

Gallifrey,
the long way round

Issue 7 - Winter 2021/22

Blake's 7 Special!



Raine Szam 2017

Gallifrey, The Long Way Round

Issue #7: Winter 2021/22

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Blake on Gauda Prime

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EDITORIAL

Hello again! At this time of year, most of us look forward to the final run-up to Christmas (Omicron notwithstanding), and thus it was in December 1981. Fans of the sci-fi series **Blake's 7** knew that the final episode, due to be screened on December 21st - 40 years ago exactly - would see the return of Roj Blake, the leader of the band of freedom fighters who had thrilled us over three years and four seasons. But any thoughts of a happy ending, let alone a happy Christmas were scuppered when first Blake, then the whole crew were gunned down. Only Avon, who had inherited Blake's mantle as leader was left standing, surrounded by Federation troopers, all of whom were levelling their guns at him. Were the crew *really* all dead? Blake certainly was. Would Avon survive? Would there be another series? Oh BBC, how could you? So much for the season of goodwill...

Of course, in the following decades, there have been novels, fanfic and Big Finish Audios which have continued and enhanced the story of **Blake's 7**. There's been talk for years of a revived or rebooted TV series or a film. So, on this 40th anniversary, we at **GTLWR** thought we'd dedicate this issue - Issue 7 in fact (see what we did there?) to celebrate this amazing series and offer up a mixture of features, fanfic and photos and some stunning original artwork. Most of our regular features and ongoing series have been held back this time, but worry not, they will appear in *Ish #8*, due online in (hopefully), just a couple of months' time.

Oh, and wasn't *Doctor Who: Flux* just brilliant? So, until next time, from all of us at GTLWR, our Very Best Wishes to You All for a Merry Christmas and a Happy, and above all, Safe New Year.

Nick



RAINE SZRAMSKI



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Arcs of Disaster – The Twin Codas of Blake's Seven

By
Sean C Coote

UNKNOWN

December 21st 2021 will mark the 40th anniversary of the final episode - or rather the second final episode - of *Blake's 7*. Few shows end brilliantly: even fewer end brilliantly *twice*. And although both journeys to these points are fantastical and epic, elements of them have always resonated with the viewing public. *Blake's 7* was "real people in unreal situations" as Gareth Thomas once said. There were distractions on the journey, blind alleys, bad luck, small victories and defeats, but as we tuned in each week, we sensed we were going somewhere dark, and very specific.

The Christmas edition of the *Radio Times*, 1977, landed on the mat, thick and shiny. The season's most important prop. And within was a message from the television gods.

Blake's 7 roams a universe of expanding physical boundaries, and restrictive bureaucratic discipline... The photos looked good. Our protagonists were not staring boldly at the camera, but up, into a void. You felt they were up against something big. The production involved good people. David Maloney was producing Terry Nation's visions. They were names I knew well; that they'd never let me down.



Together with script editor Chris Boucher (recommended to Maloney by Robert Holmes) they were responsible for Season One's Scripts. Setting it in the *third century of the second calendar* was a masterstroke. Its location in time remained as ambiguous as the morals of its protagonists, and what it means to win.

So much of what we watch, and how it is defined for us, is dependent on the context in which first we see it. By Christmas 1977, *Doctor Who* had betrayed me, and it wasn't all Mary Whitehouse's fault. Its humour had once been darkly submerged, but then, on October 1st, K9 had appeared. I was 12, and I was insulted.

Blake's 7 sounded like a sci-fi lifeline.

The show debuted in the wake of *Star Wars*, which had been released in Britain six days before. *Blake's 7* didn't have a fraction of its budget, but producer David Maloney saw this as a blessing. He summarised the crucial difference: "We've got something *Star Wars* doesn't have - time to develop our plots, characters, and action. They've got two hours, we've got twelve..."

On 25th December, together with 28 million others, I sat and watched *The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show*. Conflict ceased in living rooms throughout the nation.

The New Year was dark, cold and it was only 42 hours old when conflict made a comeback. 7.3 million of us saw Roj Blake stitched-up by a cabal of corrupt and well-connected party members. We saw him framed for crimes worse than most murders, and his unarmed friends and followers massacred before his eyes for the second time... Luke Skywalker had got off lightly.



Bran Foster—Blake's fellow revolutionary from before his memories were taken from him...

Whilst *Star Wars* was pure fantasy, *Blake's 7* wasn't. Britain was beset by social breakdown. Workers at Ford and British Steel had walked out, and the firemen were on strike, precursors of the strife that would bring down Jim Callaghan's Labour government. The fact the show was screened on Mondays, in midwinter, further fed its sense of cosmic misery. Those were also days of blizzards, snowdrifts, and freezing rain.

The dome, Blake's sterile home, that we are introduced to in episode one, bristles with CCTV (less omnipresent in 1978) and doped-up citizens shuffle its faceless walkways. When Blake drinks from the forbidden brook outside, framed through scrubland by its blinking mass, we expect to see a tyre floating past, or a half-submerged bicycle. But that's the point - dystopias are only down the road.

Blake, fitted-up for child abuse, is forced aboard prison ship *The London*. Its first, last and only stop is *Cygnus Alpha*. His brief lies dead by the brook from which he recently drank. The arc which would end, fifteen months later, in the space above the shale of *Star One*, has begun to vent its engines.

Writers should observe how Nation-scripted episodes feel filmic in length. So adept is he at establishing character and motivation, it's easy to forget they run for barely 50 minutes, because, through the economy of the scripting, they cover a lot of ground.

And so much ground is covered in *Space Fall*.

2 JANUARY 1978 75

HOLIDAY MONDAY tv

BBC 1

6.0-6.50 New series
Blake's Seven
The first of a new space adventure series in 13 episodes
The Way Back by TERRY NATION starring Gareth Thomas
Sally Knyvette, Michael Keating
Life in a domed city of the future is secure and comfortable but Roj Blake, a loyal citizen of the Federation, commits a Category 4 crime by venturing outside it. What he discovers is a nightmare that contradicts everything he knows and threatens an end to his life on Earth...

Blake.....	GARETH THOMAS
Jenna.....	SALLY KNYVETTE
Vila.....	MICHAEL KEATING
Brad Foster.....	ROBERT BEATY
Glynd.....	ROBERT JAMES TARRANT
Varon.....	JEREMY WILKIN
Maja.....	PIPPA STEEL
Ravella.....	GILLIAN BAILEY
Richie.....	ALAN BUTLER
Arbiter.....	MARGARET JOHN
Dr Havant.....	PETER WILLIAMS
Alfa Morag.....	SUSAN FIELD
Clerk of Court.....	RODNEY FIGARO
Computer operator.....	NIGEL LAMBERT
Guard.....	GARRY MCDERMOTT

Series created by TERRY NATION
Script editor CHRIS BOUCHER
Designer MARTIN COLLINS
Producer DAVID MALONEY
Director MICHAEL E. BRIANT

FEATURE
FILE

BBC 2

11.0 am
Play School
Story: *The Grumpy Princess*
Written by RUTH CRAFT. Presenters Evelyn Skinner, Derek Griffiths
(Repeated on BBC1 at 4.0 pm)
11.25 Closedown

6.25 pm
News Headlines
for the deaf, and Weather

6.30-7.30 Planets
The Royal Institution Annual Christmas Lectures to Young People.
1. *The Outer Solar System and Life*
The Big Planets - Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus - used to be thought too far from the Sun, and thus too cold, to be possible sites for the evolution of life.
But Professor Carl Sagan, among other experts on the origin of life, has actually made a Jupiter atmosphere in his laboratory and in this lecture he explains that life on Jupiter is not out of the question. Knowledge of the mighty hydrogen-rich planets has already been transformed by spacecraft fly-bys: other probes, now in the design stage, may settle the question of life in the 1980s.

Blake (Gareth Thomas) up against a nightmare world. Blake's Seven: 6.0

We know there will be seven main characters, but who out of those we see will be chosen? Avon and Vila are obvious candidates. And Jenna, marked out by her words of kindness to the fallen revolutionary: effectively being threatened with rape by Raiker seems small reward. This is not lightweight stuff. For the prisoners on our magic little screen, escape is the only option. And that means taking the ship.

Their revolt ends in a moral stand-off that Blake loses. Avon is appalled. The tone between them is set. But it's not all bad. Midway through negotiations, the imminently to be unemployed Leylan (surely a dig at the car firm) inadvertently introduces Blake to the ship that Jenna is fated to name.

"There's something large and travelling very near us, and we've been running blind..."

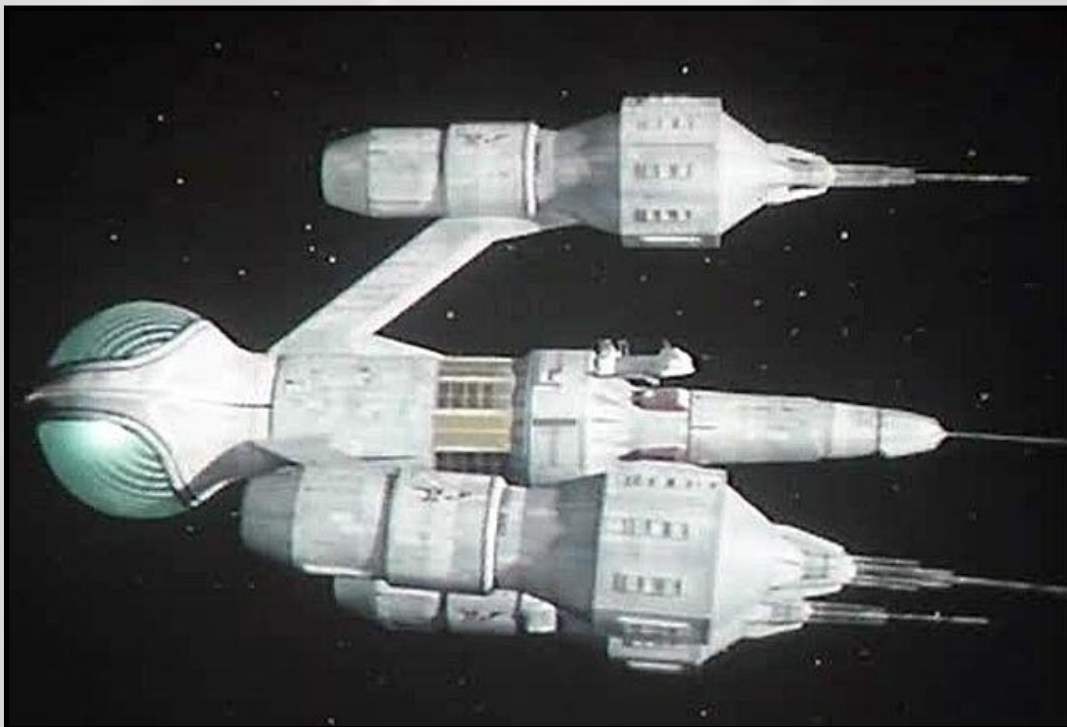
It appears fully formed, like a god or a dream, drifting abandoned in the ship-lanes of infinity. As reveals go, it doesn't get much better. The rebels are forced to board, and the ship defends itself, but Blake's torture in the Federation's clinics has prepared him. There are no spectacular explosions to punctuate their escape, but Raiker, seeing a fortune slipping through his fingers, is sucked to his death. His desperation at the end is protracted enough to count as revenge, and catharsis.

Artix, gazing at space. For Commander Leylan, there will be no more gigs at the helm: it would be hard to conceive of a bigger dead end. "They won't have to. He'll find them," he replies, wondering how letting the man who will soon top the Federation's most wanted list escape in the best ship in space will impact on his pension.

Vila called it after observing the architecture: Cygnus Alpha is *early maniac*. Daylight has been abolished. The place looks like a quarry (it is a quarry). Vargas, the high priest, may wear Kickers but his robes and syntax match the architecture. Apostasy is death - compliance grinding misery. He wants the Liberator. He wants to *spread the word...*



Vargas: Not just the architecture that's Early Maniac...



The episode sees Blake at his best. His speech to the caged criminals, pacified and quarantined, is up with his most stirring. He's already lost one stand-off, he's not going to lose another. Even the prospect of seeing his shipmates sacrificed isn't going to stand in the way of his plans. "There's no way I'm going to order that ship to land... You can fight, or you can die..." A fair few do both.

Vargas' world and methods of rule are those of the

Federation, just writ very small, and with a fake god attached. Yet Blake is no less possessed (albeit for better reasons) and needs followers as much as Vargas does. He gets them, but nearly loses the ship in doing so.

"I can see you haven't been wasting your time on frivolities," quips Avon as Jenna parades a new top. Investigating the holds himself, he returns with an armful of space-bling. The pair give Blake an hour. With six minutes left Avon is ready to go. He needs Jenna to fly the ship. He makes a final appeal to the woman of dispassionate logic he wishes that she was.

"We lose it all."
He fails, and by default, Roj Blake wins.

Outside, it's raining heavily, and fog drifts low across the dark fields. The leaves hiss and rattle. The windows in my room are damp in their frames. The orchard is overgrown, and the barn is home to rats. But these are small things. After its broadcast on January 9th 1978, I go to bed believing *Space Fall* is the best TV I've ever seen.

Tellingly, the *Who* story running at the time *The Way Back* first appeared was the dismal *Underworld*. Whilst there would still be great moments, the show was embarking on an arc of its own...

"I said, Sir, they'll never find him out there," muses Mr.

I was officially a teenager by the time Servalan, head of Federation Space Command (and schoolboy's midnight visitation) appeared to solve the Blake problem. What started as an irritant had become a political embarrassment. "His name is a rallying-call for malcontents of all persuasions," whine the politicians.

10.9 million people watched *Seek, Locate, Destroy* unfold.



Servalan, Head of Space Command

Servalan toys with the coiffured and winsome Rai, the first officer we see on her staff. This man cannot be in the military: Blake must have it made. But she stomps all over Rai when he counsels restraint, and he is quickly superseded. "Destroy Blake," Servalan demands of Travis, her contentious appointee.

"Depend on it on it," Travis replies. And because we believe in his bearing as a soldier, we see him as a proper threat.

And so, they're set in opposition, the man in black and the man in tainted white. If Servalan is Margaret Thatcher, Travis is Norman Tebbit to Blake's Fidel Castro. And they both have their chances to end their historic feud, early and permanently. That they don't is telling. Using Cally (missing in action) as bait, Travis is waiting. But deploying his old foe's tactic, Blake has got there first. Travis takes an age to fire. Blake has time enough to shoot the helpless Travis... But no...

First up, *Duel* has the best space battle ever. It certainly has the best incidental music. Tension, distilled. The action is localised, claustrophobic, tactical, and for Travis, brutally expedient. Sinofar's

costume had me and many others writhing in their armchairs. Again, Avon has cause to shake his head at Blake's selective humanism. Given the collateral damage he generally leaves in his wake, that he won't kill Travis in the forest seems baffling. "You don't matter enough," seemed as a weak an excuse then as it does now.

At least Sinofar is happy.



Sinofar is happy, even if it is a bit nippy on her world...



Commander Travis: "There's nowhere to run, Blake!"

Project Avalon revolves around Blake's plan to spring the titular revolutionary (the cutest terrorist in space) and unite rebel factions against the common enemy. Even if it means visiting mines during *the long cold* and becoming ensnared in a Travis overseen plot to kill the crew and take the *Liberator* intact. It's a fifty-minute action movie: the shoot-out in the cell-block is straight out of *Where Eagles Dare*. Travis' scheme is audacious but over-complicated, and Avon's improvised robotics save the day. Travis is left having to take the catch of his life.

This time, Blake has both Travis *and* Servalan at his mercy, but passes up the chance with irritating predictability. For Travis, *Project Avalon* is the beginning of the end.

It is perhaps a sense of empathy with Ensor's son's absolute single-mindedness that leads Blake to indulge a man that would see his crew die on Cephlon for the sake of extending the lifespan of his elderly father. On first viewing, I wanted Blake to 'do a Vargas' on him and send him to the void. A part of me still does. Once you're at least partially responsible for blowing up a neutral research centre, your morals are already up for grabs.



Orac: Super smart and super sarcastic

Despite the attentions of Servalan, Travis, a revolving darkroom door, and a couple of Phibians, the priceless Orac is eventually secured, only to predict the destruction of the ship. Rather than be left wondering if that was curtains, I seem to remember finding out quickly, in comforting announcer's tones, that the series would return.

Series Two Big Ideas

Looking back, I don't see *Orac* or *Redemption* as representing the ends or beginnings of an arc. Orac's value is still theoretical here, and I think *Redemption* makes a fundamental error.

The *Liberator*, in Series One, was possessed of almost supernatural qualities. Its appearance in proximity to the London defied all rational probability. It could read thoughts and send intruders mad with false visions. To see it revealed as the work of a rogue AI system served by a bevy of Barbarellas seemed like sci-fi by numbers. Not that it doesn't have great moments. Avon to Jenna, through the window of their cell, reads their fate in the stars.

"I made a mental note of the configuration..."

"And?"

"You're looking at it..."

They're precisely where Orac has foretold disaster... Yet surely, in the end, the ship was better-off as a manifestation of faith, an unknowable aspect of Blake's mania for justice? People need myth. Not that I realised that at the time.

And Nation's bleak visions of struggle had their parallels on the streets of Britain. Premier Jim Callaghan, having refused an autumn election he might have aced, now presided over a country where even the gravediggers were on strike. The winter of discontent was underway.

"We've won," says Blake to an empty room. "I've won". The first half of the proclamation is that of the revolutionary as a blind man. The second pure hubris. *Pressure Point* sees Blake at his worst, the mission, *his* mission, has been a disaster on all levels. He gets mugged by fake intelligence. Avon had gone along as it gave him an outside chance of The *Liberator*, everybody else through varying degrees of loyalty.

Four days after Sid Vicious bit the dust, Gan lies dead. The automated nerve-centre that allows The Federation to function is light years distant. And that is where we are eventually heading: To *Star One*...

Trial is Croucher's finest hour as Travis. Boucher's dialogue is worthy of Holmes. Whilst Blake is contemplating the nature of responsibility, Travis is trying to offload it. Servalan has nobbled his trial: he's a political embarrassment and she wants him dead. His bitter declarations from the dock are not without gravitas.

"An officer is the product of his training... If I'm guilty of murder, then so are all of you..."

Travis' scenes with trooper Par in his cell are pitch-perfect. "You won't go blind drinking that..." Par doesn't make it when the courtroom seals itself after the hull breach (*Avon's gadget works!*) because he cops a Travis elbow: a tragedy within a tragedy.

Killer is the first of Series Two's stand-alone classics: here with a chilling contemporary resonance. Holmes pairs Avon and Vila for a visit to Fosforon and the former's criminal associate, the compromised Tynus (the great Ronald Lacey). Their mission is to procure the Federation's latest translator crystal. A Pre-programmed zombie plague-carrier, sent by aliens who wish to isolate man, massively complicates matters. Dr. Bellfriar's final words summarises the silent killer's virulence. "My god, I've forgotten how to read..." Blake shows restraint, refusing to let it infect inbound Servalan, and risk spreading it further.

Countdown is a fine (and literal) example of the ticking clock narrative technique. It manages to provide us with a back-story for Avon, hinting at some long-buried vestiges of humanity.

Voice from the Past is a mess, memorable only for the ludicrously disguised Travis' even more ludicrous accent ('eez 'ee come?) and his failure to shoot up his enemies at the Wembley Conference Centre

despite having numerous opportunities to do so. Blake's dismissive reaction to events he appears to have no memory of, is unforgivable. It was almost as if, by this point, he had to go...

Gambit and *The Keeper* signpost the road to *Star One*. In *Gambit*, Holmes (always aware of the bigger picture) introduces us to Docholli. Unfortunately for the weary cyber-surgeon, he possesses galaxy-changing information regarding the location of *Star One*. It's no wonder he's pissed drunk all the time. Typically of Holmes though, *Gambit* is really the Avon and Vila show, the Orac-shrinking comedy criminals starring in the kind of caper that would become more frequent with Blake gone.

Servalan has a ball. "I'll have that vulpine degenerate eviscerated with a very small, and very blunt knife," she says of Krantor. And we're right behind her. Sadly, the ghastly furniture doesn't tally with the concrete underpass, and the extras look like they've stepped out of a village play. But Docholli's clues hasten the crew to the planet Goth...

