

FIREFLY
"Serenity"

By
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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

SOLDIER

I can hear something...

EXT. SERENITY VALLEY - JUST BEFORE DAWN

We fade up to the dim blue of predawn.

We are close on the face of Sgt MAL REYNOLDS. He is stubbly, cut and parched, as though he'd been stranded at sea after a terrible battle.

SOLDIER

Does anybody hear that?

He gradually focuses on the sound of approaching engines, looking up and in the distance. Rouses himself from his sitting position, starts crawling over to a soldier lying near him.

MAL

Private.

(no response)

Zoe. Signal flare.

ZOE sits herself painfully up, beginning to understand. She looks as bad as Mal -- everyone does, or worse. Off screen, we hear the other soldier again:

SOLDIER

(O.S.)

There. There! Do you see it?

They're coming!

ZOE

Whose colors?

The SOLDIER comes into frame.

SOLDIER

It's a rescue ship, sir. They came.

(near tears)

They came...

ZOE

Whose colors are they flying?

She is handing Mal the flare as she says it.

MAL

Don't matter none. One side nor t'other... ain't no difference... Both of you pass the word, see who's still with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zoe and the other move out, and we stay on Mal, widening as he makes his way up a small slope that is littered with soldiers, living and dead and very much in-between. One of them is sitting and crying. Mal puts a comforting hand to his head as he passes -- we are pulling back as Mal continues on. As we pull back further, we see that Mal's about a foot around on the middle of the door. Zoe reaches in and snips the wire with pliers.

Since there is no sound in space, all we hear is the labored breathing of three very tense people.

Mal pulls out a small device, looks almost like electric nosehair clippers, and clamps it onto the end of the wire.

He hits a switch on the device, and a charge runs through the wire, causing a reaction in the gel that turns it incredibly acidic -- it starts melting through the metal in a circle.

Mal moves away from the door, holds onto something near Zoe.

ANGLE: THE GEL

as it eats through the door, further and further...

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

This (as we will learn in detail later) is the bridge of SERENITY, a small transport ship. The bridge itself is small and cluttered, more like someone's car than a pristine futuristic space vessel. In the pilot's seat sits WASH, a slightly shlumpy, unassuming fellow. He's concentrating intensely.

WASH

Everything looks good from here...

(beat)

Yes. Yes, this is a fertile land,
and we will thrive.

It is at this point that we realize he's playing with little plastic dinosaurs. He holds a stegosaurus and a T-rex (or whatever the hell they call 'em these days).

The dinosaurs look out over his dash/console, toward the window.

WASH (CONT'D)

(as steg)

We will rule over all this land,
and we will call it... This Land.

(as T-rex)

I think we should call it... your
grave!

(steg)

Curse your sudden but inevitable
betrayal!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH (CONT'D)

(T-rex)

Ha HA! Mine is an evil laugh! Now
die!

He makes them fight. As he does, a light near him flashes red.

He stops fighting, looks, then looks at a sort of radar screen.

ANGLE: THE RADAR SCREEN

has got three other dinosaurs on it. He sweeps them off as a blip appears in the upper right quadrant, closing fast.

WASH (CONT'D)

Oh, motherless son of a b--

FWOOSH! The circle of door shoots out toward us, as we're back in:

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

The piece of door flies across the room, bouncing off the wall right by Jayne -- he catches it as it's ricocheting. What looks like steam pours out the hole for a few moments.

ZOE

Full pressure. The goods should be intact.

MAL

Assuming they're still there.

He's floating to the door -- sticks his hand in the hole and shoves, the door slides aside and Jayne shines a flashlight in there.

ANGLE: INSIDE THE CHAMBER

Three crates, roughly the size of haybales, sit in the dark.

MAL (CONT'D)

Okay. Looking good.

A voice sounds simultaneously in all three headsets: Wash.

WASH

(O.S.)

We have incoming! Alliance cruiser,
bearing right down on us!

MAL

(in Chinese)

Fuck me blind!

(in English)

Have they spotted us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH
I can't tell if --

MAL
Have they hailed us?

JAYNE
If they're here for the salvage,
we're humped.

ZOE
This ship's been derelict for
months. Why would they --

MAL
(in Chinese)
Shut up.
(in English)
Shut it down, Wash. Everything but
the air.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH
Shutting down.

He is flipping switches, we hear engines running down, lights
go off - he hits the com:

WASH (CONT'D)
Kaylee! KAYLEE!

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KAYLEE rolls into frame from underneath a huge engine part,
ups and runs to the com. She is young, zaftig - as cheery as
she is sexy. She and her jumpsuit are, as usual, speckled
with grease.

WASH
Kaylee! Go to black out! We're
being buzzed!

She hits the com --

KAYLEE
(in Chinese)
Affirmative,
(in English)
going dark --

and keeps moving, hitting switches -- climbing atop the
engine to pull the last lever. Everything goes pretty damn
black.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)
Okay. Now I can't get down.

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

Jayne, Zoe and Mal all hold their positions, tense.

MAL
(softly)
Wash. Where's the Crybaby?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH
Right where we left her. You want
her to cry?

MAL
Not yet. They slowing down?

WASH
That's a neg. Don't think they're
interested in us. We should be
eating wake in a minute or two.

MAL
All right. They do a heat probe,
you holler.

WASH
(in Chinese)
Affirmative.

Mal looks at the other two. They wait.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

And we see it, in all it's glory: An Alliance Cruiser. Sleek,
huge, antiseptic. The AngloSino flag painted above the name,
I.A.V. DORTMUNDER.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)
What am I looking at?

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Hey, it's big. And clean, and everything a spaceship is
supposed to be. The Captain speaks with an Ensign. They are
rigid, formal, their clothes somewhat Trekkian, with a more
militaristic edge to it. They're cops, Army, Ambassadors --
they're the Man.

ENSIGN
It's a carrier, blew out a few
months back. No survivors, but it
was only run by a skeleton crew
anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Now we see their view: A huge window, in which the twisted wreck of a ship is a tiny speck, and a computerized window within in which it's magnified, a rotating 3D image.

CAPTAIN

Damn shame. No point in checking for survivors...?

ENSIGN

Locals swept it right after.

A moment, and the captain takes off his hat. The ensign follows suit as the Captain hits the com, his voice booming out around the ship:

CAPTAIN

Crew, a moment of respect, if you please. Passing a graveyard.

The other men in the ship respond by pulling off their hats and slightly bowing their heads, a couple looking out at the approaching ghostship.

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

Mal waits as through a piece of ripped out wall behind him, the ship, impossibly huge and dangerously close, passes by.

ANGLE: MAL'S FACE

Is set with grim dislike, as the reflection of the passing ship plays across his faceplate.

He is silent. So are the others.

EXT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

As the cruiser passes by, leaving the ship behind, all clear...

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

A MAN seated at a screen suddenly brow-furrows.

MAN

Sir, there is a reading on that thing. Some residual heat...

CAPTAIN

Do a sweep.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

An alarm sound, lights blink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH
 (in Chinese)
 Shit on my head!
 (in English)
 Captain! We're humped!

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

MAL
 Fire it up! Now!
 (to the others)
 We move these in, double-time!

They float to the crates, start dragging them (not hard in zero g).

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's still pitch black in here.

WASH
 (O.S.)
 Fire it up! Kaylee!

KAYLEE
 I'm all over it! I just gotta find
 the damn...

She hits the switch that gives her light. But in the action, topples off the engine she was perched on and out of frame.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)
 Wahh!

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP/AIRLOCK OF SERENITY - CONTINUING

Mal, Zoe and Jayne all float their crates past the twisted wreckage and into the airlock. Mal hits the button and the airlock door shuts. Hits another and gravity hits, the three of them landing on their feet, crates dropping, as air rushes in.

