

# Bounty Hunter

## Segment 2

### The Kitchen Episode

(Where Reyanna's writing career began)

This story came about with an idea to get the children involved more in reading and writing. It's un-edited and in its original format. Each participating discussion board member created a character and posted a paragraph (or more) to the storyline. The result is what you'll read below. Will it become a best seller?

## Starring

(In order of appearance)

Daniel ----- "Damon Morlan"  
David ----- "Jason Rider"  
Michelle ----- "Jayce Williams"  
Reyanna ----- "Solace Black"  
Stephanie ----- "Kidd Majere"

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Many things had been said about alleys in many different ways. Some people praised them for their secrecy; others hated them for the dark and sinister nature that they often exuded. Some enjoyed strolling down the underworld of the city; others ran through it a full speed as a last-ditch shortcut. Right now, Damon HATED the alley he was in; dark, damp, and downright confusing, he'd been stumbling about in puddles and gutter muck for at least a half an hour now, trying to find a way back to the edge of town. *Great frickin' idea*, he thought to himself, *trying to find your way through an alley in a city you've never been in. Just great.* He had one hand on the wall to make sure that he didn't get lost AGAIN; ONCE was bad enough...

Suddenly, he glimpsed sunlight; a low wall on his left! That meant that he'd been... travelling in the WRONG DIRECTION the WHOLE TIME! With a vexed sigh, he vaulted up on to the wall and began running; not very inconspicuous, of course, but speed was the essence now, not secrecy. His black trench coat flaring behind him, the ex-bounty hunter sprinted along the wide alley wall towards the south, towards his ship and relative safety in the desert. Several townsfolk glanced up at him only to hurry away; his weapons were in full view, now, his impressive array of pistols, knives, and other instruments of hurting flashing in the sunlight. He'd be lucky if no one called the local authorities.

As luck would have it, no one called authorities, per se; the only problem was, he was passing through the territory of some rather... UNSAVORY characters who demanded he pay for passage. He snickered loudly. "Really? And what if I refuse to pay?" Switchblade knives clicked open, and he smiled a grim smile. "Ooohh... way wrong answer." With expert ease that belied the length of time it had been since he'd last performed the maneuver, Damon unsheathed the *Masamune*...

Less than a minute later, seven street toughs lay in the dust. Not dead; all of them lay unconscious. True, some had slash marks on them from expert cuts and slices, but none of them were dead. Damon calmly sheathed the blade; it flashed once in a stream of sunlight in that dark place and disappeared into its sheath. It'd felt good, using the cursed blade again, but he'd managed not to kill anyone, which felt even better. So, with a smile on his face, Damon renewed his sprint for the *Jammer*.

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The black clad bounty hunter panted as he leaned up against the steaming hull of the black spaceship; the heat seeped through Damon's black leather gloves, but he didn't care right then. It'd been a VERY long run out here, and he was bloody tired! Still breathing heavily, he punched in the keycode for the door; it beeped three times and slid open. He blinked; something wasn't right. Normally, the thing only beeped twice. Shrugging, he entered the dark ship. When he landed, he'd shut down all but emergency power to lower his energy signature from space; a minor precaution to getting caught. Apparently, Rider was nowhere around, else the bounty hunter would have seen a light or something. *Huh... poor guy probably couldn't take the pressure.* Damon tossed his brimmed hat to one side where his desk sat and took a step forward. \*click\* The sound of a hammer on a revolver being locked back made him stop.

"Nice of you to join the party, Morlan." a deep, gravely voice greeted him. The lights came on and there stood a huge man with a biomechanical left arm and an

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implant below his right eye. The man who was responsible for the very existence of Solace Black; Jet Black. "Now, if you wouldn't mind putting your hands behind your head..?" the tall bounty hunter asked, and Damon sighed. *Great, just frickin' great....* he thought as he put his hands up.

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"THIS RUDDY ARM IS WORTHLESS!" Jayce screamed, grabbing her arm as the pain pierced her for the 4th time in a row. She could hardly move it let alone point a gun. Gunfire in her direction told her the cops had caught up with her. She streaked past alleyways and bums, looking for her ship, *Lighthawk*. *Where did I hide it?!* She thought, although her swordsmanship was superb, her memory stunk. She heard voices behind her and wheeled around, Spike and Faye, with their guns close to Jayces' head, had wild smirks on both their faces. "If it isn't our good friend, Jayce Williams", Spike said, still smirking. "Your bounty went up another million Jayce, and you know we can't turn down 2 million oolongs. "He's right you know," Faye jumped in. "We have to make a living..." "Yah, save it Faye, you hated me from the beginning. "She spat at her," and YOU Spike! What the heck are you doing?! "She said as he dragged her out into the sun, where cops and bystanders were surrounding the place. "Look at the cute little vein she gets in her temple when she's mad!" Faye laughed. "Jayce just glared at them as Faye went on to talk to the cop about the pay, while Spike pushed her into a car.

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*How could I have gotten caught and by those two,* she thought to herself as she looked behind her to see Spike and Faye waving at her. Most of the crowd had gone back to there normal lives while some were following the car trying to get a good look at Jayce, and all she could think about is never getting her revenge. *And what would Vicious say if he saw me?* he did, after all, teach her everything she knew. She sighed as they pulled up and started to get out of the car, Jayce got up and saw a very familiar looking ship. *That's Jets Ship!* she thought, and sure enough out of the doors came Jet Black, father of Solace, looking rather happier then when she last saw him. He stopped dead when he saw her and just stared. She tried not to look at him, *this is so embarrassing!* She thought after they'd past him and made there way past the double doors.

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The prison bars slammed shut as Jayce looked around the disgusting little room. Thoughts were racing in her mind, and she felt sick, but on the outside she was, or at least looked, very calm. She heard a voice echo out to her and she recognized it instantly, she whipped around and they locked eyes. "YOU!!" they said together. !

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Solace and Kidd arrived at *Battousai* about 20 minutes after their encounter with Spike and Faye. Kidd ran to the refrigerator as soon as the door opened, she was extremely thirsty after eating the mystery meat and walking for 20 minutes in the 25 degree temperature. "This planet is too fricken hot." Kidd had said to Solace after walking only about 5 minutes. Kidd popped open a can of root beer and began gulping the "beautiful, carbonated beverage."  
"So, where's Damon?" Kidd asked.  
"I'm not sure. After we have a drink we'll go check his ship." Solace replied while

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taking a drink of her water.  
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Ten minutes later they were walking into Damon's ship.

"I can't believe the idiot left the door open." Solace said as they walked up the ramp. It was still dark inside.

"Um, Solace? We didn't think about something..." Kidd said.

"What's that?" Solace asked.

"Rider, what if he's still here? He might pull something. Ya know, since we killed his ship and all." Kidd said.

"Hmm, you're right." Solace said while taking her pistol out of the holster on her hip. "Guess we should be a little cautious."

"When you're right, you're right." Kidd said removing her dagger from the top of her right boot.

They turned around a corner cautiously, weapons ready to shoot or slash. It was quiet, there appeared to be no one there. All of a sudden, there was a scurrying sound and a mouse ran out from behind a crate and ran right in front of them, almost getting squished underneath Solace's boot.

"Aaaah! Oh my gawd!!!" Solace screamed and took several steps backward, almost falling on her rear during the process. She shot at the little critter and then realizing how idiotic she sounded she straightened herself up and started to walk forward towards Kidd, who was doubled over with laughter.

"IT STARTLED ME! THAT'S ALL! STOP LAUGHING OR I'LL HAND YOU OVER TO RIDER!" Solace yelled. She stalked off down the hallway, kicking the wall of Damon's ship as she went.

Kidd waited a few minutes for Solace to cool off and then she followed her.

"I don't think he's here." Kidd said when she caught up with her. They had almost reached the back of the ship and it was still dark, no sound anywhere.

"So, yeah, the little @\$\$hole just leaves whenever he pleases, doesn't give us a HINT of where he's going. I don't care anymore." Solace had turned around and was heading out of the ship, stomping the whole way down.

*I guess she's still mad* Kidd thought, and risking her life said, "I thought you felt sorry for him? What about all that stuff you said at the restaurant?"

"Forget about that! Forget about him! We are leaving! Set a course for Saturn, we're getting out of here. Let him find his own way out of whatever trouble he's in, it'll be better for us anyway." Solace said, very irritably. They had reached the *Battousai* and Kidd headed for the control panel.

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"Why Saturn?" She asked as Solace took a seat in the passenger's side.

"We need to hide out for awhile, Rider's out there somewhere and I have no desire to see his face anytime soon. I thought we could go to sanction for awhile." Solace replied.

"And then what? Just because that's my home-town doesn't mean we'll have a place to stay. I don't exactly have a good reputation there ya know." Kidd replied.

"No, you don't, but they haven't seen you in three years so maybe they've forgotten you." Solace said.

They headed to Saturn, it would be a while before they got there and who knows what kind of trouble they would get into. God knows they get into a lot of it. The bounty on their heads was growing bigger by the month and Rider was out there plotting who knows what. Damon, for all Solace cared, was lying dead in a ditch somewhere...

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Damon sighed as he sat in his nine-by-nine-by-ten cell on the Cowboy Bebop, sulking in an awful mood. As if getting CAUGHT wasn't bad enough, he'd had to endure one of Jet's "I feel sorry for you" speeches...

*"Y'know, at one time we considered you a prominent rival, Morlan," Jet said as he slapped the cuffs on Damon. "It's kinda sad to see how far you've fallen." Damon snarled at him.*

*"Oh, shut your trap, Jet. Y'know...uh...I'm- I'm friends with your daughter!" Jet paused for a second, then laughed, a low, gravelly sound.*

*"Oh, right... Solace the outlaw, teaming up with you? She may have USED you, but you were never FRIENDS." Damon blinked as the huge man pushed him out the still-open ramp of the Jammer and into the waiting ship...*

"Aw, DAMN IT ALL!!!" Damon swore loudly, pounding his fist into the metal wall and immediately regretting it. Metal was never, EVER meant to be hit with bare skin and bone...! A door opened at the far end of the hold. Faye and Spike walked in, leading a prisoner if the third set of slumping footsteps was any indication. Damon didn't even look away from the wall he had punched; he didn't want to see any more of those punk-ass Cowboys...