The Keeper is sci-fi as heavy metal. The royal tents look like something from the Stonehenge Festival. Gola is a biker president, his Mum the primary dealer in visionary pharmaceuticals. Servalan has the best line, suggesting to Jenna that a lifetime with the former would be "very educational" - hardly furthering the cause of second calendar feminism.

Fittingly, the fool holds the key to the future... All roads, and all threads, lead to *Star One*. It is breaking down, and taking The Federation with it. Spacecraft are colliding, and weather systems on key worlds are out of control. Servalan stages a coup. Blake wants to play God and speed the destruction up, regardless of human cost. "It's the only way I can be sure I was right," he declares in a moment of breath-taking arrogance. Cally's face says it all...

A now-rogue Travis is en-route to facilitate an alien invasion, but Blake gets to *Star One* first, and pretends to be his nemesis in time for the *final act*. "Who's this?" asks the alien commander, gesturing at Cally. Amidst all the chaos, Blake delivers his greatest comic line. "My mother..."

Turning up late, Travis fails finish to finish off Blake, Blake fails to finish off Travis and it's left to Avon's shot to send him plummeting to his death down a cosmic pipe in the floor. Yet the scale of Travis' betrayal makes little sense. Unlike Avon, he goes mad too quickly.

"This is stupid," declares Vila, as the crew, back aboard the *Liberator*, prepare to repel the aliens. "When did that ever stop us?" Avon replies. The day after *Star One* broadcast, and with the

British government in meltdown, a general election was called. By the time the show returned the following winter, Britain would be massively changed.

Series Three ***Rudderless in Space***

It's the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher (a less well-dressed Servalan) is running things. Unemployment is soaring. All is darkness and confusion. Aboard the *Liberator*, Blake is missing. He may be dead. Jenna is missing too. She may be dead as well. The Aliens didn't have the numbers to succeed with their plans.

On Christmas Eve, in the real world, the Soviets invade Afghanistan. That scheme too, will end in defeat...

Season Three is more exploratory, less a righteous crusade than the first two seasons. It's about leadership. New boy Tarrant even looked like Blake, perm and all. Conflict looms, but by the season's end it's clear Avon's in charge. Nation's *Aftermath* and *Powerplay* usher in the new order.

Avon is trying to return to the ship from the backward planet Saran where his ejection capsule landed. Saved from Chel (a regressive local with anger management issues) he's taken in by Dayna and Hal Mellanby, fugitives from the Federation. The news from the front is that although the aliens were routed, *Star One* was destroyed. Servalan memorably murders Dayna's blind father - she will go on to murder two more disabled men - but Avon escapes with Dayna and Orac.

The transition to *Powerplay* is seamless. "What are you doing on my ship?" asks its future pilot. "Your ship?" Avon replies, carelessly.



Avon: "Your ship?"

Powerplay is a claustrophobic whodunnit. At stake is the Liberator and all it contains. The opposition are thuggish Troopers on the rob, their Section Leader, Clegg, outranked only by Tarrant's officer patter and stolen uniform. Whilst Vila and Cally are being measured for a distant spare-parts bank, the Liberator is quietly seeking them. Avon and Dayna stalk the infrastructure. Together with Tarrant they overcome Clegg's men. Escaping butchery (and the omnipresent Servalan) by a whisker, Vila and Cally return. The new-look crew are registered with Zen.



All Change: The new-look crew for Series 3

With Blake gone the series becomes, in many ways, a show about Servalan (who has seized the presidency) and Avon, as an *item*. Their meeting on Sarren is implausibly delicious, and despite throwing her to the Mellanby's living room floor and declaring a union would leave him "dead in week", Avon's merely playing hard to get. It's the Marquis de Sade in space show. Free at last from Blake's moralising, Avon embarks on an unconsummated and bizarre affair with his nemesis. *Will they or won't they?*- a question asked by even the casual viewer...

For the Liberator and its new-look crew, a pattern of wandering and theft is established. Perhaps still dazed from recent upheavals, the show slips into coma, fed by feverish visions. *Volcano* is one. Lava pulsates in a psychedelic sideshow. There's a Woody Allen robot waiter. Pacifists float across moorlands. Liberals blow up a planet. Somewhere in the undergrowth, Servalan tries and fails (not for the last time) to take the Liberator.

Dawn of the Gods is likewise a bad dream - and as absurd when analysed. The Thaar'n hardly cuts it as a deity, and why would the Mad Hatter want to scrap the best ship in space? To make Herculaneum filing-cabinets?

The Harvest of Kairos is a first, hinging as it does on an armed heist. It has an unfairly poor reputation.

Sopron, the philosophical rock, is quite an entity. Never mind the Kairopan-munching, sleeping bag snail, *Harvest* is the Jarvik show. He thinks like a man, and he acts like one too - the kind of man that upsets people. You can almost smell his Y-Chromosome aftershave. But Servalan needs him, as a strategist and a bit of rough on the side. Dastor and his creeping sycophants aren't going to bag her the Liberator.

Jarvik, above all, has codes of honour, and there's something Shakespearian about his rise and fall. He can't believe the inability of others to accept the evidence of their own eyes - this from an age pre-dating internet fakery. Tarrant gets the last word on his former commander when Avon suggests he was merely a Federation thug. "No. He was more than that..."

City at the Edge of the World is Vila's finest hour. Having been bullied by Tarrant, he outmanoeuvres the ridiculous Bayban, gets laid, and steals the crystals required for the weapon systems. "I'm impressed," admits Avon. Vila, suspecting he may have made the biggest mistake of his life in leaving the girl, feeds Orac his greatest line. "In the light of your previous record, that seems unlikely. I would predict there are far greater mistakes waiting to be made by someone with your obvious talent for them..."



Bayben: Possibly over-compensating?



“The rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated,” is Avon’s declaration in the final frames of the next episode. He may not be dead, but something inside him soon will be. From the moment he discovers that Anna Grant, the woman he’d so tenderly eulogised in *Countdown*, was a Federation plant, he expels the abstraction of love from his life forever. What replaces it resembles an increasing psychosis that will reach its peak in the final season.

Deathwatch is underrated, judging by the polls. It’s war-by-proxy premise is as relevant as ever, as is conflict as nationalist spectacle. Vila gets the booze out as Tarrant’s twin and the android Vinni do battle in a *Sweeney*-type Warehouse, and Avon visits his “sick friend” (yes, it’s Servalan) who is waiting in the wings. They kiss. While Deeta has no chance against the android, Tarrant, bending the combat rules in kind, exacts his revenge in the compulsory return shoot-out. Servalan’s plans are dashed, and Tarrant loses his brother. Other than that, *Deathwatch* ends in an entertaining stalemate.

What a coda *Terminal* would have made. Blake, an electric shadow. Servalan left on the brink, and the great ship from nowhere gone for ever. Avon and the rest beaten, but alive...

In an age of streaming and Blu-Ray, where the viewer can play with episodic timelines, it’s easy to underestimate the initial impact of *Terminal*. We know of old the episode isn’t the end, other than for Servalan, badly served by her techno-goons (mistaking Orac for a sculpture? Failing to spot the state of the ship?) and tragically, for Zen. Nation thought it was going to be, and this is what we have to remember as we watch.

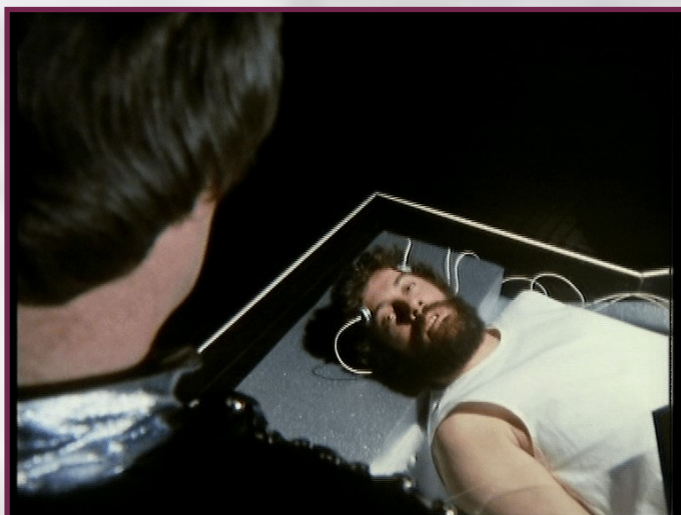
Whilst I didn’t feel the sense of betrayal I was destined to feel in the wake of *Blake*, the feeling *Terminal* left me with was bad enough. *Terminal* exposes the fractious nature of Avon’s leadership. It’s a showcase for his worst personality traits. His pathological dissociation from other people is one, as is his condescension towards his intellectual inferiors. Blind to the dangers of the mysterious cloud of particles, and deaf to the protests of his ship-mates, he orders Zen to fly through it to keep his secret rendezvous.

Unforgivable error though that is, it’s his latent sentimentality, something he’s consistently counselled against, that really does for him. And it’s an experience he fails to learn from. But like Lennon needed McCartney, Avon needed Blake, and Servalan knew this. “I never recognise the fool,” she heard him admit in the dungeons beneath Residency One. Sentiment: the crack in wall of his logic that triggers the arcs of his failure.

Come on Avon! Did you not see it? Did you *not want* to see it?

Terminal has an epic sense of finality. Dudley Simpson’s score reprises the heartbeat motif from *The Robots of Death*, and the artificial landscape is just as bleak. And at least, in the end, Avon has the dignity to give his nemesis (and perverse soul-mate) her due. “If it was a trap, it had to be yours. The precise planning, the meticulous detail, the general flair, who else could it be...?”

Servalan certainly delivers here, each new revelation bringing down the curtains on Avon’s hopes with a vampish joy. The Links, the organic component of the man-made planet on which she plans to leave the crew marooned, “are not what man developed from but what he will become...” Pretty final, as finalities go - as is her update on Blake, a twisting of the knife in her triumph. “He died from his wounds on the planet Jevron, more than a year ago... I saw his body cremated... Blake is dead...”



Avon is under no illusions that he's found Blake at last..

It’s notable that Vila, *in extremis*, steps up to the plate here. His attempts to retrieve the situation Avon has caused are considered and rational, and he pulls off the last-ditch extraction of Orac like nobody else could have done.

In the end though, Servalan’s triumph is short-lived. She’s blinded by the scope of her own ambition. On boarding her long-sought prize, she fails to notice its condition. “Maximum Power!” she declares, arms spread wide. It’s an order that will conclude the path of destruction that Avon first embarked upon. *Terminal* represents an almost total closure. Almost. The Liberator’s silent disintegration (aside from Dudley Simpson’s gongs) and with it the remorseful Zen, is terrible to see. For space (despite suggestions to the contrary) is an empty place. It is inimical to man: an infinity of death.

"I let her take the Liberator," Avon admits. Tarrant softens the blow, seeing the bigger picture. "No... We all lost..."

There were no guarantees of a fourth series as the credits rolled, no reassuring announcement from auntie that the show would return. And it's not hard to see Terry Nation relaxing in his armchair, knowing that he'd finished off a masterful job. It was his show, after all.

Double maths, first thing on the Tuesday, was doubly bad. Like the end of the world.

Series Four ***This Way Madness Lies***

In the eighteen-odd months that had elapsed since the stark closure of series three, the unemployment figures in Britain had passed the 2.5 million mark - numbers not seen since the 1930s. And on top of this, snow had come to Terminal.

"Blake!" is the last thing Cally ever says before the bunker where his ghost appeared is blown sky-high. It should really have been "Avon!" if the popular (and seamy) theories of who-is-paired-up-with-who aboard the (now departed) Liberator are followed through. I was disappointed - hurt even. Servalan also blows up the ship she so generously left them...

Taken together *Rescue* and *Power* are not so much a pastiche of Oscar Wilde, but an exercise in grand larceny and iffy gender politics. Arriving on Terminal to procure scrap, the mysterious Dorian rescues Dayna and Vila, only to be rewarded with a hi-jacking. The odds, within two episodes of the stranded crew finding themselves both a base and functional spaceship (not to mention Soolin) must have been astronomical. But this is television, and compulsive television at that. We forgive, which is more than Dorian would have done - had he not been killed by a Sea-Devil - given he gets robbed of his home, Scorpio, the lethally decorative Soolin, and thanks to Vila, the contents of his drinks' cabinet.

Three things, all of them to some degree submerged, are at play in the arc of season four. The need to deal with Federation's accelerating pacification programme, Avon's decent into psychosis, and his working secretly with Orac in his continuing and obsessive hunt for Blake. It is also about moral decay, and the disintegration of the trust required to effectively resist.

In *Traitor*, Robert Holmes saw an arc for the season. A doped-up galaxy is a compliant one. Boucher knew the series' epic end, but, whilst we got the latter, the former idea was never followed through sufficiently. Holmes (no doubt drawing on his personal experience) satirises mess-hall politics with his customary wit, and Servalan (temporarily Sleer) has her psychopathic tendencies unequivocally confirmed with the torture and murder of the luckless Forbus.

It's odd that the *Stardrive* they coerce Doctor Plaxton into fitting into Scorpio doesn't get used to better effect from here on in. Despite its potential, the ship remains the galactic equivalent of something built by British Leyland. After putting up with RADA trained bikers with cardboard wings on their helmets, the crew deserved more. "Who?" is Avon's reaction to Plaxton's death. And it isn't intended as irony. Rather as a celebration of cynicism in its purest form. Avon's psychosis is tuning up...

Animals is a bore, but its undercurrent of child abuse is clumsy rather than offensive. Dayna's role was intended for Cally, ten years her senior. Servalan makes her compulsory appearance. The next idea, that Ensor had two projects on the go, I never quite bought into, and *Headhunter's* lurching comedy spook is straight out of *Rentaghost*. It's too proportionally skewed to be taken in any way seriously, and its voice foreshadows Mr. Blobby's.

Orac's chilling projections of humanities' inevitable enslavement pull the episode back from the brink. I didn't spot in *Assassin* that Cancer was the blonde, but then I'd only ever read half an Agatha Christie. It's still a fun romp: Avon being strapped down and menaced by a clockwork spider is worth the entrance fee alone. The slave trading scene is pure Carry-On, and Cancer's death is exuberant pantomime.



The B7 Crew—Series 4



Scorpio,
not as
elegant as
The
Liberator,
but does
the job...

But so much for philosophical reflection. The crew's moral disintegration reaches tipping point during the bodged heist of *Gold*. Freedom fighters to armed bullion robbers is something of a comedown. The episode is the beginning of an end we always sensed would not be good.

Vila wants nothing to do with the heist!

Heiller: *Your friend Vila, he wants no part in this?*

Soolin: *He doesn't trust you Keiller. He thinks it's a trap.*

Roy Kinnear is superb as the duplicitous degenerate Keiller, an *old friend* who contacts Avon. Avon, having cleaned out Krantor's casino, wants more of the buzz. Much to their discredit, the rest, apart from a cautious Vila, sign up wholeheartedly to the blag. The shooting of the guards on Zerok is murder in pursuit of money they don't really need. The last of Keiller's buffoonish charm evaporates when he kills the uppity doctor, but no-one present is exonerated. Keiller, it transpires, is working for Servalan. No surprise when it's her crew that meets with Avon's to finalise the cash-for-gold exchange. Servalan, knowing Keiller tried to double-cross her, leaves him face-down in the dust.

Back on Scorpio, the crew are counting their money when Orac spoils the party. Due to unforeseeable economic circumstances, the cash is useless. Servalan, laden with the stolen gold, royally profits instead.

Avon, by now, on the edge of madness, laughs uncontrollably at the irony.

If it's *Gold* that shreds the crew's morals, then it's *Orbit* that shreds the last of their friendship. If I were to be exiled and allowed a single episode of the 52 for company, it would be *Orbit*. It's Holmes at his brilliant best. To misquote Conan-Doyle: *talent knows genius, but mediocrity knows only itself*. Not for first time, he lifts from a classic (here of genre) then adds his own sardonic twists.

It's supposed to be a straight swap: Orac for the exile Egrorian's Tachyon Funnel. The ultimate computer for the ultimate weapon. But who would want to give up either? And so *Orbit* is multi-layered with betrayal.

Tarrant is labelled expendable by Avon, which Vila goes along with. Egrorian's domestic situation is ambiguous. "How can you tell which one is the Queen?" Avon asks with a straight face as Pindar, Egrorian's student and companion, cheats his master at chess. The grotesque Egrorian betrays Pindar (Avon and Vila as an elderly couple). Pindar overhears the details and exacts his revenge. And in the end Vila (already humiliated by Dayna and Soolin) is unforgivably betrayed by Avon.



"Vila weighs 70 kilos."

Holmes knew more than most how to source ideas, synthesise them, and fashion them anew in the context required. The nub of the notorious shuttle scene, the problem of its weight, he lifts from *The Cold Equations*, a much-adapted short story by Tom Godwin. Orac, who must have known about the issue, keeps silent until asked directly about the collapsing orbit, before stitching-up Vila with a level of self-interest even Avon hasn't quite reached: 70 kilos worth. Avon has already betrayed Egrorian with the fake Orac, just to complete the circle and Holmes even finds space to send up the show as Servalan reveals this to Egrorian "You fool... That's just a box of flashing lights..." before ruthlessly dashing Egrorian's amorous schemes of an alpha-union ("Together we would stand like mountains!"). Her dismissal of his final, ridiculous pleading effectively sentences him to death at Pindar's hands, who dies himself during the execution.

Warlord kicks off by showing us the Orwellian advancement of the pacification programme, at last re-referenced. The Federation, using ultra-concentrated Pylene 50, has reduced the populations of many troublesome worlds to that of the walking dead. Avon sees hope as lying in a great alliance of former foes. But thanks to the treacherous Zukan (yet another Servalan stooge) the crew end up losing Xenon base, the nearest thing on firm ground they ever had to a home. Tarrant misses out on the girl (Zooona, the doomed Zukan's daughter) who took her glove off (pretty stupidly) and is mummified by the radioactive virus her father has released...



Zeeona: Hair today, gone tomorrow...

The “tracing of a line through infinity...” So writes Boucher, so speaks Orac...

We’ve already seen the opening titles. Yet none of us are prepared for events on *Gauda Prime*, where we discover Soolin’s parents were murdered by industrialists (“Oh, it was a crime alright, it just wasn’t illegal”) a welcome (if late) backstory. But most importantly of all we see Blake, alone in a forest, left scarred by the hard times he’s fallen upon. This time he isn’t a drug induced dream. His actions are real and violent, but his motivations unclear... *Blake* is all about misunderstandings and ambiguities as we accelerate towards oblivion. And it’s death by exposition too: through words alone we are left to make up the pictures of Jenna hitting the self-destruct.

“I have to test each one myself,” says bounty-hunter Blake of Avon’s new companions. An over-complication of an already over-complicated situation. Avon, closing in as time slips away, needlessly guns down Klyn (Darrow’s wife) after she’s triggered the alarms whose mournful pulsing forms the soundtrack to the final act. “He’s sold us,” Tarrant erroneously declares of Blake.

There’s a black and white picture I long ago downloaded: 35mm, grainy, and taken on set. It’s Avon at a three-quarter angle, surrounded by armed troops. The guns levelled at him, as he once had cause to observe, “are not standard issue.” The shadow on his face is the strangest thing: it’s as if his features are metamorphosing. Lumpen and melting.

The bodies of his crew are lying at his feet, including that of Blake, who, almost as if in a dream, he’s shot at point-blank range. There’s something disturbing about the image, as if it’s not from a television show, but from the frontline of a distant war. It sums up *Blakes’s 7*: even at its worst, there were transcendental elements to the show.

Down the years, there has been much speculation as to the fate of the crew. But in the end, the final word has to be Chris Boucher’s. He later said that other than Blake (confirmed dead) whoever died in the final shootout was always going to be dependent on which of the cast signed up for another series... Cold logic Avon would have appreciated.

Yet in a parallel world, how many of us have not sat down transfixed by its phantom opening episode? Well, as we know, it never happened. And it’s hard to see where a fifth series could have gone, had the crew not been executed, or pacified to the eyeballs and exhibited as broken and repentant model citizens.

