it was here, and now, and he was shivering, and the knowledge that Travis could see and feed upon that shiver made him tremble all the more. Head held high, he settled himself with all the pride of a sultan in his seraglio, and his very superiority, his exquisite control, fuelled the vicious need in Travis. He heard the gun cycle up to full power, heard the safety clip go on, and only then did he look up.

“T’ll put it here, shall I?” Travis said to him, carefully placing the gun on a ledge, the eye of the muzzle staring Avon straight in the face. “And don’t forget, Kerr old boy, I didn’t spend most of my life sitting behind a desk. The most you’ve done is prance around the Galaxy for a few months playing at pirates, but I’ve spent years being trained to kill bastards like you. So don’t even try it, Avon, because I,” and suddenly he was there, on the ground, hands wrenching Avon’s legs apart, one hand rampaging upwards to grab Avon’s cock and balls, pulling and tugging and twisting. Making Avon hard. “Oh, you like that, do you? Then perhaps I should stop, Why should you enjoy my revenge, hmm, Kerr? But as I was saying,” his hand closed into a vice over Avon’s vitals, trapping the blood, enpurpling Avon’s cock, “if you try one stupid move, then I’ll kill you. But slowly, old love. I’ll shove my gun hand up you, Avon, and that will rip your insides apart. And then I’ll tell Blake where to find you. Would you like that, Kerr? Would you like Blake to find you because your lover—his enemy—got a bit too rough in one of your kinky, sick little games? No, don’t speak. I don’t want to hear you speak. I want to hear you scream!”

And he was there, hard cock pressing at tender skin, strong muscle fighting to keep him out, flesh stretching, feeling as if it would sunder any second now, pulling on the fragile sensitivity of cock. “Damn it, Kerr, you’re hurting me!”

But before Avon could respond to this outrageousness, a leather gloved hand slapped across his face, drawing a tendril of blood from the corner of his mouth. He lay on his back, legs spreadeagled over Travis’ thighs, moonlight glinting on his own body and glimmering on the seeping tip of Travis’ reddened cock. An abrupt coolness, a slimy slickness on his body, sliding inside him, and his mind rebelled from the thought of what it might be, of what Travis might carry in his pockets that would be concentrated and viscid enough to double as a lubricant. He shut those thoughts away, forcing his attention to what was happening, looking for an opening, finding it as Travis loomed over him, all of the other man’s attention focussed on the small, tight hole he was going to invade.

Avon twisted, grappling Travis, feeling the heavy erection graze his thigh instead of ripping into him, feeling strong arms encircle him, the inhuman smoothness of that eyepatch brushing his face. Then the moment of surprise was over, and Travis was fighting him back, ruthless, bruising, using every trick in the book. But Avon hadn’t spent all those years doing nothing more than sitting behind a desk and he certainly hadn’t been playing pirates. He struggled back, biting and kicking and gouging, muscles rippling.

But Travis was driven by more than mere survival: for him it was a chip on his shoulder so deep it reached all the way to his soul. Inexorable, he pushed and pulled and shoved, manhandling Avon until they were tangled
together in a heap, all one pile of entwined limbs and grappling hands. Underneath the stifling weight of the other man, Avon lay, winded, catching his breath and gathering his wits, one part of him always, always, intensely and intently aware of what was happening to him, of what was being done to him. One last surge, one last burst of his strength, and then he heard Travis laughing, raucous in the soft shimmer of moonlight. “Is that the best you can do? You’re softer than my mother.”

“So you don’t limit yourself when it comes to rape then.”

The jibe flowed off Travis as the tears and blood of his victim would. The only response Avon got was a hand gripping his cock, using that as threat to turn him, until his knees were pressed into pungent moss and a cock was pressing into his arse, piercing him, thrusting into him, too much, too fast, too tight, the slipperiness of the lubricant dulled, like the blunted blade that was reaving him.

“Oh, you like this, don’t you?” Travis was muttering in his ear, big hand fondling Avon’s cock and balls, manipulating him with oft-practised skill, none of the old knowledge lost, each touch perfectly in tune with what Avon’s body had always loved best. “So that’s where I went wrong with you, is it, Kerr my old love? It wasn’t a catamite you wanted, but a big strong man to make you take it and make you love it. You didn’t want a lover, you wanted a daddy.”

His cock was thrusting into Avon as viciously as his words were fucking Avon’s mind, ripping him in two. Avon was gasping and heaving under him, body arching, pushing, pulling away, sweat slicked with the heat of his own body and Travis’, so heavy over him. “Oh, my Kerr,” and a biting on his shoulders followed the words, warning him of the bitter pain to come, “if you’d only told me, I could have made you love me enough.”

And then Travis was kissing where he had bitten, undulating sensuously where before he had plunred. All the while, there were words again, sweet, soft words, the selfsame thing that had been whispered in the secret dark of the room they had shared before it had gone so badly wrong between them. Words that Avon didn’t want to hear, words that had no place in this time between them. He had known perfectly well what he was getting into when he had agreed to meet Travis here, had known it when he’d arranged to be picked up by Liberator, no matter what attacks by Federation vessels included. And these simpering declarations of paradise found and love reborn were not, as far as he was concerned, part of the package. Not at all. Ever again.