"Hey, Spike! Let my ass outta here!" he shouted as the bounty hunters retreated. He heard Spike laugh and call him a nasty name as the door closed. "Yes, that's about the response I was expecting..." the ex-bounty hunter sighed.

For the millionth time, he wondered why oh WHY he got mixed up with that crazy woman outlaw in the first place. Sure, the hope of a 25 million reward for this Cyan fellow was an AWFUL lot to pass up... but he could have just taken the sure thing and taken in Solace for 12! He hit himself in the head with his hand. *Stupid, stupid, STUPID YOU!!!* He sighed and slumped against the wall. Well, there was nothing he

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could do now but see who was in the other cage.

He rose and glanced across the way, a friendly word on his lips, but it died before it had a chance to be said. It was Jayce Williams!!! "YOU!!!" they said in unison.

Damon rushed the bars on his side and jammed himself against them with a snarl.

"Great, just bloody great! Not only do I get caught, but I have to share this ship with YOU!" Jayce didn't seem all that please about sharing with him, either.

Damon gritted his teeth. Well, at least he had someone to conspire with. "Listen, Williams... I know you don't like me, and I really, REALLY don't like you, but for right now, we HAVE to figure out a way out of here. And when we're done, we'll settle the score between us." Damon gave his fellow prisoner a grim smile. "How does that float your boat?"

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IC: Jayce stared at the would-be-bounty hunter; she had jumped back several feet as he slammed himself against the bars. "Well I suppose I could put up with you until we get out of here..." *Then I can finish you off once we're done!* She started fumbling with something at her waist and Damon, looking at first surprised at her helping out, now looked confused. Jayce reached outside of the bars and stuck a wire inside the cardkey hole, "Oh come on Damon you should know what this is, you're a bounty hunter!" She rolled her eyes, *he was a bounty hunter?* She thought to herself. "They should've searched me better...turn me in will they....." She said under her breath. Red numbers flashed and Jayce waited. Damon still looked confused and she sighed. "It's just a simple little computer chip that unlocks any cardkey hole." When the final number flashed the doors opened. "And there you have it; a 16 year old girl able to unlock any cardkey is a scary thing..." she looked around the room for a cardkey. "Aha! Here it is!" She then looked at Damon, *I should leave him in here, bloody bounty hunter...* he was reading the look on her face and becoming redder by the minute. She leaned over and put the cardkey into the hole. He looked relieved.

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"Now we need our weapons, where did he stash them..." they turned the corner of the hallway and slid into a storage closet. there, she found her sword, dagger, gun, and some other weapons that spike and them stole from other bounty heads. Damon leaned forward and got his many guns and stashes of ammo. "I've always wondered what you kept under that little coat of yours, and stop thinking dirty thoughts!!!" she half yelled as Damon began to laugh at her words. He reached for a sword that looked like one Jayce had only seen in pictures, her mouth was wide open but she closed it quickly. *So at least he'll put up a good fight.* She heard footsteps and voices coming closer and started to panic, before she could think a figure was walking up the hallway... Jayce sighed..... "It's only Ed."

*This is our ticket out of here...* she thought. Ed was coming into view and saw Jayce, and Damon, who was looking at Jayce like she was insane. Ed gasped, "JAY JAY!!!" she came to a screeching halt as she looked up at Jayce. "Hello Ed, listen where's Faye, Spike and Jet?" Ed looked at around her and saw Damon, "Faye, Faye, Spike person and Jet person, went bye, bye!" she laughed. Jayce looked at Damon who nodded. *they probably went out to celebrate.* She then turned her attention yet again to Ed. "Listen Ed, when Faye and them get back, you can't tell them we're gone, kay?" Ed looked at her for a moment, and said in a whispered voice "Okay Jay, Jay, Ed will keep your hush, hush, secret. Jayce sighed, "Okay Ed, we'll be going

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now...."She looked at Damon and he followed her out the doors and into the night.  
"Now Damon, about our little score to settle.....  
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*Battousai* zigzagged in and out of the labyrinth of rocks in the asteroid belt that Kidd was flying through. They had been traveling for quite a while and were now running low on fuel. She made her way to a place on a decent sized asteroid called "Blue Heaven." It was a place where a lot of outlaws went for supplies, fuel, or if they just wanted to take a break from running. The only thing Kidd didn't like was the "no shooting" rule. If a stray bullet were to hit the interior and make the slightest rip, everyone would get sucked out into space. Oh well, at least you could still carry a blade.

Kidd docked *Battousai* at the nearest available slot just outside the entrance to Blue Heaven. Solace gave instructions to fill her up and they then made their way to the entrance. They had to go through the inspection first. The guards, a couple of robots, Solace hated robots, checked them to make sure they had no shooting weapons and then waved them on.

They headed to the local bar, Solace needing a "real drink," and took a seat at the counter.

"Give me a whiskey." Solace said to the bartender.

"Right, and you?" He looked at Kidd.

"Me? Uh, fuzzy navel." Kidd replied.

The bartender nodded. *I love this place! They don't give a damn how old you are, they give you what you want, when you want it* Kidd thought to herself. She looked over at Solace and gave her a wide grin. Solace rolled her eyes. *Get over it; you know they never ask your age,* Solace thought.

Kidd was halfway through her drink and Solace on her second whiskey when an outlaw news report came on the TV. just above the bar counter, it was similar to the bounty hunter program "Big Shot" but it was for outlaws and it was less annoying.

**"Outlaws beware! The well known bounty hunters, the Bebop gang, are in very poor moods now that their bounties have escaped. Jayce Williams and Damon Morlan, both brought in yesterday, have slipped through their fingers.**

**Williams, only 16 years old was brought to the Bebop by Spike Spiegel and Faye Valentine minutes after Jet Black's capture of Morlan, who was last known to be teamed up with Solace Black. Black's whereabouts are still unknown. If any of you other outlaws have seen these two, be a bud and help them out! It could be YOU next! Stay clear of the Bebop gang because they are hot and won't go easy on any outlaw now. We'll bring you the latest news as it develops.**

The TV went back to the usual program of *Babes on Bikes*; to which Solace gave a

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disgusted grunt.

"Oh great, it was your dad that caught Damon. Now he's really gonna be pissed. Do you think him and Jayce have teamed up now? Kidd asked.

"Probably, and with our luck, Rider's with them. Great, as if we weren't at the top of enough people's sh\*t list. Now Damon's going to be back on our asses." Solace answered. "I think we should finally get those grappler arms fixed that you never got to finish. We'll have to find someone who can do it."

"Ok, you want me to contact Fred?" Kidd asked her as she finished the Navel.

"Who's Fred?" Solace asked.

"Fred Luo, he knows just about everybody, when you have a problem, he can fix it!" Kidd said.

"Why haven't you told me about this guy before?" Solace asked.

"Because one, he's a total nut-bar, and two, we've never needed to contact him before, we always knew somebody else who could do whatever we needed." Kidd replied.

"Ok, so I guess we head to this 'Fred' guy. Let's go." Solace said as she got up and tossed a few oolongs on the counter. Kidd nodded and followed her out the door.

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"She's ready to go!" The fuel guy saw them walking towards him and was waving.

"Alright, thanks, Kidd, pay the man." Solace said as she climbed inside.

Kidd paid him and gave a small tip and then she made her way into Battousai. She sat down at the control panel and prepared to take off.

Twenty minutes later they were on their way to Fred Luo's.

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Damon nearly kissed his guns as the came back into his hands from the Bebop's stash. "Oh, how I MISSED you!" he whispered to them half-jokingly. He really DID miss being armed; not that he couldn't defend himself just fine without them, but he just felt better! He strapped the weapons on and slung his *Masamune* over his shoulder; NOW he was ready for anything. Ed's appearance in the ship wasn't a surprise, per se; she DID live here, after all, and, from what rumor said, she rarely left the Bebop. The good thing was that Ed didn't seem to have any kind of alliance problem whatsoever and let them go without sounding any kind of alarm or whatever.

The two fugitives escaped out into the night, into the sweet, SWEET air of freedom!!  
*Oh, shut it, Damon, you've only been in the lock-up for an hour or so!* a voice told him in his mind, but he shut it up. Freedom was freedom, and THAT was THAT!  
Jayce's words pulled him back to reality. "Now Damon, about our little score to

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settle....." The ex bounty hunter closed his eyes and smiled lightly.

"So, you want to do it right here, do you?" The black-clad man turned to face the small woman across from him. "I'm surprised that you've got the gumption to take me on, Williams. Honestly, I am." He reached down into his trench coat and pulled out his guns, one at a time and tossed them into the dirt. "I have heard that you are a fairly accomplished swordswoman, Williams," he said as he pulled out the wide array of weapons he had just stashed away, "So we'll keep this simple: No guns, blades only." He nodded to the sword that rested on her shoulder. "From what I've heard, you've had some fairly impressive training..." She gave him a poisonous look, but he kept going. "...seeing as Sid Vicious was one of your mentors." Damon clicked his tongue. "Quite a prestigious name to live up to, Williams. Raised you like a daughter, no doubt," the bounty hunter scoffed as he reached up to grip the hilt of his sword.

"I must warn you ahead of time that I'm not just some bull-sh!t bounty hunter who carries a sword to look good. I'm no stranger to fame where that concerns." He gave Williams a sly smile. "Ever hear about that massacre on the Subrose Colony 10 years back?" He poked himself in the chest with his thumb. "That was me. The 30 people killed on that space station 7 years ago? Me again. That ship's crew who just disappeared on the Toshi Station at Jupiter three months after that? Guess who?

Me, that's who," He drew his sword, the massive curved blade glistening in the moonlight like a wicked icicle of doom. "Don't think wrong about me, Jayce. I'm not a cold blooded killer. It was the sword... the *Masamune* made me do it. It's... possessed... it makes whomever carries it insane... until they can control it." Damon smiled coldly across the glistening blade to Williams. "I have learned. And now I will settle this score between us."