For Avon, some lonely Egrorianesque exile at best? Vila, if he too was lucky, a drunken legend in the nook of his spaceport local? Soolin and Dayna, with youth on their side, fairing better, but Tarrant, having lost the love of his life, ending up like Jenna...? An unlucky fate to whoever discovered Orac in the ferns?

Wherever the show might have taken its protagonists, it would have been downtown.

Whilst *Terminal* (for a short time at least) left us plenty of options to speculate upon, *Blake* left us utterly bereft, just in time for Christmas. In the news from the real world, The Communist Party of Poland were crushing the opposition of the unions. The letters of disgust and despair addressed to the BBC were testament to the prevailing mood, including ones from the suicidal unemployed.

40 years on from the show’s unique denouement, what’s left is loyalty. Yet there’s a price, for with it comes an empty aching the passing of time cannot disperse. Time has not made less contentious what has proved to be the journey’s final scene.

Maybe one day the situation will be re-addressed...



21st December 1981: My then 7 year-old self settled down in front of the TV to enjoy the final episode of series 4 of Blake's 7. This was an episode I was awaiting with keen anticipation as the titular character was due to return to the show. Now truth be told I didn't actually remember Blake that well what with being only 4 when Gareth Thomas made his final regular appearance (his appearance in Terminal didn't really count) but still this was being promoted as a real return. Intriguingly it was also being promoted as a shocker of an episode. Still, that didn't faze me as images of unwrapping presents and gorging on chocolates in just a few days danced through my head, besides my hero, the guy I considered the star of the show: Vila, wouldn't be hurt.....would he?

The episode began with them blowing up their base, a bit extreme I thought. Actually, I was a kid, so I probably believed somebody had gone out and left the gas oven on, this coming a few short weeks after my friend's sister destroyed their kitchen whilst attempting to fry chips! Then things started going downhill fast as Scorpio came under attack with Tarrant volunteering to try to take the damaged ship down safely and being about as successful as my skills in pulling the girls in my single years! Sadly, all the drama of this moment was lost as for some reason it looked like the crew had installed a fun slide in the middle of Scorpio's cockpit which Tarrant gleefully took a turn on! Honestly apart from the crushing final five minutes the only thing my friends talked about was how fun that looked.

Of course, soon after Blake made his proper return to the show his scar not bothering me one bit as living on an East Hull council estate, I'd seen worse! He rescued Tarrant and everybody came together and this was the moment part of my youthful innocence died.

Avon shot Blake! No, not the usual sort of shot in Blake's 7, this time there was gore, lots of gore and then just for good measure Avon shot him again....and again. Blake slumped to his knees (and off screen I'm sure so did his intestines!) and unquestionably died. Then Arlen revealed herself to be a baddie and held our heroes at gunpoint. Dayna then had a complete brain fart moment and decided she could bend down, pick up a gun, aim and shoot at their captor before she could be shot herself. Needless to say, that didn't work out so well and Dayna dropped to the floor at the same time as many viewers jaws headed the same way. I have to admit my jaw was not among them as Blake I barely knew and I hadn't grown too attached to Dayna.

I then shuffled uncomfortably as Vila advanced upon Arlen. No, no, no I was screaming inside as outside my face managed the expression a rabbit would have played a game of chicken with a car by standing in the middle of the headlights only at the last second to realise the advancing vehicle was a Robin Reliant!

Vila somewhat surprisingly not only disarmed Arlen and knocked her out but also delivered a James Bond worthy quip whilst doing so. This was then the moment the BB, bloody C decided to ruin my Christmas as Vila forgot it was Panto season and neglected to "look behind him" and was promptly shot in the back and "killed" by a Federation Trooper doing his best Pantomime Villain impression.

Now it was my turn for my jaw to hit the floor. This was to this day the most shocking thing I'd seen on television and I'm speaking as one of those viewers who saw more of Keith Chegwin than they ever planned to on Ch4's Naked Jungle!

What the hell had I just seen? How can Vila be dead? No, I reassured myself something will save him this will be okay and.....oh Soolin's dead?.....so is Tarrant?

I sank back into my part of the sofa, my favourite spot in the home where this young telly addict drank in all the kids TV and selected grown up stuff he could and fought back a tear. My TV heroes didn't die? They never died, I'm sure I never saw an episode of Jamie and The Magic Torch where Jamie flashed his light in the corner of the room to discover his loyal dog Wordsworth lying dead on his back with all four legs stuck in the air. Had I missed an episode of Rentaghost where loveable Jester scamp Timothy Claypole went psycho and bludgeoned the Meaker family as they slept and was I busy when the episode of Rainbow aired which revealed that Zippy was really the inside of a Dalek (hey they were both Roy Skelton!) who got his armour back and promptly exterminated Rod, Jane and Freddy for singing another one of their awful songs? No! None of that happened and I'd have probably thoroughly enjoyed and remembered that last one!

Avon was now stood astride the corpse of Blake like the dominant member of the pack he truly was, surrounded by Troopers Avon lifted his gun and on came the credits accompanied by gunfire, lots of gunfire. Then the theme tune slowly came in. There was no friendly continuity announcer to reassuringly announce that the series would return in 1982 and BBC One then plodded on with the rest of its programming leaving millions of Blake's 7 fans to struggle to come to terms with what had just gone down.

Fast forward 40 years and the series finale still stands up as the very best with only Blackadder Goes Forth coming anywhere near touching it. To this young impressionable viewer back in the day it was a devastating viewing experience and my first hard lesson that sometimes the good guys don't win... or do they? It occurred to me that the finale doesn't actually have to be the finale. It was simply where Blake's 7 the TV series met its end but with the powers of imagination Vila, Avon and the others can live on and here is the result. A tale I've entitled Blake's 7: Resurrection for you to enjoy or alternatively ignore!

Who lived? Who died? You'll find out! Old favourites will return and new characters will be introduced and, in later chapters, one character who viewers of late 80s Doctor Who will remember will crash his way into the world of Blake's 7.

Please read and hopefully enjoy.

Make of it what you will until inevitably our beloved series finds its "Way Back" to our screens.

Ian "Tushy" Rushworth

Blake's 7: Resurrection

1: Pretend Best Friend?

by I.G Rushworth

The scent of death penetrated the air as numerous bodies lay strewn across the floor.

Kerr Avon was the last member of his crew presumably, to Avon himself, left alive. Events had occurred so quickly, and Avon now struggled to comprehend exactly what had taken place only minutes beforehand. He recalled the shock of actually, after years apart, coming face to face with his former crewmate Roj Blake.

He recalled the anger of discovering that Blake had, by all accounts, betrayed him. A terrible sight returned to him in which he violently gunned down the closest thing to a friend Avon had had for a very long time.

Blake now lay dead on the floor of that there could be no doubt, blood pouring from his lifeless body. His eyes left accusingly wide-open tormenting Avon's psyche. Avon pondered to himself just how his life had ended up here Kerr Avon had led a very private life barely opening up to anyone, even his own brother. Avon certainly preferred his own company with friends kept to just the bare minimum to suit his own particular agenda.

Roj Blake was different though. He possessed an infuriating knack of inspiring people, but although Avon would never admit it in the time, they were shipmates, perhaps, if not exactly *friends*, he had come to hold a begrudging respect for Blake.

Here was a man who had been falsely accused of the most heinous of crimes but fought back against the very system which sought to ruin him meeting the bogus charges with unwavering determination. Both he and Avon were convicts when they met on the prison ship *London* although admittedly Avon was somewhat less innocent than Blake, yet both had been reduced to the lowest of classes, their former Alpha Grade standings now simply a memory.

On transit to the prison planet Cygnus Alpha, he and Blake along with fellow prisoner Jenna Stannis had somehow lucked out into gaining their own spacecraft, *The Liberator*, a fantastic alien ship far beyond their wildest imaginations. They'd later gained additional crew members in the thief Vila Restal, the hulking Olag Gan telepathic alien Cally, ship's computer Zen and later the all-knowing (or know-all computer), Orac.

Together they proved to be a thorn in the side of The Federation, a corrupt government who unfortunately were the ruling class and in particular the Federation's enigmatic Supreme Commander, Servalan, as they began a game of cat and mouse attacks on her regime.

Yes, there was an abundance of danger, poor Gan after all had paid the price for his faith in Blake with his own life but in spite of this and other losses Avon had begun to arrogantly believe he and Blake were untouchable. It all changed however one fateful day when *The Liberator* had sustained heavy damage in battle necessitating the crew to temporarily, so they hoped, abandon ship. That was the last time Avon had ever seen Roj Blake.

Sure, there had been rumours and the occasional red herring, but Avon had become resigned to the fact he would never encounter Blake again let alone that Blake's life would end at Avon's very hands. Then, out of the blue Avon received a signal which confirmed that not only was Blake alive and well but also disclosed his current whereabouts. Avon still travelled with Vila and Orac minus the now deceased Cally and the long-missing Jenna and had over time gained new crewmates in Dayna Mellanby, Del Tarrant and Soolin.

Now Avon dragged them all recklessly towards the supposed location of Blake in their new spacecraft *Scorpio* with *The Liberator* having been destroyed also due to Avon's reckless pursuit of Blake some time earlier. It proved to be a costly mistake as now the *Scorpio* too was destroyed with its crew barely escaping with their lives. Soon after shooting Blake dead in a terrible misunderstanding Avon witnessed his current crewmates gunned down, first Dayna was shot by an apparent associate of Blake's before Federation Troopers filled the room wasting no time in shooting Vila, Soolin and finally Tarrant.

Now with his crewmates seemingly dead the Federation Troopers trained their weapons upon Avon who still stood astride the corpse of Blake. Avon accepted the inevitable and defiantly smiled, raising his own weapon almost daring the Troopers to open fire and end his life.

Unseen at the back of the crowded room, one trooper slowly reached for their mask silently beginning to remove it whilst motioning to Avon to stay quiet.

Avon, confused and still stunned by the recent deadly turn of events stood steadfast with the same stoic smile upon his face. The mystery trooper finally moved the mask away from their face as Avon struggled to conceal his shock, as standing before him was the long-missing Jenna Stannis!

Jenna's eyes made a quick sweep of the room taking in the carnage played out before her. Suddenly she broke the unbearably tense silence barking one word and one word only: "*Now!*"

On her command five of the troopers swiftly turned their aim from Avon and, with the aid of surprise, turned their weapons upon the remaining troopers.

Avon watched bemused as each Federation Trooper who had him in their sights were rapidly gunned down, their bodies crashing pathetically to the ground like marionettes upon having their strings cut, until the screaming sounds of gunfire and agony mercifully gave way to silence.

Jenna strode across the room barely acknowledging Avon and bent down to check Blake's pulse although she knew in her heart that her friend was dead.

"Dammit" sighed Jenna, "We were so close to making contact with you, Blake." she closed Blake's eyes and lightly brushed his cheek. Jenna deftly wiped away a tear as she looked up at Avon who had finally moved away from Blake's body. She rose to her feet her face only inches away from that of Avon's. "What the hell happened here Avon?" she demanded. "What happened to all these people? To Vila? To Blake?"

Without missing a beat Avon pointed to Blake. "He thought you were dead," Avon lied, hoping to draw some information from his former shipmate.

"Do I look dead, Avon?"

"Well, unless I'm dead myself or hallucinating, I'd have to say no," Avon replied with a confused look upon his face. Avon now scanned the room its floor littered with countless bodies as what he presumed must be Jenna's friends removed the weapons from the fallen federation troopers placing them in a pile on one of the units. Avon sighed deeply. "At the moment Jenna, I really have no idea who's alive who's dead or what the hell is going on."

"Well, I'm not dead if that clears things up a little," cried a voice from somewhere amongst the bodies on the floor. "Although I've got an awful crick in my neck through laying on that floor!"

"Ah" smiled Avon warmly, surprising even himself with his sincerity. "I should have known, the only two things guaranteed to survive the apocalypse: cockroaches and Vila!"

Vila climbed to his feet nervously checking the room whilst brushing the dust off his clothing. "Yeah, once Dayna went down and I saw that first Trooper come in I thought I'd take a quick nap," he said "After all nobody's going to waste ammo on a dead man, are they?"

Avon shook his head "Vila," he began "Your lack of intelligence is more than made up for by your self-preservation skills."

"If that's your way of saying I'm glad you're alright then you're welcome, Avon" replied Vila now returning Avon's smile.

"Anybody would think he was pleased to see me," mused Vila quietly to himself. Without missing a beat he glanced at Jenna. "Hello Jenna," he said. "How's things?"

Jenna looked quizzically at Vila "Aren't you surprised to see me?" she asked.

"I was more than surprised when you took that Trooper mask off, but until I was sure whether you were going to kill Avon or not, I thought it was in my best interests to stay dead!" grinned Vila.

"Charmed I'm sure," groaned Avon.

"Me killing Avon was never in question," said Jenna She turned to face Avon once more "In fact, I came here to find Blake. The fact you and Vila were here with your crew was just a coincidence."

"Jenna," Avon flashed what seemed to Jenna to be a sincere smile "You know full well I don't believe in coincidences, but for whatever reason you are here for I am glad to see you."

"Stannis!" snapped a voice suddenly from behind them. "This reunion is all touching and so on, but shouldn't we think about getting out of here? The place will be crawling with *real* Federation troopers soon."

Jenna addressed the masked trooper. "Garrick, I think it's safe to remove your mask. You're amongst friends now I assure you."

Garrick hesitantly removed his mask revealing a young man of around 20 with jet black hair and beard to match. He had a hard glare behind his cold blue eyes as he viewed Avon and Vila suspiciously.

"I'll take your word for that for now, Stannis but forgive me if I don't turn my pistol to stun just yet."

Vila had been taking all this in and turned to face Avon. "He seems to not be the most trusting of people perhaps you're related. Any children you've not told me about?"

Avon turned to Vila staring into his eyes and whispered menacingly, "I'd choose my words very carefully after all I just killed Blake, so killing you would simply be an afterthought!"

The colour drained from Vila's face as Avon walked away. "Avon," called Vila nervously "Avon?"

Avon walked on, breaking into a grin after a few steps. However, glancing at the corpse of Blake, Avon's expression changed once more to a look of regret.

Had Blake truly betrayed him? Did Blake deserve to die so violently at his hands? Could there have been another way? No, there was no other way he had to believe that if only for the sake of his very sanity.

Quickly regaining his composure, Avon glanced around the room to ensure nobody saw what he would regard as a moment of weakness. Content that he was not observed, Avon strode on.

"All of you can remove your masks now," commanded Jenna, as the four remaining Troopers obliged. "Avon, Vila let me introduce you to my crew."

She pointed to a towering black man of almost 7ft tall with a scar riddled face. His left arm had been replaced by a crude robotic replacement despite this he still looked happy and friendly.

"This is Konor, I'd trust this man with my life and believe me on many occasions I've had to do just that."

Konor smiled broadly at Avon and Vila. "Pleased to meet you," he boomed his deep voice echoing around the room.

Jenna nodded at a female of around thirty. She was a little plump, with long red hair tied into a ponytail. She smiled heartedly as she was prone to do most of the time.

"This is...." Jenna began before the woman cut her off.

"I am Stratus, and I am more than capable of speaking for myself thank you Jenna." Jenna frowned before Stratus began laughing. "You are so easy to wind up El Capitan!"

She bellowed with laughter as seemingly the greatest audience for the humour of Stratus was Stratus herself!

Jenna sighed. "Thank you Stratus, as always, your attempt at making light of the situation is so very appreciated!"

Stratus now broke into a snorting laugh.

"Do you really have to snort like that young lady?" said the figure next to her, a much older man of almost seventy. His hair brushed to one side as one last vain attempt to disguise that his days of actually having a head of hair were long gone. He looked nervous. He rubbed his forehead tenderly before complaining. "That noise goes straight through me and sets off my head!"

Stratus laughed some more.

"C'mon Tursell everything gives you a migraine. You could be in a padded cell with your own thoughts and they'd give you a headache for being too loud. "Let's face it, you're a walking medical journal. Hell, you keep Adrill here busy twenty-four seven! Isn't that right Adrill?"

Stratus turned to where the final trooper was previously standing only seconds earlier to find nobody there. "Adrill?"

Garrick shook his head. "The miracle worker is down there with the bodies ,Stratus. Where did you think she'd be?"

All eyes turned to the floor where what looked, to Avon & Vila, like a Mutoid, was kneeling next to the body of Tarrant.

Adrill spoke in a monotone voice. "While you were talking to those humanoids," she motioned at Avon and Vila. "I took the liberty of checking whether these bodies on the floor still functioned." She pointed at the corpses of Deva and Klyn. "Those over there have no vital signs." She then motioned towards Dayna. "Nor does this one."

Avon and Vila exchanged a sorrowful glance.

She then nodded towards Soolin. "This one is merely stunned and should subsequently recover soon." Adrill placed a hand on Tarrant's head. This one has also suffered a shot from a weapon set on stun. However ,unlike the female he was hit in the head."

Jenna kicked one of the Troopers' helmets clean across the room barely missing the head of a deeply unimpressed Tursell.

"Dammit! I gave a direct order!" she yelled angrily "Unless it was a Federation Trooper, use no lethal force and no head shots!"

Jenna's crew shuffled uncomfortably "So who was it?" she demanded "Well?"

After a brief silence Garrick spoke up. "It was me. Look, I'm sorry but it happened so quickly, plus he was coming down some steps. My aim was good; it was just a simple accident."

Avon sneered at the young man. "Well, your simple accident cost my.... *acquaintance*, his life".

"No" interrupted Adrill. "He still lives but needs more help than I alone can provide him. I suggest we take him back to the *Onyx*. Perhaps we can provide better care there".

"Excuse me," enquired Vila "What's an Onyx?"

Jenna smiled "Ah, of course we haven't told you about The Onyx".

"No," replied Avon. "And you still haven't so if you could provide us with an explanation, it would be most welcome. I assume you mean your ship?"

Jenna's crew exchanged smiles and glances...

The Adventure Continues...





BLAKES 7

Talkin' About My Federation Part 2

By Annie Worrall

How big was the Empire?

This is a major headache for fans because we can't really use time or distance to guesstimate it's scale. The Press Book tells us that, "our galaxy, the Milky Way and the Magellanic Clouds, is contained in a theoretical sphere with the radius of about 200,000 light years and that within it are perhaps 150,000,000,000 stars." So the Empire is potentially pretty big, though of course these distances shrink if humans can traverse them in ships that travel faster than the speed of light (that's faster than 299,792,458 meters per second).

Theoretically, those of you better at maths than I am can now work out how far away from Earth Cygnus Alpha was, since Leland states it will take the London 8 months to get there. Or can you?

No you can't, not exactly, because you don't know how constant its speed, or whether it had to stop to refuel. And the London had "hyperdrive" capabilities (Jenna: *Space Fall*) so presumably it could travel much faster than the speed of light, traversing distances of many thousands of kilometres in mere seconds. And since you don't know HOW much faster, all you can really conclude is that Cygnus Alpha is a long way away from Earth.

In *Moloch*, Vila announces that the Liberator has been following Servalan for 27 days, but as we know neither her speed or starting point, this doesn't help us to work out how far the Outer Darkness is from Earth either.

Throw in the fact that the Liberator has 'ultra light speed' capability and Scorpio is capable of 'sub light' bursts of speed and it becomes even more confusing, especially to a non-scientific fan like me who hasn't a clue whether these speeds actually relate to time and distance, and if so, how they do.

Of course none of this matters when you watch the show because distances are travelled in television time and 400 spacial can equate to, "quite a long way" or "not very far" depending on the demands of the script.

That said, I have, for my own amusement, created a mental picture of Blake's world using Earth, its continents and countries as my reference. It is probably about as accurate as those maps drawn by travellers in Medieval times who filled in the uncharted spaces with monsters and strange civilisations, deduced from half-understood reports and tall tales, but it deludes me into thinking that I know the *B7* Universe.

Here's how it works...

For me, Earth is equated with England (overseas fans may disagree here). The "Outer Darkness", "Far Out", the "Outer Rim" and any planet visited outside our solar system lie either far north or far south of the equator. The inner planets are located in the bit in the middle.