Mal hits the com.

MAL
 Wash! We're on! Go!

EXT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

The Cruiser is a good ways away as part of the black, twisted shadow begins to disengage itself, and we see for the first time that Serenity was anchored to the wreck, hidden almost in her bowels.

Serenity is a small, buglike ship, patched together, rusted in parts -- everything the Dortmunder is not. And teeny in comparison. It somewhat unfolds itself as it gets free.

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

The Captain is watching on his screen.

CAPTAIN
What the hell?

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash is seated, all business now.

WASH
Hang on, travellers...

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Everyone grabs something, as Jayne pulls off his helmet.

JAYNE
Let's moon 'em.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

As the ship turns away from us, the back lights up -- the entire bulbous back end glowing beneath a metal grid.

The ship fires away from us.

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Mal hits the com:

MAL
Cry, Baby, Cry.

WASH
(O.S.)
Make your mother sigh. Engaging the crybaby.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

Behind some little moon, we see a tiny jet-propelled satellite looking thing, beeping out its distress signal. It's roughly the size of a thermos, and has written on a piece of tape: "Crybaby #6".

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

The captain and ensign are near the screen. The captain's face goes cold with disgust.

MAN
It's a transport ship. Firefly class.

CONTINUED:

ENSIGN

They still make those?

CAPTAIN

Illegal salvage. Lowlife vultures
picking the flesh off the dead.

ENSIGN

Should we deploy gunships, bring
her in?

MAN

Captain, I am picking up a distress
signal thirteen clicks ahead...
From a... it sounds like a
personnel carrier...

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The crybaby beeps.

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

MAN

Definitely a big ship, sir, and she
is without power.

CAPTAIN

(considering)

Gunships'd never get back to us in
time...all right. Let's go help
those people.

(to the ensign)

Put a bulletin out on the Cortex,
and flag Interpol: a Firefly with
possibly stolen goods aboard.

(almost to himself)

Maybe someone'll step on those
roaches.

INT. CARGO HOLD - CONTINUING

The airlock feeds right into the cargo hold. It's a cavernous
space with a great deal of junk cluttering it. The airlock
door opens and Mal and the other two step out, clearly a bit
tense. They all pull off their spacesuits -- tees and undies
underneath.

WASH

(O.S.)

We look shiny, Captain. They are
not repeat not coming about.

ZOE

Close one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNE

Any one you walk away from, right?
Long as those crates aren't empty,
I call this a win.

MAL

Right.

He looks away, darkness in his gaze.

MAL (CONT'D)

We win.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. CARGO HOLD - LATER

A crate is jimmied open. It is Jayne with the crowbar, Mal who pulls the top off, looking in. Zoe, Wash and Kaylee are also about. (The three who went out have got pants on now.)

MAL

Well that sure enough don't hurt to see.

ANGLE: IN THE CRATE are bars that looks a lot like gold.

KAYLEE

(excited)
They're awfully pretty...

WASH

I'd say worth a little risk.

JAYNE

Yeah, that was some pretty risky sitting you did there.

WASH

That's right, of course, 'cause they wouldn't arrest me if we got boarded, I'm just the pilot. I can always say I was flying the ship by accident.

MAL

(harshly, in Chinese)
Shut up.

He has a bar in his hand, is looking at it up close.

ZOE

Problem, sir?

Clearly, there is. But Mal tries to cover -- just a big of tension creeping into his voice.

MAL

(after a moment)
Couldn't say.
(tosses the bar back)
But we'd best be rid of these 'fore we run into another alliance patrol.

JAYNE

What the hell they doing this far out, anyhow?

KAYLEE

Shining the light of civilization.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNE

Doesn't do us any good...

KAYLEE

Well, we're uncivilized.

As they talk, Mal approaches Wash, talking over them.

MAL

How long til we reach Persephone?

WASH

Three or four hours.

MAL

Can we shave that?

WASH

(shakes his head)

We're down to the wire on fuel cells. We run hot, we might not even make it.

MAL

Play it as close as you can. This catch is burning a hole in my hull.

ZOE

You think that cruise could've I.D.d us?

MAL

Gotta hope not. Contact Badger, tell him the job's done. Don't go to mentioning the Cruiser, though. Keep it simple.

ZOE

Sir, we're sure there's nothing wrong with the carg --

MAL

It's fine. I just wanna get paid.

They head up the ladder as Mal turns his attention to:

MAL (CONT'D)

Jayne, Kaylee, let's get these crates stowed. I don't want any tourists stumbling over them.

KAYLEE

We're taking on passengers at Persephone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL

That's the notion. We could use a little respectability on the way to Boros. Not to mention the money.

JAYNE

Pain in the ass...

KAYLEE

No, it's shiny! I like to meet new people. They've all got stories...

JAYNE

Captain, can you please stop her from being cheerful?

MAL

I don't believe there is a power in the 'verse that can stop Kaylee from being cheerful.

He smiles at her, never stopping working.

MAL (CONT'D)

Sometimes you just wanna duct tape her mouth and dump her in the hold for a month.

She grins and kisses his cheek.

KAYLEE

I love my captain.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR/BRIDGE - CONTINUING

As Wash and Zoe crest the ladder and head to their positions, talking.

ZOE

I know something's not right.

WASH

Sweetie, we're crooks. If everything was right, we'd be in jail.

ZOE

It's just, the Captain's so tense...

WASH

Of course he's tense. He's awake. Look, we drop the goods on Persephone, fly away rich and prosperous, then when we get to Boros --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZOE

Maybe take a couple of days shore-leave?

WASH

Exactly. We been running nonstop, and our shares from the salvage could put us somewhere sweet.

He moves in on her, wrapping her in his arms.

WASH (CONT'D)

Kind of place where they bring food to your room, food with food in it. We'd never move -- they'd lift us up to change the sheets.

They're getting closer, soon to be kissing, yes.

ZOE

Wouldn't mind a real bath...

WASH

Room in there for two?

ZOE

You'd have to move from the bed...

WASH

Well, I've changed my whole policy on not moving now. 'Cause of the bath thing.

They're so close...

ZOE

If the captain says it's all right...

Wrong. Wash shuts his eyes a moment, rests his head on hers, quietly pissed. He breaks apart.

WASH

What if we just told Mal we needed a few days, 'stead of asking him?

ZOE

He's the captain, Wash.

WASH

Right. I'm just the husband.

He lands in his seat. She still stands.

ZOE

Look, I'll ask him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WASH

Don't forget to call him 'sir'. He likes that.

MAL

Who likes what?

Instinctively, Zoe's demeanor changes as Mal enters, her bearing more erect, military.

ZOE

It's nothing, Sir.

Wash looks up at her excitedly, mouth, "good!" and gives the thumbs up. She looks away.

MAL

After you talk to Badger, see if you can reach the Ambassador. Let her know we're out of Persephone fast. She's got business pending, she better squeeze it dry and send it off. We ain't waiting.

WASH

I'm sure the Ambassador will appreciate your colorful phrasing. Sir.

ZOE

Inara knows our timetable. I'm sure she'll be checking in soon.

MAL

Well if she don't, rouse her. You know how wrapped up she gets in her work.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

We are close on INARA's face. She is being made love to by an eager, inexperienced but quite pleasingly shaped young man. She is beneath him, drawing him to his climax with languorous intensity. His face buried in her neck.

INARA

Oh... Oh.... oh my god...

He tightens, relaxes, becomes still. She runs her hand through his hair and he pulls from her neck, looks at her with sweaty insecurity. She smiles, a worldly, almost motherly sweetness in her expression. He rests his head on her breast, still breathing hard.

INARA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Oh my boy...

INT. SAME - LATER

They are seated on cushions, close to each other with their legs entwined, sipping tea from small cups. She has a robe on.

