

# Thanatos

by Sheila Paulson

"Why, Avon, you have killed Blake."

The familiar voice cut across the unnatural stillness of the room, and Avon ceased his struggles against the Federation troopers who held him. As the alarms had faded and the troopers poured into the room, Avon had moved to stand over Blake, raised his gun and smiled. He had fired, triggering some return fire, and he managed to fell several of the troopers -- though he remained strangely and frustratingly untouched -- before they wrested his gun away from him. He let it go without much regret, until he heard that voice.

"Servalan!" he hissed.

"Avon." She came gliding into the room, clad all in black, mirroring Avon, and smiled at him. "Avon, the survivor. Your 'friends' are dead, Avon, just as friends of yours have always died. How glad I am that we have always been enemies, you and I."

"What are you waiting for, Servalan?" he asked wearily. "Kill me and end it once and for all."

"Kill you?" she echoed with mock surprise. "Oh, no, Avon. You will not die. You are worth far more to me alive."

He went for her then, his fingers going instinctively for her throat. Smiling, she made a careless gesture, and the troopers gripped Avon's arms again, restraining him. Servalan counted the troops. Six of them. They would all die before they could tell anyone that Avon had called her Servalan, but for the moment, they were necessary.

"You want to die, don't you Avon?" she purred, stepping forward to run a caressing hand down his cheek. He jerked away distastefully. "You killed Blake," she reminded him, pleased when he flinched at the name. "Why, Avon," she smiled, "I believe that you cared for Blake after all."

"Blake was a fool." The words tore harshly from his throat. "He asked to die, stupidly."

"And now you are asking to die," Servalan said. "Go ahead, Avon. Beg to die. I would like to hear you pleading for death."

He remained stubbornly silent, his eyes hard and empty.

"Oh, no," she said, "You are going to live. Unless ..."

His head came up. "Unless?" he prompted, a thread of hope in his voice.

"ORAC," she said. "Avon, what have you done with ORAC?"

Avon folded his lips together and said nothing at all.

"Oh, you need not worry, Avon. We will find ORAC eventually. And this time, a quick death is not the reward for silence." She smiled. "I told you once, a long time ago, Avon, 'It's an old wall. It waits.' Well, you've reached it at last, haven't you, Avon?"

He looked down involuntarily at Blake's body, and though the rigid muscles of his face changed not at all, his eyes burned. "Damn you, Servalan."

Amusement lit her face. "Yes, Avon. And I lived to see it. I'm glad. And now, shall we talk of ORAC?"

"No."

She bent suddenly and touched Blake's face, and Avon made a hasty and quickly controlled gesture of protest. "So he is finally dead," she said.

"I killed him," Avon said in a voice that held no trace of emotion at all. "I felt him die."

"And died with him? A pity, for your sake, that you are still breathing. But live you shall, Avon, and I will enjoy every moment of it."

"I only need one moment, Servalan. One moment when you let down your guard, and then I will be dead -- and you with me."

The shots were sudden and shocking in the strained silence of the room. Servalan gasped as the pain tore into her chest, crushing her under an intolerable weight. She was dead before she even knew what had happened.

Avon watched her fall dispassionately. Her death was not even important any more. He had not felt the second shot, the one that would kill him. And then the pain of his shattered ribcage struck him, and he felt the warm gush of his life's blood, and he was glad.

From somewhere, he found the strength to turn and see what had happened.

The gun slid from Vila's fingers before the troopers could fire, and he sagged back to the floor. Dulled eyes met Avon's for one final look.

"... Why ...?" Avon spat out. "For ... him?" And he gestured at Blake.

"For us all." Vila's voice was almost too soft to hear, raspy with pain. "For Malodaar, for Gally, for Blake ..." He coughed, shuddered, and dragged control back. And then he stretched out his hand in a gesture that might be both absolution and blessing. "But most of all ... for you," he whispered, a ghost of his old smile flitting across his face.

And died.

Avon stood there a moment longer, looking down at Vila, then very carefully, he sat down on the floor. He looked from Vila to Blake, and even knowing that he was dying, he did not touch them. The troopers bunched around him, staring down at him stupidly.

Avon threw back his head and laughed. He was still laughing when his own blood rose up in his throat and choked him.

When he fell, it was across Blake's chest. He took one last, blurred look around the room, saw the bodies strewn about him. Tarrant. Dayna. Soolin. Servalan. Vila. And Blake.

And with a smile, Avon joined them.