

**The Time Rift (1998) [ADULT CONTENT] NC-17: AS, AL, V, EX, M/M**

A Blake's 7/UFO crossover.

The Liberator gets caught in a time rift, plunging the ship and crew hundreds of years into the past where they encounter a mysterious Earth force known only as SHADO.

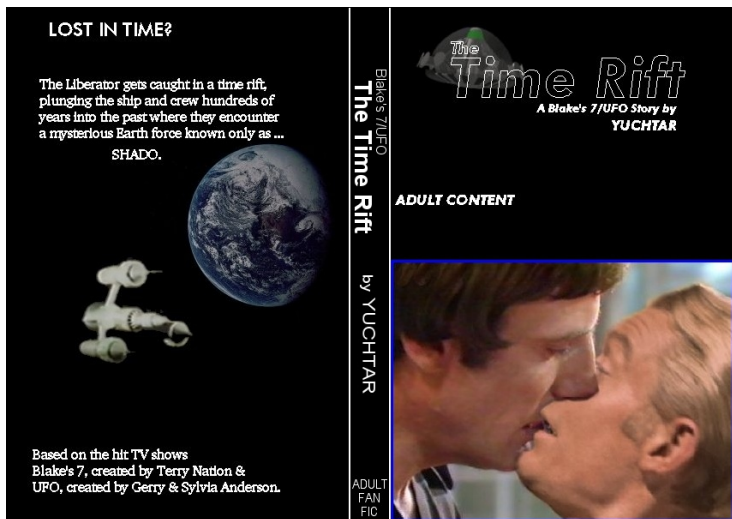
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# THE TIME RIFT

An UFO/Blake's 7 story written by

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**ADULT CONTENT**

"What the hell are you doing?" came the voice from behind.

Avon had been expecting it, but it was grating on the nerves none the less. "What the hell does it look I'm doing, Tarrant?" he replied coolly.

"It *looks* like you're setting course for Earth, but *no* one can possibly be *that* insane."

Ahhh, youth, for nothing else could generate such vehemence -- or stupidity. Avon was toying with the possibility of putting a permanent end to Tarrant's constant irritation when Vila stepped in.

"Oh, I don't know about that," he said casually. "You're giving a fairly good stab at it yourself."

"What?" Tarrant asked, confused.

"Why don't you help me run through a systems check on the transporter, Tarrant?" Cally suggested. "*Now.*" Before he could object, Cally had him by the arm and was leading him off the flight deck.

"I'll come, too," Vila chimed in, anxious to escape Avon's possible outburst.

Avon remained outwardly calm, however, and asked Dayna why she hadn't fled with the others.

"Perhaps because I'd like to know what the hell you're doing, too." Her voice had a hard edge, but her lovely face sported a huge grin, so Avon returned the expression -- and outdazzled her.

"I'm feeling homesick." Unlike Dayna, Avon kept his voice smooth as the black silk shirt he wore. "Any objections?"

Dayna sauntered over to him, swaying her hips provocatively. She had wanted this man ever since she had found him unconscious on Sarran, and the sight of him in those tight leather pants made her wet with desire -- it was quite maddening. She suspected he knew the effect he had on her, and dressed like he did deliberately -- he had a slight sadistic streak she had come to appreciate. Trying to keep the

lust from her voice, but not quite succeeding, she replied, "Perhaps, but I'm sure I could be persuaded."

Her lips were mere millimeters from his and their eyes were locked. Her musky scent was tantalizing and he could smell the wetness between her legs. He was tempted to give in to the firm hard-on he could feel beginning to form -- it would be so easy to take her; she wanted him, he could tell. But, it was more amusing to watch the agony he could cause by refusing her, so he willed his passion to dissipate, even as he kissed her. "I'm sure it wouldn't take much." he said quietly into her ear. "But I'm not in a very persuasive mood right now."