In my imagination, Cygnus Alpha is about the same distance from Earth as Lapland is from England, and using this scale I place Xenon in North Korea (because of its underground radio-active caves), Lindor in Sweden, Horizon in The Dominion Republic, Saurian Major in Madagascar and Auron in Northern China. Space City, of course, equates to Dubai. And the Darkling Zone is the Bermuda Triangle.

Continuing with this conceit: Sinobar's planet is in Northern Russia, Exbar in Norway, Freedom City in Arizona, Goth in Afghanistan and Star One in Antarctica. The border planets are in Southern Africa.

I hope you're keeping up at the back there!

If I went exploring, I'd know I'd find the Teal/Vandor system in Greenland, not far from Terminal, (Alaska). Blake was stranded after the Andromedon war (which took place in The Ross Sea) and he drifted for ages before being rescued by Deva and Jenna. They had many adventures in Tasmania (Jevron). Eventually they made their way to Gauda Prime (Northern Australia). Meanwhile Avon fetched up on New Zealand with Dayna, while Vila found himself in Papua New Guinea. Obviously the scale I am using here is far too small. Blake and his crew would have bumped into Federation patrols much more frequently in such a tiny Universe and Avon would have stumbled upon Blake without any need to "trace his pattern through lines of infinity." (*Blake*) Servalan says that the destruction of



Star One left, "half the civilised Worlds to their fate" (*Aftermath*) and Avalon mentions thirty annexed planets which are rebelling (*Project Avalon*) all of which implies the Federation had a pretty wide sphere of influence. But my map works for me because it gives me a sense of how far the Federation extended and how it's parts all fit together using cultural reference points and distances I can comprehend.

Yes, I know that my placements don't conform to the complicated grid system that the Federation employed to divide space into sectors but I don't care! For me it is not worth the effort to try to make sense of information that I find both confusing and at times contradictory.

To misquote Dr Havant, (*The Way Back*), "The impressions I have gained have been filtered by my brain to create an individual model of what the Federation world was like."

You might like to do the same while thinking about the following question:

Why did the Federation find it necessary to use a New Calendar?

As I've already mentioned, Blake says in *Pressure Point* that the Federation started its expansion programme 200 years before the events in that episode. Later he tells Gan that, "the Federation had all [churches] destroyed at the beginning of the New Calendar." However, he doesn't say why the Old Calendar was abandoned, nor is it clear if he is saying that the New Calendar and the Expansion Programme were synchronous, or why one of the Federation's first acts after its introduction was to destroy all the churches.



Vargas, who founded his own religion on Cygnus Alpha: "Just you TRY to destroy MY church!"

It would be logical to conclude that this change was the result of some catastrophic event in Earth's future - possibly the atomic war the Press Book mentions although there is no canonical evidence for it. Terry Nation seems to have been more interested in writing

about drastic climate change, and this maybe a better explanation, fitting with the notion of Star One computers that control planetary climate systems. Besides the Press Book refers to "Atomic Wars" implying that these affected not just Earth but it's planetary colonies. It states that after these wars, "there emerged from the ensuing chaos a dictatorship so powerful that it enmeshed the majority of Earth populated worlds. As the Federation grew in power so the hard-won freedom of the people it ruled disappeared."

We might be forgiven for concluding that, as an explanation for the rise of the world we encounter, this leaves more questions than it answers. But if we accept it at face value, it does lead to the conclusion that I outlined previously: that the expansion programme Blake mentions is not about colonising the planets in our solar system but about expanding beyond it. And if we put this together with Blake's assertion that churches were destroyed at the same time, then perhaps this points to there being organised, religious objections to the expansion, which resulted in a banning of worship.

But how far in our future did was the foundation of the Federation?

Even if we accept that Earth's colonisation of Space occurred before the rise of the Federation, could it really have expanded into the technologically advanced Empire we encounter in the series in a mere 200 years? This would mean accepting that, following a catastrophic event, humans were not only able to establish a repressive but stable system of Government within that time scale but to spread out into the galaxy, bringing hundreds of planets under its jurisdiction and devising a complex climate-control system for its Empire. Which seems unlikely. I know 200 years in our own history has seen society move from blood letting to heart transplants, graphite writing sticks to auto text, from horse drawn vehicles to Space rockets but even so the advances we are shown in *Blakes' 7* must surely have taken more than 200 years to develop?

The answer, however, could lie with a possible reason for the introduction of a New Calendar which could push the events we witness in the series far into our future.

Let me explain.

We have seen the introduction of a new calendar in our own time. The Julian Calendar was dropped in favour of the Gregorian Calendar in the 18th Century because the Julian calendar didn't accurately reflect the actual year length. Over a period of a thousand years it had become progressively inaccurate and, amid much religious controversy and objection, the Gregorian update was officially adopted to correct this.

However the Gregorian calendar is not completely accurate either- it loses one day every 3,236 years. Could this be the reason for the introduction of a New Calendar throughout the Empire? It could have been introduced on the basis that it would be more accurate than the Gregorian, but it would also have symbolised a new beginning and a uniform system of dating and recording events throughout the Empire. And it would push the date for its introduction at least 3,000 plus years into the future: certainly sufficient time for the technological developments we witness in the series. Vila's reference in *Space Fall* to the eight month journey the London would take may suggest that the Gregorian calendar was still being used by the Federation but it is equally possible that, like the change from Julian to Gregorian, the differences between it and the New Calendar were slight- a matter of how the year was divided rather than nomenclatures.

Of course we might have expected that after 3,000 plus years, the memories of today's Earth customs, names and history would have faded from popular memory and that isn't the case: Vila makes jokes about his 'Royal Mounties' (*Orbit*); Jarvik misquotes the Duke of Wellington (*Harvest of Kairos*). Residence One, the Presidential Palace is, according to Sula (*Rumours*), an expensive reconstruction, so the blue prints or photos of the original must have survived. There is also the problem of explaining the survival of the Tommy Steele record in President Sarkov's possession. (*Bounty*). But then, in our own time, memories of the past linger in place and surnames; intact artefacts from pre-history are still being discovered; we can reconstruct ancient dwellings thanks to Lidar scanning; time capsules are being dug up; so this may not be surprising.



Sarkov: "Tommy Steele ? The man was a legend, a legend, I tell you! "

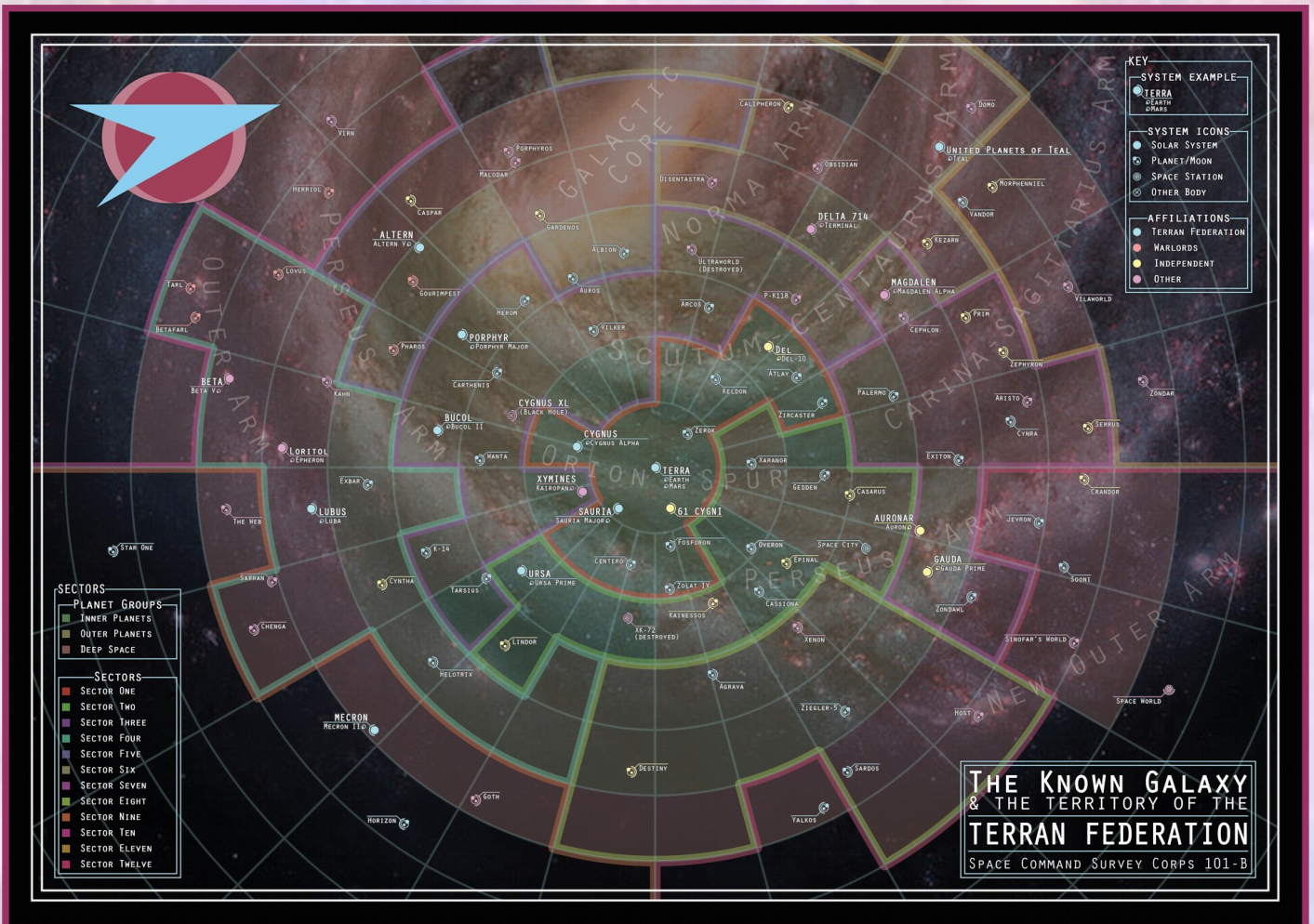
As I've already postulated, the Gregorian Calendar may have come to be associated with a time of religious protest against the expansion of the Federation, so the New Calendar may have been introduced in the same crackdown on the activity that had resulted in the destruction of Earth's churches.

Fortunately, when we consider our next question, there are going to be some definite answers.

Maybe!

Log into our next edition to find out.

But like everything else in *Blakes 7* we are reduced to "perhaps" and "maybe" when we try to pin things down.



Federation Star Map
Artwork © Jamie Parry-Bruce

SECOND CHANCES

By
Sue Little

"So how do you intend to find out where they moved Central Control?" Jenna asked. It was a straight forward question, one that Blake could not easily answer.

He was seated on the forward couch, staring at Orac, the flashing box on the table before him.

"I'm hoping that Orac may be able to supply that information."

"And if he can't?"

"Then we just keep looking. It's out there, somewhere, Jenna. Someone must know."

"But meanwhile?"

"Meanwhile... we gather our thoughts."

Cally entered the Flight Deck, a tray of drinks in her hands. She handed a cup to Jenna and then turned her attention to Blake.

"We need rest; all of us. Gan's death has been traumatic and while the attack against Space Command headquarters may have satisfied the need for revenge, we still need a complete break."

"I agree," Jenna said.

"The Federation won't rest until it destroys all of us," Blake countered.

"We need time to recover from the shock of Gan's death,"

"What do you suggest, the Cally?" Blake snapped back.

"It will be some time before Orac processes every piece of information in the Federation records. Won't it?"

Jenna said sharply.

"Yes," Blake's reply was begrudging.

"Then I think I know of a place where we can recuperate."

"And find peace?" Cally asked.

"I don't think such a place exists," Jenna smiled, "But it would be a start."

*

"So why didn't Avon want to come?" Vila asked.

He, Blake and Jenna were standing in a bustling square. People hurried past, totally unfazed by the sudden appearance in their midst of three complete strangers.

"Something about wanting peace and quiet..." Blake began.

"Somehow I can't see Avon being reflective," Vila interrupted.

"Maybe he is considering his options," Jenna smiled, but Blake seemed to blank out her words.

"I thought you said that this was a nice, quiet bolt hole," he remarked.

"It was, once. This was one of the transit points for reaching the outer reaches of this part of the galaxy. Everyone stopped here to rest, refuel and consider their next move. I've never known it to be so busy though."

"Maybe they are all running, just like us."

"Well, I for one," grinned Vila, "am about to stop running and see what all the fuss is about. There seems to be quite a crowd over there."

"Vila," Blake ordered, "Don't do anything to attract attention. Just find a nice quiet corner..."

"You can count on me," Vila replied, taking a small bag from his pocket.

"What's that?"

"Oh I've borrowed some small change from the Liberator's strong room. Well, I can't come and visit this place empty handed, can I? Besides, Avon won't notice."

Blake watched Vila disappear into the crowd and then reached inside his own pocket, "Oh, I think he will."

*

"Cally. Do you know...?"

"Shh."

Avon did as he was told. For a moment he watched the Auron as she sat cross legged on the teleport section's floor, her eyes closed, her fingers extended.

"Not more contemplation?"

"It is a form of relaxation. You should try it some time," Cally opened her eyes, "Even you may find it conducive to your well-being. Now what is it?"

"And I presume that the Moon Disc also finds it conducive," Avon remarked, pointing towards the small disc residing on a silver tray just to the right of Cally.

"As a matter of fact, yes it does. Now, / presume that you have a good reason to interrupt me?"

"It appears that we have a thief on board."

"I think you will find that we do."

"Vila has been helping himself to my...our resources in the strong room. There is certainly a lot less there than there was the last time I looked."

"You make a habit of doing that, I suppose?"

Avon smiled, "Frequently. I wouldn't want to suddenly find out that our reserves are severely depleted; especially in an emergency."

"And what emergency would that be? You're not planning to leave are you?"

"Is that why you stayed on board; to make sure that I didn't have any plans?"

"No, of course not. I stayed on board to try and get some well-earned peace and quiet."

"Sorry," Avon said, suitably chastised.

"Now, if you don't mind. I'd like to finish my session."

Avon considered her request, but still didn't move.

Exasperated, Cally got to her feet.

"As you seem at a loss as to what to do, why don't you teleport down to that spaceport? I'm sure that you'll find something to amuse yourself."

"I might just do that. At least I can see for myself exactly what the attraction of this place is."

Cally waited until Avon had vanished from sight before reaching into one of her pockets and withdrawing a small bag, "Oh dear."

*

Blake's idea of rest and recuperation was not shared by Jenna. After visiting the umpteenth stall in the main arena, Blake had decided enough was enough.

"I'm sure that you find all this battering exciting, but if you don't mind, I'd like to sit this one out. Let me know if you need any help..."

But Jenna had disappeared into a small shop beneath one of the low buildings that surrounded the area. Blake shook his head; whatever she was looking for was obviously going to take some time; time that he didn't particularly want to spend.

He made his way over to a table overlooking the bustling plaza. Here was a place according to report, where he could try and put his mind into some sort of order.

He'd tried that a few days before, on an unnamed planet which had ended up trying to devour him. That strange creature, Zil, had momentarily taken his thoughts away from Gan, but now the guilt had returned. Gan's death had shocked him to the core and he knew that the others blamed him. But he was so sure that attacking control had been the right thing to do. Unfortunately, for Gan, it had turned out to be the completely wrong thing.

And the knowledge hurt.

He found an empty seat and sat down.

It was time to think about his future; about their future.

*

Vila had tried all the side shows and been told to go away in no uncertain terms by all of the operators. He couldn't help it if he knew how the games were rigged; he'd done the con several times himself.

So now he found himself seated at a table in a busy part of the plaza, sampling one of the local beverages. Then he saw her.

She waved at him.

He couldn't believe it.

Here he was in a crowd of all sorts of people and she was waving at HIM.

He waved back.

Suddenly, things didn't seem so bad after all....

*

Avon had no idea why he had stopped at this one particular retail establishment, set in a side street a long way from the milling crowds. But something had caught his eye. A fascinating piece of ancient computing equipment, very similar to that he had once examined at the Academy. It was almost considered prehistoric by then, but it worked and it had proved to be a curiosity...if nothing else.

He was so engrossed that he didn't register her presence,

"Fascinating, isn't it?"

"Indeed," he replied, still not acknowledging her.

"You'd be surprised at just what people are prepared to give up, just to raise some funds and get away from here before the Federation arrive. There's even more inside, if you'd like to come and have a look?"

This time he did look at her. She wasn't pretty in the classical sense, but then in her line of employment, running a place like this, he supposed that dazzling beauty wasn't a requirement.

"We seem to be attracting all sorts of customers with hard luck stories," she continued.

"And you fall for them?"

"It's one of my weaknesses I suppose. Here, as you seem to have some knowledge of this ancient hardware, maybe you could help me with a problem. You're not in any hurry? Are you?"

Avon thought about Blake; somewhere out in that vast huddle of heaving masses, trying to salve his conscience. But it was a mere passing thought.

"Why not?"

"Oh good. Come this way..."

The door shut behind him and he heard the key click in the lock. Avon spun round. She was smiling at him; a strange knowing smile.

"You really don't recognise me, do you?"

*

Vila was taken aback by the urgency of her voice.

"You must help me," she begged, urgently looking over her shoulder.

"I must? I mean...how?" Vila replied, also scanning the area.

"They are after me. I need your help; please I beg you."

"All right. Come with me. Let's get out of here."

But she had already taken Vila's hand and was dragging him off to a quiet corner off the main thoroughfare.

"Look, tell me what the problem is and I'll see if I can help," Vila said, still trying to see who was after the young woman.

"Can you help me? I daren't go back....they'll kill me."

Vila didn't like the sound of that, "Well I can't do much..."

"Please, take me to your ship."

"It's not actually mine."

"You can't help me?"

"Not really...but I know someone who can."

*

"Vila, could you repeat that?" Cally asked.

"Look, I need another bracelet." Vila's voice trickled back.

"Why?"

"Well, it's like this...there was this young woman and... well she's in some sort of trouble and I said I'd...we'd help..."

"Vila..."

"Look, just get down here with another bracelet; she's petrified. They may kill her. And me!"

Cally got to her feet.

"Orac, I need you to operate the teleport."

+If you insist.+

"I'm on my way, Vila. Tell the young lady not to worry."

"Hurry. They could find us at any moment."

*

Jenna found herself being closely scrutinised by the stall holder.

"May I assist you, pretty lady?"

"No," she replied, smiling, "I'm just looking, thank you."

He wasn't deterred, "Are you looking for something in particular?"

"A necklace, perhaps."

"Are you tired of the one that you already wear. It is most beautiful. I could do a deal..."

"No. I am very fond of this necklace."

"A gift, perhaps, from a friend or a lover?"

"Perhaps," Jenna murmured, recalling exactly who had given her the necklace, and why.

The stall holder persisted, "Look, I have two beautiful necklaces here, I could..."

"As I said, no..."

"But..."

"The lady said no."

Jenna turned to see who had chosen to intervene in the discussion.

He was quite tall, with blonde hair, dressed in black with an unmistakable air of superiority about him.

"Forgive my intrusion," he began, "But I could not help but overhear your attempts to brush aside this man's over-enthusiasm."

"Thank you," she smiled back at him.

"I take it that your colleague does not share your desire to find another necklace?" he nodded in the general direction of Blake; now seated and looking as if he was asleep.

"My colleague came here for some rest. I thought it would take his mind off... the last few days. You seem to notice quite a lot, don't you?"

"That is part of my job; to notice."

"And exactly what is your line of employment?"

"Alas I find myself between positions; through no fault of my own, you understand? I was not kept informed of certain things and I'm afraid my plan did not deliver the desired conclusion. I thought it best to leave while that opportunity was still open to me."

"And now?"

"And now I am here on this somewhat less than fragrant spaceport waiting for my transport to be prepared."

"And where is that going?"

"As far away from my ex-employer as possible. But, why are we discussing my problems, when you have your own?"

"In what way?"

"That stallholder seems determined to follow you from stall to stall; why?"

Jenna fingered the necklace she was wearing, "This I expect. He seems to think that it is very valuable."

"And is it?"

"No. Maybe it was once."

The stranger reached forward, "May I?"

Jenna smiled.

He held the necklace between his thumb and forefinger, "It is most exquisite. A gift?"

"Something more than that..."

"Ah, from a very close friend; a lover? Your... colleague, perhaps?"

"Let's just say it was from someone of whom I was very fond and I thought that he reciprocated that feeling. But it was not to be."

