

THE SCREENWRITER

Excerpt from 'Between Life and Death' by M.G. Harris, originally published in 'The Aquitar Files'.

SEATED AT A TABLE IN A FRENCH-STYLE CAFETERIA, you are enjoying a weekend breakfast alone as you read through your correspondence. You sip coffee from a large mug and generously cover your croissant with butter and jam. The cafe is almost full and the atmosphere is both sedate and jolly; people out to relax on a Sunday morning. Like you, several people sit alone at their table, contentedly carving up plates of bacon with eggs or else just drinking coffee and browsing through the Sunday supplements. Reading your mail, you have set aside the largest envelope as a special treat for when you have finished with the mundane matters; you are that sort of person who steers a course through the less pleasant duties of life with small enticements, rewards for a job well done. Almost certainly, the largest envelope holds your latest 'Liberation' newsletter: all the very latest news from the world of *Blake's Seven*.

It has been weeks since you last heard from either Jemima or Jonathan. Following the encounter with Jonathan and Garda on the night you arrived, Jonathan appeared to cease all attempts to pursue you, something which you now realise you have taken more for a pique than the relief which you initially expected. Was his interest attracted elsewhere? The nature of the relationship between Garda and Jemima's brother still intrigues you, even now. You would not have guessed them to be compatible, would have assumed Jonathan to be too simply boyish for a woman of Garda's apparent contradictions. One thought eludes all your efforts to dispel it; this is the possibility that if Garda finds him attractive then there may be something more to him than you have so far discovered.

Your visit to their house remains for the most part, a subject of curiosity. Jemima appeared the day after your arrival, without so much as a word as to her disappearance the night before. And to your immense relief, neither Jonathan nor Garda seem to have told her anything about the embarrassing incident in the study. Which presented a problem because after reading the first few pages of Jemima's own foray into the world of *Blake's Seven* fiction, you were, as ever, curious to read more; in this case it was only too clear that any further investigations would be impossible without Jemima's permission since the remaining text is locked away on Jemima's computer.

Mentally, you run through the plots of the four stories which you have now begun and lost. How many of them might you reasonably hope to recover? The last one - *In The Lattice Of Realities Which Interweave* - seems the least likely because it is Jemima's own and naturally, still in progress. Something which Jonathan said to you, however, makes you wonder whether what you read wasn't simply an early draft of the story, the rest of which is still in Jemima's computer, or else, already on its way to the printers? The other stories, *In The Lattice Of Memories* etc., *Between Life And Death* and *Blake, Beset By Adversaries*, are more easily recoverable. since you did at one time hold in your hand the complete versions of the first two and have it on good authority that sequels exist for the third.

Clearly, what you need is proper access to a comprehensive library of all known *Blake's Seven* zines. You take out a piece of paper and write down upon it, the four titles which you now seek.

You are on your third cup of coffee by the time you finally open up the envelope containing the latest 'Liberation' newsletter. As you open the newsletter, a piece of paper falls out and drops onto the floor; you pick it up and notice that it is a flyer for a grand *Blake's Seven* convention in Chicago.

At that moment, you are surprised to hear that your name is being called. As you wave to identify yourself, a waitress comes over to your table with a cordless phone.

It is Jonathan. "Hi! How are you? Great to talk to you! Listen, I'm over at your place."

He came to visit you, out of the blue?

"That's nice Jonathan. Erm, why?"

"We have to talk. I need your help. Look, what are you doing over the next two weeks?"

"Going to work, as usual."

"I was wondering, could you consider taking some time off...? I want you to come to San Francisco with me."

(Which happens to you all the time, men asking you to drop everything and fly to San Francisco.)

Jonathan continues; "Look, it's really important. Jems has flown off the handle. She's heard the news and has decided that she can't stand by..."

You interrupt politely. "Excuse me, what news would that be?"

"You haven't heard? Haven't you got your 'Liberation' newsletter yet? About the movie!"

You flick through the newsletter and sure enough, splashed all over page three is the announcement; Fox to produce big-budget *Blake's Seven* movie, with a new cast and written by the reknown screen writer, the English-born Greville Davis, who began his career writing for *The Avengers*.