INARA

Sihnon isn't that different from this planet. More crowded, obviously, and I guess more complicated. The great city itself is... pictures can't capture it. It's like an ocean of light.

THE YOUNG MAN

Is that where you studied? To be a Companion?

INARA

(nodding)

I was born there.

THE YOUNG MAN

I can't imagine ever leaving.

There is but half truth in her reply, and a hint of weariness.

INARA

Well, I wanted to see the universe.

THE YOUNG MAN

My cousin hopes to become a Companion. But I don't think the academy will take her unless her scores come up.

INARA

It was the languages I struggled with. And music, at first.

THE YOUNG MAN

You play beautifully.

INARA

Thank you.

He looks down at his cup a moment.

THE YOUNG MAN

Do you really have to leave? I mean... I, my father is very influential, we could... I could arrange for you to be with...

She smiles that knowing smile again, just a tinge of sadness in it. He doesn't continue.

INT. SAME - LATER

He is dressed and exiting, his manner slightly more diffident.

THE YOUNG MAN

A very -- it was very good. Thank you.

INARA

The time went too quickly.

THE YOUNG MAN

Your clock's probably rigged to speed up and cheat us out of our fun.

The smile vanishes from her face. He looks guilty, then ducks out of the chamber, shutting the door behind him.

She takes a moment, then hits a button by the door, locking it and sealing it. She moves across the room and pulls aside a tapestry that conceals the cockpit of what we now see to be a small shuttle. Gets in the pilot's seat and hits a switch (and continues hitting them as she talks).

INARA

Serenity, this is Shuttle One, what's your ETA?

WASH

(O.S.)

Inara, hey. We're touching down at the Eavesdown docks in about ten minutes.

INARA

I'll join you there, thanks.

WASH

(O.S.)

Looking forward. We missed you out here.

INARA

(softly)

Yeah. Me too.

She punches a few buttons, rides the joystick, and the cockpit begins to shake slightly as we CUT TO:

EXT. CITY - DAY

The outside of the shuttle, which rises slowly into the air. As it does we see it is perched atop a skyscraper in a fairly big and ritzy city. It flies off.

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

We see Serenity as she touches down at the Eavesdown docks. It's a bustling bazaar, ships lined up next to each other, each one advertising passage or selling goods. The place is filled with People of all races, modes and languages. It's chaos; trade, theft and outright violence all happening amidst the jumble of humanity.

This district is clearly poorer than the gleaming city in the distance, and every ship parked looks at tad haphazard -- though Serenity does seem particularly small and ratty next to the ships it docks between.

The airlock opens, the ramp coming down and our gang piling out.

MAL

(to Kaylee)

This shouldn't take long. Put us down for departure in about three hours.

(to Wash)

Fuel her up, and grab any supplies we're low on.

Kaylee moves to a computerized placard in front of their 'parking space', starts entering data. We arm up to see It reads: DESTINATION: and that BOROS appears below that. The rest is filled in thus:

CAPACITY: TWELVE

DEPARTURE TIME: 1500

KAYLEE

I'd sure love to find a brand new compression coil for the steamer.

MAL

And I'd like to be king of all Londinum and wear a shiny hat. Just get us some passengers. Them as can pay, all right?

KAYLEE

Compression coil busts, we're drifting...

MAL

Best not bust, then.

Zoe, Jayne and Mal start off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH

Zoe.

(in Chinese)

Watch your back.

ZOE

We will.

He watches her move through the crowd.

EXT. EAVESDOWN DOCKS - DAY

We're in the middle of the hubbub. We see a sign that advertises: Good DOGS! Arm down to see a pen of scrawny, listless dogs of various breeds. Arm further down to see a griddle, with some suspicious looking cuts of meat sizzling on it. A man works the griddle.

We see, Passing through frame, Shepherd BOOK. He's about sixty, weathered and worldly, with a quiet kindness in his eyes. Farmer stock, not a trace of bullshit and a workingman's hands. He drags a few boxes and suitcases on a sort of wheeled papoose, carries another suitcase in his hand. His clothes are plain and instantly identify him as some kind of protestant minister. As he moves on, looking about him, he is approached by MAN, who's in his face a bit.

MAN

You going on a trip, grandpa? Need safe passage? We're cheap, we're cheap and clean, The BRUTUS is the best ship in the 'verse. What's your des, grandpa, we're hitting the outer rings --

BOOK

I never married.

MAN #2

What?

BOOK

I'm not a grandpa.

The guy just looks at him like he's crazy, let's him move on past the next barker, MAN #2. The guy is fancy, with people gathered around -- his ship is clearly high class.

MAN #2

-- three berths left, junior suites, we are not interested in Asian or Catholic passengers, thank you, we will be bidding for the last three berths --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Book moves on. Comes to the third dock in the row. It's Serenity's, Kaylee sits outside it in a lawn chair. He looks at it, never stopping, 'til Kaylee says, smiling:

KAYLEE

You're gonna come with us.

BOOK

Excuse me?

KAYLEE

You like ships. Don't seem to be looking at the destinations. What you care about is ships and mine is the nicest.

She's completely innocuous. It's hard not to be charmed by her. He does stop, gives the ship a look-over.

ANGLE: THE BRIDGE sticking out above them, SERENITY painted on the side.

BOOK

She don't look like much.

KAYLEE

She'll fool ya'. Ever sailed in a firefly?

BOOK

Long before you were crawling. Not an aught three, though. Didn't have the extenders, tended to shake.

KAYLEE

You wanna shake, sail the PARAGON there. Guarantee you'll barf before you break atmo.

Book looks over at the fancy ship he just passed, clearly agreeing.

BOOK

They can dress her up pretty, but a Gurtlser engine's always gonna get twitchy on ya.

(re: Serenity)

The aught three still use the trace compression block?

KAYLEE

Til they make something better.

Now she pretty much thinks he's the cool fool too. There is a moment between them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAYLEE (CONT'D)

So how come you don't care where
you're going?

BOOK

'Cause how you get there is the
worthier part.

KAYLEE

You a missionary?

BOOK

I guess... I'm a Shepherd, from the
Southdown Abbey. Book, I'm called
Book. Been out of the world for a
spell. Like to walk it a while,
maybe bring the word to them as
need it told.

KAYLEE

I'm Kaylee. This is Serenity, and
she's the smoothest ride from here
to Boros for anyone who can pay.
(beat, worried)
Can you pay?

BOOK

Not what they're charging on the
Paragon. But I expect we could come
to terms. I've got a little cash,
and, uh...

He approaches her, with a small wooden box. Shows her the
contents. She goes a little bit wide-eyed, eying the contents
lustfully.

KAYLEE

Oh, Grampa...

BOOK

I never married.

INT. UNDERGROUND 'OFFICE' - DAY

This is BADGER'S place. It's not too large, and kind of
dingy. The ceiling has what looks like subway grates over it -
- we can hear the traffic above, and every now and then the
bright white of a flying vehicle pours through the grate. On
one side are stairs leading up to ground level and a door
beside, at the other end an oversized, beat up desk and a way
into the back through a curtain.

Badger is a petty thug with pretensions to Kingpinery: He has
bad facial hair, bad teeth, a crushed derby and he wears a
woolly three piece and tie, though he has only a wifebeater
beneath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We find him in the room with three thugs in the corners. A fourth, an old man, is holding the arm of a clearly frightened but slightly hopeful young woman. Badger inspects her.

BADGER

Let me see your teeth.

She gives him a big smile. He pulls her lip up, the other one down.

BADGER (CONT'D)

Yes.

She looks apprehensively pleased as she is shuttled behind the curtain. As she is, yet another thug leads Mal, Zoe and Jayne down the stairs. Badger doesn't look at them, heading for his desk.

BADGER (CONT'D)

You're late.

MAL

You're lying.

