

Chases

Heroes Lost, part 5

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Featured fandoms: Babylon 5, Blake's 7

Featured pairings: Delenn/OCM, Cally/Ivanova

A.S.S Story codes: mf,nc

Story rating: NC17

A Space Commander's uniform. Of course. Avon didn't bother to wonder how it came to be in Servalan's wardrobe, but simply put it on.

"You really look gorgeous in that," Servalan said. "Wouldn't you want one for real? I promise you won't have to go to basic training."

He turned to her. "I thought of bringing you along," he said, "as a hostage, but it seems far too dangerous. So I suppose you'll just have to stay here. How long do you think it'll be before your drones come looking for you?" Her distressed look brought a smile to his face.

"That's what I thought too," he said. He picked up a metallic device from the floor and placed it on top of the bolt that held the manacles to the wall. Flipping a switch, it started counting down. He saw fear in her eyes as she recognised it for the mine it was.

"Don't worry," he said. "I've taken out most of the explosives. Should be just enough to blow away the bolt. You might not hear too well for a couple of days, but that's better than dying of dehydration, don't you think?"

She looked at him with a most peculiar expression. "Why?" she asked. He shrugged. He had asked himself the same question, and he wasn't at all sure that he liked the answer. "I'm supposed to be one of the noble rebels," he lied. "Noble rebels don't leave people to die, not even evil tyrants."

There was no reply, and after a minute's uncomfortable silence he took a last long look at her naked body and left.

Sinclair didn't like the look of the officer who met them. He looked alert and intelligent, and intelligence was always dangerous in an enemy. The other soldiers looked like typical unenthusiastic grunts, which was good.

"So where is the Supreme Commander?" he asked, loudly. He indicated Blake's apparently unconscious body. "And can I have a stretcher or something for this? He's heavier than you'd think."

"She's waiting in her office," Barcol replied. "Surely you didn't expect her to come down here just to meet scum like you?"

Sinclair laughed. "No matter if I expected her to, I'm obviously not getting it! Shall we be off?"

Barcol gave him a long, suspicious look before he replied. "Of course. Just follow me."

Avon paced back and forth in front of Servalan's desk, trying to think of a way to get out of the station. It wouldn't surprise him a bit if Blake had totally forgotten about that little detail. Fortunately, things weren't quite as bad as they could have been. He had a gun, and it seemed that his clone had been a Space Commander, so it should be possible for him to go without an ID card. Maybe the easiest way would be to order a pursuit ship to be prepared and then just try to bluff his way to it. He stopped in front of the comm panel and called up a map of the station, tried to memorise a safe route to the docks. It almost certainly wasn't the fastest or safest way, that would be the secret passageway Servalan was sure to have had built. But he didn't know where that way was, and it wouldn't be possible to tell from the official maps. He kept staring at the map, trying to brand it into his memory.

Instead of using the call button by the door to the Supreme Commander's office, Barcol opened it with the watch officer's over-ride code. If the Supreme Commander herself really was in there she'd have his hide for it, but he felt reasonably certain that she wasn't. Nor was he disappointed. As the door slid open after the mandatory ten-second over-ride wait he saw that there was no one in the room but Space Commander Ger, who was intently studying the station plan.

"Space Commander, the bounty hunter and his prisoner, as ordered," he said, trying to judge the officer's reaction. There was relief in his eyes as he looked up from the comm set.

"Ah, good. Leave them with me," Ger said.

"Yes, sir." Barcol gestured to the troopers with the stretcher to put it on the floor by the desk, spending the time as they did so observing, trying to see what wasn't right. There was something he could almost remember about Ger, something he'd recently heard. He followed the troopers out of the room, still thinking. When the door closed behind them he grabbed one of the troopers.

"Hide nearby and watch this door," he said. "Alert me the second they leave the room." The soldier nodded, and Barcol left to find a computer terminal. He had a few things to look up.

"Mr Avon, I presume?" Sinclair said, smiling.

"Yes," Avon replied. He looked at Blake, who had got up from the stretcher and was adjusting his clothes. "How did you plan to get us out of here?"

"The same way we got in the first time," Blake answered. He pressed the activator button on his teleport bracelet. "Liberator, this is Blake, do you read?"

No answer.

"Liberator?"