With a light tap on her bottom, Avon got up and headed for the doorway. "I'm going to go double check the repairs I made to the shield systems," he said. "Call me if you need me." And with that, he was gone.

Dayna felt like screaming, and might have done so, if Vila hadn't popped his head around

the corner at that moment. "Is he gone?" he asked. Dayna growled loudly at him and stormed off the flight deck, leaving a bewildered Vila to wonder what he had said to deserve that.

A wry smile formed at Avon's lips as he relished the tight feeling of passion denied; knowing it would be ten times worse for someone like Dayna who possessed no where near his level of self-control. His amusement was cut short, however, when the ship suddenly lurched violently, throwing Avon across the room where his head smacked into a console and all thought momentarily blinked out.

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"RED ALERT! RED ALERT!" bellowed the disembodied voice of SID. Everyone at SHADO HQ scrambled into position and the MoonBase Interceptors were launched, but this Ufoe was unlike any other the elite force had ever encountered. For one thing, it was HUGE and

had materialized out of nowhere, and for another, it wasn't moving. It had parked itself in orbit around the moon and just sat there -- menacing, but so far passive.

"Should we fire our missiles, Colonel?"

It was Greer, a new kid, fresh from Interceptor training - this was his second real launch. Colonel Foster could hear the eagerness in his voice. His first instinct was to go ahead and let them blast the bloody thing, but he knew the Commander might disagree. "Stand by," he said to the Interceptor pilots, as he turned to Straker's image on the screen. "What about it, sir? Blast them, or what?"

"Have they made any threatening moves, Paul?"

"No, sir, not yet; but as big as it is, I'd hate to contemplate the damage it could do if it did get threatening."

"Transmit any visual and sensory data you pull in and stand by, Paul." That said, Commander Straker turned to Colonel Freeman and motioned

him to follow. Once safely behind the closed door of his office, Straker became quite animated. "What d'you make of this, Alec?" He switched on the view screen in his office and watched the strange-looking craft as it hung limply in space.

"Well," Freeman couldn't help himself saying. "It sort of looks like a Mr. Microphone with three syringes attached."

Straker shot him a disapproving glance, but he remained enthusiastic. "That's beside the point, Alec -- maybe we're finally going to make contact with our green friends and find out what the hell this has all been about."

"What makes you think so, Ed?"

"Look at that thing, Alec! It's big and I dare say beautiful in it's own way." Responding to the blank look on Freeman's face, Straker added, "An effort has been made to make it aesthetically pleasing - it's not a warship, Alec. Oh, I know, it's probably loaded with firepower, but that's not its primary function. Well.

hopefully, anyway. Besides, it hasn't fired yet, so there's hope."

As he said that, the strange craft shifted slightly and one of the Interceptors launched its missile. "HOLD YOUR FIRE, DAMMIT!" Straker yelled into his mike.

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Avon had one hell of a headache when he came to, but he didn't let that slow him down. As he jogged toward the flight deck, he wondered how long he had been out and made a mental run-through of every incident that could possibly have caused the ship to lurch that way. There were none. That worried him, and he broke into an actual run.

When he burst onto the flight deck, he found Cally leaning over Vila, who was moaning on the floor and Dayna and Tarrant were trying to get a visual on screen. "Zen, what happened?" Avon demanded, but there was no answer.

"Answer me, Zen!" Still, receiving no reply, he turned to the smaller computer on the console and put the question to ORAC instead.

"Insufficient data." ORAC had such a smug voice, Avon was often quite tempted to smash the bloody thing, but something always interrupted. This time it was Zen.

Slowly, the resonating voice of the ship's computer ground out a series of random sounds until it formed a coherent word. "Time," it said. "Time, time, time rift . . ." Finally regaining full control of his voice, he explained more fully. "Liberator has encountered a time rift."

"Damage?"

"Minimal. All systems functioning."

Avon demanded visual, at which point the screen slowly dissolved into a view of . . .

