



(This vignette follows directly after the episode "Powerplay.")

Avon sat alone on the flight deck after the others had retired to the crew's quarters for a needed rest period. Cally would come up later to relieve him, but for now, he could just sit and think. The dark eyes closed wearily, in spite of the stimulants he had taken earlier. The last few days had taken more out of him than he had realized. "You're getting old, Avon," he told himself, somewhat surprised, as he had never thought much about that particular possibility.

'And senile, talking to yourself like that?' Avon could almost hear Blake's voice. 'You've got the Liberator, what are you going to do with her?'

'Get out of my head, Blake,' Avon rose restlessly, not wanting an argument at this point.

'You haven't answered my question, Avon. What are you going to do with Liberator now that you've got her?' The imaginary Blake cocked his head to one side, an amused glint in his eyes. He enjoyed catching the other man off-guard.

"How the hell should I know!" Avon whirled, half-expecting to see Blake standing at his station. "Besides, the ship's not totally mine."

'True. There're Cally, Vila, this new girl, Dayna that you picked up on Sarran. I'd like to hear more about her story some time. And then there's Tarrant ... ambitious lad there.'

"Oh yes, he is that and too sure of himself like you. If I don't interfere he'll get us killed the same as ..."

'I would have if you didn't keep an eye on

me?' Blake nodded again with that enigmatic smile. 'You're quite right, Avon.'

"Go away, Blake," hissed Avon, afraid he was losing his control. "I don't need you to tell me what is right or wrong ... You could never just let me be."

'No, I couldn't, not when I needed you so badly. I just hope you will do as well for the others now that Liberator is yours.' The voice died away, leaving a very disturbed man looking for someone in the shadows.

"Are you alright, Avon?" Cally stepped through the hatchway, concern on her face.

"Why shouldn't I be?" he snapped back at her, clutching at the torn shreds of his dignity. "And what are you doing here?"

"I couldn't sleep. I must have gotten enough rest when I was drugged, so I came up to relieve you." Cally had heard the one-sided conversation and sensed Avon's disturbance. She would never let him know that, though. It would be too damaging to his pride.

"Thank you." Unexpectedly, Avon accepted her story, sensing more, but not wanting to ask. He started to leave the flight deck and paused. "It feels ..."

"What?" Cally felt the strangeness here with Blake and Jenna gone. Did Avon miss them, too?

Abruptly Avon resurrected his shield. "Nothing." He headed for his quarters. Only the imaginary Blake would ever know how much he cared.

"Good night, Avon." Cally smiled at the rigid back. She knew, too.