Everybody tenses as Badger turns.

BADGER

What did you just say to me?

MAL

You're well aware we landed two hours 'fore we planned to, with all the goods you sent us after intact and ready to roll. So your decision to get tetchy and say we're late means you're looking to put us on the defensive right up front. Which means something's gone wrong and it didn't go wrong at our end so why don't we start again with you telling us what's up?

A beat. A mean little smile from Badger.

BADGER

You're later than I'd like.

MAL

Well I am sorry to hear that.

Badger site, Briefly holds up what appears to be digital paper: A clear, pliable piece of plastic with words and images running across it, constantly changing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BADGER

If you'd gotten here sooner, you might've beaten the bulletin that came up saying a rogue vessel, classification 'Firefly', was spotted pulling illegal salvage on a derelict transport.

MAL

They didn't ID us. Doesn't lead to you.

As he speaks he sticks an apple on a rusty old peeler, slowly turns it.

BADGER

No, it doesn't. But the government stamp on every molecule of the cargo just maybe might.

Zoe looks at Mal --that's what he didn't say when he examined the bars.

BADGER (CONT'D)

Oh, you noticed that. You were gonna hand over imprinted goods and just let me twist, is that the case?

MAL

We didn't pick the cargo.

BADGER

And I didn't flash my ass at the gorramn law. There's no deal.

ZOE

That ain't fair.

BADGER

Crime and politics, little girl: the situation is always fluid.

JAYNE

Only fluid I see here is the puddle of piss refusing to pay us our wage.

Mal shoots Jayne a look that shuts him right up.

Mal steps forward and Badger rises -- hands go to guns, but Mal is reasonable of tone.

MAL

Doesn't have to go this way. You know you can still unload those goods.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAL (CONT'D)

So I can't help thinking there's something else at work here.

As he talks, two more girls are hustled in. They are nudged, and both smile at Badger.

BADGER

(re: one)

Yes.

(re: other)

No.

(to Mal)

I don't like you.

He makes a face, reconsidering --

BADGER (CONT'D)

(to his thug, re: other)

Dyeahh.... yes.

The girl is pushed through the curtain after the first one. Badger calls after them:

BADGER (CONT'D)

But keep her in the back, yeah?

MAL

I'm not asking you to like me --

BADGER

(overlapping)

What were you in the war, a Sergeant? Sergeant Malcolm Reynolds, Balls and Bayonets Brigade, big tough veteran, now you got yourself a ship and you're a captain! Only I think you're still a Sergeant, see. Still a soldier, man of honour in a den of thieves.

(in his face)

Well it's my gorramn den and I don't like the way you look down on me. I'm above you. Better than. I'm a businessman, yeah? Roots in the community. You're just a scavenger. You're a bagman, Mal; you come and go at my beck and I say you go. Get out.

MAL

Maybe I'm not a fancy gentleman like you with your... very fine hat... but I do business. We're here for business.

BADGER

Try one of the border planets -- they're a lot more desperate there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BADGER (CONT'D)

Of course they might kill you, but you stay here and I just know the Alliance'll track you down. I have that feeling.

Long beat. Mal is inches from starting a firefight -- Jayne is less than inches. Zoe merely waits to back Mal's play.

But Mal turns to go. As he's leaving, he says:

MAL

Wheel never stops turning, Badger.

BADGER

That only matter to the people on the rim.

They are about gone when Badger stops Mal with:

BADGER (CONT'D)

Hey Mal!

(Mal turns)

That war -- how'd that turn out for you? You come out on top?

Mal says nothing, exits. Badger smiles, starts eating the apple peel.

EXT. EAVESDOWN DOCKS - LATER

We are now following Mal, Zoe and Jayne back to the ship.

JAYNE

I don't understand why we didn't leave that sumbitch in a pool of his own blood.

MAL

We woulda lost.

JAYNE

Well, I guess you're the expert on that.

MAL

(not breaking stride)

You figure this is a good time to rile me? You honestly think that?

ZOE

We'll sell the goods on Boros, no problem.

MAL

Boros is too big. It's crawling with Alliance, they could just be waiting for us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZOE

You really think Badger'd sell us out to the Feds?

MAL

If he hasn't already.

JAYNE

Gettin' to be so a man can't do an honest day's crime.

MAL

It's like the bastard called it: We'll have to hit one of the border planets on the way and hope we can make a deal. We could maybe to hook up with Patience...

JAYNE

Who's Patience?

ZOE

Works out of Whitefall, one of the Athenian moons.

MAL

It's possible she's in need of what we got. And government trace won't scare her.

ZOE

Not much does.

JAYNE

You trust her?

MAL

'Bout as much as I'd trust a baby to a pack of Reavers. But that don't matter now. Alliance catches us with government goods, we'll lose the ship.

Zoe realizes what that means to Mal. They have reached Serenity by now -- Mal is looking at it as he speaks. Zoe stops him.

ZOE

Sir, maybe we should just dump 'em.

MAL'S POV: still looking Serenity, he sees Kaylee welcoming another passenger, introducing himself as:

DOBSON

Dobson... Thank you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He stumbles, nearly dropping his luggage -- he's just a bit bumbly and sweet. Over this we hear:

MAL

We don't get paid for this, we won't have enough money to fuel the ship, let alone keep her in repair. She'll be dead in the water anyhow.

(Mal turns to the others)

We just gotta keep our heads down and do the job. Pray there ain't no more surprises.

He is standing by the airlock ramp as he says it, looking at:

ANGLE: A BOX. Being loaded on by Wash on a dolly/truck is, among a few other things, a clearly special, futuristic-looking dark blue box with many dials and readouts.

The box clears frame to reveal SIMON, a young, clearly affluent man. He wears a dark suit and round glasses. He seems to be looking directly at Mal, then glances over to the box.

SIMON

(to Wash)

Please be careful with that.

KAYLEE

Mal, this is Simon. This is our captain.

Both men size each other up, neither particularly anxious to make conversation.

SIMON

Captain Reynolds.

MAL

Welcome aboard.

(to Kaylee)

This all we got?

ANGLE: IN THE CARGO BAY

We see Zoe talking to Wash, giving him the bad news.

INT. BRIDGE - DAY

Wash is prepping her for take off, sees a signal, flips a switch.

WASH

Inara. You're just in time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INARA

(O.S.)

Let me guess. We're in a hurry.

WASH

Looks like. Port hatch green for docking.

INARA

(O.S.)

Locked in five. Four.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

As Inara's flying shuttle locks onto a side of the still-parked ship.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

As she feels the lurch of lock. She doesn't leave the pilot's seat.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash turns, calls back:

WASH

The Ambassador has returned.

He is talking to Zoe, who moves to the

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

And calls down to Mal, who is stowing cargo with Jayne:

ZOE

We got a full house, Captain.

He turns to the airlock:

MAL

Kaylee. Lock it up!

EXT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Kaylee looks around once...

KAYLEE

(softly)

All aboard...

ANGLE: SIMON

As he passes his box, looking at it, looking coldly at Mal.

EXT. PERSEPHONE - DAY

As Serenity shoots away from the atmosphere and into the black of space.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. SPACE - LATER

Serenity moves silently through. It is a tiny light in the black of space.

INT. PASSENGER'S SECTION/DINING ROOM - LATER

We see Dobson hurriedly coming up the stairs from the passenger section to the upstairs dining area as Mal has already begun addressing the other two passengers. Zoe and Kaylee are up there as well.

MAL

Meals are taken here in the dining area, the kitchen is pretty much self explanatory, you're welcome to eat what there is at any time, what there is is pretty standard fare, I guess, protein in all the colors of the rainbow. We do have sit-down meals, the next being at about 1800

--

KAYLEE

(excited)

I think Shepherd Book has offered to help me prepare something.