"What's that?" Tarrant wanted to know.

"The moon," Vila answered, almost as if he had expected to see it.

"What moon?"

"Earth's moon," Avon supplied.

"Earth doesn't have a moon."

"No, not now," Vila said.

"It was destroyed centuries ago," Avon added.

As the implications of that statement sank in, Vila suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, great! Now we're stuck in the *past!*"

"What are those blips on screen there?" Tarrant wanted to know.

They tried to get a closer look, but one of the starboard sensors was out, so they shifted the ship laterally to get a view from the forward sensor. As they did so, the ship was rocked with the force of an explosion. The shields held, but the ship was buffeted enough to knock Vila on his butt again.

"What the hell?!" he exclaimed.

"We've been fired on!" Dayna yelled as she ordered Zen to prime weapons.

"No, wait," Avon ordered. "They're holding fire -- it might have been an accident."

"Accident, my ass!" Dayna exclaimed.

"And a damned fine ass, it is too," Avon retorted with a grin, which took Dayna by surprise, but he didn't give anyone else the chance to comment. "I said we hold fire and wait, and that's what we're going to do."

"And what makes you think you're in command here?" Tarrant wanted to know.

"Because I'm the only one capable of killing *anyone* who gets in my way." Gone now was the smooth-as-silk tonal quality of voice Avon liked to keep; having been replaced with the brutal demeanor for which he was so often remembered, but which he seldom actually used.

For all his bravado, Tarrant took a few steps back at that, sensing for the first time that Avon not only meant what he said, but that he might possibly be capable as well.

Satisfied with the reaction, Avon regained his coolness. "Zen, scan the area for any possible communications traffic and zoom in whatever those are that fired on us."

Zen acknowledged the command and the

view screen was suddenly filled with the image of three small craft - smaller even than any Federation pursuit ship. Two of them carried one large missile apiece at the nose and the third, presumably the one that had fired, had none.

"Interesting," Vila said before he could stop himself.

"Very," agreed Avon.

"What's so interesting already?" demanded Dayna.

"You may as well explain, Vila, as you seem to know a whole hell of a lot more than a Delta Grade should about Earth history. And incidentally, Tarrant, you really should be ashamed of yourself if you can't recognize a SHADO Interceptor after having graduated from the Federation Space Academy and all . . ."

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"I'd say that proves they're not looking

for a fight," Straker said. "Wouldn't you, Alec?"

Freeman looked at the viewscreen in consternation. "Perhaps the ship has been damaged in some way . . ." he suggested.

"Oh, come on, Alec, admit it! You're as curious as I am. But how to make contact?" Straker pushed down on the intercom button and asked Foster if he had detected any communication attempts, but the reply was negative -- there had been no signal from the Ufoe . . .yet.

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"Paul, has there been any attempted communication from the Ufoe?" The sound of the voice piqued Avon's interest as much as the question itself. He tried to envision the man who had spoken -- such a deep, husky and, he admitted to himself, damned sexy voice. The reply was no less tantalizing: "No, Commander, we've detected nothing so far." Another

intriguing voice - smooth, but with an easy, youthful edge to it -- spoken by a man of action, confident in his own abilities, but without the kind of overbearing smugness so often displayed by the likes of Tarrant.

"They're speaking English," Dayna said.

"And I thought it was Vila's job to overstate the obvious," Avon jibed.

Dayna bristled a bit at that, but Avon ignored it and ordered Zen to display a visual of the speakers. The computer was unable to descramble the images right away and could not comply, which irritated Avon just a little.

They all sat and listened to the SHADO communications for a while, waiting for Zen to descramble a visual, but eventually, Avon grew too impatient to wait any longer. Speaking into the ship's communicator, Avon called: "Liberator to SHADO Control; Liberator to SHADO Control, come in."

"What the hell are you doing?" Tarrant wanted to know.

"I'm contacting them, Tarrant; have you no powers of observation at all?"