"Perhaps it would be best if we removed this temptation from view. May I?"

"Well of course."

She turned to allow him to remove the necklace.

He handed it to her, "Now perhaps we can find something worthy of you without any interference. Shall we?"

Jenna took the stranger's outstretched hand, "Why not?"

*

"Should I?" Avon replied in response to the retail lady's question, "I'm afraid I don't recall us being introduced."

"We never were as such. After all, you were one of the elites, far above the likes of me and my fellow class mates. But I have followed your career with great interest."

"I suppose that I should be flattered. But you didn't invite me in here to discuss old times, or you wouldn't have locked the door. I presume you have a good reason?"

"Oh yes, a very good reason. You see, my two friends here, and I, need to leave this spaceport but we find ourselves lacking in funds."

Avon didn't need to turn round to see exactly who her two friends were; he could see their reflection in the window.

"And what does a lack of funds have to do with me?"

"Very simple. Vern; Chad. Allow me to introduce you to the man who almost defrauded the Federation Bank out of several millions credit. This is Kerr Avon, and he is going to succeed this time, with us as the main beneficiaries."

*

"So?" Cally asked as she stepped out of the Teleport.

Vila swallowed, "Well, it's like this..."

"Yes."

"She waved..."

"And you waved back?"

"Yes. Look, she was frightened and she came to me."

"Out of all the people down there, she came to you?"

"Yes. You would have done the same, wouldn't you?"

Cally was less than impressed with that assumption.

"All right...maybe not. But what else was I supposed to do?"

Cally couldn't answer that, especially as standing beside her was one very quiet, confused young woman.

"Where are we?" she asked nervously.

"It's all right. You're safe now," Vila began to explain, "You are on our ship in orbit."

"In orbit? Not in the compound?"

Cally intervened, "Now don't you worry about it. Meanwhile, Vila, you need to come up with a very good explanation. So while you do that, I'll take our 'guest' to get cleaned up and"

+Perhaps it would be more expedient to remove and destroy the locator device currently worn by this person. + Orac intervened

"A locator? Where?" Vila asked.

+In the ankle area. +

"Excuse me," Vila mumbled as he bent down to locate and remove the device. Seconds later it was in his hand.

Both he and Cally stared at it.

"Destroy it, Vila."

Vila obliged.

"Who would want to put a locator on such a pretty thing like her, she's just..."

"The bait? I think that is the term. Look, I'll leave you and Orac to discuss the matter, while I help this unfortunate woman regain some sort of dignity. Come with me and we will try and find some suitable clothes."

"But I think she looks..."

"Vila!"

He watched forlornly as the two women made their way out of the teleport area.

"Well, Orac, I thought she could join us as a new crewmember. I think she would fit in very well."

+In my opinion, she would be far too much of a distraction. Now, if you don't mind, I have more important things to do than operating the teleport. +

*

Blake didn't move.

He knew that that would alert whoever it was trying to pick his pocket.

Whoever it was, wasn't being exactly subtle. Maybe lessons from Vila would be in order.

Blake made to stretch and yawn and then said quietly, "If you are trying to pick my pocket then you're going the wrong way about it."

He opened one eye, coming face to face with a young boy who was rooted to the spot.

"Well?"

"I... I... Don't tell my parents... please."

"Did they put you up to this, or is it your own idea?"

The young boy swallowed, "I just wanted to help."

"Help?"

"I'm sorry mister, but you looked..."

"Rich and an easy target? You've got a lot to learn boy, believe me. I know someone who could teach you a thing it two... No, on second thoughts, that wouldn't be a good idea. Perhaps if you tell me about it, we can sort this problem out."

"Really?"

Blake nodded, wondering if he was about to hear a sob story,

"Yes, really."

*

"So why did your attempt to defraud the Banking System fail?" the woman asked.

"Other people let me down."

"Who?"

"I refused to tell the Federation interrogators their names, so I'm hardly likely to tell you. Besides, they know who they are and one day, I shall collect on the favour they owe me."

"You really mean that, don't you?"

"I am a man of my word."

"And I am a woman of my word. I promised my friends here, that I would get us off this planet."

"That's very thoughtful of you, but I don't see how I can help."

She smiled at him, "I have a proposition for you. You repeat you fraud, with my help, and I won't inform the Federation that their most wanted fugitives are here on this space port. I am correct in that, aren't I? Blake and more of your colleagues are here while the Liberator orbits above us?"

Avon didn't answer.

"I'll take that as a yes. Of course, I could very easily forget to mention you."

"Now why would you do that?"

"A man with your skills and abilities would be of a great help to me. Don't you think?"

Avon was thinking about it. Could this be his escape route? Away from Blake and his increasingly erratic behaviour. He looked out of the window. Somewhere out there was the man who had not only caused Gan's death, but had almost killed him and the others.

It was so very inviting. Maybe too inviting. But right now, he had no other option but to go along with this woman's scheme.

"I presume that you have a computer I can use?"

"Of course. The former proprietor of this establishment had a very extensive system..."

"The former proprietor?"

"Yeah," the so far silent Vern replied, "he no longer needs it, we made sure of that."

*

Blake listened to the young boy's story.

It seemed straight forward enough; a father who had voiced his views about the Federation.

A father who had dared to challenge those who wished to take away his freedom and who now faced imprisonment if he and his family were caught.

A father who had decided upon the only action left to him; to run and hide. But the greed of the transporter crew had taken him by surprise. They wanted more money and he didn't have it.

"So you thought that you would try and get the money?"

The boy nodded, "There wasn't time to think of anything else. That transport is due to leave in about half an hour. If we're not on it..."

"Then your father will be stranded and be at the mercy of those who wish to arrest him for treason."

"He only spoke out because he believes in what Blake is doing."

Blake smiled to himself. He took the money from his pocket and gave it to the boy, "If your father asks, say it was from an anonymous benefactor who heard that he was in trouble."

"Really? I don't know how to thank you."

"Just stay out of trouble and don't go round picking anyone else's pockets. I've got enough problems with one of my crew and that's how he started out. Now go. I have a friend to find as I think I may well have overstayed my welcome."

*

"What is Orac?"

Avon punched in a string of commands.

"A very sophisticated computer programme that would have been of great assistance to me when I attempted my bank fraud."

"Just how much was it you almost got away with?"

"It depends on whom you ask. But it would have been enough for me... for us."

"Us?"

"You would never have heard of her..." Avon's voice trailed off as he thought back to those days. The days before he crossed Blake's path and got caught up in the man's all consuming cause. "There, it is done. You and these two delightful gentlemen are now very rich and no-one will trace it back to this place."

"I'm impressed."

"I'm glad."

"The offer still stands. With your expertise and our talents, you could end up a very rich man; free to live as you wish."

"And I presume that your colleagues are in agreement about that?"

"Of course, they know a good thing when they see it."

"Like the proprietor of this establishment?"

Vern grinned, "He didn't like the way we wanted to do business."

"And I am not completely enamoured of the way you want to do business either. That computer programme called Orac?"

"What about it?" she asked, suddenly not sure of Avon's motives.

"You'll see. NOW would be a good time..."

And Avon disappeared...

*

"Well, this seems to be a most unusual necklace," the charming stranger said, holding up the chain with its several copper coloured discs. "The store holder says it came from a stranger passing through who claims to have bartered for it in a mysterious tented city. By all accounts it is a ritual necklace."

"What sort of ritual?" Jenna asked as he placed it around her neck.

"A bonding ritual."

"A bonding ritual? I don't think it's at all suitable..."

"I'm assured that it only applies to that particular planet. I must admit, though, I find the whole idea rather quaint." He smiled, his warm, charming smile that Jenna was sure could break quite a few hearts, "And have you been equally successful in your quest?"

"I believe so. What do you think?" She held up another necklace; it wasn't as showy as her original one, in fact it looked quite bland,

"It doesn't set off your eyes, but at least it won't attract so much attention from unwanted admirers. Which reminds me; why did that stall holder find it so fascinating?"

"Because he recognised it for what it was. Unfortunately, it is not of any use as the device it was created for is no longer available. It is in a safe place, locked away from prying eyes."

"Unlike yourself, I'm glad to say." He looked up to see a man approaching him, "And it seems that I must leave you as my transport is ready. May I say what a great pleasure it has been spending time with you." He took her hand, "We won't meet again, more's the pity. We must go our separate ways. Me, aboard a less than salubrious transport, and you aboard the Liberator with Blake. Au revoir Jenna."

His eyes twinkled as he swept away in a theatrical fashion, leaving Jenna dumbstruck and Blake somewhat puzzled.

"Who's your friend?"

"I don't know," Jenna said, biting her lip, "But he knew who I was and certainly recognised you."

"Shouldn't we go after him?"

"I don't think he is any threat: if anything, he's the most charming man I've ever met, but then again, they're the most dangerous kind. Where's Vila?"

"Good question. I haven't heard from him since we left him in that plaza. I suppose no news is good news..."

"Unless he has got himself into trouble."

"True. I think we should go and find him."

"I'll just pay for these. Avon won't be impressed. He considers all this money to be his."

"Then he won't be too pleased about me, either. I'll tell you about it later."

*

Vila almost jumped out of his skin as Avon appeared unannounced in the Teleport.

"Where did you spring from?"

"Later. Are Blake and Jenna back on board? We need to leave, quickly."

"Um, no. They are still sampling the delights of the spaceport."

"They will be sampling other delights, unless Orac does its job."

+ I have intercepted the message + Orac replied + and soon their attempt to use the money so thoughtfully provided by you will prove fruitless. +

"What's he going on about?" Vila asked, confused.

But Avon didn't reply. He was staring straight past Vila. Vila turned round to see what, or who, was worthy of Avon's attention.

"Oh, it's..." Any further words caught in Vila's throat.

She was standing in the entrance; tall and elegant. Her dark almond eyes smiling at him. Gone were the old and worn out clothes, she was now wearing an azure blue jumpsuit. And with her shimmering, dark complexion she was a vision of beauty.

"Ah...yes this is..." Vila suddenly remembered that he hadn't even asked her name.

"Her name is Imana," Cally informed both men, "and it seems that she was forced to pretend to be in serious trouble and 'con the mark' to take her aboard his ship and then it was hijacked by her captors."

"That's an old trick," Vila said, his mind obviously elsewhere.

"And you fell for it," Avon said.

"All right, I fell for it, but do you have to keep reminding me?"

"Ordinarily, I would have considered it an outlandish ploy, but the further we get away from Earth, the more I see things in a different light. One can understand why the Federation is keen to establish its rule of law."

"Not in Blake's eyes."

"No, but his dream of Utopia could vanish if he's not careful."

"Utopia? Where's that?"

"Imama and I were discussing where she would like to go." Cally said.

"Returning to my family would be suicidal," Imama began, her voice sounding like a choir of angels to Vila's ears, "That would be the first place that those greedy men would look. They warned me many times that unless I co-operated, they would track down my family and kill them."

"They may think that you are dead," Cally pointed out, "now that your locator is no longer working."

"No, they will make sure. Believe me, they are very thorough."

"You could stay with us?" Vila ventured, hoping that she would agree to that arrangement.

"I don't think so. I have to make my own way now and you have all given me that opportunity. I will be grateful and I will be free." She held up the silver case, "I thank you for these clothes and for the money..."

"Money?" Avon glared at Cally.

"We can hardly let her go without some means. And I believe Orac has obtained her passage on the next transport off this planet."

"How very convenient."

"I shall go with her and make sure no one tries to stop her."

"I could go..." Vila began.

"No you couldn't," Avon snapped, "We have enough trouble on our hands as it is. So much for a quiet, restful interlude."

"You came here for that?" Imana asked, "This planet is now the hub of freedom. People are escaping from the Federation and paying over the odds. It is no longer a quiet backwater."

"We know," Avon replied.

"Maybe you should try Del 10."

"Del 10?" Vila asked.

"Yes, I'm sure that your Ship's Computer will know its location."

"I'll find out right away."

"But before you go, I must thank you." As she spoke, she leaned forward and gently kissed Vila's cheek,

"Thank you so much."

Vila blushed and swallowed, "The pleasure was all mine."

"I think it's time you left," Avon said flatly, mindful that at any moment Blake could be making contact and that there would be some very difficult questions to be answered, "And good luck where ever the future may take you."

*

"I'm sure I left him here," Blake said, scanning the crowds, "I told him not to get into any trouble."

"Maybe he got bored," Jenna suggested.

"Vila? Bored? In a place like this?" Blake replied, pressing the comms button on his bracelet, "Liberator, we can't find Vila. Can you?"

"He's here," Avon's voice drifted back, "apparently he got bored."

Blake looked at Jenna, who just shrugged.

"I see."

"I presume you're ready to return to your Cause?"

There was that sarcasm again, "Ready when you are, Avon."

Blake sensed immediately that something was wrong.

Perhaps it was the slight delay in teleporting up to the Liberator?

"That's your imagination," Avon suggested, "Perhaps you should take a leaf out of Cally's book. Meditation. Apparently the Moon disc thrives on it."

"I'm not a Moon disc," Blake pointed out. "So Vila got bored. I find that very hard to believe."

"Do you now? He's on the Flight Deck, if you must know."

Cally smiled, "He's heard of a planet that just could be the answer to our problems."

"What problems?"

"Making sure that we don't go anywhere that could further deplete the resources in the strong room," Avon countered, "You do realise that we may need the contents of that room to buy ourselves out of trouble?"

"I wasn't intending to get us into trouble." Blake looked from Avon to Cally, "I get the feeling that something has happened while Jenna and I've been away."

"Nothing has happened," Avon said bluntly and it was enough to stop Blake asking any further questions.

"So, did you find anything of interest?" Cally asked.

Jenna smiled, "I met a very interesting character. He helped me choose a necklace or two, seeing as the other one was attracting far too much attention."

"One or two?" Avon asked.

"Two, if you must know."

"I see."

"And I'd like to think that I put a would-be Vila on the straight and narrow," Blake recalled.

Avon looked from one to the other, "Do I take it that money was involved in both these enterprises? Money from the strong room?"

"Yes," Jenna said, "And I think you should realise that it isn't just yours; it belongs to all of us."

"I may have to seriously consider putting a lock on that room."

"With Vila aboard?" Blake remarked, "I wish you luck!"

*

He was engrossed in the detailed instructions of what to do in case of an emergency. After the slight argument at the Flight Desk when three undesirables tried to pay with a card that was obviously forged and lacking any credits, he was just thankful that the only people who had turned up to arrest them were the security forces assigned to this spaceport.

It could have proved embarrassing if any Federation agents had spotted him trying to blend in with the crowd. But now he was settled...if only his nerves were

For some reason, he still tended to suffer from nerves whenever he was about to venture out into space.

Usually he had the luxury of a Space Command ship, but this transport wasn't a Federation ship. It was an old retired freighter brought out of storage to deal with the growing number of desperate people trying to get away from the ever expanding Federation.

It wasn't exactly what he was used to, but when one had limited means, then one took whatever was offered to you.

He ignored the first cough; but the second one seemed far more urgent. He looked up to see who was attempting to gain his attention.

She was stunning.

"Excuse me, but is this seat taken?"

He was momentarily lost for words.

"Well?"

He smiled at her, "Please, be my guest."

She sat down beside him, her brown eyes studying him intently.

"I had no idea that I would have such a beautiful traveling companion," he said, "Are you going far?"

"As far as this ship will take me."

"Then it seems that we have the same destination."

"How convenient. Mine was a last minute booking. And you?"

"One of necessity. It is prudent that I disappear for a while, until things quieten down."

"And then?"

"That all depends where I find myself and if my talents can be of use."

"Talents? You interest me Mr...?"

"Carnell, Ma'am. At your service. And may I enquire the name of such a delightful travelling companion."

"Imana."

"A name as delightful as its owner. Once this rather ungainly mode of transport has attained orbit, would you think me impudent to order us both some form of liquid refreshment?"

She smiled warmly at him, "Impudent and tempting. A dangerous combination."

"You consider me dangerous?"

"All men are dangerous; some more so than others."

"I hardly consider myself to be included in that all-encompassing statement. Besides, it is well documented that the female of the species is far more dangerous."

"Documented by whom?"

"Me."

The roar of the engines halted any further debate on the matter, but once the ship had attained orbit, the noise subsided and the crew began the inflight schedule.

The man, who called himself Carnell, called one of the attendants over and ordered two drinks.

"Simply to settle my nerves," he replied to Imana's questioning look.

"Perhaps it is I who should be nervous. You sound as though you have had some experience with the female of the species."

"Indeed I have and I do not wish to experience one female in particular again. In fact, I do not believe that she

will ever forgive me.” He sighed and sipped his tepid drink, “But such is life.”

“You fascinate me, Carnell.”

“As do you. Now tell me, from whom are you running?”

“People who will try and hunt me down. I have been given this chance to escape.”

“By whom? Because I feel that I should thank them.”

“I doubt if it is anyone you would know.”

Carnell smiled, “I’ve always considered myself to be most knowledgeable, that was what made me so successful in my previous life, but one can become too confident; too arrogant. And then one finds oneself aboard a rather unedifying mode of transport with nothing to show for past glories. And then you come into my life.”

Imana returned the smile, “Then we both have a second chance. Perhaps we should make the most of it?”

“Indeed. Suddenly my future prospects do not seem so dismal.”

“You are one of the most interesting men I have ever met, Carnell; attractive, impudent and tempting. An intriguing mixture.”

Carnell studied her; her sultry almond eyes captivating him. He raised his glass, “As are you.”

*

“So, do you want to tell me about it?” Blake asked.

“What is there to tell?”

“Avon, according to Orac you stole...”

“Borrowed, I think you will find. It was expedient that I did so, or the other party were more than happy to set the Federation on you and the others.”

“And what did they plan for you?”

“I had the idea the partnership would not have lasted. The offer they had in mind was quite interesting though.”

“But not interesting enough?”

“Obviously, or I wouldn’t be here discussing the pros and cons of that offer.”

“So what made you decide to stay with me?”

“They killed people, Blake, for the sheer hell of it...”

“As opposed to me.”

Avon got to his feet. He was determined not to get into an argument with Blake about the rights and wrongs of his cause. But as he made his way from the Flight Deck, Avon paused, his voice quite soft, yet menacing.

“There’s an old saying on Earth, Blake; better the Devil you know,”

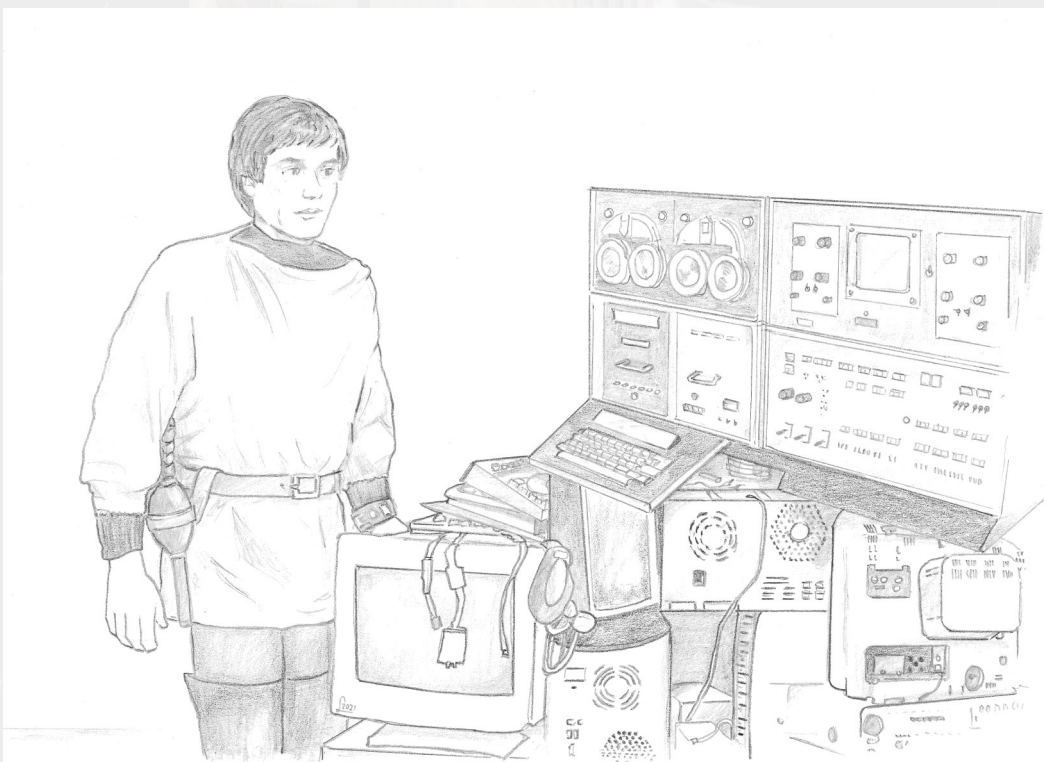
“And you consider me the Devil?”