MAL

(to Book, less excited)

You're a Shepherd.

BOOK

Thought the outfit gave it away. Is it a problem?

KAYLEE

Of course not!

(to Mal)

It's not a problem, 'cause it's not.

MAL

No.

(to the bunch)

As I said, you're welcome to visit the dining area any time. Apart from that, I have to ask you to stay in the passenger dorm while we're in the air. The bridge, the engine room and the cargo bay are off limits without an escort.

SIMON

Some of my personal effects are in the cargo bay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

I figure you all got luggage you'll need to get into. Soon as we're done here we'll be happy to fetch 'em with you. Now I have to tell you all one other thing and I apologize in advance for the inconvenience -- Unfortunately, we've been ordered by the Alliance to drop some medical supplies on Whitefall. It's the fourth moon on Athens, a bit out of our way, but we should have you on Boros no more than a day off schedule. Is that gonna be all right for everyone?

BOOK

Jake by me...

SIMON

What medical supplies?

MAL

I honestly didn't ask.

ZOE

Probably plasma, insulin, whatever they ain't got enough of on the border moons.

MAL

Alliance says jump...

SIMON

All right.

These two clearly already don't trust each other. Book watches the both of them, sensing the dynamic.

DOBSON

I'm supposed to be meeting my wife's sister. I've only got a few days to see her...

ZOE

I wish there was another way...

DOBSON

Oh, no, no. That woman is like a dragon. I mean, I believe she has a tail. If there's any other moons we need to visit, or if we could just fly very slowly...

The tension is broken -- people smile at Dobson's disarming relief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL

One last thing, I forgot -- Your Firefly is a solid boat, but she's older... We've been having a bit of interference with our aeronautics, the new frequencies... I need to ask you all to stay off the cortex, at least til we get to Whitefall. We should be able to correct the problem there.

He smiles: the bland, cold smile of a liar.

INT. CARGO BAY - LATER

People are getting the luggage they need. Dobson is spilling clothes out of his case -- he's a perpetual bumbler. Simon is also placing things into an elegant little valise -- all while eyeing his special blue box.

Book places something wrapped in tissue into a wooden box, hands it to Kaylee, who beams at him.

ANGLE: THE SECOND SHUTTLE HATCH

opens, showing Inara's shuttle. She steps out of it, in a simple but elegant dress. The hatch opens onto a catwalk that runs above the space in an 'X', the opposite side being the entrance to the first shuttle. She descends stairs as the group notices her.

MAL

The Ambassador graces us with her presence.

Book looks up -- and Inara does indeed look the part of a lady of state.

MAL (CONT'D)

Hello, Mal. I see we have some new faces.

KAYLEE

Hey you.

INARA

Hey you.

There is a sweetness between those two. Not so much with Mal, whom Inara approaches.

MAL

Ambassador, this is Shepherd Book.

INARA

I'd have to say this is the first time we've had a preacher on board.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOK

Well, I wasn't expecting to see a state official, either.

(takes her hand, bows slightly)

Ambassador.

Mal laughs. Inara glowers at him.

BOOK (CONT'D)

I'm missing something funny.

KAYLEE

(glaring at Mal)

Not so funny.

INARA

"Ambassador" is Mal's way of --

MAL

She's a whore, Shepherd.

Book's clearly a little thrown. And disapproving.

KAYLEE

The term is "Companion".

MAL

Yeah, but the job is whore.

(to Inara)

How's business?

INARA

None of yours.

MAL

(to Book)

She is pretty much our ambassador. There's plenty of planets won't even let you dock without a decent Companion on board. This isn't a problem for you, is it?

BOOK

Well, I... no, I certainly...

INARA

(turns to go)

It's all right. I mostly keep to myself.

(passing Mal)

When I'm not whoring.

MAL

Don't you wanna meet the rest of the bunch?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

INARA

Why don't you make sure they want
to meet me first.

Inara and Kaylee head out together.

KAYLEE

So how many fell madly in love with
you and wanted to take you away
from all this?

INARA

Just the one. I think I'm slipping.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

Kaylee has made her way up with the box, lays it on the counter. Quietly excited, she opens it, looks in. A beat, then she pulls out a strawberry. It's just as red and luscious as it could be. She smells it, slowly puts it in her mouth, eyes closing. Watching her savor it is not an entirely unsensual experience.

She swallows it. Smiles, broad and bright.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

We see a sparse but none-the-less inviting spread - Book and Kaylee have made a salad of tomatoes, and grilled up some root vegetables along with the pasta and protein/starch mush that is the usual diet of space travellers. To us, not much. To this crowd, a banquet.

People are gathering, sitting, helping themselves to things -- everybody's moving and talking over each other and everyone's there save Wash and Inara.

ZOE

Oh, this is incredible.

BOOK

It's not much -- I had a garden at the Abbey, thought I should bring what I could.

SIMON

It's very kind of you to share with all of us.

ZOE

I'm gonna make a plate for Wash...

BOOK

(to Simon)

Well, it won't last, and they're never the same when they're frozen. The important thing is the spices.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOK (CONT'D)

A man can live on packaged food
from here til Judgement Day if he's
got enough Marjoram.

DOBSON

(over this, to Jayne)
Can you pass me the tomatoes?

He does, after taking several slices. People settle.

BOOK

Captain, would you mind if I say
grace?

MAL

Only if you say it out loud.

A beat -- Mal has broken the mood. He starts eating, others
follow. Book lowers his head a moment, as do Kaylee, Dobson,
and Jayne, then they eat as well.

SIMON

So, does it happen a lot?
Government commandeering your ship,
telling you where to go?

MAL

That's what governments are for.
Get in a man's way.

DOBSON

But it's good, if the supplies are
needed...

JAYNE

Yeah, we're just happy to be doing
good works.

DOBSON

I hear a lot of the border moons
are in bad shape. Plagues, and
famine...

ZOE

Well, some of that's exaggerated,
and some of it ain't. All those
moons -- just like the central
planets, they're as close to Earth-
That-Was as we could make 'em:
atmosphere, gravity and such,
but...

MAL

Once they're terraformed, they'll
dump settlers on there with nothing
but blankets and hatchets and maybe
a herd. Some of them make it, some
of them...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIMON

Then I guess it's good we're helping.

KAYLEE

(to Simon)

You're a Doctor, right?

SIMON

Oh. Uh, yes. Yes, I was a trauma surgeon on Osiris, in Capital City.

MAL

Long way from here.

KAYLEE

(to Simon)

You seem so young. To be a doctor.

SIMON

(changing the subject)

You're pretty young to be a ship's mechanic.

KAYLEE

No how. Machines just got workings, and they talk to me.

BOOK

That's a rare gift.

KAYLEE

Not like being a doctor, helping fix people, that's important. It's kind of comforting to have a doctor on board.

JAYNE

Little Kaylee just wishes you was a gynecologist.

Kaylee, visibly humiliated, looks down.

MAL

Jayne. You'll keep a civil tongue in that mouth or I will sew it shut, is there an understanding between us?

JAYNE

(pushing)

You don't pay me to talk pretty.

MAL

Walk away from this table. Right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A beat, and Jayne goes, grabbing a bunch of food as he does. Everyone is silent a moment.

SIMON

What do you pay him for?

MAL

What?

SIMON

I was just wondering what his job is. On the ship.

Mal stares a moment.

MAL

Public relations.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Inara is kneeling, robe pooled at her waist. She is sponging off -- the only kind of bathing you'll find on this ship. A knock on the hatch.

INARA

(in Chinese)

Come in.

Book enters. She is facing mostly away from him, but she sees it's him. She continues to bathe herself, running the sponge over her breasts, more in defiance than seduction.

BOOK

If I'm not intruding...

INARA

Not at all.

She pulls her robe up, in no great hurry, as she turns to him.