Still no answer. Avon and Sinclair looked at Blake. "They're probably not in range yet," he explained. "Let's wait a while."

Barcol leaned back in the chair and pondered the information on the screen before him. Space Commander Ger hadn't used his passcode or identity card anywhere on the station since the attack by Blake's people. And now he was alone, in the suddenly missing Supreme Commander's office, together with a bounty hunter previously unknown to the Federation and a rebel who had evaded capture for a very long time. It was a bit much for a coincidence. He called up the file on Blake and starting looking through it. When he got to 'Known Associates' he swore, jumped up and was out of the room running down the corridor before his chair had hit the floor.

The heavy goggles turned darkness into ghostly grey, the weak light from the bioluminescent guidance strips quite enough for them. Much better than ordinary Federation issue nightvision equipment. There were connections for more esoteric functions, but as far as Ger could tell you had to have an Alta's implanted computer connections to use them. No matter, he could see where his companions could not. He took a firmer grip on the heavy, rifle-like weapon and checked again that it was ready to fire. It didn't feel at all like the blaster he was used to, but it'd do. As silently as possible, he stepped out

into the hallway. Somewhere out there, they were hunting for him. They might have the advantage of superior numbers, but he intended to make it as hard for them as he possibly could. If he was going to die, he wouldn't go alone.

Passing through dark corridors with terror or destruction waiting ahead of her brought a sense of familiarity, of rightness to Delenn. It seemed a recurring theme in her life. First the crystal corridors of the temples on Minbar where she grew up, later the passages of the Grey Council's starship, later still the hallways of Babylon 5, now an alien ship in a universe not her own. An icy calm had settled on her, focusing her mind on one thing only: revenge. Some small part of her tried to protest, tried to remind her that no good ever came of that violent mania. But no attention was paid to that tiny voice, it was overpowered by the lust to see the man who had defiled her die. Her blood sang with the nearness of her prey. Weapon held ready, mind carefully screened, she ran through the darkness.

Cally worried. Ivanova could feel it in her mind. She tried to hide it, but it leaked through with her memories of the Liberator's hallways.

What?, she asked.

The alien sent a crooked smile. *Do I leak that badly?*

Yes, you do. Now tell me. What if it really is Avon? He might have hit his head and be confused. Running away isn't that unreasonable a response to someone pointing a gun at you, after all. I wonder why she did that, by the way.

So do I, Ivanova thought more to herself than to her companion. *So do I*.

"Full house."

"Again?!" Sheridan threw down his cards on the table. "You're cheating!"

"I am not!" Marcus put on his best air of wounded innocence. "It's only luck. You know the old saying, unlucky in love, lucky in games."

"Yeah, right. One more hand, and if you win again you'll have to *walk* home."

"Really? Well, a brisk walk never hurt anyone." He started shuffling the cards. Sheridan looked at him with great suspicion. He'd tried to sleep, but found that he couldn't. So instead, he sat on the White Star's bridge playing poker.

"Captain?"

"Yes, Lennier?"

"We're receiving a signal from Blake, but the Liberator isn't responding."

"Have they heard the signal?"

"I don't know, Captain, they're not responding to me either. I can't even get a reply from their on-board computers."

"Can we get a reply through to Blake?"

"No, sir. Our systems aren't made for the modulation they use, it's only by using our scanners that we can hear the signal at all."

Sheridan and Marcus stood, the poker game forgotten.

"Lennier, Marcus, you take the White Star and go get Blake and Sinclair. I'll go over to the Liberator and see what's going on."

"The station is heavily defended," Marcus said mildly.

"So dodge! Our ship is more manoeuvrable than theirs are."

"How do we contact them when we get there?" Lennier asked.

"I don't know. Figure something out. Just give me enough time to suit up and get outside before you leave."

As Sheridan left the bridge, Marcus went to the weapons console and started doing systems checks.

Jenna cursed with great feeling and skill. She invoked the powers of all that was hostile on Avon, and she wished eternal migraine on those who designed Zen. After working too hard for far too long, she'd reached the manual over-ride switches on Zen just to discover that Avon'd been there and disabled them long ago. Frustrated, she sat on the floor in front of the open access panels and swore. Not that it really helped, but it made her feel better. For a moment, at least. A sound. A scratching sound, as of metal against metal. She'd heard it before, but couldn't immediately place it. It took a couple of seconds before it came to her. The airlock. Someone was coming in the airlock. She grabbed a handgun and hurried away from the flight deck.