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Jayce looked at Damon with utmost disgust. "So we'll keep this simple: No guns, blades only. *Fine, I'm better with swords than guns anyway...* She thought, tossing her gun down to the right of her. "From what I've heard, you've had some fairly impressive training..." *What does he mean, fairly?* After Damon was done rambling on about massacres and killings, she unsheathed her prized possession, the Einlanzer, but she made a few 'special' adjustments to it. the sword started to burn as if on fire, up to the tip and down until it reached the jewel crested hilt. She looked over at Morlans masamune, the legendary sword, able to possess anyone who picks up the sword. *This isn't gonna be easy, if he mastered it, he must not be lying about all those killings...* Fine, Morlan. I don't care what you've done in the past....now let's get this over with, I have to get back to my ship before the cops or anybody else find's it". She sounded as it was nothing to her if she killed him right here on the spot, but she didn't intend on killing him, she liked to see people suffer. Sweat rolled down her face as she took her stance. And like lightning, they clashed, Morlan was very strong, but she wasn't about to give up yet. Jayce jumped and tried to attack from above, but he was ready for her, he blocked and took a swing at her, barely missing her left leg. she locked eyes with Morlan, who looked menacing. She tried a ground attack and swung at his legs but he jumped and avoided that too. "You're good Damon, I'll give you that." She laughed. "But I was just warming you up, now, lets get started for real."

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The full moon glowed and shadowed half of Morlan's face, The masamune's glow was almost hypnotizing, and the Einlanzer's fire was growing along with Jayce's anger. She faked a jump attack and this time went for the neck, she missed but sliced his shoulder up real nice, he cursed her and in a blinding rage struck gold as he sliced her cheek and it was bleeding freely. She heard voices coming closer but didn't pay real good attention to them, She was too angry. They clashed again and again, blood was dripping off Jayce's face and Morlan's jacket. "HEY! THERE THEY ARE!!!" Jayce heard a gruff voice say and she and Morlan whipped around, there stood Spike, Faye, and Jet, looking murderous. "Well Damon! I guess our fight will be cut short!" She yelled as she quickly sheathed the Einlanzer, picked up her gun, and started running like heck. He was running the opposite way most likely to his ship. and the Bebop gang split up, Spike and Jet following Morlan, and Faye following Jayce. "GET BACK HERE!" she yelled, and fired shots at her. *Like I'm gonna* she thought, rolling her eyes as she jumped another fence, but lost her balance and fell, but Faye didn't follow. "I don't like this....Hey! I remember this alleyway!" She said. "This is the way to the *Lighthawk!* And sure enough, there was the old cave where she had hidden it. Into the hanger door and up to the control room where she set a course for mars. She was already in space and a couple minutes till she would blast out of here when she was warned of an approaching ship, she thought it was Morlan but it wasn't.....it was Faye! she fired and they had a direct hit on all of her wings. the lighthawk was going down" There's only one chance if I'm gonna make it out of here." She headed to the back of the ship and flipped on the lights.

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She had only used it once, her mini ship, *Blazer* She had 20 minutes to get it out of there. She got in the little one seater and started it up. She opened the lighthawk's hanger and blasted out of there, and soon after that she heard a HUGE explosion, and groaned. "My extra ammo, my stereo, my CD's, Everything!"

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Damon swore and sheathed the *Masanune* in one smooth motion as Spike, Jet, and Faye showed up on the scene. "WE'RE NOT FINISHED, WILLIAMS!!!" he shouted over his shoulder as they parted ways yet again. "NOT BY A LONG SHOT!!!" Damon dug the tread of his combat boots into the soft dirt and made tracks away from the Bebop. He heard Faye's voice get faint while Spike and Jet's voices kept getting louder. *GREAT! Now I've got JET and Spike on my tail... how WONDERFUL!* Damon ran back towards his ship on the OTHER SIDE of the city. Well, at least it gave him some time to lose these two cling-ons.

Luckily, Damon could keep a fair pace on foot for a good distance, he managed to stay ahead of Spike and Jet until he entered the city streets. Once again he found himself dodging down alleys and jumping over fences as his pursuers managed to somehow gain ground on him. They didn't give up as easily as Faye had the first time; he had a bad, BAD feeling in his stomach that this was one of those "You're caught or you're dead," situations that the Bebop crew was famous for. A glance behind him showed him something he could USE, finally; Spike pointed down a side street and Jet took it. They were trying to cut him off! *Well, we can't have THAT, now can we?* he thought.

In a sudden reverse of forward thrust, Damon dug the heel of his right boot in,

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coming to a stop incredibly fast. Spike was just slowing down as he approached the stopped ex-bounty hunter; the Cowboy turned it into a high spin-kick aimed at Damon's head, but Damon was all ready ducking for his own move. The stout hunter-turned-fugitive rammed his shoulder into Spike's solar plexus, forcing the air out of his body. Spike's eyes bugged out as he staggered backwards only to be met by Damon's foot in his face. He flew backwards and crashed into a trash can where he lay motionless. The black-clad bounty hunter's chest heaved as he backtracked down the street he'd just come up, hoping to throw off the last vestiges of this pursuit.

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Less than an hour later, Damon was all checked out and plugged in, heading out of Earth's asteroid field and into deep space. He knew the Bebop had to be coming after him; no one got away from them easily. He made his way towards the warp gate and hoped they wouldn't look there. As his massive ship plunged into the warp field, he settled back in the pilot's chair with a heavy sigh. He'd cheated fate not once, but twice today, and he didn't think his luck was going to hold out much longer at this rate. Sighing, he set his course in for one of the colonies, a certain one where he KNEW he could get some rest and relaxation. Fred happened to LIKE him, and not just as a friend; Damon didn't swing that way, but at least he got some fair discounts.

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Fred Luo was on Sentinal 3. He really was a nut-bar, Kidd had the feeling he's a little gay too. Ok, a *lot* gay. She and Solace were already halfway to his place, and with any luck would be there in no time.

In the meantime they had the news on. The news report was about an explosion that had just happened on some sandy looking planet. The reporter was going on about how the explosion happened but Kidd and Solace were too pre-occupied watching the man in the background. He had blond hair and was wearing a red coat and yellow sunglasses. He had been shoving doughnuts in his mouth but paused to give some stupid peace sign in front of the camera. Kidd and Solace looked at each other, both with a look of stupidity on their face.

"Well, nothing good on." Kidd said as she turned off the tv.

"I think I'll go take a nap." Solace said as she got up and headed to her bunk.

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Solace woke up hearing the computer on the control unit.

"Approaching destination" said the mechanical voice.

She got up and went to join Kidd, who was preparing to land. Kidd was saying some weird crap to "Her Beautiful Baby" about making a safe landing. Solace heard her telling the ship that she was beautiful and all the other ships were jealous of her. Solace smirked as she sat down next to her.

"Kidd, do I need to commit you? Last time I checked, it's not a healthy sign to be talking to something that can't respond." Solace said.

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"Oh bullcrap. People talk to their ships all the time." Kidd replied as she smoothly set *Battousai* down.

"Besides if they commit me, they'll *definitely* have to take you in too. You're a lot crazier than me."

Solace shrugged in response.

A few minutes later after they made all the necessary adjustments and payed the docking fee, they called a cab and headed to Fred's place.

-----

Twenty-Five minutes later they were just outside Fred's place. It was a huge building. They had to take an elevator up to his office. They knocked on the door and were let in by Fred's bodyguards who asked what they were there for. They said they needed to see Fred and after Kidd finally convinced them that she knew him, they led them over to his desk.

"Hey there" Kidd said. The man, named Fred, looked up and he immediately recognized Kidd.

"Well, hell-oo! Kidd, long time no see!" Fred said. He smiled a rather fruity smile and ran around to her and enveloped her in a bear hug. Solace tried to contain her laughter while Kidd gasped for air, bug-eyed.

"So what can I do for you?" Fred asked while finally setting her down.

"Well, we need a favor. See, our ship, the *Battousai*, needs its grappler arms repaired and we haven't been able to find anyone who could do it. I would do it myself, but I don't really have the time." Kidd replied.

"Who's 'we'?" Fred asked. He apparently wasn't paying any attention to Solace's presence.

"Well, me and Solace here are partners." Kidd responded pointing to Solace. Fred looked over at Solace.

"Solace Black." She said to introduce herself.

"Black? Black, Solace Black, that name rings a bell..." Fred was talking to himself and racking his brain to remember where he had heard her name before when the door burst open. In walked a tall man with red hair and a couple of scars on his left cheek. He ignored the body guards and started towards Fred.

"Hey FRED"! He yelled. "I need a fav..." he locked eyes with Solace. "YOU!" he pointed at her.

"Me? Who the hell are you?" Solace asked.

"Ah HA! Solace Black!" Fred suddenly remembered. "Oh God! I'm in danger! Gene! Save me!!" He ran behind his desk and cowered down.

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"I'm Gene Starwind." The red haired guy responded. "You know, just about everyone in the Galaxy is looking for you and your partner there." He said nodding at Kidd.

"Gene Starwind huh? I thought you were an outlaw? Solace asked. "What are you after us for?"

"Some might call me an outlaw. I wasn't after you though, I don't usually go looking for bounties but when they fall into my lap, I can't just ignore them can I? Especially when I'm short on cash and you're worth a lot." Gene responded. He pulled some sort of blaster and aimed it right at them, Fred's bodyguards started closing in on them too.

"Get them Gene!" Fred yelled from behind the desk.

"Hey!" Kidd yelled at him. "What about me? You know me! Can't we talk it all out?"

"Sorry Kidd, but she's dangerous and I'm not fit for danger." Fred said. "So if in order to take her, they have to take you, then so be it. You understand don't you?"

"I understand that once we get out, I'm gonna kick your ass!" Kidd yelled.

"Sh\*t, we can't even TRY to fight, those damn guards of his took our weapons before we came in. This was a GREAT idea, Kidd!" Solace said.

"Well, how the hell was I supposed to know this was going to happen?" Kidd asked.

-----

About an hour later they were shoved into a cage in some crappy garage slash house thing, Solace assumed was what Gene called home.

"It's a real shame a couple of beautiful girls like you are such wanted criminals." Gene said as he clicked the lock on the door.

"And it's a real shame we're on the other side of these bars or I would kick your pride right about now." Solace responded.

"Now that's no way for a lady to talk." Gene said. He turned towards a blond haired kid and said, "Ok, watch them, Jim. I'm going to head back to Fred's to finish what I went in there for." He turned to face Solace and Kidd again and said; "Now you two behave ok?"

-----

Damon carefully docked *Spades* on Sentinel 3; well, "docked" wasn't really the word. "Parked" would have been better, considering he just plopped her down in the street outside Fred's place. In went the black-clad bounty hunter, nodding to the two guards as he passed. One of the huge burly men grabbed his arm firmly, seeming to be intent on keeping Damon out.