INARA (CONT'D)

I expected you.

BOOK

Can't really say the same, myself.

INARA

So. Would you like to explain to me the wickedness of my ways?

BOOK

Do you never come to supper with the others?

INARA

Sometimes, I --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOK

I saved you some food. I cooked up some fresh vegetables, a salad... If you wanted to... forgive me, I haven't got a lot of experience with --

INARA

Whores?

Book's face clouds.

BOOK

Captain Reynolds has no call to speak about you like that.

INARA

He dislikes pretension.

BOOK

Still, a lady shouldn't --

INARA

Please don't delude yourself, Shepherd. The captain is a sadistic boor, but I am a companion. And right now, a lecture on antiquated notions of moral turpitude is --

BOOK

Not my intent. I like that word, though. turpitude. You just don't hear it enough. But no.

A beat, as she shifts, trying to figure him out...

INARA

Well, you should know I have a strict policy about never sleeping with crew -- or passengers.

BOOK

Ma'am, I'm sorry to tell you that I

have no interest in your body, or what you do with it. It's true, I'm a Christian, and we don't exactly celebrate the flesh trade, but that's your business. It's perfectly legal. And I'm beginning to suspect it's the only business on this boat that is.

A beat, a she laughs. He smiles disarmingly.

BOOK (CONT'D)

Fact is, I don't know how long I'm gonna be with you all.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BOOK (CONT'D)

I always heard that by law,
Companions are educated in the
literary arts, philosophy and
whatnot. Among, well other things
but I just thought it might be nice
to be able to talk once in a while.

INARA

You think you and I would have
things to talk about? Don't you
think our perspectives might be a
little at odds?

BOOK

Doesn't scare me none. I come to
this world to learn, not to preach.
Well, sometimes to preach, but I
can control it. But what I got out
there is a bunch of people don't
much wanna talk about anything.
Your captain's a particularly tight-
lipped fellow.

INARA

He can be a little brusque, but
he's a decent man.

BOOK

I thought he was a sadistic boor.

INARA

He's a lot of things.

She sounds almost weary when she says it. Her feelings for
him are clearly complex.

INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING

It's a tiny cell, just a bunk and a tiny fold-down desk. A
ladder runs up to the hatch (the crew rooms are under the
foredeck hall). The room is cluttered with junk, pictures,
general mess.

Mal is in the heroic act of doing up his trousers as we find
him. There's a kind of metal drawer that hinges open to knee
level. It's the toilet, and Mal kicks it shut, causing a
flushing sound not unlike an airplane toilet. Above it is
another metal drawer. He pulls it open and it's a small sink.
He runs a little water on his hands, splashes his face, when
the com sounds.

WASH

(O.S.)

Mal, you might wanna get up here...

Mal's up the ladder in a flash.

INT. FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUING

The hatch, set at the side of the hall at a 45 degree angle between floor and wall, slides open and Mal climbs up. He moves through the hall to:

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Where Wash is studying a screen.

MAL

What is it?

WASH

Signal. Somebody went on the Cortex, hailed the nearest Alliance Cruiser.

MAL

Tell me you scrambled it.

WASH

All to Hell, but I don't know how much got through. Alliance got a pin in us for sure.

MAL

< Fuck everyone in the universe to death. >

WASH

We got a mole on board.

Mal's face hardens as he works it out...

INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Simon is checking on his box, looking at lights and gages. The lights are low now and he is furtive and very quiet, crouching on the larger crate on which his luggage sits. He finishes and steps down.

He turns and Mal is standing before him.

MAL

Forget your toothpaste?

Mal SLUGS him, sends him sprawling. Simon feels his head, furious, as Mal shakes his hurt hand.

SIMON

Are you out of your mind?

MAL

Just about. What'd you tell them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON
(standing)
Tell who?

Mal draws his gun, puts it in Simon's face.

MAL
I have exactly no time for games.
What do they know.

SIMON
You are a lunatic.

MAL
And you're a gorramn fed.

BOOK
Hate to say it, Captain, but you've
got the wrong man.

Both men turn to him, Mal stunned to think the Shepherd is actually a fed. A beat, and both Mal and Simon realize Book is looking behind them. Slowly, they turn the other way, and understand Book's meaning.

Dobson holds a gun on Mal.

MAL
(defeated)
Son of a bitch.

DOBSON
Drop that firearm, Captain
Reynolds.

A beat, and Mal does.

MAL
This is not my best day ever.

Dobson moves the gun to point it at Simon.

DOBSON
Simon Tam, you are bound by law to
stand down.

Mal takes a moment to realize the man is after Simon.
Switches gears instantly.

MAL
You -- what -- the doctor? Oh!
(indignant at Simon)
Hey!
(hopeful, to Dobson)
Is there a reward?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Right where we left off. Dobson is ignoring Mal, focusing on Simon. This bumbling businessman is now a very intense, tightly wound cop.

DOBSON

(to Simon)

Get on the ground. Get on the ground!

SIMON

Lawman, you're making a mistake.

MAL

I think you oughta get on the ground, son. Man seems a mite twitchy.

BOOK

I think everybody could stand to calm down a bit.

He is moving slowly towards Dobson, hoping to defuse.

DOBSON

This isn't your business, Shepherd.

BOOK

The boy's not going anywhere, Lawman. As I understand it, it's pretty cold outside.

Mal moves casually for his gun -- he's of the righteous now.

MAL

Not to worry. We can hold Lord Fauntleroy in a passenger cell -- won't make a peep til you hand him over to --

DOBSON

(pointing the gun at Mal again)

Get the hell away from that weapon! You think I'm a complete backbirth? You're carrying a fugitive across interplanetary borders and do you think I actually believe you're bringing medical supplies to Whitefall? As far as I care, everyone on this ship is culpable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

(icy calm)

Well now. That has an effect on the
landscape.

BOOK

Please, we're very close to true
stupidity here --

DOBSON

I got a cruiser en route for
intercept, so talk all you want.
You got about twenty minutes.

MAL

Might have less than that.

DOBSON

Yeah, threaten me...

BOOK

(still moving)

For God's sake --

DOBSON

You think I wouldn't shoot a
Shepherd? Back off!

Mal grabs Simon -- and everybody's shouting --

MAL

Just take the kid!

SIMON

Get your hands off --

DOBSON

Stand the hell down --

KAYLEE

Hey, what's --

Dobson spins and FIRES.

Kaylee steps backwards, puzzled, as Jayne steps in behind her
--

KAYLEE (CONT'D)

Wait, why are you...

She puts her hands to her belly. Blood runs over it.

A lot of things happen. Kaylee slumps to the ground as Simon
rushes to her, Mal dives for his weapon, Jayne draws his,
Dobson swings to fire at Mal --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

-- and Book is in Dobson's face, a brutal jab in the throat as he grabs his gun--hand whip-quick, twists and pulls the gun out, cracking Dobson across the face with it in the same motion and Dobson is down. In seconds.

INARA

Kaylee!

She is on the upper level, having come out of her shuttle at the sound of the shot. She races to Kaylee, as does Mal, seeing that Dobson is no longer a threat.

Jayne comes toward Dobson with a purpose, gun in hand, and Book turns to face him.

JAYNE

Get out of the way.

BOOK

You're not killing this man.

JAYNE

Not right away...

BOOK

He's not a threat.

JAYNE

Move.

BOOK

Not gonna happen.

JAYNE

(raising his gun)

I'm not joking with you, Preacher --

ZOE

Jayne!

She's got her gun out, pointed at Jayne.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Just tie him up. Do it!

A moment, and Jayne holsters his piece, moves to get some duct tape.

ZOE (CONT'D)

The gun, Shepherd. Please.

Book hands her Dobson's gun. A bit of blood drips off it.