"This is incredible...wow, I'm amazed..."

You can hear the smile in his voice as he replies, "I know. Great, isn't it? We haven't stopped talking about it since we heard. But something awful has happened. Jemima started thinking about the script and about her personal canon..."

It appears that initially, Jemima was filled with anxiety about what the new writers might do to upset the carefully constructed *Blake's Seven* Universe which has become so important to her and her inner circle. Then, she realised what a marvellous opportunity this represented: if the *screenwriter* himself could be persuaded to fall into her sphere of influence then Jem's view might become the prevailing one! Moreover, he might be able, in his new script, to surreptitiously correct small but crucial facts which have lurked, embedded quietly in the fabric of the TV series canon, disturbing not only Jemima's view of the series but in fact, the smooth continuity of the work as a whole. The thought of finally changing such factors, irritants for so long, seems to have filled Jemima with an unshakeable resolve as a result of which she left, yesterday, for San Francisco, bent upon visiting Mr. Greville Davis in his house in Sausalito.

You are stunned by the audacity of her action. Fumbling for something to say, you manage to ask, "What does Garda think of all this?"

Jonathan answers dismissively: "Oh, you know Garda. Nothing seems to ruffle her feathers. She just poured herself a large Scotch and muttered something about having her ideas stolen." "Stolen?"

"Something Garda wrote about the first convention she went to. It was purely fictional, of course but it did seem as though that's where Jemima got the idea. If she's read the story, that is."

He went on to explain that Garda had not been angry but rather, nonplussed, saying that Jemima was free to make a fool of herself any day of the week, as indeed were we all. Jonathan, on the other hand, obviously felt differently.

"We have to stop her. She lives in such an isolated world...she has no way of understanding that this is just too way out! He's going to think she's crazy. You know what they are like out there. He'll probably find something to sue her for...good God, the legal bills alone could run into millions..."

He is panicking. Soothingly, you say, "Okay, Jonathan, I see your point. But really, is it such a terrible thing? Writers must get free, unwanted advice all the time!"

"You don't know what she is like. He is going to think she is kidding but *you* know that Jemima has absolutely no sense of humour!"

"Alright Jon, what do you want to do?"

You hear a warm smile in his voice; "Thanks...you know, I knew I could count on you...if only I could persuade Jemima to think the way you do, maybe I could have something like a normal life..." Then, his brisk tone resumes; "You'll need to get over here right away and pack! Have you got a valid passport? We can get the bus to the airport. There's a flight tomorrow at 11am. I'll help you get ready. If we hurry, we can make it."

You're at the airport, browsing through the magazines and airport novels, trying to decide which one to take on the trip. Jonathan is sitting, holding a table for you in the Cafe Yaourt. You are still unsure as to exactly how it is that you are here with Jemima's rather beguiling brother, waiting to catch a plane on less than a day's notice: what is going on, Reader? Could it be that you are finding yourself, somehow, after everything I have done to dissuade you, to be attracted to this man? How typical then, and how tragic that when he could not do enough to attract your attention you found it necessary to shun him, yet in the moment he turns his attention elsewhere you suddenly find yourself almost wistfully missing that interest!

Ah, but I see you make the old excuse again...it is not Jonathan that brings you here but rather, the intriguing possibility of meeting the figures central to the future creation of *Blake's Seven* on the silver screen. Like Jemima, you are irresistibly drawn to all reincarnations of the series you have grown to love; can you help it then, if Jonathan has seen fit to provide you the very excuse you needed in order to catapult yourself headlong into the midst of the fomenting cauldron of creativity?

Jonathan has ordered tea but even in this you something to criticize because you wanted coffee. Carefully, he removes the cup and saucer from in front of you and with only the slightest

pause, during which his eyes rather nervously scan yours, he begins to drink your tea.

"There's something I need to talk to you about," he says eventually.

"Well, go ahead."

"Garda...has been asking about you," he begins. You say nothing, merely stirring sugar into your freshly poured black coffee. Jonathan seems almost anxious.

"Did you find...when you stayed with us...that is, did it ever cross your mind...have you ever had any sort of feelings towards...or even just, attraction..." His voice trails off as his eyes meet yours. Then, more quietly he says, "You needn't fix me with quite such a beady glare, you know."