"We're sorry, Mr. Morlan, but Master Luo has been terribly frightened today and he's

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demanded we search everyone."

Damon smiled up at him, then looked at the hand still on his shoulder. "Tell me, do you want to KEEP that hand? If not, just leave it there and I'd be happy to take it with me." The guard didn't budge, so Damon shrugged. "Suit yourself..."

"WAIT, DAMON!" A certifiably gay voice called out to him as he prepared to dismember the guard. *Oh god... I was hoping that the whole gay thing was just a phase...* Damon winced as Fred Luo raced across the room and wrapped him up in a cheesy bear hug. Damon took it for a few seconds, gritting his teeth, determined not to let this gay man break him... but when Fred touched his butt, that's where he drew the line! "FRED!!!" he shouted, shoving the short man backwards, "I TOLD you never to touch my @ss like that!!!" Fred gave off a giggle.

"Oh, stop it, Damon. You're just so damn CUTE!" Damon slapped himself in the forehead.

"Fred... just cut it out, OK? I'm here on business." He glanced back at the two guards. "Why didn't they just let me through? What scared you so badly as to have even ME checked?" Fred's eyes went from dreamy gay man's eyes to the eyes of a frightened rabbit.

"Oh GOD, Damon... that evil brat, Kidd came in here!! With her evil, EVIL little sidekick, Solace Black!! Came HERE! Kidd said she needed supplies and a fix for her grappler arms, but I think they were here to KILL ME!" He clung to Damon, but the bounty hunter wasn't listening. Solace was HERE?! *Oooh, this is TOO PERFECT!* He laughed aloud and Fred gave him a questioning look. "What is it, Damon?"

"Fred, you know that Solace Black has just left me to DIE on Earth?! I'm out for BLOOD, Fred, and you've just given it to me!" He broke Fred's embrace and raced to the door. "Where is she now?!" he shouted over his shoulder.

"GENE STARWIND JUST TOOK THEM IN! THEY'LL BE AT STARWIND AND HAWKING'S GARAGE!!" Fred shouted after him. Damon leaped into *Spades* and took off at full throttle, leaping high above the city in search of this Starwind and Hawking's garage... He thought he recognized the names, but they didn't exactly ring a bell at the moment.

-----  
IC: "There it is!" Damon wheeled *Spades* around and landed in an alley down the street from the fair-sized building marked "Starwind and Hawking". The delta-wing fighter landed gracefully, just barely clearing the tight walls of the alley; Damon wasted no time. He popped the hatch and leaped out, sprinting down the street. Only after he'd reached the front door did it occur to him that he had no PLAN. What if this Starwind fellow didn't want to give Solace and Kidd up? Could he fight? And the Hawking fellow as well; Damon didn't even know what these two LOOKED like. *Ah well, such is life*, he thought, rapping solidly on the door.

A short blond boy answered the door and said, "Hello, welcome to Starwind and Hawking, I'm Jim Hawking, how can I help you?" in a crisp, business-like voice. Damon blinked down at him.

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"You're... I mean, YOU are... Jim Hawking"? Jim seemed a bit peeved by Damon's reaction.

"YEAH, I'm Jim Hawking! What'd you expect, a six-foot-ten burly-as-hell wrench-monkey?!" He folded his arms tightly. "Well, I'm sorry, but THIS is what I am. Got a problem with that?!" Damon laughed.

"Actually, quite the opposite". The delicate *whoosh* of a silenced weapon hissed through Damon's trench coat as he shot Jim with a tranquilizer dart with a gun from his pocket. Jim's eyes widened for a second, then his lids sagged and his eyes closed; the tranq worked quite well, knocking Jim out in less than 20 seconds.

Damon grinned down at him. "If you'd been a six-foot-ten burly-as-hell wrench-monkey, I'd had to use more than one dart."

Damon stepped over the prone boy and into the stinky, nasty garage of Gene and Jim. His eyes fell on Solace and Kidd in a make-shift cage; and he laughed. He rolled with laughter, holding his sides as he ached with mirth. Solace shot a venomous look at him. "Oh SHUT IT." Damon wiped a tear from his eye and chuckled again.

"I'm so SORRY, Solace, but you just look...too funny..! Locked in a CAGE no less!" And he laughed some more. Finally, after a good five minutes, he coughed once and straightened up. "All right" He drew his .44 revolver and pointed it at the cage. "Solace Black, you and your partner, Kidd, are under arrest. I hereby place you under said arrest as freelance bounty hunter Damon Morlan." He grinned at the two women. "Ahhh, it's GOOD to say those words again. Y'know, I should actually THANK you for ditching me to the Bebop gang... if you dad and his friends hadn't caught me, I've just stuck with you and ruined the REST of my life." He pulled the hammer back on the huge revolver.

"Now..." He blasted the lock to tiny little pieces. "You're coming with me."

-----

Ten minutes later, Damon had both Solace and Kidd tied up and in the back of *Spades*, ready to take off. As he climbed into the pilot's chair, however, a red-haired man walked by the entrance of the alley whistling. He glanced down at Damon and the ship as he passed the edge... and slowly came backwards, looking again. "HEY! THOSE TWO ARE MY MEALTICKET!" he yelled at Damon, who gave him the universally accepted sign to say "f\*\*\* off" and powered up his engines. *Spades* lifted gracefully into the air, leaving the red-headed man to run back... to Starwind and Hawking? "Don't tell me THAT was Gene Starwind..." he said to the two captives behind him.

"Oh yeah, that's him all right," Solace said, laughing. "He's rumored to have one of the fastest ships in the galaxy, too, so you'd better run FAST, you dumbass!" Damon waved a hand over his shoulder.

"Ah, shadap..." Within minutes, the three were in space on the *Jammer*, heading out. However, Starwind was quickly closing in, if the radar was any reliable source. "Aw great," Damon said under his breath. "Kidd, Solace, each of you to a gun

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turret! You need to hold him off and make sure he doesn't do a poopoo-load of damage to my ship while I look for a place to land!"

-----

"Just who the hell are you to give us orders? You break us out of that cage just to arrest us and take us in and now you want us to HELP you get away with us?" Solace yelled at Damon. "At least Starwind just wants the money. Not BLOOD. That's the real reason you're here right? You're pissed cuz we left huh?" She was suddenly jolted from the turbulence that was Gene Starwind.

"You don't have any choice but to fight. You wanna die up here?" Damon shot back.

Solace screamed out of anger. "Dammit! Take one Kidd." Solace said. "Damon, when this is over, I'm gonna kick your ass for being right!"

Solace took the one on the right, Kidd took the left. Gene was behind them and firing like crazy. Apparently he was VERY mad. "Try not to enjoy this too much huh Kidd?" Solace said to Kidd.

"No promises." Kidd replied as she readied the gun.

They started firing, aiming at any part of Gene's ship. But he was good, he zigzagged, dodging beams and firing his own. Damon weaved in and out doing his own dodging. The turbulence was becoming annoying.

Solace was firing like mad. It felt nice releasing some of her anger. A person would be foolish to cross her right now.

Kidd on the other hand was doing the exact opposite of what Solace told her not to do.

"Muwahahahahahahahahaha!!! Take that!!! Ooh, you think you're good don't you? Well dodge this BI-YAAATCH!!!!!" Kidd released a crapload of ammo at once. Even Gene Starwind couldn't dodge this. She hit him! It damaged most of his firing abilities.

"Ha! Next time you won't be so c0cky, will you?" Kidd was talking to herself as Gene fell back.

-----

Solace sighed as she got up and sat down next to Damon.

"So what are you planning on doing with us? Take us in or just kill us right here on the spot?

And what about my fricken ship? You just gonna let her sit in that place and rot?"

"Hey yeah! My beautiful ship...What's to become of her?" Kidd asked.

"It's actually my ship, Kidd." Solace said to which Kidd stuck her tongue out at her.

"Well? I'm waiting for a response..." Solace turned back to Damon who looked to be

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contemplating something in that teeny tiny brain of his.  
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Damon sighed as Solace and Kidd both suddenly demanded to know what was to happen to their ship. "Well, it's docked on Sentinal 3, right? It'll stay there for as long as paid for and then they'll impound it until someone wants to buy it. So at the VERY least we have to go back and buy your ship from those government bums."

Damon turned his face back to the front view screen, smiling secretly. "As to the two of YOU, I was thinking that I would let you..." he toyed with his choice of words, "...BAKE... for a while..." And then he laughed. (Insert my evil laugh here,

guys... ) With an evil glance at his passengers, he turned his ship towards a planet that was quite out of the way, so much in fact that there were no spaceports or ANYTHING on it. After all, it had two suns and was a huge DESERT; what could it POSSIBLY have to offer?

Damon put the *Jammer* down in the desert at night just outside one of the towns.

The bounty hunter led Solace and Kidd out into the dark sands, giving them a wry grin. "Don't worry guys! I've been here before, and the people are a little weird, but they're friendly enough. C'mon!" So the three dark figures trekked into town late that warm night, the man in the black trench coat, the woman in the high black

boots, and the girl with an attitude. ( )

Damon led them to a modest little bar and kicked open the swinging doors, as he always did when he visited this backwater planet, and was greeted by a gunshot in the doorjam above his head. Without flinching, Damon put his foot on the floor and drew his .44 revolver, pointing it at the bartender. "Hey, Lou! What's the big idea!?" he growled at the chubby man.

Lou gasped and dropped the revolver he had barely held onto in the first place.

"Damon! Oh thank GOD its you!!" The fat man rushed around the empty counter and hurried across the empty bar. "We've got a PROBLEM, Damon!" Lou threw a glance at Solace and Kidd, silently asking if it was all right to talk in front of them.

Damon nodded, and Lou went on. "Everybody's cleared out of town, my boy; everyone but the old, the crippled, and me." Damon frowned at him.

"Why's that, Lou? This place has always had GREAT business before..."

"Well... we got wind that..." the fat man swallowed, "...that... Vash The Stampede was on his way!" Damon blinked at the mans fear, and asked what was so great about this man. Lou nearly passed out.  
-----

An hour later Damon, Kidd, and Solace sat around the bar as Lou finished up the seeming legend of Vash The Stampede. Damon lifted his mug of free booze and toasted Lou. "Well well well... it seems you've given me a bit of a job there, Lou old pal... This Vash The Stampede is worth \$\$60 billion? Well well..." He glanced at Solace and Kidd. "I know we can get that changed into about 30 billion oolongs... How about you guys help me nail this Vash guy for... say, 900 million oolongs?"