By the time they sensed his mind, they were no longer communicating in words. There was no sign of Delenn, so they approached him, taking great care not to be discovered. He was standing near a three-way crossing, softly lit by an emergency light, so they went around and approached from opposite directions. Cally concentrated. Avon?, she sent, loud enough for the dead to hear.

"Who's there?" came the response. They heard and sensed him turning, trying to find out where the voice had come from. It is I, Cally, she sent. I just want to talk to you.

"Why?"

To help. If I come out, will you please not shoot me?

"Come unarmed."

After a quick look at Ivanova standing on the other side of the opening, she unfastened her gun and put it on the floor. She stepped around the corner, holding her hands where he could easily see them. The man who might or might not be Avon stood aiming a rifle at her, a barely visible shape in the soft, soft green light of the guidance strips.

"Avon?" she asked. "Is that you?"

Voices. She could hear voices. Without hesitation, Delenn turned and hurried towards the sounds.

Ivanova watched them. She heard Cally try to reason with the armed man. Telepathically, she felt the alien woman sending calming, friendly thoughts to his subconscious. It seemed to work, so she approached him cautiously.

The captain from the other ship stood inside the airlock, removing his spacesuit. He looked up as Jenna approached.

"What's going on here?" he asked. "Sinclair and Blake have been trying to contact you for some time now."

"Avon isn't Avon. Or maybe he just went insane. Anyway, he's shut down nearly everything on the ship and locked us out from Zen."

"And he refuses to put things back again?"

"We haven't asked him. As soon as he saw Delenn he ran for his life."

"When he saw *Delenn*?! Why would he do that?"

"Don't know, but she followed him, gun in hand. Cally and Ivanova went after them both, and I've heard nothing since." Sheridan cursed. "Where are they now?"

"Somewhere aft of here."

He didn't hesitate. "I'm going after them."

Jenna smiled crookedly. "Let me grab a couple of handlights before we go. It's dark back there."

"Who are you?" Cally asked.

"Cally? Is that really you?" he replied.

"Yes. You're not Avon."

Susan, help me probe his mind, she sent. You're better at that than I am.

Not bothering to reply verbally, Ivanova went into the man's mind, relaying what she saw to the other woman. What she saw was chaos. The man was a mess, a tangle of conflicting memories and motivations. She saw fragments of two overlapping pasts, one seemingly recent, one older. A white-clad woman figured prominently, giving orders, rewarding and punishing.

Servalan, Cally sent. No wonder he's so messed up. Try to focus on Avon's memories.

For a moment, she saw Delenn in his memory, lying naked and crying under him on a coarse blanket. Revulsion and excitement filled him as he remembered ramming into her resisting vagina, taking his pleasure from her unwilling body at his Supreme Commander's order. No wonder Delenn wants to kill him, Ivanova thought. No wonder he ran at the sight of her with a gun. She moved on, looking for something related to the Liberator. It wasn't hard to find, once she started looking. There were hours and hours poring over the workings of Zen, sudden moments of fear as pursuit ships appeared on monitors, adrenaline-fogged memories of missions. There was loneliness, longing for someone lost. There was fear, fear of ever being hurt like that again and fear of being laughed at. And there was Cally. Cally in red on Saurian Major, pointing a gun at Blake. Cally on the flight deck concentrating on Zen's display. Cally unconscious on the floor beside Orac. Cally laughing at one of his jokes. Cally in tight workout clothes, sweaty, in the ship's gym.

This guy's got a serious crush on you, Ivanova sent. We can use that.

Slowly she summoned her memories of their lovemaking and let them drift ever so slowly over into the man's troubled mind. She felt herself get excited. Half voluntarily, half not, she intensified the contact with her lover's mind. She tried to gauge not-Avon's reaction, and felt that the Avon-side memories seemed to be getting clearer. Concentrating, she ventured closer, physically as well as psychically. Memory of a deep kiss and body pressed against body. She could pick some sensation from him now. Rough cloth on his skin, Cally's hand caressing his cheek. Closer still, closer. Through his ears, she heard Cally whispering sweet nonsense. Through his eyes, she saw Delenn standing further down the corridor raising a handgun.