“The jury is still out on that.”

“Thank you for your honesty.”

“But be warned, Blake, you’ve been given a second chance. Don’t squander it.”

“I won’t... and thank you Avon. Sometimes we all need a second chance.”



Artwork ©
Lara Widara

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!

By Annie Worrall

Annie Worrall continues to examine what our heroes/heroines and their allies and enemies are consuming during the events of *Blakes 7*.

Season Two – in which copious amounts of liquor are consumed, but the principle cast is obviously weight-watching.

Redemption

No comfort eating on the Liberator, despite the stress of seeing their ship targeted by its developers, who want it back. Vila does accept a cold drink and pill from Cally, presumably for the headache of which he's complained. Cally also has a drink, from a similar (and new) opaque white tumbler. Blake must have authorised yet another trip to Space IKEA or (in a Nation arranged *Who* cross over) a delivery from *Kerblam!*

conditions and he needs to ensure their complete loyalty.



Weapon

While Clone Master Fen seems to subsist on a diet of worship and heavenly music, on the planet Coser escapes to, the rats nibble on grain-like fragments (possibly bead crumbs) suggesting that there may be edible rations around. Rashel thinks so and suggests preparing them a meal. However, in the event, only the rats and the clawed creature that preys on them, get any sustenance. Though it's possible that Clone Blake has more than just a scratch meal to look forward to once everyone leaves, if that 'accidental' hand touch is anything to go by.

Back at Space Command, Carnell flirts outrageously with Servalan but, although she obviously enjoys his company, his plan is not delivering, so no drinks for him.

Horizon

Again, given the stress the crew is under, we might have expected to see them resort to comfort eating. Instead Blake is given a glass of the blue liquid we saw Ensor consume in Orac. It's for his headache, so we can infer it's a pain killer, and probably stronger than the pill Vila was given in *Redemption*. Vila gets a shot of adrenaline and soma after experiencing the effects of a space swirly thing, which knocks him out (though it's difficult to see how- wouldn't the effects of the two substances cancel each other out?) and later, still semi-sedated, quaffs a virulent green vitamin solution.

In the monopasium mines on Horizon, the Liberator crew and natives are fed a sort of gruel from a



Shadow

Only intoxicants, hallucinogens and poisons are consumed in this episode. Vila regrets an epic bender on Space City and Hannah looks forward to ingesting the highly addictive Shadow which is served up in orange spheres and has caused the death of her brother Peety. Largo, a Terra Nostra Don, meets his end after consuming what looks like poisoned custard. Blake enjoys a drink in a clear glass while waiting to blow up the President's garden (just how many different types of drinking vessels does the Liberator carry?)

The Security guards on Zondar are noticeably portly, which suggests they have access to abundant, high calorie food – something to be expected I guess, because they work for the President in challenging

communal bowl. It's cool enough to be scooped out in handfuls and thick enough not to drip. Gruel is made from boiling some type of cereal- such as ground oats, wheat, rye or rice- in water or milk. From what we see of the planet, it seem unlikely that there is much native agriculture or animal husbandry going on, so my guess is that the Federation supply ship that Zen mentions, brings in stocks of grain on its annual visit, which is then boiled in water to make an unappetising meal.



Further, we learn that the Liberator carries enough concentrated food to sustain one person for a thousand years. Something of which Avon seems unaware. He obviously avoids mess duties.

Pressure Point

Blake's teeth have got in a right old state. Maybe the result of all those years on suppressants but surely he could clean them regularly?

Servalan hangs out in a forest wilderness for 18 days with an army of mutoids and Travis, apparently without consuming or imbibing anything. I suppose she needs to fit into those gowns she's brought with her. And any appetite the crew might have is taken away by the discovery that they are on their way to Earth to attack Control, an installation that has been subject to "massive rocket attacks from space, ground assaults, every kind of attack," yet "still operates untouched." Vila is understandably alarmed: " Armies can't do it, space fleets can't do it, but we can, is that it? "

Less understandably, he doesn't sink his worries in glasses of adrenalin and soma.

The truth drug Servalan feeds Kasabi and the soma gas Veron throws into the ruins to incapacitate Blake, Gan, Avon and Vila are the nearest any of them get to eating or drinking. Poor Gan. Dying on an empty stomach!

Trial

Blake fortifies himself for his self- imposed trial by

pouring himself a glass of adrenaline and soma from a jug, before transporting to an unknown planet. Seems the crew are still relying on it to deal with their stress.

Down on the planet he's sprayed with water by a philosophical flea called Zil, who then steals his homing device and his day bag – together with any rations he may have had the foresight to pack. He's forced to quench his thirst from a pool and Zil reappears to offer him some vegetable matter (or possibly dirt) to eat. He declines it and who can blame him?



Travis, who is actually on trial, fares somewhat better. While the Military Arbiter, his fellow judges and the President's representatives brace themselves for the dubious cuisine of Space Command kitchens, Travis is gifted a small flask "of the good stuff" by Trooper Par. Thania has intended that it will loosen his tongue and get him to explain why he seems so



disinterested in mounting a defence for his actions. It's worth noting that Bercol has his own chef who cooks for him when he's away from home for any length of time. A little detail that demonstrates how wide the divide is between Alpha elite and Delta grades.

Meanwhile the Liberator crew seem more interested in playing a board game than eating or drinking as they wait for Blake's signal.

Killer

While Avon and Vila put the frighteners on the former's criminal partner, Tynus, the rest of the station grapple with a fatal plague and are far too preoccupied with trying not to succumb to eat anything. Vila pours himself a glass of clear spirits while they wait to combat his boredom. Avon tells him that he (Avon) "won't fit into a sandwich" if he messes up taking apart the converter. In response, Vila reveals he's a vegetarian, which, if true, probably indicates that amongst Deltas this is of necessity, not choice, with meat being reserved for the high echelons.



In an effort to delay them long enough for Servalan to reach Fosforon and arrest them, Tynus offers to bring food packages and Avon is hungry enough to demand "a big one." These prove to be of the same shape and colour as a giant maggot and consumed through a straw (yuck) but it is the fear that Tynus has poisoned or drugged them that leads Avon and Vila to lose their appetites, not their unappetising appearance.

Blake makes reference to a pickle barrel, which suggests that pickled vegetables might be used aboard deep space vehicles, or on prison planets, as a cheap method of preventing scurvy – just as they were in Columbus' day.

Fried eggs must be somewhere on the Fosforon menu since the firefighters' uniforms are modelled on them.

Hostage

Jenna and Avon are on the blue stuff. Is this the same stuff prescribed for Blake's headache or a more palatable beverage? They have just escaped from a full on attack by Federation pursuit ships so a quick snifter to calm the nerves would not be surprising.

Servalan is on the green. This is no vitamin solution: she's definitely calming her nerves with a drop of the hard stuff having failed (again) to destroy Blake, but she hides the evidence from Joban, who is not adverse to a glass himself.



Down on Exbar, Ushton serves Blake liquid in a leather and horn cup: possibly some home brewed small beer - more likely water. It's very matey but shows a surprising lack of urgency given his daughter Inga is in the hands of Travis and his Crimmos. Ushton indicates that finding enough food is a problem for those left on the planet and his skins and leather outfit suggests he lives a hunter-gatherer life style.



Hot on the trail in a pursuit ship, Servalan is served a very large glass of green – well it is a long way to go with only mutoids for company.

Given the chance to escape from their bleak, inhospitable existence, Ushton declines on the unlikely grounds that it's "too late for him", while Inga is far too excited by the discovery of a storage room full of food concentrates to follow cousin Blake into space. Instead she plans to use them to feed and unite Exbar's populace. A penchant for hopeless causes seems to run in the family.

Voice From the Past

Absolutely no food or drink is consumed during this episode.

Gambit

There is an amazing variety of very brightly coloured drinks consumed on Freedom City. The Hollywood Bowl cocktail hour still seems to be flourishing.



Docholli is partial to a dark blue liquor to drown his painful memories, while bar owner Chenie favours something amber coloured. The Klute enjoys glasses of green, and two of the casino tourists are imbibing bright purple beverages.



Vila starts his evening with a large glass of baby blue and later, Jenna chooses the same tippie. For Blake it's a drop of the dark blue while Cally adds sherbet to her glass of light green- she obviously knows her cocktails. Jarriere's dim wits are rendered even dimmer by his glass of dark blue. Travis, on the other hand, only accepts a vitazade – he needs a clear head so he's not on the booze.



On the food front, Servalan is offered pataki cake – made from the distilled venom of a local reptile

and hallucinogenic. Wisely she refuses. Krantor and Toise are partial to both pataki cake and marzipan fruits for nibbles. Consumed in what appears to be their bed! Think of the crumbs guys.



And watching Vila gamble turns Avon's stomach – so perhaps choosing to eat a bowl of ice cream is not the best idea... though he does just spit it out, not throw it up.



The Keeper

On the Liberator, Blake gets a glass of water to help him recover from poisonous gas. On Goth, the Charl has his own hookah and Tara inhales hallucinogenic smoke to predict the future. Servalan, who has



dropped in with Travis to discover the whereabouts of Star One, enjoys a few grapes from a well-stocked fruit bowl. Travis is offered wine. Given the poisonous atmosphere on Goth, which has forced the inhabitants to live underground, both fruit and wine must have been imported.



Later we see a feast of bread, chicken, what looks like a plate of ham or wild boar, fruit again, and a great deal of poisoned wine! The meat could be



home-reared or hunted (Tara's purple furs and the Charl's leathers suggest they do hunt something). The poison is Tara's own concoction,

but the flour and yeast for the bread along with the fruit and wine, have to come courtesy of the Federation. Though it stretches the imagination as to what they might be trading for them. Tents? Tarot readings from Tara? Ethnic jewellery?

Star One

Servalan is at her magnificent best as she grabs the opportunity forwarded by the collapse of Star One to declare herself President, but, perhaps because of the tightness of her slinky gown, is not eating or drinking. The collapse has brought about a disastrous climate change to the outer planets, which is decimating their crops, and tropical fruits are going to be off the Alpha Earth menu for the foreseeable future. The weather patterns on these planets have been tightly controlled by Star One, so that each produces food that is then, it is implied, imported to Earth.

Quite where the scientists, who have voluntarily immured themselves on the complex for many years, eat and drink is a mystery – despite its impressive layout, including what appears to be a giant waste disposal unit, (“He is now!”) there is no sign of a kitchen. Not that that bothers the Liberator crew. They are too busy making Travis “talk or scream”, laying out and then removing bombs, alerting Servalan of an alien invasion, engaging those aliens in battle, and in Blake's case, trying not to die, to worry about feeding their faces.

Summary

Whereas Season one focussed mainly on food and drink as a means of control and reward in the Empire, Season two seems to dwell on the use of alcohol and drugs for decadent, recreational purposes, to alter consciousness, extract information, or to poison enemies: bright green beverages being the most popular. At least one soft drink is available to purchase (naming it Vitazade is rather a good piece of marketing) so perhaps piloting a spaceship whilst under the influence is a category 4 or above crime.

I found myself wishing as I watched, that there was an occasional scene set in a recognisable kitchen, with the crew disagreeing about Blake's plans over a tasty Spag Bol or Curry. Regrettably no one on board Liberator seems keen on cooking. Culinary expertise is left to Federation Chefs, (probably beta grades) bond slaves, and the natives of Horizon and Goth, although the natives' skills only seem to stretch to pottage, bread and roast meats.

More Intergalactic Gastronomy soon...



** ED's Note: Part One of this feature appeared in GTLWR Ish #4*

Yesterday's Hero

By
S.F. Bennett

"Roj Blake meet Torr Cade."

Vila was beaming as he made the introductions. A mixture of pride and genuine pleasure was doing its best to to split his face from ear to ear with an ever-widening grin.

"Torr is a good mate of mine," he went on, "and the best thief in the business."

Blake was struggling to share his enthusiasm. Cade was not what he had been expecting.

For the last seventy hours, since they had learned of Cade's location at the ambitiously-named Liberty City on the wrong side of the borders of Federation space, Vila's one topic of conversation had been his old friend. What had started as a recommendation of his talents soon become a fanciful trip down memory lane, with each tall tale sounding more improbable than the next.

They had let Vila ramble on, unable and unwilling to compete with the hero of his earlier years. Blake only hoped Cade was as good as Vila's word. A lot was riding on the man.

Looking at him now, he was having his doubts. Years removed from the loose-limbed, agile-minded rogue of Vila's recollection, Cade had three days' worth of stubble on his chin, clothes that were torn and patched and tired eyes that had the look of a life that had thrown him more defeats than victories. Blake read wariness there too, that spoke of confidence lost and trust broken.

He hoped he was wrong because, from what he could tell, Vila was seeing none of this. He had picked up where they had left off all those years ago, slapping Cade on the back and smirking like an impudent child.

If Cade was slower to respond, Blake tried to pass it off as nothing more than the effect of his surroundings. Not everyone had the luxury of the Liberator; Liberty City was home to the desperate and the despairing, eking out whatever was left of their pitiful existences in the bars and brothels until either rotgut or the Federation made their condition permanent. Whatever had brought Cade there, it was unlikely to be for his health.

"Blake," said Cade, shaking his hand in return. His grip was firm, if clammy. "I've heard of your exploits."

"Likewise. Vila speaks very highly of you."

Cade managed a wan smile. "Then I am in trouble."

"I haven't told them everything," said Vila with a knowing wink. "I'm saving that for later."

The prospect of reminiscing failed to raise much interest in the other man. "I'm guessing you didn't come looking for me just to talk about the old days."

"As it happens," said Blake, stepping in, "I'm in need of an expert in your particular line of work."

He chose his words with care. Vila might have vouched for the man, but time had passed since their last meeting. People changed and past allegiances could never be taken for granted.

Cade's faded blue eyes flared with suspicion. "What's the matter with Vila? Or has he forgotten everything I taught him?"

"I could recite it in my sleep," Vila said indignantly. "Especially the most important lesson of all: don't get caught." He frowned. "Didn't work out like that though. I would have ended up on Cygnus Alpha if not for Blake."

"Then why do you need me?"

“Ah, well, it’s a very particular kind of lock. A *Federation* lock. You remember, the integrated hybrid strategic sensor with the phase-detector interface?”

“The old Mark 10,” mused Cade. A little of the tension eased from him. “You never did get the hang of those, did you, Vila?”

“And that’s why, Torr, we’ve come to you.”

Cade considered. When he spoke, his voice sounded stronger. “This lock, what’s on the other side?”

“An interrogation centre,” said Blake, “and someone we need to get away from the Federation before he tells them the location of several rebel groups in Sector Seven.”

“What’s in it for me?”

“What do you want?”

Cade glanced around. The bar was almost deserted, save for several drunks sprawled across dripping tables with the vermin stealing the last of the food from between their fingers.

“A way off this satellite, for a start,” he said. “And then transport to a quiet planet somewhere well away from the Federation’s reach. Like yourself, Blake, I’m a wanted man.”

Blake smiled. “I think we can manage that. Vila, give him a bracelet.”

* * * * *

Avon and Gan were awaiting Blake’s return to the *Liberator*, while Jenna, seated at the console, worked the teleport. Cade was suitably impressed by the experience and was silenced for long enough to take in his surroundings in open-mouthed appreciation. Away from Liberty City, something of the irrepressible exuberance of which Vila had spoken fondly was starting to resurface.

“This is quite a ship,” he said with a low whistle.

“We like it,” Avon remarked.

“Pretty.”

“Not the first word that comes to mind.”

“I wasn’t talking about the ship.” Cade’s gaze had come to rest on Jenna. “Well, Vila, aren’t you going to introduce me?”

“Oh, yes,” he said hurriedly. “Torr Cade, Jenna Stannis.”

“Ah, the notorious smuggler.” He leant on the teleport console and leered down at her. “Is it true there’s nothing you people won’t do for money?”

Jenna regarded him coldly. “I’ve knocked out a few teeth in my time for nothing.”

Cade recoiled in mock alarm. “No offence intended. When it comes to celebrities, I have a soft spot for the pretty ones.”

“Located just above your neck, no doubt,” she returned.

“And this is Olag Gan,” said Vila, moving Cade quickly along.

“Where did they get you from, big fella?” Cade aimed a playful punch at Gan’s stomach. Gan took a step back and looked bemused. “Many’s the time we could have done with someone like you in a tight corner. Good with your hands, are you?”

“Fairly,” said Gan. “It’s the head that’s the problem.” Cade frowned, not understanding. “I’ve got a limiter.”

“That’s rough. What about you?” Cade’s attention had turned to Avon. The *Liberator*’s resident computer

expert had listening to the introductions and accompanying banter without comment. A mixture of amusement and disdain was currently registering on his features. "You got any limitations?"

Avon took his time in replying. "Only the people around me."

Cade burst out laughing. "I'll go along with that! You'll know what I mean, having to put up with Vila."

"Hey! I do my fair share," Vila protested.

"In return for an *unfair* share while others do the hard work. Am I right?" Vila looked a little crest-fallen. Cade clapped him hard on the back, making him stagger slightly. "I'm only kidding. You had your uses, even if I never did find out what they were. Now, who's your friend?"

"Torr, this is Kerr Avon," said Vila, watching both men's expressions warily. "He's a thief. Like us."

Cade's eyebrows rose in amusement as Avon rejected the hand extended in his direction. "So, a common thief, eh?"

"Uncommon actually," Avon retorted. "My sights were set higher than picking pockets and looting stores."

"He went for the big one," Vila confided to his friend. "The Federation banking system."

"Still got caught though, didn't he?" A smirk twisted the corners of his mouth upwards. "Maybe you're more like us than you care to admit. They call you Kerr?"

"Only once."

"Avon it is then. We'll have to talk later. I can give you advice on where you went wrong."

Avon bristled. "I'm breathless with indifference."

At this, Cade laughed again. With Avon glowering all the more, Vila hurried his friend on.

"Let me show you round the rest of the ship," he said as they tramped up the stairs. "Then I've got a few bottles that might interest you."

"Sounds like an offer I can't refuse," said his companion with gusto. "Lead on, Vila."

"Well," said Gan, once the pair had left the teleport, "he seems..."

"Objectionable?" Jenna finished for him, getting up from the console. "How long is he going to be here?"

"What's the matter?" said Avon, enjoying her obvious annoyance. "Are you not 'charmed' by his legendary wit?"

"Are you?"

"Not much, no."

"It won't be for long," said Blake. He gave Jenna a sympathetic smile. "After we rescue Lothar, we'll take Cade where he wants to go."

"What's the flight time to the base where they are holding him?" asked Gan.

"Thirty hours," Blake replied.

Jenna rolled her eyes. "With Cade onboard, it's going to feel a lot longer than that."

* * * * *

“This is good stuff, Vila. Let’s have another.”

Cade, sprawled across the seating with his feet up on the table, held out his empty glass. Vila obliged by filling it with a quantity of pale blue liquid. He promptly downed it in one.

“Another.”

Vila gave him an uncertain look. “You sure about that? We’ll be at the base in five hours.”

“Now, now.” Cade clicked his tongue. “I can drink you under the table any day, my friend.”

“I know. But this is important. We’ll need our wits about us.”

His concerns were waved aside. “The Mark 10 is easy. Now the Mark 11, that’s the difficult one.”

Listening from his lofty position beside Jenna at the main flight console, Blake had been watching the pair with a growing sense of unease.

So far, Cade was making all the wrong impressions. Jenna was still seething, Avon was keeping his distance and Cally had been offended by Cade’s constant remarks about whether she could tell what he was thinking. To Blake’s mind, the man had trouble taking anything seriously. He said all the right things, but he had yet to be put to the test. Given what was at stake, Blake knew his concerns had to be addressed.