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Everyone at SHADO HQ as well as everyone on MoonBase were momentarily stunned to silence when the call came through. When the second call came through, everyone started talking at once and had to be silenced by Straker and Foster, respectively.

"This is SHADO Control," Straker finally replied -- any hint of anxiety well hidden. "To whom am I speaking?"

"That's what I'd like to know, but my computer can't seem to descramble your image."

"Ah, I see. Well, if you were to broadcast *your* image, perhaps I could see about descrambling mine."

Without warning, an image suddenly popped up on the SHADO viewers. A dark-haired man in a black silk shirt filled most of the

screen, with a slim black woman by his side. "My name is Avon," the man said. "Commanding the Liberator. And you are?"

Before he could help himself, Straker blurted out: "You're human!"

"Of course, we're human," Avon responded.

"Most of us, anyway," came a feminine voice from off screen.

"And some of us are more human than others," chimed in a bemused-sounding male voice, also off screen.

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Avon found himself quite taken aback when Straker's image materialized on screen. He couldn't say just exactly what he had expected, but the angelic visage staring back at him certainly wasn't it. The voice had suggested a bigger, older man, and the demeanor made Avon envision a craggy-faced militant, perhaps

with a flat top hair cut and baggy fatigues. The reality, however, was a slender, well-dressed man with long blond hair and big penetrating blue eyes, much younger looking than anyone in command had a right to be. Avon allowed a slight smile to flash in his eyes and hoped ORAC would not be too terribly quick about figuring a way back home - this situation was becoming an amusement. From what he'd read about Commander Straker, Avon didn't think he would consent freely and, while the thought of rape had an appeal all its own, he wasn't sure he wanted to go that far. When Colonel Foster's image shimmered on screen, Avon was faced with the dilemma of choice. Foster was young and dark with sultry eyes and looked more the type to be bi-sexual and therefore more likely to be willing; but Straker was so magnetic - the gold hair and ice-blue eyes pulled Avon inexorably toward him. Avon grinned. Yes, this would be an amusement indeed.

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"You're NOT going, Ed!"

Straker stopped his bustling, momentarily taken aback by the outburst. Freeman didn't ordinarily give himself over to theatrics, so this meant he was genuinely concerned, which meant Straker should think again.

"Alec," he said imploringly. "I CAN'T pass up the opportunity to find out about these people. The only way to do that is to go to MoonBase."

"It's not safe, Ed."

"Come on, Alec, you've seen that ship. I'm certain they could kill me just as easily while I sit at this desk -- if they'd a mind to."

Freeman chewed his lip a moment and Straker had to laugh at his friend, which made Freeman frown.

"It's okay, Alec. I appreciate your concern, but you have to understand that I MUST find out -- I've GOT to know who they

are."

*All of them, or just Avon?* Freeman almost choked on the words, but he didn't utter them. Instead, he merely said, "Be careful, Ed."

Straker grinned, which tweaked a pang of regret that flashed quickly across Freeman's eyes. Oh, he had no sexual designs on his friend; Freeman was never homosexual, but he couldn't deny a strange kind of protective love for Straker. He didn't want him to get hurt -- and this Avon character looked decidedly dangerous.

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Straker's sleek bronze car was zipping along the motorway toward the Lunar Launching Pad when the attack came. It was probably one of the spinners lost a couple weeks before, having sought refuge under the sea only to emerge now. The explosion ripped apart the roadway in front of him, and Straker twisted hard at the wheel to avoid slipping into the

crater. The car being an obvious target, he dove out of it as soon as it had come to a stop. Before he could decide which way to turn, the spinner exploded above him.

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Zen announced the spinner attack as instructed by Avon and then eliminated the threat with precision, also as instructed by Avon. Having been threatened with being meticulously disemboweled with a laser probe, ORAC grudgingly teleported Avon down to the specified coordinates.