A blue vortex opened against the starry background and the White Star rushed out into normal space.

"We are receiving the Red Dwarf's location beacon," Lennier said. "She appears to have docked with the station."

"Have they seen us?" Marcus asked.

"They are not shooting at us, so I am assuming that they have not seen us."

"Well, we'll just have to start it ourselves, then." He got up from the command chair and walked over to the weapons console. "About half speed, Lennier, and take us around so that we approach the station from below."

"They will see us coming a long way off if we do that."

"Yes, they will. Did Blake say what part of the station they were in?"

"He mentioned an office of some kind. Excuse me for asking, but what exactly are we trying to accomplish? It seems to me that we will just make ourselves a target for them."

"That's the general idea, yes. You know, we don't have a teleport to pick them out with, so we create a bit of chaos, mess things up at the station a bit and hope that they'll be able to reach an escape pod or something."

"Ah. That sounds...reliable."

"If you have a better idea, let's hear it!"

"Half speed ahead, coming in from below."

Lennier waved his hands above the glowing control crystals, getting the ship in motion. Marcus did pretty much the same at the weapons console, adjusting the ship's weaponry and targeting systems.

"An office... That'd be near the hub of the station, don't you think?"

Blake pressed the call button on his bracelet yet again.

"Liberator, this is Blake. Can you hear me?"

Avon sighed. "If they could, don't you think they would've answered by now?" he asked.

"If they are going to answer, I hope they do so very quickly. I think we're about to get some company," Sinclair interrupted. He was standing at the viewer by the door, watching the corridor outside through the surveillance cameras. "The officer who let us in here just returned, looking out of breath and trying very hard not to show it."

"Well, I guess we'd better think of a way to get out by ourselves, then. Any suggestions?" Blake replied.

"If we can get by the guards just outside the door, we might be able to get to the docks and steal a ship," Avon said. He smiled. "After that, we only have to evade all the pursuit ships the Federation has in this sector and we're home free."

"Let's deal with that problem when we get to it, shall we? Ambassador Sinclair, how many guards are there outside?"

"Four. The officer just left."

"Four of them, three of us and we're all armed. Should be enough to intimidate them, with a bit of surprise. Avon, you and I go out and get them. Ambassador, will you open the door for us?"

"Certainly, Mr Blake."

They placed themselves and paused a moment to make sure that everyone was ready. Sinclair pushed a button, the door swished open, Avon and Blake stepped out into the corridor with guns drawn.

"They are launching fighters. Do we proceed?"

Marcus nodded vigorously. "Yes. I want to get a bit closer before I fire. Wouldn't want to damage too large a bit of it."

"They will be in firing range soon, I think."

"Evade them, then."

An alarm started yelling while they ran down the corridor towards the outer portion of the station. There wasn't much Avon could do about it but hope that it didn't concern them, although he couldn't think of much else that it could be. He ran first, since it'd look less unusual for a space commander to be leading two civilians than the other way around. They reached the end of the diametral corridor and turned into the one circumnavigating the great wheel. The alarm sirens got louder as they approached the docking area, and after a while they could hear sounds of frantic activity. When they got close enough to see ships being prepared and launched as fast as the crews could manage, they stopped, in the cover of a large vending machine.

"I don't think it's us they're after," Blake said.

"I still don't think it would be a very good idea to step out and ask what's going on," Avon said. "We need a diversion."

"Firing," Marcus said. "Get us out of here. Keep the viewer on the station, I want to see what happens." Lennier didn't bother to reply, instead he turned the ship as quickly as it could stand, concentrating on evading the bolts from a steadily increasing number of enemy ships.

"Oh dear," he heard Marcus whisper. There was a lull in the attacks, so he looked up at the viewer. On it he saw the station. A large section of its outer ring was slowly drifting away from the rest of the wheel, neatly cut away by the White Star's blasters. The main part of the station was visibly starting to wobble from the sudden shift in centre of mass. Clouds of rapidly freezing atmosphere and debris billowed out of the cut-off ends.

"You don't think they built that thing out of ordinary unreinforced metal, do you?" Marcus asked.

"It would seem that they did," Lennier replied.

They both watched the drifting pieces of debris, hoping that Sinclair and the local rebels weren't among them.