He pushed upwards, welcoming the pain of Travis’ cock pulling free of him, finally using his full strength, taking Travis by surprise, displaying some of the combat skills he’d picked up over the years. Before either one of them could catch his breath, he was over Travis, forearm pressed across tender throat, Travis’ breath caught and held. “You,” Avon hissed, left hand grabbing Travis’ erection, nails raking delicate skin and more sensitive nerves, “are supposed to be raping me. That’s what I came here for, you twisted, sadistic bastard. Not some shilly-shallying lovesick boy!” And he twisted round, ripping Travis’ shirt away, sharp teeth tugging at Travis’ nipple, a small blossoming of red in his wake. “Now, Travis, are you going to prove that you’re a man? Or was I right all those years ago, my stupid, effete, pretty baby?”

It was enough. With an atavistic roar, Travis was upon Avon, over him, around him, suffocating him with the smell of male musk, animal in rut, heat rising and rippling between them. Avon was shoved and pulled, onto his knees, his arse displayed whitely in the moonlight, and Travis salivated at the sight, spitting on his hand, smearing it onto his cock to complete the half-hearted lubricant that was left. He didn’t want to rip himself raw, not now, not with this man. He wanted this one to last. A lifetime, an eternity, with his cock up Avon’s arse, showing him who was the man around here, who it was who held the power and the control. Forgotten was that this was precisely what Avon had ordered: all that remained was animal lust and human violence, and his cock, red heat cauterising white cheeks. He screamed his pleasure, echoing Avon, the two voices rising together, a union as unholy as their youthful
one had been self-deceptive. Pounding and pounding, he thrust hard and was thrust into, fucker and fucked, both taken, both controlling, power and fear and pain and pleasure coiling them together.

Avon was devouring Travis, the heavy weight slamming into him, hard hands leaving bruises, thick cock stretching him to the very limits of his endurance. There was cum pooling in him, orgasm imminent, but they were so commingled that neither could tell one from the other. Travis was pulling on a cock, fingers digging into delicately balls, skin satin and warm, but it could have been himself, as it could have been Avon rending the tight hole where Travis’ cock was thudding into him. On and on they went, forever for them, moments for the rest of the world, sweat dripping in the light, breath gasping in the air, cries rising to the sky. Then a second of stillness, the two men a tableau, as still as the other statues on the plateau, and then movement again, juddering thrust, convulsive orgasm, coming and coming, Avon’s seed staining the moss, colour fading as his body was collapsed on top of it, Travis collapsed on him, both of them adrift, mindless in the aftermath.

It was, not surprisingly, Avon who recovered first. With a fastidious grimace that freed him from having to actually acknowledge any feelings that might linger in him, he struggled out from under Travis’ weight, taking his gun back and crossing over to where his clothes had been abandoned so shortly before. He picked up the wisp of silken cloth that had been Travis’ and with another grimace of fastidiousness, he sopped up the seeping wetness from between his cheeks. Only then did he begin dressing, movements as deft and gracefully controlled as always, nothing betraying the lingering languor of his limbs. Covered once more, he strode over to where Travis still lay, standing legs akimbo like Colossus over the Straits, waiting until Travis’ eyes finally opened.

“I see you are still insensate after sex. Hardly a good survival skill for someone who works so…intimately with Servalan.” The gun was raised until it was in perfect alignment with Travis’ face, and they could both feel the power pulsating in the weapon. “I could kill you,” Avon said, quite conversationally. “But quite honestly, you’re not worth the effort.” A toe, nudging the flaccid softness of Travis’ cock. “In fact, you’re not worth the effort for anything at all.”

He turned away, going over to the parapet where he had climbed up here in the first place, but he stopped, listening to Travis.

“And what shall you do when I tell Blake?”

At that, Avon turned, stalking back to tower over the recumbent man, paying little attention as Travis slowly began tugging his clothes back into place. “Unlike you,” he purred, “I outgrew telling tales a long time ago. However, you can run tattling to Blake if you choose to. I shall, of course, deny it, and he’ll believe me. You see, he has no idea about my…predilections, and I want it to stay that way. And you will play into my hands if you tell him, for then I am automatically innocent. Do you honestly think Blake would ever believe a word said by the man who proved Blake guilty of child rape?”

“You’re bluffing. Blake has no idea—”

“The holding cells in the Justice Treatment Centre. You, and two mutoids, Servalan in a red suit, watching.”

The words were chains, immobilising Travis, rendering him impotent and aware of his own weakened nakedness. His damaged hand crept over to cover the only part of him left bare.

“Oh, Blake remembers far more than you ever want him to. Which is, by the way, why I agreed to meet you here. You see, Blake is unfortunately moral in his sexuality, Gan is an unimaginative lump and Vila is too much of a victim for a masochist like me. Which leaves me…shall we say, high and dry? You, Travis, sounded like rather a pleasant divertissement or at the very least, a source of information that would make it possible for me to actually do something about this farce I’m forced to live. But,” and this time, the foot kicked Travis’ hand out of the way and then nudged, far from gently, the eggshell balls, “you weren’t even that. Were you? I suggest,” and suddenly he had leaned down, gun pressing between Travis’ thighs, digging into his arse, the tip penetrating him, promising
or threatening a fucking, “you ask Servalan for some lessons, and come back when you’re of some use to me.”

Footsteps crunched across débris, rocks and pebbles gurgled down the hill of rubble, marking Avon’s passing, leaving behind only the silence of the dead and the bitter hatred of the living.

“Don’t think this is over!” echoed over the sarcophagus land. “You’ll pay for this! I shall make you pay for this!”

And the rapist, walking away into the night, laughed at the raped.

*For the Tartlet. May she one day be a full-fledged Tart!*