Straker was unconscious, blood seeping from wounds to the head and shoulder. He must have been hit with debris from the spinner. Avon slipped a teleport bracelet around his wrist and had ORAC bring them both up.

"What the hell's going on?" Vila wanted to know when the pair had materialized on board Liberator. "Is that who I think it is?"

"He's been hit, get Cally to the lab," Avon told him. "*Now*," he added when Vila didn't move fast enough to suit him.

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The wounds were superficial -- mere scratches, really. Straker had been knocked out from the force of the blast, but should recover fully. He was now resting comfortably in Avon's cabin; while Avon, dressed only in a black satin robe, sat with his hands together gazing down at him, debating how he should handle things when the other man awoke.

Gods, but Straker was beautiful; his face so calm and boyish. Avon could feel the blood rushing to his cock just looking at him! He gazed at the lidded eyes and imagined their icy depths. Momentarily lost in his fantasies, he didn't notice right away that the eyes had opened. When he did realize it, Avon actually blushed! It was just a fleeting flash of color, but Straker

noticed it, none the less.

"Have I been out long?" Straker asked.

"Just about an hour," Avon replied. "How do you feel?"

"All right, I guess. Where am I?"

"Aboard my ship." Avon smiled to himself when he considered what the others would have thought of him referring to the Liberator as "his" ship, and then continued. "You were attacked by a . . . spinner -- isn't that what you call them?"

"Sometimes. What do you call them?"

"Nothing -- they don't exist when I come from."

Straker took notice of the phraseology, but didn't want to give the satisfaction of letting his overwhelming curiosity show. Besides, he found himself somewhat distracted by the look in Avon's dark eyes. It had been so long since Straker had allowed himself to contemplate such things, he could very well have been mistaken to think he saw desire -- or even

plain lust; but was he mistaken? He looked more closely.

Avon was beautiful, no doubt about that. He had a fire in his eyes that seemed to mirror his own self-denied passions. He was concentrating on the sensuous lips, contemplating just how kissable they were, when he realized they were smiling at him. Avon had spoken, but Straker hadn't heard. "I'm sorry, did you say something?"

"I asked if you like what you see."

Straker thought about denying his feelings, but he suddenly felt so very weary. He also began to realize that he was, in fact, naked beneath the sheets and he felt his cock begin to stir. Besides, this guy was obviously from another galaxy and/or another time and certainly was not under his command, so there was no ethical reason not to let himself go. And it had been so long since Mary had left him . . . so long since he had felt another Human in his arms.

Reading the pause as apprehension, Avon told him, "It wouldn't have to be painful, you know."

Almost indignantly, Straker replied, "I'm no stranger to masculine sex."

Avon arched an eyebrow at that unexpected confession. "Oh?" Human sexuality was no longer considered a taboo subject in Avon's time, but he knew from the history texts that homosexuality was very much frowned upon in the late twentieth century. "You're homosexual?"

"No," Straker replied with a slight pout which pursed his lips in a most seductive way. "Are you?"

"No -- bi-sexuality would have been quite an extraordinary mindset for this time period, Straker, I'm surprised."

"Yeah, well, I guess I'm just an extraordinary man."

"Yes, considering the social implications of the day, I would --"

"Avon."

"Yes?"

"Shut up." Before Avon could react to that statement, Straker pulled him down into a long, passionate kiss.

As their tongues explored each other, Avon thought to himself that this certainly wasn't the way he had envisioned any of this proceeding. But, of course, he had no desire to complain about it either, as his robe dropped to the floor to reveal the results of a more basic desire.

Straker's hands were all over Avon, kneading and caressing every inch of skin he could find. Avon, a little anxious to avoid squeezing the wound at Straker's shoulder, tried to keep his hands at the other man's back.