"I'm the sort of person, Jonathan," you state emphatically, "...who prefers to be told about the nature of an engagement *before* being asked whether one is free on a particular night."

"Yes, well, doesn't everyone," he mutters sullenly, continuing, "Only, it isn't always like that is it? You needn't take it so badly anyway. I would be flattered, if I were you."

"Oh you would, would you?!" you exclaim indignantly. "Then perhaps it's better if you don't give me the opportunity to disappoint you!"

"Well, I wouldn't be disappointed," he hastens to add, "Not in the slightest, you can be sure about that!"

How can one possibly respond to such an apparent insult? There appears to be little point in arguing any more. A frosty silence has suddenly developed between the two of you and quite astonishingly, for one whom you had taken to be so well-mannered, Jonathan seems entirely unrepentant concerning his outburst, even to the point of appearing to harbour some feelings of anger towards you yourself!

From the diary of Greville Davis

Tuesday 18th

Without any doubt, the ideal way to begin the morning is with a cup of black espresso, charred plum tomatoes with eggs over easy; *at least* two Marlboro Lights. I followed my own advice this morning as on others. Reading material: *Variety*. Music: Schubert symphony number 5, first movement *only*. I read that Gabriel Byrne has just finished shooting another picture; I make a note to tell Sonja to call him to read for Travis. Or Blake. Or, just possibly, Avon. On second thoughts, score that; he's perfect for Travis; remember him as the Nazi in "The Keep", or the Irish gangster in "Miller's Crossing". He could bring a real subtlety to the role; I'd have to write him closer to the original but with the disturbing self-containment of the second Travis. I wonder if the Coens would be interested in being involved? No; they'd want a hand in the writing, which no-one is going to have but me. Put down same for Quentin Tarantino; don't be tempted!

Second cup of coffee, third cigarette; music change: three minutes and twenty seconds *only*, J.J Cale.

Standing on my balcony I look right across the marina; I can't quite see my own boat from here; it's too small. After the picture, I'll buy a bigger one. I'm convinced, at last, that the opening scene is right. I'm not out to shock but then again I don't want anyone to sit there thinking that

they've walked into yet another spaceship blockbuster. Its strength always was the interior lives of the characters; let's stick to that, dialogue and psychological thriller.

I'm still unsure that we made the right decision to do this as a post-Gauda Prime. There are so many constraints; *Blake's Seven* in a fundamentally Blake-less universe. Alternative Universe Seven might be easier but it would never be accepted as canonical. Never-before-told stories are just a waste of time; we need a cash cow. Something to continue the adventures. We could bring Blake back as the original Blake and say that Avon shot the clone...but would that be stretching credibility? Perhaps I've too much respect for Chris to do that; no, the impact of the final episode must not be compromised. Ideally.

Another minor victory; Terry finally came around about not using his story outline. For a while there, I thought he'd never speak to me again, which would have been a shame because even though I *resent* some of his comments about my landing this deal, he's still a great man and one of my all-time heroes. Plus, he has a great wine cellar.

Fourth Marlboro; reading; 'Vanity Fair' music; Simon and Garfunkel – 'Mrs Robinson'.

Sailors are early risers; I can see them spilling out onto the wharf as I write, all decked out in Gortex and Reeboks. There's a girl on the deck of one of the nearer boats. She's been there for an hour at least; just reading; not wearing sailing clothes; doesn't seem to have plans to go anywhere today. I wonder what she's reading?

If only I knew whom they were going to cast as Avon, it would make my job a good deal easier. It's a role that has to be defined in a large part by the actor. If we want him played like first or second season Avon then we have to get someone who can bring out that heroic element whilst still retaining the cynical wit. Or maybe we want the angst-ridden Avon of the third series? He could never vocalize those feelings so we'd have to get someone who can say it all with The Look. David Duchovny is interested, I know, but are we interested in him? Is there anyone out there who doesn't see him as Mulder? Certainly our audience does. In any event, he's too young; too whiny; doesn't have the *gravitas* to pull it off. I still like Alan Rickman for the part. Like David, he'll appeal to all the right impulses in the Avon-groupie brigade. Even now he still has that expression, that voice that just says: sex. But then...if Alan could do it then why not Paul? They're of an age, for sure. Sometimes I just want to get on the phone to Fox and tell that producer what I think of his casting plans!