“How difficult?” he asked, stepping down to join the pair in the forward seating area.

“It’s not difficult at all,” said Cade dismissively, “but it is delicate work. If the phase-detectors don’t align on the correct frequencies, you’ll be there forever. Computers will only get you so far. You have to *feel* the changes in the detectors. It’s all in the fingers, you see. It’s hard to explain to a layman.”

“Try me.”

Blake had Orac put the lock schematics up on the main monitor. Grudgingly, Cade got to his feet and started a lengthy discourse about the best way of tackling it, pausing occasionally to confer with Vila over the finer points of the design. While the pair were lost in discussion, Avon wandered onto the flight deck and glanced up at the screen.

“Does he know what he’s doing?” he asked Blake in a low voice.

“Apparently.”

“That’s not good enough.” Avon fixed him with a hard stare. “If anything goes wrong, the probability is that we will not make it out of that base alive. We will find ourselves in the same position as Lothar. The only difference is that no one will be mounting a rescue mission for us.”

“I’m aware of that,” said Blake. “Cade knows his locks, I’ll give him that.”

“That’s what you used to say about Vila.”

“Vila I know.” Blake thought it over for a moment and decided to voice what was on his mind. “Is Cade what you were expecting?”

“As one of Vila’s inane acquaintances? I’m afraid so. Why, what’s wrong?”

Blake shook his head. “It’s probably nothing. When we first found him, he was quieter, fearful almost.”

“You did say he was a wanted man.”

“I forgot to ask by which side.”

Avon caught his meaning. “I’ll have Orac look up his file.”

“It can’t hurt.”

As Avon moved away, Blake's attention was caught by the sight of Cade and Vila sharing a joke with easy familiarity, both enlivened by the conversation and comfortable with the silences.

A strange feeling of envy gnawed at his insides. Scenes like this still had the power to torment him, a constant reminder of how much he had lost. He tried to push it aside, but it stubbornly remained, taunting him with dim memories of the nameless men who had stripped his mind. He must have laughed like this with old friends once, but who were they? What had happened to them? Had their lives been dismantled like his simply for the fact of their association? He would never know. In a life built on shifting sands, it took moments like these to remind him why he fought on.

He was aware too how it distorted his perception of those around him. Trust was elusive without memory as a reference. The thought that it might be clouding his judgement about Cade made him call Avon back.

"Be discreet," he said. "In case I'm wrong."

Avon gave the guffawing pair a weary glance. "A pity. I was hoping we could find a reason to throw him off the ship."

"Only another five hours," said Blake. "Let me know what you find."

* * * * *

Avon found nothing. Cade was exactly what Vila had said he was – a small-time thief who had caused enough trouble for the authorities to take an interest in him. He had been on the run for the best part of a year with a kill or capture warrant hanging over his head.

Satisfied, Blake had been content to let the plan go ahead. With Avon and Cally to back them up, he would teleport down to the base with Cade, find Lothar and get out as quickly as possible. With the Liberator fast approaching their destination, Cade's skills were about to be tested under the worst possible conditions. As Avon had said, if anything went wrong, it was more than their lives at stake. With that thought chasing round his mind, Blake had been strapping on his weapon when Vila's voice came through the intercom.

"We're ready," Blake said. "Where's Cade?"

"He's..." Vila sounded strained. "Blake, you need to come."

"What now?" Avon demanded.

"I'll find out," said Blake. "Tell Jenna to stay on course. I won't be long. Probably last minute nerves."

When Blake saw Vila's expression, he knew it was more than that. In the cabin they had given him, Cade was stretched out on the bed, snoring loudly. The air stank of cheap alcohol and the littering of empty bottles on the floor told him that he would not be coming with them.

"I'm sorry," Vila was saying. "I didn't know he'd do this."

"It's not your fault." Blake cursed under his breath for ignoring the signs. "Can you get that door open?"

Vila faltered. "I don't know. I've never worked on a lock like that on my own before."

"Cade showed you what to do. We'll help."

"I'll try," he replied uncertainly.

Blake grabbed him by the shoulders and made him look at him. "You'll do better than that, Vila."

"But Cade—"

"We'll talk about him when we get back." Still Vila lingered, unable to take his eyes off the unconscious man on the bed. "Come on," said Blake firmly guiding him away. "Let's get this done."

* * * * *

The sounds of shouting could be heard as far away as the flight deck.

Blake paused in the corridor, hearing angry words echoing back to him. Overall, the mission had been a success. Lothar had been rescued and Vila had proved that he was more than capable of dealing with any lock the Federation had to offer. Now he was looking to Cade for an explanation. Predictably, the conversation was not going well.

“How could you do this?” Vila was yelling. “You were drunk!”

“So what?” Cade retorted.

“Never drink before a job – that’s what you always told me.”

“Don’t pretend you’ve never had anything to take the edge off your nerves!”

“This isn’t about me!” Vila’s voice was getting louder and louder. “I looked up to you, Torr, I always have. You were like the big brother I never had. I wouldn’t be here now without you. How could you do this to me?”

Blake grimaced at the sound of fist hitting its mark and a body tumbling to the floor.

“Get out of my sight, Vila!” Cade hollered. “To hell with your damned expectations. I don’t have to prove anything to you!”

Vila left in a hurry, every sinew of his departing back quivering with anger, as one hand nursed his bruised jaw. Blake held back for a moment, hearing the sounds of things being thrown around the cabin before venturing inside. The devastation was much as he had been expecting, reflected on the anguished features of the room’s only occupant.

“What do you want?” Cade demanded.

Blake took up position by the door. “Only to tell you that we’ll be arriving at Fortuna within the hour. A safe haven, as you requested, well outside Federation influence.”

Cade’s ire faded. He ran a hand through his receding hair and dropped down onto the bed, weary to the core. “You heard? Yes, of course you did.”

Blake said nothing.

“Vila... he doesn’t understand.”

“Perhaps you should tell him.”

“That I got old?” Cade said bitterly. “And scared? He doesn’t want to hear that. He wants someone to tell him everything’s going to be all right. He wants the Cade he remembers who never gave a damn about the Federation or anyone.” He paused, slightly breathless from the fury of his emotions. “The problem is, I can’t remember who that person is. I know how he used to act. I know what he used to say. But in here...” He thumped his fist on his chest. “He’s missing.”

Blake let the thought lie. “What happened?”

The look Cade gave him suggested he was about to tell him to mind his own business. A long rattling sigh released the last of his tension and he relented.

“I suppose you had that clever computer of yours look me up. Well, there’s something they didn’t put on my record.”

His gaze fell to the hands drooping loosely between his knees as he tried to collect his thoughts.

“Times were hard. That’s nothing new, it always is down in the Delta Grades. Then, a year ago, I get an offer from a group of rebels for enough credits to get me away from Earth for good. In return, I had to get them into a base on Mars. They had some idea about disrupting the production of energy units for Federation pursuit ships. It seemed easy enough. I did my part, but the rest went wrong. We were all captured. The rebels were taken away for interrogation and me...”

His hands started to shake. He clenched his fingers shut.

“They let me go. They said I wasn’t important, not this time. They said if I ever crossed their path again, they would sever the tendons in my wrists.” A haunted look came to his eyes. “I couldn’t face it. I ran. I’ve been running ever since.”

“It happens,” Blake noted.

“Then you found me and there was Vila, talking about the past and how things used to be, and for a while... I thought I could do it. I was wrong.” He made a helpless gesture. “Did you get your man back?”

“Yes. Vila opened the lock.”

“I knew he would. He was always better than me, although I never told him that.” A low breathy sigh escaped from Cade’s lips. “Well, I’ve finally knocked those delusions out of him. I’m nobody’s hero now.”

“Who is?” said Blake heavily. “We all need a reminder sometimes that we are only human.”

It took a while for Cade to answer. His gaze had been pulled back to the empty bottles and the promise of temporary oblivion they offered. Blake saw the effort it took him to dismiss them.

“I should apologise to him,” Cade said eventually. “I don’t have that many friends left that I can treat them like that.”

“We all make mistakes. You might find he prefers you as a real person.”

A rueful laugh rumbled from him. “At least I don’t have to worry about disappointing him any more.” He got up and offered Blake his hand. “Thanks. And I’m sorry for what happened.”

Blake accepted the peace-offering. Cade’s grip had a new strength in it.

“We managed,” Blake said. “Feet of clay are our speciality here on the Liberator.”

“Works for you?”

He smiled. “Keeps me sane.”

“I’ll try to remember that,” Cade said gratefully. “Well, time to make amends. It’s long overdue.”

* * * * *

With the ship in orbit around Fortuna, it was Blake’s turn to man the teleport. In the absence of anyone else, Gan had offered to accompany Cade down to the planet and bring back his bracelet. The other members of the Liberator had made excuses to be elsewhere. Everyone wanted to see their guest go, but no one was eager to bid him farewell, least of all the one person Blake had been expecting.

Whatever had been said between the two, it had not brought resolution. If Cade was hurt by Vila’s absence, he made a good show of hiding it. Sober now, both physically and mentally, the bravado had gone and the quieter man Blake had first met was back in control.

It suited him better, Blake reflected. He would survive a lot longer without his brash alter ego making any more enemies.

Then, at the very last moment, Vila had appeared, breathless from running and Gan had stepped aside to let him take his place. No explanation was necessary. As Vila had joined Cade on the platform, the pair had stared at each other for the longest time and then had smiled.

Vila’s parting words were that he would not be long. Blake had been content to wait for as long as it took, although a few minutes after teleporting them down, Vila had been in touch, wanting to come up.

The transformation in him was visible. He was calmer and, if Blake was any judge, happier. There had been no long goodbyes, instead forgiveness and understanding, knowing that they might never see each other again. He did not ask, although he gathered from the glances Vila was throwing in his direction and his aimless pottering as he removed his bracelet that the subject was going to be raised.

“He’s gone,” Vila said eventually.

Blake nodded without comment. Self-evident it might have been, but if Vila had a need to talk, then he was willing to listen.

“He wasn’t always like that,” he went on uncertainly. “He’s had... problems.”

“It happens,” Blake said. He was careful not to drive the conversation, rather to be simply a participant. Cade had let them down, although the greater damage ran deeper.

The bracelet was replaced with excessive care in the rack. Vila was distracting himself while he gathered his thoughts.

“He’ll be all right.” Whether he believed that, Blake was undecided. “Torr’s a survivor.”

“It worked for you.”

Vila brightened. “I didn’t do so badly, did I? Got that lock open too.”

“You did very well.”

It took him a long time to reply. His gaze had been caught by the now empty glass with its scattering of water droplets from which Blake had been drinking. Had Avon been there, he would have subjected them to his usual lecture about liquids and electronic circuitry not mixing. For Vila, it was a reminder of the recent past and a warning for the future.

“I always thought he was unbeatable,” he said at last. He licked his lips and pulled his eyes from the sight of the glass and the memories it held. “Nothing ever used to worry him. Not like things worry me.”

Blake rose to his feet. If it was reassurance Vila wanted, he had none to give him. The best of intentions invariably withered before the realities of life. The experience was perhaps timely, for it was becoming noticeable that Vila was relying on Adrenalin and Soma less when he needed it and more because he wanted it.

Ultimately, Vila answered his own question. “I think I’ll give up drinking,” he announced. The prospect momentarily clouded his countenance. “Or I’ll cut down. Yes, that might do it. You need a steady hand for those Mark 10 locks. It wouldn’t do for me to lose my touch.” He grinned with pride. “After all, I *am* the best thief in the business.”

The End



DOCTOR WHO

FLUX



SEASON 13 REVIEW

by Annie Worrall

At the start of the new season, I set myself the task of writing my response to each episode, more or less as I watched it.

When the three specials we are promised for 2022 have been broadcast I will look back over the whole series and reflect on its hits and misses in a later edition of the 'zine...

Episode 1: The Halloween Apocalypse

Well that was an adrenaline rush, though I'm not sure how it's going to pan out, or even if it made much sense. Are old monsters being included for fan-pleasing purposes rather than narrative or thematic ones? How will this series will resolve the cliff hanger of the different Doctor time lines – or where the Master and his Cybermen are hiding? We did learn that The Swarm and The Doctor have a past history that she has been mind-wiped to forget; that Karvanista worked (works?) for The Division; that the mysterious Claire knows about Weeping Angels and echoes Twelve's remark that he came to Gallifrey "the long way round". But this just added to the load needing to be unravelled.



Too much in too short a time?
The proof of the pudding... and all that.

In the meantime, I was engaged throughout the episode. While there were too many threads introduced to be developed in any depth, I had an interest in the fate of the various characters we met (except chilli fridge man who joined the long line of Chibnall characters foregrounded and then discarded in a nanosecond) and I was left with an enthusiasm for next week's episode.

There must be something about becoming the Doctor, because many of the artists portraying the



role seem to hit their stride in their third season.

Certainly that seems true of Jodie: her mannerisms and tics somehow coalescing into a more powerfully eccentric performance, rather than the ditz characterisation of her first, and most of the second, series. Even her costume seemed less girly, though it may be I've just got used to it. She's still too reliant on the sonic screwdriver but her refusal to explain anything was very welcome. I also approved of the way her relationship with Yaz had matured. Gone was the latter's lesbian longing to be teacher's pet - replaced by a much more believable, exasperated affection.

I guess Karvanista will divide the fans but I really liked him. I've always suspected that terriers barked in a northern accent, secretly resented their enslavement to the human race, and would willingly push their owners under a bus if given half a chance. I had more mixed feelings about the introduction of Dan Lewis. I think we were supposed to see him as a 'salt of the Earth, brimming with human kindness' bloke, but he came across as pretty stupid. Why refuse free soup if you're completely out of food? I did like his dynamic with Yaz however – they played off each other rather well.

On the down side – the opening sequence with Yaz and the Doctor was dreadful with its unconvincing CGI and lame dialogue (and where was Yaz's designated Lupari while she was hanging above a lake of acid?) but things picked up from then onwards. The sequence with the Weeping Angel was slightly too drawn out but most of the action proceeded at a furious pace and managed to create a sense of jeopardy or shock.

My main criticism is that there didn't seem any point to the story. It had slender relevance to life today. It was totally Earth-centric (I know it's your favourite planet Doc. but goodness, spare a thought for those other worlds the Flux has destroyed!) Like the Halloween sugar fest it was named for, effort had gone into making it look scary, it offered brief excitement and slipped down enjoyably enough. But it left me with a sort of melancholy longing for something more substantial.

And surely they could have come up with a better name for the ribbony thing menacing the entire universe, than Flux!



Episode 2: War with the Sontarans

Enjoyable but not thrilling.

In an episode about the disruption of time, it was fitting that there were so many call backs to earlier points in the Doctor's history. There wasn't much wrong with the plotting either. Admittedly it stretched credulity a bit as first Dan's wok-wielding parents, and then his doggy bond mate Karvanista, popped out of nowhere to rescue him, but I could live with that. The pacing was pretty good, even if the confrontations in the Atropos Temple between Azure and the frantic triangle-guardians did go on too long, diffusing the tension that had been building nicely. Dan's parents were clichéd but they were funny, and anyway, comedy parents have been a feature of *Nu Who* since RTD relaunched the show, so it would be a little churlish to complain about their inclusion.



Sara Powell created a believable and sympathetic Mary Seacole. The Sontarians were genuinely scary, but more importantly, interesting: their code of military ethics (chillingly established and consistent) making them more than just potato heads. Add in camp, but watchable, Swarm, Azure and Passenger and there was nothing to complain about on the villain front. There was even a moral conundrum thrown in when General Logan destroyed the retreating Sontarians to the disgust of the Doctor.



And there were unsolved mysteries such as the vision the Doctor sees of a strange, crooked house, how Swarm knows Yaz, the identity of Vinder, what's going on with the Tardis, along with an exciting cliff hanger; all persuasive hooks to get us to tune in next week.



So why didn't it thrill me? I honestly don't know. The only thing I can put my finger on is that the Doctor was again largely reduced to the role of exposition queen, and that Jodie's characterisation is not strong enough to anchor the disparate stories. This Doctor is, too often, an observer not a mover and shaker, and when she does act, she lacks the dark authority that would convince me she is the threat that she claims. Imagine Christopher Eccleston in this episode and you'll see what I'm getting at. WWTDO? Well faff about with her sonic screwdriver in a cutesy dither!

All that said, I am looking forward to next week and this offering was streets ahead of most of the episodes in series one and two.



Episode 3: Once Upon Time

I don't know if this offering was as difficult to write as it was to review but I imagine it must have involved a hell of a lot of post it notes.

Basically a filler episode setting up a scaffold for an eventual denouement, it was, however, far from dull, throwing in just about everything but the kitchen sink. Bewildering? Yes (though enough clues given to stop this viewer from throwing in the towel) but with a sprinkle of surprises to keep us involved despite some lengthy info- dumps interrupting the momentum. Perhaps aware of this, Jodie chose, or was encouraged, to deliver many of her's at breakneck speed. This did not make them more exciting, and it was notable that when she alternated dialogue with the terrific Jo Martin, the latter won the 'Who's the best *Who* then?' with ease.

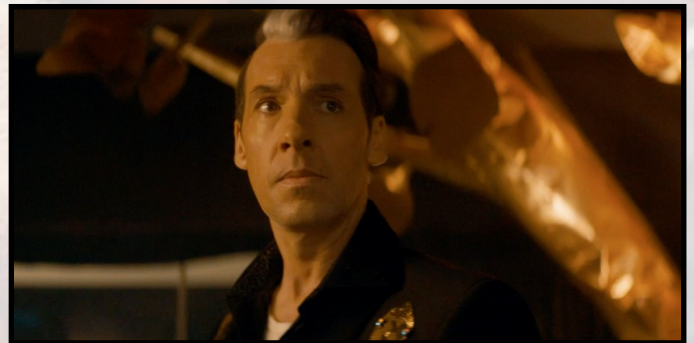
Was it wise to start the episode with a new character when we already had so many whose history had hardly been touched upon? I'm not sure, although Thaddea Graham's performance as Bel had a spiky energy and sympathetic optimism that drew me into her story.



From there we followed the fortunes of the Doctor and her pals as she took the place of the Mouri and marooned them in their own timeline to hide them from Swarm's vengeance. Dan certainly came off best here in a touching encounter with Diana – John Bishop crafting such a believable bloke that it hardly seemed acted. Yaz's section didn't add any depth to her character so it was a relief when the Weeping Angels burst through her telly to liven things up. I like Mandip Gill but she really is short changed by the material she is given. Getting her to act against type as Vinder's Commanding Officer was surely a recognition of this, and showed briefly that she is capable of more than furrowed-brow alarm and reassuring sympathy.

The Vinder story was underwhelming, even though Craig Parkinson gave a nicely judged, oily performance as The Grand Serpent. Why the heck an

apparently westernised society would title it's leader 'The Grand Serpent', is anybody's guess. Let's hope it proves, later, to be a plot point and not an unexplained detail. Vinder's guilty angst at reliving his whistle-blowing moment begged the question as to whether he was suffering because it brought back memories of Bel; he felt bad about turning off the video recording; or he was regretting that he "did the right thing". Hopefully not that last one! There was a hint here that he and Yaz had had a bit of a thing going, at least on her part (watch her face when he says he's going home to reunite with his lover). Poor Yaz. Her relationship with the Doctor is definitely cooling. Vinder and Dan are unavailable. Looks like she's doomed to be always the bridesmaid



The Doctor's encounter with the Celestial Mouri in some swirly sort of dreamscape saw her dangling rather comically in space while trying to get them to a) save her friends and b) give her some clues as to how the pieces of her lives fit together. Neither she, nor this viewer, were left much wiser. We did learn there was a war, way way back, involving the Division (representing Space) and Swarm and Azure (batting for Time). The latter are known as "Ravengers", an ancient, powerful, race who can turn people to dust and ashes in a second, or hold millions hostage in entities known as Passengers. If the metaphor holds, it would appear that the Timelords created the temple of Atropos to control the ravages of time, perhaps in a quest for immortality: playing Gods to the Ravengers' Devils. Jo Martin's Doctor and Karvanista were part of this gambit, while Jodie/ Doctor, somewhen in the near future, had trained her team to ensure Space won the fight by replacing the damaged Mouri and imprisoning Swarm and Azure in stun cubes. At least nobody dwelt on the timeytimey implications of all that!