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Solace and Kidd's mouth dropped open, *900 MILLION Oolongs?*  
They were both in shock. The reward for Bloodbane was like couch change now. They had been trekking in this hot desert, Solace about ready to strangle Damon for dragging her into this place that was far south of hell, they were thirsty and tired. Now all that seemed to just fade away.

"I can't take this anymore!" Kidd yelled. "First we're all trying to kill each other, then we become partners to catch a huge bounty, then you (she pointed at Damon) ran away just because the Bebop gang came into town, so we leave your stupid ass, just to be captured by you, we had to HELP you get away with us and now we want to team up again?! That's MADNESS!"

"But Kidd, we're talking about 900 MILLION OOLONGS here!" Solace said. "Isn't all that worth it?"

"Well, uh...I don't...I mean, it IS a lot of money...and...ok fine. But he has to agree to get *Battousai* back to us when all this is over with." Kidd answered "I'm not going anywhere without *Battousai*." She folded her arms in strong determination. "See, this is my resolve face."

Solace smiled. "Ok, Damon, do you agree to get our ship back to us as soon as this is over with? I certainly don't want to have to BUY her back, she'll look like sh\*t by that time, I want you to agree to find a place to keep her and then she'll be SAFELY returned to us. Deal"?

-----  
Damon gave Solace a careful look, but smiled and nodded. "All right, deal. I'll forward the oolongs to cover the docking fee for *Battousai*, and you two help me get this Vash guy." Damon tipped his glass up and drained it; free beer always tasted best, in his opinion. Setting the glass down with a \*thunk\* he turned his attention to Lou. "And, to aid us further, YOU, Lou, are going to tell me EVERYTHING you know about this Vash The Stampede guy."

Lou stuttered for a moment, obviously taken aback at the sudden shift of the spotlight. The fat bartender wiped his clean hands on his apron and cleared his throat. "Well... the rumors say that Vash The Stampede is a murder machine, a man who has killed HUNDREDS of people in cold blood! He's destroyed several ENTIRE TOWNS in his wake!" Lou suddenly blinked and leaned forward. "Well, to be completely honest, those are the things believed by the general public, who have NO connections whatsoever to the truth. I've heard government folk come through here talking about how it was amazing that a whole town could be destroyed and yet have absolutely NO casualties. No deaths." Damon blinked at this, and Lou continued. "I've also heard that he never, EVER kills, no matter WHO it is that he's fighting."

"You lie."

"I do NOT! It's all TRUE! Supposedly, he hasn't killed anyone for a very LONG time. No one knows exactly WHY, but no matter WHAT you do to him, shoot him, kick

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him, whatever, he WON'T kill you. At least, that's what I've heard." Lou sat back, eyeing his current customers. "And there you have it, folks. That's all I've got on Vash The Stampede."

Damon patted the stout man on the shoulder. "Very good, Lou. Excellent. You've helped us immensely." He then grinned at Solace and Kidd. "Well? What do you two think?"

-----

"Personally, I think it's a load of crap." Kidd said folding her arms.

"What for?" Solace asked.

"Like he's really gonna let us off that easy. After we catch this Vash guy, he'll probably take the reward money and ditch us." Kidd said. "Or he'll kill us! He won't need our reward with that 30 billion he'll get from Vash."

Damon started scowling at these accusations.

Solace touched his arm to silently tell him to calm down while she handled Kidd.

"Don't worry about that Kidd, you can be certain that if he kills us, he won't enjoy it for too long. I'm sure Daddy would be hot on his trail if THAT happened." Solace assured her.

"Yeah, but we would still be dead." Kidd said.

"YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE POINT!" Solace yelled, slamming her fists on the counter. "JUST SHUT UP AND LISTEN! We're helping him and that's that! I REALLY want that money and you're not going to get in my way, got that? Now stop complaining and get your @\$\$ in gear!"

"Well FINE! Don't have such a cow, Solace! Geez..." Kidd said. "I had no idea you were such a money-hungry tyrant."

Solace ignored her and turned to the man called Lou and asked for a drink.

"What do you want?" He asked.

"I don't care, something with alcohol." She answered.

-----

Solace was laughing idiotically. They were still in the bar. Solace had had about a dozen shots of whiskey and was clearly drunk. She started hugging Kidd and telling her how much she loved having her as a partner, asking her if she wanted a drink, to which Kidd responded "No, that's ok, I'd like to keep my pride."  
*After watching you, I'm not sure I'll ever drink again*

After Kidd's rejection she turned to Damon "YOU! You're going to make me rich! I LOVE you..." she gave him a big hug and kissed him on the cheek. She went to a nearby table while saying "Yup, I'm going to be rich thanks to you." she took a glass

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out of the customer's hand ("Hey!" he said) at the table and swigged the rest of his drink.

"That's great that you love Damon, Solace but you need to keep quiet before someone else in here gets the bright idea to go looking for Vash." Kidd quietly said to her while putting the empty glass back on the table, throwing the man a few oolongs, and leading her back to the counter to a freaked-out Damon.

"Does she get drunk like this often?" He asked Kidd.

An offended Solace said, "I am not as think as you drunk I am." and with that, she passed out and hit the floor.

"Well, you want the hands or feet?" Kidd asked Damon. "We need to get her to a place where she can sleep it off."

Solace Black awoke the next morning with a world record hangover. She slowly sat up, regretting every drink she ever had. The pounding in her head was unbearable.

"Oh so you're awake." Kidd walked into the room she and Solace were sharing on Morlan's ship. "How do you feel?"

"Like I've been run over by a Mac truck. Twice." Solace answered, rubbing her forehead.

"Yeah, you *look* like you've been run over by a Mac truck too."

"Well, thanks Kidd...What time is it?" Solace asked

"Noon-Thirty." Kidd answered.

"Where's Morlan?" Solace asked.

Kidd shrugged. "Who knows. He was gone when I woke up. He's probably still freaked out about that huggy-kissy bit you pulled on him last night."

"My what?!?" Solace yelled, then grimaced in pain. "Kidd, tell me you're lying. Please!" She said a little quieter.

"Well, it wasn't a major huggy-kissy bit. Just a quick bear hug and a peck on the cheek to thank him for making you rich. Nothing much, but I think he was still weirded out." Kidd started giggling. "You're very friendly when you're drunk."

Solace threw a pillow at her.

"Well, I suppose I'll go and get us some food. Not like anyone else around here will go." Kidd said.

"Ok, see ya later." Solace said while stepping into the bathroom.

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"See ya later." Kidd mocked her making faces as she went out the door.

-----

Kidd was walking through the market, looking for some 'good' food. Not that nasty sh\*t Damon calls food, as she had informed him the night before. She was headed over to an apple stand when a gleam caught her eye. It was a beautiful antique pocket watch hanging out of a man's pocket. He was tall, and had long black hair. He was wearing dark sunglasses too. *Hmm, I'm sure he wouldn't mind me taking it, it's probably weighing him down anyway.* Kidd thought and reasoned with herself. She reached over and slowly pulled it out of his pocket. She was sure he didn't notice, she started to turn around when he said, "Hey Kid, ya gonna pay me for that watch?"

"Hmm? How'd you know my name?" Kidd asked, surprised.

"What?" The man was confused. "All I said was, hey kid, I didn't say any names."

"But that's my name. Kidd." She said

"Well, I don't give a rat's @\$\$ what your name is, I want that watch back!" He yelled.

"No way! It's mine now! I stole it fair and square! You should be more aware of your surroundings and keep your stuff better protected!" Kidd yelled while throwing an apple at him and running away, laughing maniacally.

The guy gave up after hearing her laugh. You don't want to mess with a crazy mo-fo like that.

-----

Solace stood under the showerhead, in Morlan's ship. Letting the hot water run down her face, she thought about her and Kidd.

*Look at us. We sure have come a long way. Gone from being the hunted this past year or so to being the hunters.*

"I'm such a hypocrite." She said quietly to herself. *What would Dad say? Not like it matters. He was always gone. I never really knew him. I still don't. He just keeps my @\$\$ protected from Spike and Faye, that's all.*

Solace sighed and turned off the water. She stepped out, dried off, and clothed herself; black tank top, black boots and dark jeans that slid over the top of her boots, dagger inside. Apparently Morlan trusted her and Kidd enough that he didn't take away *all* of their weapons.

Solace wandered around Damon Morlan's ship. Kidd had gone to go shopping for food since "No one else would do it, and they *needed* food, or at least she did." Morlan was still gone to wherever he was. It was quiet as a ghost town and dark as night inside. The only light provided was coming from a small window that Solace went over to and looked out of. *I wonder where Jayce is, and Rider too. I bet he's still pissed.*

She was still looking out the window when she heard a gun c0ck.

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A deep, yet soft voice spoke, "I've finally found you."  
-----

"Who are you and what do you want with me?" Solace asked while raising her hands up into the air.

"Some call me by my 'wanted' name. Others know me as someone entirely different." The voice answered.

"So..." She hesitated for a second, "what is your 'wanted' name?" Solace asked.

"They call me...Bloodbane." He said.

Solace gasped quietly. *Cyan Bloodbane. What does he want? Does he know I was coming after him?*

She tried to keep calm and asked "Ok, what's your other name, and you didn't answer my other question, why did you come looking for me?"

She heard him unc0ck the gun he was holding. "Solace, it's me, Vahn."

Solace's heart fell into her stomach. *No, it can't be.*

Her hands dropped to her side as she slowly turned around. Her eyes found Vahn Manning, her ex-lover. She hadn't seen him in three years. Solace thought he was dead. He was always in trouble with someone. Always someone he owed money to. Always getting into fights. But deep down, he was kind hearted. Solace knew that. She had followed him. Wherever he ran, she ran. On one of the many days of being chased in a gunfight, they had gotten separated somehow and that was the last time they saw each other. Looking at him now, it was no wonder she hadn't recognized the description that Mayor Hoffman had given her. He looked so different from that last day. But she knew it was him, she could tell by his eyes. There was no mistaking those dark eyes of his.

"Oh God, Vahn." Solace whispered. She started forward but then stopped abruptly. "It was you? *You* killed Hoffman's wife and his 12 year old daughter?" She asked disgusted. "How could you do that?"

