

Soolin speaks

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Freedom City birthday party story. The theme was "Come As You Are", which is what I let Soolin do.

Featured fandoms: Blake's 7

Featured pairings:

A.S.S Story codes: gen

Story rating: PG

Spotlights light up, throwing ellipses of light overlapping each other on the dark stage. All is in darkness, but for that spot in the middle, which is blindingly bright.

The sound of someone walking on a wooden floor, such as the stage, break the silence. The steps come closer, and a woman steps into the light. She is blonde, her hair is bound in a tight ponytail that hangs down her back. She's wearing a tuxedo, and she's carrying a short black cane with a silver knob.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," she says. "My name is Soolin, and I'll be your host and entertainer tonight."

Deafening silence rings out from where the audience ought to be. The woman can't see if anybody's there, it is too bright where she is and too dark where they might be.

"Maybe you've heard of me," she says. "I'm a gunfighter, and a good one."

She smiles and winks towards the audience.

"If I wasn't, I'd be dead."

She puts the tip of the cane squarely between her feet and leans with both hands on it.

"Lately, I've got involved in some rebellion. Not my favourite kind of passtime, really, but you play 'em as you get 'em."

She moves the cane to the side, leans on with one hand, putting the other on her hip.

"It's not much of a rebellion, really. It's more of a game, a drawn-out chessgame with guns, where the only real danger is to the innocent bystanders. Like her."

She nods towards one side, and one of the spotlights move to the side. It stops illuminating another woman, older, dark-haired, worn-looking.

"Doctor Plaxton," Soolin says. "Brilliant scientist. Inventor of a really nifty spacecraft propulsion system. Gone, like this."

She snaps her fingers, and the spotlight on the doctor goes out, leaving darkness.

"You see what I mean?"

She looks thoughtful for a moment or three. "So who's playing the game, you ask? Who's moving the pieces, deciding the strategies, implementing the tactics?"

She smiles again. "You know who they are. On one side, the man in black leather. On the other side, the woman in black satin. Or maybe it's the other way around, I'm not sure."

A pause, a questioning frown. "And the rest of us? What are we? Not much. All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Dropping the cane, she picks three gaily coloured balls from the pockets of her coat.

"So let's play," she says as she tosses the balls into the air and starts juggling them. She's a pretty good juggler.

"Let's amuse ourselves. Let's entertain each other."

As she speaks, she takes more balls out of her pockets, until she's keeping seven of them in the air.

"Let's do our best to stand outside the killing game..."

Throwing all the balls high into the air, she yanks out two Scorpio-style guns from inside her coat. One by one, she shoots the balls to pieces as they come falling down.

"... knowing that in the end we will fail," she finishes her sentence and drops the guns, as if in disgust.

"So much death. So many corpses, so many wounds. They freeze our hearts. Turn our thoughts to darkness and despair. To fight it, we turn in desperation to each other, seeking the warmth of another's body and soul. Maestro, a waltz, if you please."

Somewhere out in the darkness, an orchestra starts playing. A waltz, as requested. Soolin takes a few steps to the side, the spotlight moves with her. Into the light comes Dayna, standing just as still as Dr. Plaxton did. Soolin moves her arms, holding her.

"Let's dance," she says.

They dance. Soolin closes her eyes, holding Dayna close, leaning her head on her shoulder. Dayna moves along as Soolin leads, but her face is blank. Her eyes stares rigidly forward, looking at nothing.

"Behind the scenes, we live," Soolin says, her voice loud and clear enough to be heard over the music. "Out of the limelight, we try to forget our fears by indulging in each others bodies. We shield ourselves with passion."

She tries to kiss Dayna, but gives up when there is no response. They dance on, ranging all over the stage, until the music ends. Soolin lets go of Dayna, who remains standing with her arms as if holding someone. As Soolin walks away, the lights follow her and Dayna vanishes into darkness.

"Or at least we try," she says. "It's not always the romances work out. Sometimes we try in vain, crying out into the lifeless darkness, waiting for an answer that never comes. We remain alone. With nobody to share our despair, we bottle it up inside. We try to force the darkness to stay out, and by doing so we let it in."

She stops at the edge of the stage, tries to look out and see if there is anybody there. There is a sound that might be of a crowd breathing, but surely a mass of people couldn't all stay so silent?

"Feeling the darkness inside us, we try harder to force it out. We try so hard that there is no time, no energy left to let somebody else in -- and so we remain alone, and the darkness grows stronger."

Slowly, the circle of light surrounding her has contracted until the edges almost touch her sides. Elsewhere on the stage, similar circles of light fade into existence. In them Dayna, Vila and Tarrant are standing. All of them still, all of them with equally blank faces.

"So close, and so far apart. We move, pawns in a game we cannot control."

She bends down, picks up one of the guns she dropped before. She holds it up before her face, looks at it like she's never seen it before.

"And as pawns...," she says, aiming the gun upwards.

"...we are sacrificed."

One by one, she shoots out the spotlights, bringing darkness.