Memo to the producer; Rick; let's get David Duchovny in to read. He has just the right deadpan wit; let's see if he can do the temper and the angst.

Thursday 20th

Waking up this morning, I switched on the espresso machine, lit up a Marlboro and walked over to my balcony to see if the girl in the Laura Ashley dress is still on that yacht deck. (Actually, I don't *know* that it's a Laura Ashley but it is one of those floral print patterns -she looks the type, mind you- I'm thinking of her that way already.) I have to admit to mild disappointment when I found the deck empty. Yesterday, she spent the whole day on the deck, just reading, sipping Mountain Dew and *I swear to God*, looking up at me. I pretended not to notice, for a while. Then, I began to pretend to myself that I had known her for ages; that we were old friends and she was visiting, just spending time on my yacht. She was a great fan of mine - of course. She particularly loved the scripts I wrote for "*Murder and More*". Then I started telling her all about my story ideas for the movie. Which she loved.

It is hard to write for an unseen audience. If I wrote novels I don't think I would have this problem; I would write only from within, only what moved or inspired me, with no thought or interest to what the waiting audience would think, only trusting to whatever god looks after writers to ensure that *someone* was on my wavelength. As it is, not only do I have to guarantee to please a large audience; I have to please people who for years have cultivated their own thoughts about this fictional world.

These thoughts were really what prompted me to accept the fanclub's idea to look at storyline submissions. Another package of them arrived today but I can hardly bear to go through them now. Not since I lost the perfect idea.

The Perfect Idea hits you only rarely; God help you if there's no pen or paper nearby. Yesterday I awoke from a dream in which was revealed to me the most wonderful idea for my script. In the dream, I didn't even have the effort of composing it, only the lazy pleasure of seeing the already completed work. We, that is, the Laura Ashley Girl and I, were attending the movie's premiere in Phoenix, Arizona (I never understood why Phoenix). And even though I *knew* we were in Phoenix, or at least believed that to be the case, we weren't in a desert but rather, a place quite similar to Seattle, with lots of mountains covered in Douglas Firs. Terry was there, chewing tobacco for some reason which seemed perfectly clear at the time, and Paul, Michael and Gareth. But most wonderful of all, the cast of the new movie was there too! And what a revelation that was!

Ralph Fiennes, Tim Roth, *both* Branaghs, Stephen Rea, Alec Baldwin and *James Spader* for God's sake!!! Juliet Stevenson! Susan Sarandon! I don't know who was supposed to be who! They were the people attending the premiere as the cast but when it came to actually seeing the movie, the strange thing was that it seemed to be played by all the old gang, looking much as they did sixteen years ago.

And the story? Suffice it to say that it was the single most exciting, most emotionally gripping *Blake's Seven* story I remember seeing.

And I don't remember one single thing about it.

Paul McCartney dreamt the tune for "Yesterday", Kekule worked out the structure of the benzene ring from a dream but when it comes to my own particular revelation, my mind turns to Swiss cheese.

Friday 21st

After the melancholy beginning to my mood yesterday, the day was salvaged by the fact that in the afternoon, after an hour of returning my stares, the Laura Ashley Girl crossed the street to talk to me. As she came closer, I leaned forwards, resting my elbows on the balcony rail and called out "Hullo!"

"You must be Greville Davis!" she returned, holding up her book to shield her eyes from the sun.

"That's exactly right!" I smiled. "You must read the gossip columns!"

"No...I don't read anything like that. I guessed it was you, actually. Because you always sit there, writing. What are you writing?"

I was momentarily confounded by her response and heard myself saying, "Why don't you come and have some tea with me and I'll show you?"

It may be a cliché but it is *actually true* that everyone in England barely stops drinking tea for a few minutes a day to get some work done. As I watched, to my total delight, the Laura Ashley Girl entering my apartment building, I busied myself with the process of brewing a pot of Earl Grey tea, hastily arranging the last of the bourbon creams my mother had sent me upon a saucer. The doorbell rang and I swung open the door to get my first proper look at 'Laura'.