"It wasn't me! Well, I did shoot the girl, but-."

"NO!" Solace screamed. "No 'buts' Vahn! There is no excuse for killing a child! You've been alive these three years, letting me believe you were dead and now you're trying to justify killing a child?" A tear rolled down Solace's cheek as she clenched her fists.

"Damn it, Solace! Would you just listen to me?" Vahn yelled back at her. "I didn't kill an innocent child! That's not me. I'm not a monster."

Solace looked up at him and then turned away. "Fine, what *did* happen then?" she said with her back turned to him and her arms crossed.

Vahn sighed. "It was about a year ago, the girl had gone crazy, almost like she was possessed. It was one of the many times I had come back to town looking for you. I knew your family was close to the Hoffman's so I went to their place, hoping you'd be there." He paused.

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"Yeah, and?"

"Well, when I got there, I heard a woman scream and I looked over in the yard and the girl had shot her mother. She had the most horrible look in her eyes, and was smiling as she did it. I knew she wasn't in her right mind so I pulled out my gun and attempted to shoot her. Nowhere vital, just to stop her from doing any more damage. Well, as I pulled the trigger, her father came out to see what was going on and he yelled something, I don't know what. Anyway, it startled me and instead of shooting the girl in the arm, I shot her heart."  
His voice cracked as if these words caused him pain.

"The woman died of the gunshot wound given to her by her own daughter, not me. But somehow, everything got blamed on me and that's when Hoffman put out that reward, you'd think he would have put two and two together when they found the other gun. So anyway, I grew my hair out to disguise myself, that's why I look so different. That's why I stopped looking for you this last year, I was on the run. But then I saw that you yourself had a bounty on your head and with all the bounty hunters trying to find you, it wasn't hard to follow some of them and learn from them, without them knowing of course." He paused again and then said, "So, do you believe me?"

Solace stood there, quiet for a few minutes. She didn't know if she could believe him or not. But then again, he did go to all of this trouble to find her so he must still care for her right? She made up her mind.

"Yes, Vahn. I believe you." Solace said as she walked over and embraced him.

-----

"This fricken planet with it's two sun's. How the hell do people live here? WHY would someone live here? They're all mad."  
Kidd was talking to herself as she approached Damon's ship. She had two full bags of groceries and it was hotter than hell here in her opinion. She sat one of the bags down and opened the hatch. She picked up the other bag and climbed inside.  
"Solace! I'm no-Ohhhhh sh\*t!!!!!" She dropped the bags and hit the floor. *Sh\*t! It's that guy! And she's HUGGING him! What do I do? What do I do?* she tried to crawl away but Solace had seen her.

"Oh, hey Kidd." She said.

"Huh? Did you say Kidd?" Vahn asked.

"EEEEEEEE!! Bye Solace!" Kidd took off back down the ramp like a bat out of hell and tripped on an apple that had rolled down the ramp.

Vahn had pursued her and caught her by the hair as she fell. "You little sh\*t! Where's my watch?"

"Ow! Umm, what watch? I don't know what you're talking about...Oh fine. Here, crybaby." Kidd said pulling the watch out of her bra and handing it to him.

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His face got a disgusted look on it and then he snatched it from her and wiped it off with his shirt. Then they both turned to Solace.

"Who the hell is this?" They both asked, pointing at each other.  
-----

"Oh, so you're Vahn huh?" Kidd said. The three of them were sitting at a table, still inside Morlan's ship. Solace had just explained to both Kidd and Vahn who each other was.

"Solace has only mentioned that name when she's drunk. I never knew you were a real person, I figured you were an imaginary friend or something," Kidd said.

To this, Vahn looked over at Solace, who shrugged.

"I can't believe you teamed up with a wacko like this." He said and pointed to Kidd. She smiled proudly.

"Well, she may not look like it, but she's one hell of a pilot, and an awesome fighter to boot." Solace said.

"Ok, so why are you two here? And whose ship is this?" Vahn asked.

"The ship is Damon Morlan's. We're kind of his partners." Solace said.

"Yeah, this is a nice enough ship but I still miss *Battousai*. That's OUR ship. Ok it's really Solace's ship, but I pilot it." Kidd said.

"No way! You have your own ship?! I'm impressed, Solace." Vahn said.

"So, who's this Morlan guy? Wait a minute! That BOUNTY HUNTER?! You're still with him?"

"He made us an offer we couldn't refuse. 900 million to help him catch Vash The Stampede, or a new home with steel bar doors and nothing but a cot to sleep on." Solace said.

"You mean you've been with some GUY, traveling with him, sleeping under the same roof?" Vahn, who was clearly jealous, turned to Solace accusingly.

"Oh please! You've been gone for three years!" Solace stood up and slammed her hands down on the table. Vahn, who had a frightened expression on his face, leaned back in his seat. "You have no right to give me any grief!" Solace said.

"All right, Ok. I'm sorry." Vahn apologized.

Solace sat back down. "He's not my type anyway."

"Ahh, giving in. I can tell you've met Solace's temper before." Kidd whispered understandingly to Vahn, who nodded.

"So where is this *Damon* anyway?" Vahn asked. Solace rolled her eyes.

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"Actually, neither one of us knows. I haven't seen him since me and him brought Solace home to recover from her drinking binge. That was last night" Kidd said.

"Drinking binge?" Vahn asked Solace.

"I was stressed! I had just agreed to help an ex bounty hunter, after already ditching his @\$ before. I thought I was done with him, but no, he has to be 'Mr. Persistent'." Solace folded her arms and leaned back in her chair.

*Man, I'm gonna kick this guy's @\$\$. Messing with MY woman. Who does he think he is?*

Vahn was clenching his fists. Solace and Kidd looked at each other and shrugged.

-----

It was dark... so dark here... this place was NOT a good place to be. He didn't know WHERE he was, HOW he got there... or even WHO he was at the moment. He tried to think back to how he'd gotten in this place, but nothing would come. *What the hell is going on?* he thought, reaching out with his hands. In the dank darkness he stumbled forward until his hands came to rest on cool metal. There was surprisingly very little growth on the walls considering the temperature and moisture in the air; it was perfect for growing algae and such. *Wait... how do I know that?* He KNEW he was a person... and he knew that he'd MUST have lived a bit, since he wasn't a baby... but he could bring no memories to the surface. Shrugging, he decided that wracking his brain could wait until he figured out where he was.

He circled the metal area and discovered that it was a box about five feet by ten feet and tall enough that he could not jump and touch the ceiling. There was a tiny bit of water towards the middle of the cell which told him that it slanted towards the middle. What GOOD that did him remained to be seen. He walked around it, across it, and repeated the whole process again, feeling the walls for some sort of release or doorway. It seemed that the whole damn thing was one solid piece of steel! He scratched his head; SOMETHING wasn't right about that. He couldn't place WHAT was wrong, but something was.

Suddenly, a blinding light filled the area from above. His eyes were instantly rendered useless, at least for the moment, and all he could do was stand there with his hands over his eyes. A deep voice echoed down in laughter from the top; it seemed there was a hatch up there.

"So, THIS is Damon Morlan, is it?" the deep voice said. He blinked. Was THAT his name? He was Damon Morlan... with the suddenness of a lightning bolt, his memories flooded back into his mind.

*Damon staggered down the back street in the town after he'd left Solace at the ship. She had officially FREAKED him out; that girl needed to straighten herself OUT before he saw her next. He shivered, having left his trench coat back at the ship. This was a DESERT, for the love of god, it should be WARM! Oh well. As he rounded a corner, something heavy whapped him over the head and he dropped like a rock. What the hell..?! He thought as his consciousness began to fade. As he'd*

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*lost all consciousness completely, he heard a man with a deep voice tell another man to give him a drug that would wipe his memory as long as no one said his name...*

The bounty hunter snickered and grinned up into the light. "Well, great plan, you MORON. Give me a drug to forget my memory, eh?" An affirmative sound came from above, and Damon laughed. "But isn't it supposed to be, 'Don't say his name?'" The chuckling from above ceased and became a string of curses and what sounded like punches. Damon saw this as at LEAST a chance to survey his surroundings. His eyes now were adjusted to the light, and he saw that the opening was JUST out of normal reach for him. *Damn... I HAVE to get OUT of here!* He checked the distance, judged, weighed, and then moved; taking a move from a movie he'd seen once, he ran to the wall, took a kick off of it and grabbed the lip of the hatch. The men at the top, too preoccupied with hitting one another, failed to notice his sudden appearance at the top. He picked up the light and smashed it into the head of the closest man. "F\*\*\* YOU! You're too STUPID to beat me!"

It turned out that a group of small-time bounty hunters had tracked him to this planet and tried to capture him, giving him that memory wipe drug and putting him inside a smelting vat at an abandoned factory. Unfortunately for them, they were stupid and Damon was NOT. So, leaving most of them dead and the others well on the way, the newly-freed bounty hunter gathered his weapons ("Filthy bastards, touching my weapons!" he'd said, popping one of the men in the head as he did) and headed out to try and figure out where exactly he WAS...

-----

After a week floating around in space trying to avoid the 'hotspots' where bounty hunters usually went looking for bounty heads, Jayce was really getting tired, and low on cash..."I should of known Faye would pulled a stunt like that, if I would've just skipped the fight with Morlan, I wouldn't be in this mess! "Jayce was really missing Lighthawk and its nice, soft beds. "That's it, I'm just gonna have to steal one," she said and headed to the closest planet to her, Mars.

-----

After landing and a quick drink, Jayce was off to find a new ship. "Hmmm, lets see," She had wandered out to a casino where there were big ships worth stealing, "no,no,no....."she said, checking them off with her finger, "Well, this looks nice.." she wandered over to the last ship, it had no name just the number 5478."Hmm,nice size, good weapons, I'd say this is perfect for me! "She looked over her shoulders to see if anyone was watching. There seemed to be some people keeping an annoyingly close watch on her. she sighed, Great, now I'm gonna have to cause a distraction,"she went into the casino and looked around. There were thousands of people in here it was too perfect! She snuck beside two men playing on the craps table. She bumped into a man on the left of her and slipped three 500 chips inside his pockets. She then took a deep breath and went over to the man on the right, "Hey,that guy right over there, "She pointed over to the left of him, "He's been stealing your chips. "He looked at her in disbelief, "It's true, look in his pockets, I swear he stole some 500 chips from you." he looked at her for a minute and then went over to the man. It started out as a good conversation but then they started yelling and then the punching began. the men at the door who were watching Jayce ran to break up the fight. She then slipped out the door and ran to the ship. "Well ship number 5478, your new name is, "She thought for a minute.