ANGLE: KAYLEE AND THE OTHERS

NOTE: much of this action will be happening simultaneously with the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Simon lays Kaylee prone, keeping her head up til the others join him.

SIMON
Lie back. How do you feel?

KAYLEE
A little odd. Why'd he... oh...

Inara and Mal join them.

SIMON
(to Inara)
Put something under her head.

Inara pulls off her robe (she is dressed beneath) and bunches it under Kaylee's head, as, Simon rips open Kaylee's jumpsuit, examines the wound. It's not pretty.

MAL
(to Kaylee)
Well, that ain't hardly a mosquito bite.

He and Inara exchange a glance that means something different.

KAYLEE
Big... mosquito...

SIMON
Can you move your feet? Kaylee.
Stay with me. Can you move your feet?

KAYLEE
Are you.... asking me to dance...?

Her eyes start to roll back --

SIMON
She's going into shock.

INARA
Kaylee, < little sister >, You gotta focus.

Simon pushes Kaylee's stomach and she screams.

SIMON
(to Mal)
The infirmary working?

MAL
We got it stocked.

They move to pick her up --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

WASH

(O.S.)

(on the com)

Captain, we've been hailed by a
Cruiser. Ordered to stay on course
and dock for prisoner transfer.

Mal and Simon look at each other.

Simon rises, steps away from Kaylee. He is tense, but
surprisingly calm.

SIMON

Change course. Run.

MAL

Hell with you. You brought this
down on us, I'm dumping you with
the law.

INARA

Mal...

SIMON

She's dying.

MAL

You're not gonna let her.

SIMON

Yes I am.

MAL

You can't.

Simon looks at Kaylee, helpless and sweet.

ZOE

No way the Feds'll let us walk.

MAL

Then we dump him in the shuttle and
leave him for them.

KAYLEE

(delirious)

Everybody's so mad...

INARA

It's okay, baby...

SIMON

You know what a stomach wound does
to a person?

MAL

I surely do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SIMON

Then you know how crucial the next few minutes are.

ZOE

(to Simon)

You let her die you'll never make it to the Feds.

SIMON

She'll still be dead.

MAL

You rich kids, you think your lives are the only thing that matters. What'd you d? Kill your folks for the family fortune?

SIMON

I don't kill people.

MAL

Then do your job!

SIMON

Turn the ship around!

INARA

Enough! Mal, do it.

MAL

Don't ever tell me --

Kaylee screams again.

Mal and Simon stare at each other.

MAL (CONT'D)

(eyes on Simon)

Zoe. Change course.

SIMON

Help me get her up.

Mal and Inara hoist with Simon.

INARA

It's back behind you.

ZOE

(hits the com)

Wash, change course and go for hard burn. We're running.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

As the ship turns and the back lights up wicked bright -- and she shoots off.

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

The three of them burst in, lay Kaylee on the table. It's small and not wildly sterile here, but it is clearly functional.

SIMON

You have an extractor?

MAL

Laser saw. We can go in --

SIMON

Not good enough. In my room, the red bag.

Inara goes. Simon raids the cupboards, finds a hypo-gun and vials.

MAL

This is over, you and me are gonna have a personal chat.

SIMON

Won't that be fun.
(tosses Mal the hypo)
Dope her.

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

We see, over time, VARIOUS ANGLES of Simon operating. What's clear here is that this guy is supremely confident and good at his job. Mal and Inara assist -- mostly Mal, who has the most field experience. Among the images are:

-- Simon using the extractor to find and pull out the bullet shards.

-- Mal holding the wound open while Simon works a laser/scope inside her. Both men with bloody hands.

-- Inara holding a breathing mask over Kaylee's face, looking at instruments indicating her vitals.

-- a vid image of a laser sewing up a hole in her liver.

-- Inara handing over bandages as Simon sews the wound shut.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Simon washes off his hands. He turns to Mal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON

I can't do anything more until she stabilizes.

MAL

Will she?

SIMON

Can't say yet.

INARA

I wanna know what's going on here.

MAL

Well then why don't we find out?

He moves quickly from the room.

SIMON

What are you... no!

Simon follows, as do we, back into

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Mal overturns some crates and cases to reveal Simon's big blue box, sitting atop another box.

SIMON

Stay away from that!

He moves toward Mal -- but is grabbed and easily held by Jayne.

MAL

(calmly, to Jayne)
Where's the Fed?

JAYNE

Secured. Shepherd's with him. Seems to think he's not safe alone with me.

Mal hops atop the first crate and pushes the blue box. It topples off the crate and lands hard on the metal floor as Wash and Zoe enter.

Mal hops down, turns some dials on the box and pulls a release lever. There is much flashing of lights and four latches twist automatically at the corners. The top comes slightly up with a hydraulic whoosh, dry ice pouring out the sides.

Zoe and Mal pull at the top. Inara enters, watches as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

Let's see what a man like you would
kill for.

The top won't go. Mal rears back and slams his heel into it. It flies off, clattering to the floor as the smoke clears from over what's inside.

Mal steps forward, looks.

ANGLE: ABOVE THE BOX

Curled inside is a naked, unconscious seventeen year old girl.

The box is clearly a cryo-chamber of some sort, perfectly conformed to her body, a sleep metallic womb.

Mal looks at the girl. At Simon. At the girl.

MAL

Huh.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

Simon tries to wrest himself free of Jayne, who's just holding his arms now.

SIMON

I need to check her vitals.

MAL

Is that what they call it?

SIMON

She's not supposed to wake up for another week! The shock could --

MAL

The shock of what? Waking up?
Finding out she's been sold to some borderworld baron? Or, I'm sorry -- was this one for you? Is it true love? 'Cause you seem --

She SCREAMS as she lurches out of the box behind Mal. He actually gives a little yelp himself as he turns, startled.

She keeps screaming, and for a moment no one does anything.

She spills out of the box, crawling backwards, breathing hard and looking around her, wild-eyed.

Simon finally pulls himself free of Jayne -- who's now more interested in Naked Girl than Struggling Man -- and comes to her.

SIMON

River --

She screams at his touch -- Inara instinctively moves forward -- but he holds onto her, tries to get her to look in his eyes.

SIMON (CONT'D)

River. It's okay. It's okay. I'm here.

Finally she looks at him, trying to focus, still breathing hard. Tears are welling in his eyes, but he just stays focused on her.

She looks about, at everyone, then back at him.

SIMON (CONT'D)

River...

RIVER

Simon...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And she realizes, begins to cry, as does he.

RIVER (CONT'D)

Simon... They talk to me, they want me to... to talk...

SIMON

They're gone... they're gone and we're safe now, we're safe and I'm here.

Everyone in the room can tell this is not what Mal thought. There is a kind of respect in their silence. Well, til:

MAL

What the hell is this?

Simon pulls the weeping River to him, looks at Mal defiantly, unashamed of the tears in his eyes.

SIMON

This is my sister.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Everyone is gathered, save Kaylee and River herself, to hear Simon speak. As he does, we will periodically INTERCUT to him taking care of River in the infirmary.

For a moment, they all just wait.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

River is brought -- wrapped in the robe Inara used for Kaylee's pillow -- into the infirmary. She sees the unconscious Kaylee, the operating room, and she freaks. Starts screaming again, struggling to get out of Simon's grip.

SIMON

(O.S.)

I'm very smart.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

SIMON

Went to the best Medacad on Osiris, top three percent of my class, finished my internship in eight months. Gifted. Is the term. So when I tell you that my little sister makes me look like an idiot child, I want you to understand my full meaning.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

Simon has calmed her down, she's sitting on the table now, looking at him with fresh tears. He prepares a hypo with a sedative. Her look of distrust at the hypo is comically grumpy -- a little child's. Her eyes wander as he injects her, she mutters something to no one -- this girl is gone.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

SIMON

River was more than gifted. She was.... a gift. Everything she did, music, Maths, theoretical physics -- even dance -- there was nothing that didn't come as naturally to her as breathing does to us.