"It's dark in here," she commented, walking past me as though something in the room had caught her eye. "You ought to open the blinds fully."

"It's true that I tend to keep this room shady," I acknowledged. "As a writer I spend a great deal of time staring at a computer screen, so, well, I get headaches easily."

But that wasn't the reason; I kept the room dark so as to help me to forget about the outside world, a place which, it seemed to me, intruded inappropriately upon my inner world of madmen and murderers. As though she had read my mind, the girl turned to me and releasing the catch on the blinds, said with a gentle smile, "There are killers on the outside too, you know."

Pursing my lips for a minute, I eventually conceded.

"You may be right. At any rate it is the way I work. Would you like to see?" I took her over to my desk, on which orderly piles of papers bearing titles such as 'Scene 1', 'Overview', 'Casting thoughts'.

"The screenplay for the *Blake's Seven* film," she said with a disappointing lack of excitement.

I replied in astonishment, "Yes...you're a fan?" She nodded once. "It's this I've come to see you about."

Our tea was getting cold. I persuaded her to sit down with me and poured her a cup, watching her in fascination as she blew carefully across the surface, cooling it down even more. Perhaps I should have offered it to her iced.

She introduced herself as Jemima. She had waited, she told me, a very long time to meet me, this period of waiting beginning long before my commission to write the screenplay. "The making of a film was always a possibility," she mused, "a thing more than anything, dependent upon the passing of a suitable period of time. It is something I have thought about for a great deal of time indeed. Now here you are...and the future of *Blake's Seven* is in your hands. I had to meet you," she concluded simply.

Jemima went on to share with me, aspects of her own vision of the post-Gauda Prime scenario in which she had (correctly) assumed I would be planning to set my screenplay. "That world is at once imbued with the essential darkness of the *Blake's Seven* universe...there are immediately so many possibilities for cross-genre plots...the murder, the mystery, the socio-political comment, potential for adventure within the developing background of the continued exploration of the characters. And above all else, that bleak future allows you to imbue the script with the eternal tensions of *Blake's Seven*...the uncertainties, the ambiguities. It is a golden opportunity, no doubt about it."

She continued; she was magnificent; from her lips tripped all the ideas which I had been waiting to hear. My mouth must have fallen open as she spoke and all I could think was to offer her a bourbon cream.

"The studio wants action, action, action...with a bit of murder thrown in," I said uselessly, hoping, *hoping* that she would keep talking whilst I hunted for my dictaphone.

"Then it will be your ambitious task to give them not what they want but what you want...and to sell it to them. But you seem troubled. Do you doubt that you are equal to it? If so, it's best not to start."

"I *am* equal to it," I answered somewhat hotly, "all I wished to do was to convey to you, the magnitude of the task."

And gazing directly into my eyes she replied; "I have no doubts whatever. No, I have a very good feeling about this."

It was not difficult to admit to myself my own pleasure in her visit; a sensation which was tempered only slightly by the fact that she confessed to being a 'fan'. Ordinarily, eager as I was to limit external influences upon my creations I would take some pains to avoid excessive contact with people with such heavily vested interests in the detail and outcome of my work, however, something told me that this girl might be a totem, a charm to give me good fortune with the success of my new venture. I kept thinking back to my dream, holding her hand in Phoenix, Washington, eating salty popcorn, watching Ralph Fiennes stroll magnificently down the dimly lit and gloomy prison corridor.

Wait a minute...*Ralph Fiennes?*

Memo to Sonja: get a courier to round up tapes of everything Ralph Fiennes has done in the last three years. I don't think I need to see "*Schindler's List*" again though. Why is my subconscious casting him as Avon? I feel as though someone is trying to send me a message; well, let's hope I'm able to decode it.

Somehow, I found myself getting into a car with Jemima and heading up to Muir Woods. Halfway there, she made me pull over and asked to get out. "To look at the sea," she explained, adding, "Like James Stewart and Kim Novak in '*Vertigo*'"

I watched her as finally, a beam of satisfaction spread across her features. She faced me with a twinkle in her eye.