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"*Bankotsu.*" she said. She climbed the hanger and used her cardkey unlock her to get inside the ship. "Wow, this ship is bigger then *Lighthawk!*"She said, looking in the 'living room'. She wondered into the control room and started her up. *Okay I've made it this far... now what? I know they heard the engine start up...*"She looked around at the weapons. "Well I'm just gonna have to fight."She laughed. All the weapons were full of ammo and looked as if they've never been used. A female computer voice came on. "30 seconds until launch. "She looked out one of the windows and saw people come racing out of the casino. She looked at the men that were at the door, and gave them all a smile and salute before taking off. Well this is REAL nice." she said, still smiling.

-----

After a LONG night of well deserved sleep and a fine meal of 'Mac n Cheese' she started thinking about the last couple of years. It seems like only yesterday that I left Saturn after I finished Vicious' training, It was Solace who I first encountered on Mars, we split up after that and met again on Jupiter, this time She had another woman with her she called Kidd. She was a little hard to get used to, she's kinda insane....but she is hilarious. As Jayce gazed out the window, she saw two ships race by and an alarm go off in the control room. She ran into the room, bumping her head as she reached the panel. The computer voice spoke again, "two unidentified ships heading in the west direction of Mars." She closed in on a still picture of the ships and gasped. The words *Blackblade* were written in red on the side of one of the ships. "Dante..?" she whispered to herself and started chasing after them. She unleashed her guns and started firing at the green ship chasing *Blackblade*. *Man! This thing moves like a rocket! I thought this thing would be very slow!* Jayce said gleefully. She heard a slight explosion and looked over at Dante's ship. One of its engine had blown and was going down. She then dropped down with it, turning around to finish off the other ship chasing him. With the success of exploding the other ship, its pieces were falling on top of Jayce's ship sending her flying down with Dante's ship.

-----

Jayce swore up and down as she got out of her ship to check on who she thought was Dante *Blackblade*. It was hotter then hades out there, it looked as though it was nothing but a ball of sand. When she reached the hanger door, she heard two men inside, one sounded like Dante, who had more of a grunt then a actual voice. "What are the damages, Lou? And then another one...he had a Fruity, panicky voice. "Well, two of our engines have blown, one of our left and front wings of been demolished..."Jayce shot the lock panel and kicked open the door...They all stared for a minute when the man named Lou said" And now we need a new door and lock panel...." "Shut up! I saved you so you should actually be thanking me!" They both glared at each other until Dante spoke up." And can I ask just what are YOU doing here..."

-----

It was night-time on the "Sandy Planet," nobody had bothered to find out the name of this place. Solace and Kidd still didn't know where Damon was, vahn didn't care. He had openly expressed his feelings about Damon earlier. He said something along the lines of, he'd hoped Damon had tripped, broke both of his legs and crawled off a cliff where his splattered body was being picked at by the birds and insects.

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Now Vahn was sneaking around Damon's ship. He went past Kidd, who was sleeping on the couch and snoring so loudly that if explosions were going off next to her head she wouldn't even notice, then he headed to the main area where the entrance was. He pushed a button that automatically opened the door. He started to head out into the night when he heard a gun c0ck, and was forced to stop in mid-step.

"Leaving so soon? *Honey?* Solace asked. "Don't tell me you worked SO hard to find me and searched SO long and now you're BORED with me?" There was a hint of sarcasm to her voice.

Vahn turned around, his hands were in the air and he was grinning.

"My, my, the tables have turned." Solace said.  
"What are you up to?"

"Now don't go gettin' all psychotic again, Solace." Vahn said. "I left a note on the table. I'm coming right back."

"Yeah, we'll see, after I hear what you have to say." Solace replied, still pointed the gun at him.

"Dam\* you're harsh."

"It's the only way I know how to be. Now speak."

"I just need to go and take care of some business."

"What kind of BUSINESS?"

"Well, I saw on the TV. earlier that a, uh...FRIEND of mine is HERE and he's in some trouble. I just want to go and help him out. I'll be back in a little while, I promise."

"Hmm, and do I know this FRIEND?"

"Uhh...no. You're just gonna have to trust me on this."

Solace lowered her gun.

"It's hard to trust you sometimes, ya know?"

"Yeah."

"Alright. If you aren't back in three hours, then I get to hunt you down and kill you just for fun."

Vahn laughed lightly. "Deal." He quickly kissed her and headed outside.

Solace closed the door.

-----

Vahn stepped inside a cheep looking bar. He searched the bar room, looking for a

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certain red-head. He had seen the guy's ship parked outside. The ship's name was the Outlaw Star. Vahn was NOT here to help out a friend. More like threaten an enemy. he had watched the news earlier and this guy had been on there boasting about his pursuit of the wanted three-some. He didn't want Solace to know that Gene Starwind was here and still after her, Kidd, and Damon. Vahn obviously didn't care what happened to Damon, but he wasn't going to let this guy get his hands on HIS woman and even her crazy side-kick, Kidd. In just the day that he had known her, he was becoming fond of the crazy girl. He still liked to tease her though.

Vahn walked further inside and his eyes found who he was looking for. There Gene was, sitting at a corner table with his own side-kick, Jim Hawkins. There were three women with them too. One of the woman, the one who was inhaling her food and drink, was obviously a Katarou A Semi-human that could transform into an animal at the light of any moon. She had cat ears and fangs. One of the other women was a ninja, she was calmly sipping tea. Vahn recognized her as Twilight Sazuka. An assassin. *"Don't want to mess with her; she's as good with a sword as Solace is with a gun.* Once you have a confrontation with her, you only have until the next sunset to live. That's how she earned her nickname. The other woman was more of a girl and someone Vahn had never seen before. She seemed really shy and was quietly sitting at the table.

*I'll have to wait. I can't take all of them on at once.*

Vahn sat at the bar and ordered a drink. Keeping a close eye on the group in the corner hopefully without them noticing. He had to make sure he was noticed himself. Being a bounty worth 25 million. He kept his head low and waited. He wasn't exactly sure what he was going to do. He just figured he would wait and see what happened and work from there.

After Solace had closed the door, she had started to go back to her room. She was going to wait for Vahn. Then she decided that she wasn't going to just wait around. She was going to follow him. She shook Kidd to wake her up and Kidd yelled something about penguins chasing her before she fully woke up. Solace told her to shut up and get up and get dressed quickly. They armed themselves and headed out the door and after Vahn.

Solace saw him about a hundred and fifty feet ahead of them. Since they were in a desert climate, it was easy to see him to follow him but it was also easy for him to turn around and see them so they had to be extra careful. Solace explained to Kidd what was going on as they followed him.

"So, if you trust him, then why are you following him?"

"Because I changed my mind about trusting him."

"Got it."

They watched him go inside a bar. Solace stopped about fifteen feet from the place.

"What's wrong?" Kidd asked

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"Let's not go in yet. Come on, we'll go look in the window." Solace said.

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They went to the side and looked for one. There was only a small rectangle window, barely a foot wide and even smaller in height. Solace moved a crate over to the tiny window and her and Kidd both stepped up on it. They crowded around the small window.

"Gene Starwind!" Kidd said a little louder than she meant to.

"Shh! I see him. Is Vahn meeting HIM?"

"Where IS Vahn? I don't see him." Kidd asked.

"Um..." Solace looked around the bar. "There, he's at the counter. He's watching Gene and his little gang out of the corner of his eye."

"What do you think he's doing?"

"I have no idea...Shi\*, they spotted him, come on Kidd, get ready to fight."

Kidd grinned. "Finally!"

-----

Vahn had been successfully spying on Gene and his crew when the Cat Woman looked up and stared right at him.

"Heeey!" She had a scratchy voice. "Gene! It's that Bloodbane guy!"

"Who?" Gene asked.

"Over there! At the counter!" She pointed. "That guy that's worth 25 million for killing that brat and her mother! He's here."

Gene looked at the counter. "Hey, you're right Aisha! That IS him."

Vahn got up and pulled a gun out of his coat pocket.

"I see word has got around..." He mumbled. "All right! I was waiting for the right time, but whatever. Starwind!" He yelled across the room. People had stopped what they were doing and were now staring.

Gene got up and also had a gun pointed at Vahn.

"Well I was going to get some cash from another bounty, but I guess you'll do just fine too." Gene said to Vahn.

"Yeah, that OTHER bounty is why I'm here. I want you to leave Solace Black alone. If you don't, I'm afraid I'll have to kill you."

"Oh really? Why do you say that?"

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"Because she's my girlfriend and I don't appreciate you on her @\$\$ after that reward. So just back off."

"Is that so?" Gene laughed. "What a pair you two make. Anyway, I'm more after her partner, or whatever the hell he is, Damon Morlan."

Vahn cringed at that name.

"Well you can HAVE him. I don't give a shi\* about that guy. Just leave Solace and Kidd alone."

"Afraid I can't do that Cyan Bloodbane."

"It's Vahn Manning."

Vahn shot at him and blew a hole in the wall. The people in the bar fled outside. Vahn grabbed a table and threw it on its side and ducked behind it just as Gene started shooting at him.

"Need some help?"

Vahn turned around. Solace had run in as the customers fled and was now crouching beside Vahn and shooting around the right corner of the table.

Vahn grinned. "You know it."

Solace smiled and they sat back-to-back, Solace on the right side and Vahn on the left, they shot around the table and towards Gene, who now had the help of his crew.

Vahn looked across the floor and saw Kidd by herself behind a table, shooting with one hand and stealing food off the table next to her with the other one.

"Is she gonna be ok by herself?" Vahn asked Solace.

Solace laughed. "You obviously have never seen Kidd fight before."

"MUWHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!! Die you bastards!" Kidd had shoved the little bit of food she stole in her mouth and was now using both hands to shoot the Big Gun.

"Oh my God. She really IS crazy...Dam\* never piss her off."

A bullet flew past his head and he ducked back.

"You can admire her unique style of fighting later. Right now you better focus on yourself." Solace said.

"Uh right."