But it wasn't all plain sailing. Ominously, an irascible Elder, played by the marvellous Barbara Flynn, had previously announced that the Universe was about to end and she was pretty annoyed at the Doctor's meddling attempts to halt it. Crumbs. And was that bulbous screwdriver she had in her hand a sonic one?



Golden Daleks and the updated Cybermen appeared briefly as part of Bel's time-line, both aiming to rule the remnants of a failing universe. Modern Swarm continues to impress, though his ambition to "rule in hell" placed him no higher on the rung of imaginative

villainy than the other baddies. The Weeping Angels have never been my favourite alien menaces but the moment when they took over the Tardis did make for a spine-tingling cliff hanger.

So... Will Dan continue to trust that the Doctor will rescue Dianne from the Passenger? Will Vinder and Bel and little Tigmi find each other? Was Tigmi included to increase our sympathies for the couple, or, in an episode with religious overtones, is it's birth going to be significant and if so, how? (I got a Mary and Joseph vibe here.) Who is the mysterious Claire? What role is Joseph Williamson going to play in subsequent events? Why is Barbara Flynn mad at the Doctor? More immediately, how are they going to defeat the Angels?



Many, many questions. Let's just hope the answers aren't signalled in the title of this week's segment and it all turns out to be a Master-induced hallucination.

And that Tigmi is not the Doctor.



Episode 4: Village of the Angels

Kevin McNally. Oh Kevin McNally. How you held that episode together and made it sing. A Professor in the best tradition of *Who*, irascible, eccentric, brave. He, Annabel Scholey (Clare) and Penelope Ann McGhie (Grown up Peggy) all gave rock solid performances, and because they seemed so real, the jeopardy they were facing seemed real too.



A contrast with the scenes involving Namaca with first Bel and then Vinder. Here the dialogue was a bit clichéd, the clumsily signalled ending of Bel's recording just before the reveal of the co-ordinates, unforgivable – well, out of place at least in such a tightly constructed story. Not badly acted but only Bel elevated her performance to rise above the apocalyptic scenario. In fact Namaca struck me as straight out of *The Life of Brian*, which I don't think was intended and certainly wasn't the fault of Blake Harrison. He played the character as written.

I wasn't enamoured of the start either. The Doctor's flippant treatment of Gerald and Jean jarred with the announcement that there was a missing child. And that thread wasn't a comfortable watch. Presenting Gerald as a probably abusive carer and Jean as his enabler didn't really compensate for the chilling disregard that child Peggy showed to his and her aunt's death. Dan and Yaz did their best, but were reduced to wandering around with furrowed brows, confronting increasingly terrifying scenarios, with little more than a "Why?" and a "Oh my gosh!"



That said, I loved this episode. Really loved it. And the reason for that was primarily my investment in Professor Jericho and Claire. What a magnificent defiance Jericho mounted, believable because of his understated reference to the horrors of Belsen, while Claire, in both her human and rebel angel persona, was completely convincing and dragged an equally strong response from Jodie. (Though my goodness that was a lengthy piece of exposition the Doctor had to deliver to Jericho.) The Weeping Angels truly became a threat for me, because although I expected the Doctor to survive, I was less certain that her companions would escape unharmed and was on the edge of my seat as the attacks mounted.

Properly scary- those arms protruding from the tunnel walls. And that disguised, jaw-dropping cliff hanger ending which subverted all my expectations. Ok, you might have spotted it coming, but I didn't!

The threads are beginning to coalesce, though I suspect once the visceral excitement I felt throughout the episode has faded, details may become plot holes that will take some patching. Why is The Division now simply Division? Significant? Possibly. Because if The Division is still active, why is Karvanista introduced as its last operative, and where exactly has it been hiding during the Doctor's 13 regenerations? The Angel's new powers troubled me- surely disintegrating people to dust at the second encounter kind of re-writes their history? And what's with the increasingly biblical/allegorical tone? If this is a side swipe at how religion is used by those in power to subdue the masses, well at least the show has a central character who can slide easily between the role of The Messiah and "A very naughty boy/girl".

Final thought: I had given up expecting *Dr Who* to become a 'must-see' again. I am really delighted that I was wrong.

Episode 5: Survivors of the Flux

Most anger-inducing moment? Not anything to do with the rewriting of *Who* history, that's for sure. It was the Doctor's holographic exchange with Yaz, during which she asserted that displaced persons seeking somewhere to call home should be regarded as dangerous invaders and fought off.

Putting that aside (not easy) it was a bold decision to leave dangling some of the threads of last week's cliff hanger and plunge us straight into a 'Ripping Yarn' with Yaz, Dan and Jericho. But was it a wise one? Well, I found wondering about the fate of Peggy and the Village of Angels, and where the intrepid trio had found the wear-with- all to travel half way around the world, pretty distracting. So probably not! Nor was I clear as to why clues to the fate of Earth were distributed in such exotic places. And while the adventures were enjoyable enough in a superficial way, what was the point of them? It was the fortuitous appearance of Joseph Williamson in the ship's cabin that provided them with answers, not their detective work (though I'm glad not to have missed their trip to Shangri La and Kammy Darweish's standout as a bored Swami).



As for the Doctor's injunction to Yaz – find out when the catastrophic invasion of Earth by refugees is going to happen and help Earth. Not only, as I've already highlighted, was this a morally questionable aim, but surely it was an optimistic one as well? Would you entrust the task to someone who elects to deal with a lit fuse by throwing a coat over it, rather than pulling it out?

The UNIT sequence was confusing. The Division has apparently been using everything we've ever encountered in the Doctor's time line (Judoons, Weeping Angels, Ood, Daleks, Sontarians, The Doctor) to maintain it's control over space. So does that mean UNIT was set up by the Division? And if not,

why has the Division left it to operate independently and allowed, even encouraged, the Doctor (whose meddling has so incensed them that they've decided to destroy the universe she inhabits) to work with it?

Why has the Grand Serpent infiltrated UNIT? Is he (it?) working for the Division too? At one level this is unimportant because Craig Parkinson's performance was terrific – very Ian Richardson in *A Game of Cards* – and the serpent thingy, creepy and convincing. Once the excitement faded, however, I was left pondering whether Vinder has a serpent for a backbone too, or if The Grand Serpent is just a planetary invader; a mercenary infiltrating and taking over governments, partly for the fun of it. Worse



case scenario, he (it?) like Daniel Barton in *Spyfall*, is going to serve his turn as the Big [plot moving] Baddie, and then disappear from the story without explanation. I guess I'll have to wait until the season finishes to find out if this happens!

The burning UNIT question, however, has to be: What was Kate thinking? Kill the alien, gal, don't just go on leave. It'll save a lot of time and grief.

Speaking of Vinder, anyone else wondering why he and Di are being kept in limbo in a Passenger (apart from plot reasons) rather than being downloaded and dustified like the others?



So many of the baddies in this episode, from the aforementioned Grand Serpent, to the Sontarians and even Swarm and Azure, seem motivated only by revenge and a desire for power and profit. Despite their memorable designs, it makes for some rather ho hum villains. At least Tecteun has a Mengele obsession with unethical scientific experiments on sentient life forms, which, though deplorable, raises her above the crowd.

Which brings us to her scenes with the Doctor.



Bit of a cop out, having the Weeping Angels convert Jodie to one of their own just to mess with her head while transporting her to Tecteun's seed bank. And while the dialogue between Doctor and Foster mother answered some questions, it raised others. Tecteun is the leader of Division, but who else makes up the organisation? Is the Timelord, Solpedon, who initially decided with Tecteun that a Division of their people was required, still alive? Where do Rassilon, Omega, The Celestial Agency, The Master et al fit into the picture? Why, if the Division is prepared to

destroy universe one to remove the threat of the Doctor, was Tecteun so keen to persuade her to accompany her into universe two?

So many unanswered questions in an episode bogged down a bit by exposition. A filler, with the purpose of manoeuvring the pieces for the final showdown into place (the sequence with Karvanista and Bel gratuitously introduced for that very purpose: man's best friend could have taken over the rogue ship as easily as he did the one Bel hi-jacked, except that, if he did so, it would have taken a lot more plotting to get her into the Williamson tunnels).

Not a boring watch but not my favourite either, though I did find out why The Grand Serpent is so named! Now I'm hoping that the Doctor's untimely moral lapse was a deliberate clue, and that next week will reveal her hologram to have been a doppelgänger. But... nah... not very likely is it?



Episode 6: The Vanquishers

Well did he land it for you?

These were some of my thoughts as the credits rolled on the Flux finale:

- Nice to see Yaz using her wits to open the “certain death” door to dispose of the Sontarans, but how did Joseph Williamson find out it existed without opening it and... well... dying?
- Why was Di considered “insignificant” and left to roam unhindered in a Passenger?
- If the Doctor was so sure that it was morally wrong of the General to kill retreating Sontarans in *Halloween Apocalypse*, doesn't her refusal to warn the Cybermen and Daleks of the potato heads' plan seem a bit iffy? And didn't her alternative “risky” plan involve mass slaughter of three alien races?
- So antimatter can be stopped by encountering colossal amounts of matter. Okay. But how come consuming entire planetary systems hasn't stopped it already, or at least drastically reduced its power and mass?
- Are we just going to forget about the Doctor's memories for the time being, and leave it to a future show runner to unpick?
- Blimey, three Jodies, all exhibiting symptoms of ADHD while waving screwdrivers and explaining the plot intricacies at speed, is a bit much to take.

In other words, while a lot of threads were tied up, others weren't. Jodie's performance lacked gravitas, so I was never convinced that her suffering was real. Her Doctor was again, morally inconsistent. The plot relied a little heavily on unexplained, fortuitous circumstances or implausibilities. And so far, the story telling hasn't made the thematic links that would bring the adventure to a really satisfying conclusion. But it ain't over yet, so I will reserve judgement on the success or failure of the series until the last special.

Biggest disappointments?

Well, Time's “rewarding” of Swarm and Azure and subsequent release of the Doctor. Yes there are thematic reasons for the former and ominous hints that the confrontation with Thirteen was only postponed. Still, a bit of a let down.

And the reveal that the venomous reptile of villainy was actually a newt, when the splendid Grand Serpent became so fixated by Kate's calling him out, that against all sense, he

placed personal revenge before the grander plan and ended up exiled to a rock in the middle of nowhere. A somewhat banal conclusion to his delicious malice (though, come to think about it, I suppose it leaves the possibility of a return) and I still don't know where he (it?) originated.

As for the thematic reason for the anti-climactic fate of the Ravengers, I think this centres around the scene in which Azure asks the Doctor why she champions evolution over entropy.



It's a pertinent question in a run of adventures that has touched on the cost, both personal and universal, of being sentient. To find a reason to continue in the face of unspeakable loss or horror, to procreate in seemingly hopeless conditions, to marshal the will to fight in spite of fear and pain—there were numerous examples showcasing of each of these. Bel's and Vinder's determination to find each other and her cheerful pregnancy; Jericho's refusal to be overwhelmed by his experiences during the 2nd World War and his gracious acceptance of death. Yaz's pain at losing the Doctor, but keeping faith that they would be reunited. Di's fight back in a Passenger. Karvanista promise of revenge as the genocide of his race sunk in. Kate's defiance. Claire's stoicism. Dan's wok. And of course the Doctor's own refusal to surrender. All these set against an apocalyptic event which they faced with optimism and courage.



So thematically, Swarm's and Azure's abrupt "ascension" may have been crafted to show that dying for what you believe in is the ultimate self-actualisation, and also to remind us that the energy that is life is never lost.

It is such a shame that we didn't see more of the characters struggling with their choices, which would have really pointed the relevance of the question. It was left to the viewer to make any thematic links, and as a result, the sense of real dilemma got watered down to the point of hardly being a dilemma at all. Azure's question has little relevance when people are shown either having already chosen, or choosing without internal debate. Even the Doctor's decision not to wallow in her memories until she had to - arguably the most relevant personal struggle since she was the one directly challenged by Azure - seemed like a cop out because Chibnall had invested us, his audience, in them and we had no voice in the outcome.

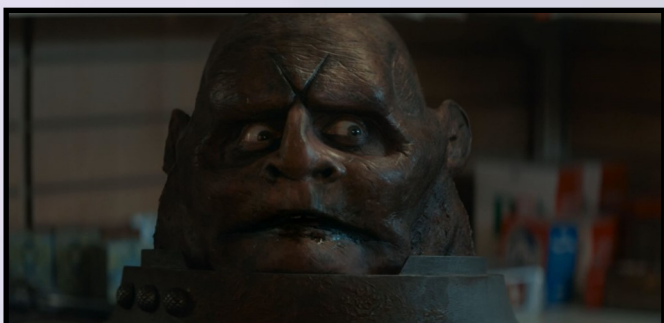
Perhaps over 12 weeks it would have been possible for those thematic links to be strengthened and for us to get to know the characters and care about them more. Was Di wrongly assessed as "insignificant" because of her disability? If so it could have had a more powerful impact if this had been made more explicit, linking it firmly to the theme of the importance of underdogs wielding woks in averting catastrophes. Similarly, a moment of doubt about bringing a child into a ruined universe, would have rendered Bel's decision to cheerfully face all dangers, a bit more plausible. As it was, out of all the trauma felt and bravery shown, only Jericho's death and the Doctor and Yaz's hug, made a strong emotional impact on me.

What else did I like?

That Lord Time took on the form of whoever confronted it. At the end of our existence we all have face ourselves!

Nothing wrong with the direction either: snappy, unfussy really well paced. All the special effects and production values were very, very good.

And I didn't just like, I **loved** how the Sontarans had been designed and the unique blend of menace and comedy that characterised them - perfectly balanced



and convincing. And Eustacius Jericho! Best companion in ages!

I think, however, that although it's been entertaining, the idea behind this series has been greater than what was achieved. The notions of belief and faith have been consistently referenced, the conclusion seemingly that family ("fam") is the only thing we can rely on. Unfortunately, this has been accompanied by the, surely unintended, message, that, in times of extremity, familial loyalty must focus on one's own race. And that there can be no reconciliation between entities with opposing faith systems.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that exploring complex ideas in adventures that are predicated on the Doctor saving the human race from attacks by aliens, has had consequences that may not have been foreseen – although we could all quote examples where this has been pulled off ("Have I the right?" to name but one.)

But of course, Chibnall still has three other attempts to stick his landing. Here's hoping.



DODO: So Much More Than a Screamer!

An appreciation of Jackie Lane's portrayal of Dodo Chaplet in Doctor Who's third season

By

ALEX PINFOLD

Jackie Lane, born Jacqueline Joyce Lane in 1941, had always wanted to perform in drama, having been around the world of theatre from childhood. As with many other actors of her generation, she started out in repertory theatre and, in a later interview¹, expressed that she always preferred stage acting, because of the way performances can develop, unlike the absolute quality of a recorded or broadcast production. In 1962, Jackie Lane moved to London and gained her first work for BBC television.

Interestingly, Jackie Lane was interviewed for two regular roles in *Doctor Who*, although there was no connection between either the roles or the opportunities. The second instance was due to John Wiles having seen her perform on stage, and this led to her casting in the role of Dodo. Meeting the other regular cast members for the first time during rehearsals for *The Ark*, Lane found them welcoming from the first day. Over the next few months on the show, Lane especially enjoyed sharing the lead in *The Celestial Toymaker* with Peter Purves, in William Hartnell's absence from most of the story, and the fun of recording *The Gunfighters*.

Much of fandom's impression of the character of Dodo is based upon *The Ark*, as one of only two complete surviving stories. However, this story was infamously overambitious, one in which none of the cast appear comfortable in roles that are two

dimensional yet also exaggerated to serve the demands of a fast moving but unfocused storyline. Scripts that require an actor to portray illness, while simultaneously allowing the character with no agency of their own, can leave an actor struggling to find a performance within otherwise meaningless material for their character, and such is the case here. Dodo, as with many female characters, even regulars, in pre-21st Century television, is there primarily for male characters to direct their own dialogue towards. In this context, Jackie Lane might not be able to impress but is at least equal to any of the guest performances here, served equally badly by the unevenness of the scripts.

The surrealism of *The Celestial Toymaker* is notable for the character because it allows Jackie Lane an opportunity to embrace the role more fully, not constrained by as many implied expectations. Here, Dodo is not merely a small part of any epic scenario or overwhelmed by a large supporting cast. In the situation in which they find themselves here, Dodo is arguably more confident than Steven! For this reason alone, it is a shame that the story is incomplete. Certainly, episode four shows a totally different Dodo than we see in *The Ark*, supporting the argument that this improvement is not inconsistency unless it regresses. Jackie Lane as Dodo goes from strength to strength.



The Gunfighters is definitely the highlight of the era for this Tardis crew, a fun and engaging parody of the film and television Western genre, that is full energy and humour, in which Jackie Lane especially shines, not only with the other main cast but the guest cast too, most notably Anthony Jacobs. Watching the story now, it becomes striking how much like a 21st Century episode of Doctor Who it is, with a bold and contemporary take on both real history and a classic genre of storytelling on screen and in print, combining charm, wit and a commentary on various kinds of human nature and social politics, however intentional this was at the time. In this context, as a prototype Amy or Clara, was Dodo underappreciated simply because, in the true tradition of the show, she was ahead of her time?



Dodo's departure part way through *The War Machines* is generally and unfairly interpreted by fandom as a final comment on Jackie Lane's perceived failure in the role, when in reality it had little to do with previous stories and everything to do with her contract running out. This was simply the way that television drama production on long running shows was organised at the time. Within those first two episodes, Jackie Lane's performance is excellent, portraying Dodo's excitement about returning to 1960s London and her curiosity about the new computer, the character's familiarity with the nightclub scene (which was completely new territory for Doctor Who as both a show and a character), and the stress and confusion of being forced to work against the Doctor under Wotan's mental control



Another lost classic is *The Savages*, the final time that Jackie Lane and Peter Purves performed together on Doctor Who. It is difficult from the audio recordings alone to judge just how good Jackie Lane was, but the evidence points towards her building upon the good performance in *The Gunfighters* with another confident portrayal of Dodo as an independent minded character with agency and motivation. Credit must go to writer Ian Stuart Black for giving her such a strong role in this story, something often denied other female leads on this and many other shows.

Dodo is clearly confident, bright, intelligent, and acts with remarkable agency and self-motivation on numerous occasions. One good example is threatening Doc Holliday with a firearm in *The Gunfighters*, and her lack of knowledge in operating it takes nothing away from the scene as there is no established reason why she should be able to. Later, in *The Savages*, Dodo's actions are driven by an intuition that something is being concealed and very quickly that that something is wrong. This general behaviour has been somewhat discriminatorily dismissed as Dodo getting herself and others into trouble but is actually a rare example of a main character other than the Doctor leading the narrative in the classic show. Again, ahead of her time.



Even in her first and last scenes in the show, generally overlooked or dismissed, Dodo comes across as a stronger character than widely perceived. In *The War Machines*, the hypnosis scene is quite poorly written – unless Hartnell was failing to follow either written or verbal direction to perform the scene differently – but a counter argument could interpret this in an alternate way, that Dodo is such a strong personality that the Doctor does not need to say or do much to overcome the influence, that he knows this, and that he is demonstrating his own confidence in her.

And if we look right back to her first appearance, Dodo is taking decisive action in response to a scenario that is never expanded upon in going into the Police Box in the first place.

In conclusion, we can say that, far from any kind of failure or lost opportunity, the character of Dodo is an icon of classic Doctor Who and feminism in 1960s British television, even if the actor might not have enjoyed the same level of agency as her character does. As with Ben and Polly in subsequent serials,

the loss of many episodes from the archives influences modern viewpoints, and it would be fascinating to see *The Savages* in particular animated in the future!

¹ *The author would like to acknowledge the work of filmmaker Keith Barnfather, as his video production Myth Makers: Jackie Lane was invaluable in compiling this essay. It is available from directly from the publisher via the Time Travel TV website.*

**RIP: Jackie Lane
10 July 1951 to 23 June 2021**



Illustration artwork © Raine Szramski

AVON!



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

See You Next Time!