"Imagine this, here I am, almost where they stood, with the creator of the future *Blake's Seven*," she said dreamily.

I moved closer to her. "Not the only creator..." I felt duty bound to point out; "After all, the actors will make of it as much as I..."

"All the same..." was all she said before she turned to face the setting sun.

In an attempt to distract her, I murmured, "Didn't James Stewart kiss Kim Novak at about this point?"

"I forget," answered Jemima, gazing deeply into the ocean.

The moment was shattered when to my amazement, I heard someone calling her name. Then running from another parked car came two people, a man and a woman, from their accents, obviously English.

"Don't touch him Jemima!" they shrieked. Instinctively, I took one step away from her and only then noticed quite how close to the edge we had meandered. I glanced over at Jemima; she did not appear to be surprised but instead, irritated.

"My annoying little brother again!" she exclaimed and then turned to the woman who accompanied him, adding, "And you! I thought you were *my* friend!"

An argument ensued, in which several voices were raised at the same time, first Jemima against her brother and the female friend, then the replies of both these people who shouted both at her and at me, finally turning upon each other with accusations of having been led halfway across the world for a case of paranoia. I understood little of it but instead marvelled at how a woman as apparently whimsical as Jemima could be transformed suddenly into a paragon of wrath! The other woman rather quickly withdrew from the argument, seeming willing to abandon the brother to his fate. Just as I had come to believe Jemima capable of hurling her younger sibling over the cliffs with exactly the same manner as he had, minutes ago, seemed to believe me threatened, he about-faced and said to the other woman.

"You are right: it's my fault. Can you forgive me? I don't know what I was thinking. And Jems, I'm sorry. It's just the way you've been recently and...I was worried. I see now that my concern was misplaced. And now that I have seen you are in good hands, I should take my leave."

At this, a change of heart seemed to come over his companion, who shook her head, saying, "No, I rather think that it is your sister who owes *us* an apology...Jemima, why can't you at least thank him for his concern? Neither of us had to come out here and Jon did so entirely out of the best of motives."

Jemima said absolutely nothing.

With something of an embarrassed yet grateful smile, her brother took the hand of the other girl and turning to me said, "And may I wish you the best of luck with your screenplay? We are so much looking forward to the film."

"Wait a minute..." I called after them as they began to wade through the grass to their car. "You are fans of *Blake's Seven* also? Jemima and I were just on our way for a walk in Muir Woods, where I planned to discuss with her the outline for my script. Why don't you join us?"

The long walk to the electrocution chamber. Down a grimy, metallic corridor lined with the cells of murderers and madmen walks a figure clad in a simple white robe. The little light that there is is from above and his face is wreathed in shadows. He is flanked on either side by officers clad in uniform.

Arriving in a reception room, the prisoner is read a litany of his crimes; treason, resistance, slander, murder of Federation officers, murder of civilians, the murder of Roj Blake. All around the planet, citizens gather to watch this event. Those who pay may even buy into the execution lottery; many may press the button but only one electrocutes. Commissioner Sleer, the arresting officer, takes her place as they prepare to make history.

Avon is executed; Avon fries.

Gasping for breath, a man wakes from a nightmare; it is Avon. He gazes in despair at his surroundings; a disembodied voice tells him; "When you die, you leave nothing; no heirs, no spouse, no friends, not even so much as a scrap of paper which will tell anyone who you were and what you did. *Everything is erased.*"

Servalan visits Avon in his cell on death row. She has a proposition for him. Since extensive searches of the remains of *Scorpio* and the base at Gauda Prime have failed to recover Orac, Servalan is willing now to make a deal for the computer. In return for commuting Avon's sentence to one of life imprisonment, he must lead her to Orac.

Avon refuses.

Seemingly reluctant, Servalan unveils her second offer: a threat to torture Avon's one surviving friend; Vila. Avon is taken to where he is witness to Vila being tortured. After just a little while, he relents, on the condition that Vila and he be taken to GP to recover Orac.