After a few more minutes of Kidd's maniacal laughing Solace and Vahn ran out of ammo and as Vahn was looking for more, Solace realized it had gotten a little quieter. She risked a peek above the table. Gene had just ran out of ammo too. Jim and Kidd were the only ones still shooting at each other. Solace felt she had to give

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the little guy some credit. He'd managed to survive Kidd this long. He looked terrified though and was asking Gene something that sounded like, "Are all girls this crazy?"

"Dammit! I don't have any more ammo at all!" Solace heard Gene yell.

It got really quiet. Apparently Kidd and Jim had finally ran out too.

"All right, Bloodbane, what do you say we call it a draw and pick this up again later?" Gene asked.

"What the hell are you talking about? I'm not agreeing to anything!" Vahn said

"Why don't you go stick your tongue in a friggen light socket, Starwind." Solace said.

I thought that was you Solace! How are ya? Where's Damon?" Gene asked.

"Bite me, Starwind."

"CAN WE PLEASE CONTINUE THE FIGHTING!? I'M GETTING IMPATIENT HERE!" Kidd yelled

"Hey Solace! You wanna put a leash on your animal here?" Gene said.

"Ooh! That did it! I WAS GONNA GO EASY ON YOU! BUT YOU HAD TO BLOW IT! SAY GOODBYE!"

Kidd ran out from her table and was in tackle mode, ready to pummel them. Solace looked around and saw that the three girls were gone. Apparently out the back door.

Gene and Jim yelled, threw their empty weapons and ran out the door, as Kidd ran up to them. Solace and Vahn got up and ran after them. Gene and Jim got on their ship that the girls had started up.

"We'll see you guys later! Get that girl some help!" Gene yelled as the door shut and they took off into the sky.

"GET BACK HERE AND FIGHT! YOU COWARDS!" Kidd yelled at the ship as it got smaller in the early morning sky. The first sun was just starting to rise.

-----

"So where do you think Starwind went?" Solace asked Vahn.

The three of them were walking back to Damon's ship after their encounter with the "Stupid little boys, and their stupid little women," according to Kidd. Kidd was extremely upset that a CHILD and some pretty boy had beaten her. Again. Before it was understandable; they were caught off guard and had no weapons, but this time, there was no excuse. Solace had tried to explain that they hadn't technically lost. It was a draw. But to Kidd, not winning, even if it was a draw, was losing and it pissed her off royally.

"He probably just went to another part of this planet to get fueled up on ammo. He'll be back, that's for sure." Vahn assumed. "By the way, I thought you trusted me and

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you weren't going to follow me?"

"Woman's intuition told me to shut up and follow you anyway and it's a good thing I did, huh?"

"Yeah. Thanx for saving my @\$\$. "

"Hey, it's what I do. Saving stupid men..."

"Oh, don't tell me you've actually saved DAMON?!" Vahn groaned, disgusted.

"Well, not DIRECTLY. We've kinda been helping each OTHER out...as crazy as that sounds, then one of us will have a change of heart and we try to kill each other..." Solace shrugged.

There was silence for a few seconds while Vahn was trying to think of what else to say when they heard, "Friggen red haired pretty boy." Kidd was muttering to herself. "Ooh! Look at me! I'm so great, I have a ship that matches my head. With my midget sidekick and three women! Ooh! I must be a pimp too!" Kidd had a squeaky, mocking tone to her voice.

Solace and Vahn looked at each other and grinned.

"Well, she sure makes things more exciting." Vahn said.

"Yeah, that's for sure." Solace agreed.

-----  
An hour and twenty minutes later, they were back inside Damon's ship. He STILL wasn't back yet.

"Maybe we should go and look for him?" Solace suggested.

"Hell no!" Kidd and Vahn said together.

"Maybe he's dead. Ya don't want to disturbed the dead, Solace." Vahn said

"Yeah, and I'm enjoying the peace and quiet. In the ship at least. Outside it's a friggen zoo with all the bounty hunters running around. We're lucky his ship is strong." Kidd added.

"If I didn't know any better, Solace, I would think you were WORRIED about him. Is there something going on with you and him?" Vahn accused her and would regret it the next second.

Solace, exploded and rounded on him. "WHAT?!?! YOU HAVE SOME NERVE VAHN MANNING! IF YOU ACCUSE ME OF HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT 'OVER-DRESSED, FAIRY BOY, BOUNTY HUNTER' ONE MORE TIME, I SWEAR I WILL REMOVE YOUR REASONS FOR BEING CALLED A MAN!"

Solace stomped off towards the room she was staying in and slammed the door.

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"Whoa. You REALLY shouldn't have done that. Boy, I feel sorry for you now...And you say I'M the crazy one?" Kidd said.

Vahn couldn't say anything. He was staring off in the direction Solace went. Bug eyed and terrified.

"I bet you're regretting finding her now?"

Vahn came back to reality and smiled.  
"Nah, that's what I love about that woman."

Kidd shrugged. *crazy people*  
-----

*OK, this is OFFICIALLY starting to piss me off!!* Damon swore to himself as he entered yet ANOTHER small town on his journey. Thanks to his incredible persuasive skills, he'd managed to discover that his inept captors had transported him 30 MILES to the south; and, being that he had no money or transportation, he had to FREAKIN' WALK the whole way!! He'd gone back and beaten the snot out of the would-be bounty hunters who had captured him, JUST for causing him the trouble they had. Now he trudged through a town that had no name as far as he was concerned, still a good 15 miles from his destination; he'd been walking a better part of the last night and day, heading north at a pace that MIGHT get him there before Solace and Kidd decided he was dead and that his ship would bring some hefty coin on the black market.

He'd found a large-brimmed black hat at a local shop two or three towns ago, and it kept the sun off his all ready crisped face. His black trench coat was HOT, but it was better than the REST of him roasting in the sun. He smacked his lips and glanced about; surely there was a pub or bar around here SOME place that he could wash this road dust out of his mouth. Sure enough, over on the corner was a small establishment by name of... well, the sign was so scarred and rubbed off by sandstorms that it just said "The \*big empty space\* Bar". He pushed open the cowboy-style swinging doors and entered the darkened bar. He felt a dozen pairs of eyes fix on him as one; he simply brushed himself off and headed for the counter.

He plopped down and ordered some light alcohol to try and get the dust from his throat. His crystal blue eyes danced around the bar, taking in the people who sat there. As he had guessed, there were twelve people in the bar, all with the look of seasoned gunfighters about them. He cautiously patted the gun under his left shoulder to make sure it was there; he didn't want to be caught unawares. As his drink was handed to him, bits and pieces of a nearby conversation drifted to his ears.

"Y'know what I hurd?" a man with a dirty poncho asked.

"Oh gawd, not another one o' your stoopid stawries, Lenny," a man in a clean white hat and brown chaps groaned. The man called Lenny hit him.

"I ain't foolin', Bart! I heard dat Vash da Stampede was headed for a town 'bout fifteen miles north o' here." Bart spat out his drink.

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"VASH !? Is you kiddin' me !?"

"Hells NO, I ain't kiddin' you!!"

Bart wiped his mouth. "Jeebus, dat place bettar watch out now... Vash ain't known for leavin' a place standing once he's been through..." The tall man trailed off as Damon dashed out the door, not paying for his drink. Bart looked to Lenny. "What da hells was HIS problem, I wonders?"

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"Well, thanks, good sir, for the most EXCELLENT and FREE ride." Damon gave the bus driver a huge grin as he poked the poor man in the back of the head with his huge revolver again. After hearing the news about Vash, the BIGGEST BOUNTYHEAD EVER, heading towards the very town he needed to be in, he'd hijacked a bus and made his way VERY rapidly there. He jumped off the bus, tossed the driver a thank-you salute and a sideways grin and dashed immediately out of town towards where his ship lay.

As he neared the edge of town, however, a couple of local law men found him. The black-clad man smirked and reached for his revolver, but hesitated. *DAMN it, I don't want to KILL them... but what other option do I have?!* There was only one: Damon ran and yelled "Sh!t!" with each shot fired, dodging this way and that as the local cops tried to "bust a cap in his @\$\$". He went over fences, through bars and yards and everything else, and just when it seemed he would NEVER lose them, he eluded them by running through a woman's bath house; the law men wouldn't enter because they obviously had vanity issues.

Finally, he arrived at his ship, just in time to watch from a distance as Solace Black stomped off in a huff from a man who was in HIS ship!! It was a considerable run to the *Jammer*, but Damon made it in record time, his black coat flaring behind him as he went. He reached the ramp and quietly crept up behind the man, who was speaking intently to Kidd. The black-clad bounty hunter tapped the man on the shoulder. He jumped and spun around; in one smooth motion, Damon dropped to one knee and tripped the stranger so he fell flat on his back; then he was up, the *Masamune* in one hand and his .50 caliber revolver in his other. "All right, first question. Who the f\*\*\* are you." The man moved to answer, and Damon pulled the hammer back on his revolver. "Let me finish. Second question is what the hell are you doing on my ship?"

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Vahn Manning didn't know what the hell was happening. One minute he was talking to Kidd and watching Solace stomp off. Now he was on the floor with some crazy guy, he could only assume was Damon Morlan, sticking some huge-@\$\$, sharp sword and a gun in his face, demanding to know who he was.

"Dam\*, this day keeps gettin' better and better." He mumbled to himself.

He looked around to see where Kidd was. She was standing behind him, looking shocked. But that wouldn't last too long. He turned back to his harasser and was about to answer him when Kidd let him have it.

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"Damon Morlan!" She yelled pointing a finger, "We thought you were dead! Do you have any idea how worried I've been. For MY safety? I could have starved to death! You left us here with no MONEY! You're lucky I'm good at borrowing mister!" She took off her boot and threw it at him, but he dodged it.

"Calm down, Kidd." Vahn said. "And YOU," He turned his attention to Damon, "Would you kindly remove the LETHAL weapons from my FACE?"

"What the HELL is going on?" Solace had just stepped into view. "YOU!" She yelled spotting Damon. "Where the hell have YOU been?" She demanded walking up to Damon, ignoring Vahn.

"Umm, could I have some help here?" He asked.

"Shut up! I'm still mad at you." She said, then continued talking to Damon, "You're lucky I didn't steal your ship and leave your stupid @\$ on this dam\* planet! I was REALLY considering it."

Kidd came up and stood beside her and crossed her arms, "Yeah. What she said."

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