The kiss became a hunger as Straker's hand closed around Avon's fully erect cock. He stroked it for a moment, moving the foreskin back and forth when he realized Avon had not been circumcised. Then he swiftly kissed his way

down Avon's chest and took the throbbing cock into his mouth. He sucked hard, occasionally raking his teeth lightly across the surface and delighting in the slight gasp this would elicit from Avon.

Avon, who still had both feet on the floor, was now supporting himself with one hand on the wall, as his knees threatened to buckle beneath him. The fingers of his other hand were entwined in Straker's fine platinum hair.

Breathless, Straker released his prize and asked, "Have you got any K-Y?"

"Huh?" Avon grunted, equally breathless.

"Lubricant -- got any?"

Avon nodded and reached over to a shelf to get it. Straker took it from him and kicked his sheet off. He smeared some of the gel into his anus and then pulled Avon onto the bed.

"I want you now," Straker said, and he kissed him again as he messaged the gel into Avon's cock. When he thought he had enough lubrication, Straker pulled Avon into himself.

"Oh, yeah," he groaned. "That's what I want."

Amused as well as aroused, Avon pumped Straker's ass mercilessly, but Straker took it all and begged for more. Avon grasped Straker's cock - intrigued to note that the foreskin had been removed, and stroked it in his fist, keeping rhythm with his own thrusts.

Straker shut his eyes and threw his head back as he groaned in pleasure. "You like this, Straker?" Avon asked with a grin.

"Oh, yes, Avon," he replied. "Don't stop now." Straker blindly reached out and ran his hands through Avon's thick wavy hair and then brought them down to caress and tweak Avon's nipples.

Little electrical sparks shot through Avon's spine whenever Straker squeezed a nipple. A little startled by his own reaction, Avon jerked involuntarily every time it happened, thrusting deeper within Straker each time.

"Oh, yeah, that's good," Straker moaned,

and attacked the nipples with greater vigor once he realized the cause and effect.

Avon's breathing grew ragged and his pumping more frantic until, with a muffled cry, he came in Straker's ass. Almost simultaneously, Straker came in Avon's fist, spraying come up Avon's chest and back down on himself.

Afterwards, they both sat frozen in place for a moment as they tried to catch their breath. Avon pulled his now limp cock out of Straker and collapsed onto the bed next to the other man.

When his breath was regulated enough to speak again, Avon sighed. "You know, I really didn't think you would go for something like this. I thought your Colonel Foster would be a more likely subject."

"He's attractive enough, but only has eyes for the ladies, I'm afraid," Straker replied.

"Really?" Avon said with a wicked grin as he propped his head up and looked down at Straker. "Are you sure about that?"

With no hesitation, Straker answered, "No, but it doesn't matter as far as I'm concerned; I don't get involved with fellow officers under my command."

Avon was tempted to argue, and even opened his mouth to do so, but said instead, "You made a mess; I need a shower -- care to join me?"

Having expected an argument, Straker glanced suspiciously at him a moment before deciding he was serious. He grinned and said, "Lead the way, MacDuff."

"MacDuff?"

"Never mind."

=====

The water ran hot, but not too hot. Straker, with his fine white chest hairs, was clean as soon as the water hit him. Avon, however, had come all matted in the thick dark hairs of his chest and belly and Straker grinned

as he used the soap to lather him up. "This is what happens when you have too much chest hair," he said.

"You're just jealous," Avon replied.

"You might be right." Once the soap was rinsed off, Straker commanded, "Turn around."

"Turn around?"

"I came prepared." Straker held up the container of lubricant and grinned.

"Ahhh," Avon muttered as he looked from the container to Straker's stiffening cock.

"Turnabout is fair play?"

"Exactly -- now do as you're told."

Avon did as he was told and Straker prepared him for entry. "You like it easy?" Straker asked. "Or rough?"

"Sort of . . . in between."

Straker put the lubricant away and then eased his hands around Avon's cock while easing his own into Avon's ass. Avon was rather impressed, as Straker had used just enough lubricant to get himself in while leaving just

enough friction for it to be pleasantly painful. "Good?" Straker asked.