On their way to the site where Avon buried Orac, the landing party is attacked by an army of guerrillas who take all the survivors prisoner. Avon, Vila and Servalan learn that the guerrillas are headed by a fearsome native of GP. Awaiting interrogation, Servalan offers Avon valuable information in return for help with an escape. Avon demands the information and is informed of the following:

The man he killed was not Blake but a clone made years before and recaptured before being conditioned to be a tool of the Federation. The whole plan was Servalan's to convince Avon that Blake was indeed dead but she had not expected that Avon would do the job himself...

Still pondering this news, Avon is taken off to be interrogated. The leader of the guerrillas turns out to be none other than Soolin, who was originally left for dead unlike the others who all died in hospital. It is not clear whether Soolin intends to be friendly towards Avon.

Servalan escapes with one mutoid and is believed to be heading for her ship. Soolin takes Avon, Vila and a pilot from her army and they rush ahead to steal Servalan's ship, stopping only to finally recover Orac. Once aboard, Avon decides and Vila agrees that they must begin to search for Blake.

And so the search begins. A mystery unfolds...clues, rumours are followed, some leads are false but slowly the true picture is built...then finally, Blake's location is revealed. The film ends when Avon and his crew land upon a world to discover that Blake is a long-term patient in a psychiatric institution, a man suffering from an intractable psychiatric problem.

Or maybe:

They arrive on a world, to discover that Blake is a long-term patient in a psychiatric institution, where he believes himself to be someone else, someone suffering from an intractable psychiatric problem and the patient Blake is accompanied by the one person who cares about him; Jenna.

Or maybe: They arrive on a world, etcetera etcetera, only this time Blake, although insane, has escaped to become the leader of a religious cult which is taking over that world. And his rediscovered comrades find themselves being initiated into that cult...

Or maybe: The trail left by Blake leads directly into the heart of the Andromedan galaxy. Will Avon follow him, even beyond the confines of the known universe?

Or maybe: The trail leads to an underground base, a party of rebels, finally, to Blake, who faces Avon with a gun, once more utters the words, "I set this up" and is, once again shot. Then Avon regains consciousness in a prison hospital; it was all a coma induced dream but the nightmare has not yet begun...

Or maybe: The trail leads to an underground base etcetera etcetera, only, the ending is reversed; Blake and Avon face each other down and this time Blake kills Avon.

You sigh. What seemed to begin in a promising fashion has dissolved into a mess of confusion.

"The middle section needs work," offers Jonathan, "and that is even before we go on to the subject of choosing one of those endings." The screenwriter appears to agree with him and goes on to describe in more detail the character motivations, the interactions; it is clear that he has devoted much thought to this.

"Why do so many of your endings offer a solution with a mad Blake?" you ask of Greville Davis.

He answers quickly; "It is one of my favourite theories for why Blake was missing for so long; namely that he was a victim of a multiple personality disorder which trapped him in an alternative personality for the time after he left the ship after the Andromedan Wars. Either that or an amnesiac. In fact, both work well"

Interesting. You see that Davis goes on, quite warming to his subject. Greville Davis is a screenplay writer who is a frustrated novelist. His high profile position as the new screenwriter, however, means that he is one of the few people who can actually get a *Blake's Seven* novel published. And therefore his opportunity to enter the field of the novelist...

"I'd like to read it, if I might," you venture; "I'm making a sort of study of *Blake's Seven* fictions at the moment but my particular trouble is that I seem unable to read any completed works. I'd like to be sure that the work you have written is complete before I read it."

"Then we might have some problems," agrees the author, "for although I have written a draft which more or less satisfies me, all computer copies of it were lost when burglars stole my computer's hard drive. Luckily, there were some surviving paper copies; I even sent a few out to some of the fanclub presidents to look over. One of the copies is in this city but I am so loathe to risk its loss that it is kept with the publisher. We are working on another computer copy but that is in progress..." The man's eyes light up for a moment.

"In fact, you could help! Yes! Only a few days ago my publisher sent me a copy of the manuscript which he scanned from the original using Optical Character Recognition...I need someone to go through it and proofread it...I could give it to you in an envelope to take on the plane...would you mind?"

Jonathan and Jemima swap brief grins of anticipation, which you cannot help but share, for you are in the privileged position to read the as-yet-unpublished first novel of Greville Davis.