"Perfect," Avon purred.

Straker manipulated Avon's cock until it hardened in his hands and then help him erect as he pumped himself toward orgasm. Both men moaned and Straker eventually announced, "I'm gonna come."

Breathlessly, Avon replied, "Well, I'm not and I hope to Hell you're not going to leave me like -- oh!"

His words were stifled as Straker reached orgasm, his whole body -- including the hand that still held Avon's genitalia -- stiffening in the process. After a heavy sigh, Straker relaxed and pulled out of Avon's ass. "Turn around," he said breathlessly.

"Again?" Avon asked, but he turned to face the fairer man.

"You were saying?" Straker asked as he knelt and took Avon's aching cock into his mouth.

"Oh, yeah -- "Avon muttered while he sat on the corner seat of the shower and squirmed under the onslaught. "Damn, you're good, Straker!"

"Hmm-hmm, sats what sey say," Straker replied around a mouthful of Avon.

Avon laughed and then squealed as he could contain himself no longer and came, Straker sucking every bit of the briny fluid down and then sucking some more for good measure before he was forced to release his prize once again for the want of air.

They both sat panting for a moment before Avon said, "Didn't want another mess?"

"Exactly. We'd never make it out of the shower otherwise!"

Avon laughed again, which Straker quite enjoyed, rather suspecting that it was a rare occurrence.

=====

Afterwards, the two men lay side by side on Avon's bed and sighed in contentment.

"I haven't done that in a while," Avon admitted.

"Nor me. Can't seem to find anyone I can trust enough, you know?"

"Oh, I know all right; but what the hell made you think you could trust me?"

"Well, you already know more than you should about me and my organization -- which I'm hoping you'll eventually explain soon -- but you're not under my command and you didn't kill me when you had the chance, so I don't see that I was risking much really."

"I guess I do owe you some sort of an explanation, don't I?"

"From what you said earlier, it sounds as if you're from a future Earth -- I hope you're not going to tell me you traveled back in time just to seduce the famed Ed Straker?"

Another laugh from Avon brought a smile to Straker's features, at which Avon marveled,

suspecting it was a rare occurrence. "No, it was an accident, I assure you! We haven't developed a technique for time travel!"

"But you know of me? And SHADO?"

"Oh, yes -- quite an extraordinary period of history, really."

"Why are the aliens coming here?"

"Don't know -- never found out."

"But we *do* defeat them?"

"Yes and no. I mean, you and your people make it too expensive for them to do business here and they simply move on -- vanish as suddenly as they appeared."

"Do I . . . ? I mean, do they . . . ?"

"All I can tell you is that the aliens don't get you. More than that and I'd be fucking around with the whole time stream."

"And we've already done enough fucking around for one day, haven't we?"

"Exactly."

=====

"WELL LOOK AGAIN, DAMMIT!!"  
Freeman barked into the phone just as a shape shimmered and materialized next to him in Straker's office at SHADO HQ. He dropped the phone and came close to dropping the glass of Scotch he was holding as he almost fell over backwards trying to stand before he had pulled his feet off the desk top first. "WHAT THE HELL?!" he sputtered. "ED!" he screamed, for it was Straker, he could tell now -- dressed in black leather boots, black leather pants, and black silk shirt, opened at the neck. His hair was tousled and his eyes gleamed, Freeman also noted instantly.

"Alec," Straker said with a nod. "Been hard at it?" He felt a (very) slight twang of guilt about his friend frantically searching for him while he was enjoying a bit of a romp, but it passed quickly. "Any new developments?"

"Only that you've gone missing, but I guess that crisis is over now," Freeman replied

with a wave of his hand. "Oh, and that strange Ufoe has just vanished as well," he added as he watched the ship on the view screen blink out of existence.

"Yeah, well, they were only . . . passing through."

END