(smiles, remembering)

She could be a real brat about it, too. She used to tell me --

(losing the train)

I mean, she's a kid. You know? Like everyone else, except she understands. So much.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

River drifts off to sleep. We pan across to see Simon holding her hand.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

Simon pauses a moment.

SIMON

There was a school... a, uh, government-sponsored academy, we'd never even heard of it but it had the most exciting program, the most challenging... we could have sent her anywhere, we had the money... but she wanted to go. She wanted to learn. She was fourteen.

A moment of bitter emotion, then he pulls it together.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I got a few letters at first, then I didn't hear from her for months. Finally I got a letter that made no sense. She talked about things that never happened, jokes we never... it was code. I couldn't even figure... I talked to professors, spent a week trying to work it. It just said... "They're hurting us. Get me out."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He can't go on for a moment.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

She sleeps.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

ZOE

How did you do it?

SIMON

Money. And luck -- for two years I couldn't get near her, but I was contacted by some men, some underground movement. They said she was in danger, that the government was playing with her brain. If I funded them they could sneak her out in cryo. Get her to Boros and from there, I could take her... wherever.

MAL

How did you know it wasn't a scam?

SIMON

I didn't. Until you opened that box.

INARA

Will she be all right?

SIMON

She was supposed to reacclimate before I brought her out, she's in physical shock, but not serious. I don't know if she'll be all right. I don't know what they did to her, or why. I just have to keep her safe.

(to Mal)

You asked me what a man like me would kill for. And she's it.

There is a moment.

BOOK

That's quite a story, son.

MAL

Yeah, it's a tale of woe, very stirring but in the meantime you've heaped a world of trouble on me and mine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON

I never thought that --

MAL

No, I don't imagine you did. In consequence of which we got a kidnapped federal officer on board, be got the Alliance hard on our trail and Kaylee...

He doesn't say it.

ZOE

(to Wash)

How much does the Alliance know?

WASH

Can't say. I killed the message pretty quick, so they might just have had our position.

MAL

Or they might have personal profiles on each and every one of us. Til that fed wakes up, we won't know.

JAYNE

What do we do?

A moment, as he thinks, looking at his crew. At Inara.

MAL

The job. We finish the job. I sent word to Patience, she's waiting for us. We circle round to Whitefall, make the deal, get out. Keep flying.

SIMON

What about us?

Mal looks at him a moment.

MAL

Kaylee comes through, you and your sister'll get off in Whitefall.

SIMON

If she doesn't come through?

MAL

Then you're getting off a mite sooner.

BOOK

That'd be murder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL

Boy made a decision.

INARA

He didn't shoot her.

JAYNE

But somebody on this boat did and
I'm scratching my head as to why we
ain't dealt with him.

And now the room gets louder, people start talking over each other...

ZOE

Kill a fed? Can you think of a
stupider thing to do?

JAYNE

Ha can I.D. us all.

SIMON

You wanna throw me out the airlock,
fine, but River's not a part of
this.

WASH

Can we maybe vote on the whole
murdering people issue?

MAL

We do not vote on my ship because
my ship is not the gorramn town
hall!

INARA

This is insanity. Mal...

WASH

I happen to think we're a ways
beyond that now, sir.

(to Zoe)

Come on, we're gonna talk this
through, yeah?

Zoe doesn't answer. Wash is truly pissed.

BOOK

I'll not sit by while there's
killing here.

JAYNE

(smiling)

Shepherd's got a mean streak. We'd
best walk soft.

Book looks down, ashamed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAL

< Everybody shut the hell up! >
 (they do)
 Way it is is the way it is. We got
 to deal with what's in front of us.

INARA

Mal, you know those two wouldn't
 survive a day in Whitefall anyway.
 You throw them out, I'm leaving
 too.

Mal looks at her, furious at being confronted publicly, truly
 upset by the thought of her leaving, taking a moment to push
 both below the surface.

MAL

Might be best you do. You ain't a
 part of this business.

They stare at each other a moment. He exits toward the back.

INT. AFT HALL - CONTINUING

Simon follows him.

SIMON

What business is that, exactly?

Mal turns and gives him a murderous look, but Simon doesn't
 back down.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I'm a dead man, I can't know? Gold?
 Drugs? Pirate treasure? What is it
 that makes you so afraid of the
 Alliance?

MAL

You don't wanna go down this road
 with me, boy.

SIMON

You're not afraid of them? I
 already know you'd sell me out to
 them for a pat on the head -- Hell,
 you should probably be working for
 'em, you certainly fit the profile -
 -

Mal decks him. He goes tumbling. Mal looks down at him, looks
 back to see:

ANGLE: THE DINING ROOM

The rest are looking at him, Book and Jayne in the
 foreground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNE
Saw that coming...

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

The girls are asleep. Simon finishes injecting something into Kaylee, goes to return a bottle to a cabinet.

BOOK
How is she?

Startled, Simon shuts the door. Turns to the Shepherd.

SIMON
Touch and go.

BOOK
I might pray over her a bit, if you don't mind.

SIMON
Of course.

BOOK
She's a special girl. We kinda got to be be friendly right away.

SIMON
That's a talent I seem to lack.

BOOK
If I can ask, what made you pick this ship?

SIMON
It looked disreputable.

Book smiles. Simon does too, though his is a bleak one.

BOOK
Well, you're not without critical judgement. Didn't happen to look at the name, I suppose?

SIMON
Um, what -- "Serenity", right? That's a joke.

BOOK
I believe it's not.

SIMON
< I'm sorry? >

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOOK

You want to get a lay of the land here, it might be what you lack isn't psychological insight. Might be it's History.

Simon looks at him.

INT. SIMON'S ROOM - LATER

Simon opens a small notebook. It's got a sheet of digital paper inside on the right, and a series of what look like little plastic pointers inserted on the left. He picks one, slides it in the spine of the notebook, and the paper lights up, reading: Universal Encyclopedia. He touches a section that says: VOICE, and says:

SIMON

Serenity.

Up comes the dictionary definition, and below that, SERENITY, BATTLE OF. He touches it and a paragraph forms with photos next to it.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Read.

As the book reads, in a soft female voice, the images fill the page. Planets, banners, then images of battle and carnage, the aftermath of which we saw in the flashback.

ENCYCLOPEDIA

In the war to unite the planets, The Battle Of Serenity was among the most devastating and decisive. Located on Hera, the valley was considered a key position by both sides, and was bitterly fought over. The Independent Faction, with sixteen brigades and twenty air-tank squads, held the valley against Alliance forces for almost two months, until superior numbers and a brilliant deep- flank strategy by General Richard Wil --

ZOE

What does it say under 'bloodbath'?

Simon turns off the book, seeing Zoe in his doorway.

SIMON

I'm was just trying to --

ZOE

We're not in there. The book, I mean.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZOE (CONT'D)

We're not generals or diplomats, we didn't turn the tide of glorious history or whatever that thing is supposed to spew.

SIMON

You know what they say: History is programmed by the winners.

ZOE

Nearly half a million people lay dead on that field at day's end, about a third of them 'winners'. Can you imagine the smell? Can you imagine piling up the bodies of soldiers -- of friends -- to build a wall 'cause you got no cover? Blood just kept pouring out of them, you'd slip in it half the time, find out bloodbath is not just a figure of speech.

SIMON

Mal was there with you.

She enters, sits across from him.

ZOE

He was my sergeant. In command of thirty-odd grunts -- five days in, there were so many officers dead he commanded two thousand. Kept us together, kept us fighting, kept us sane. By the time the fighting was over he had maybe four hundred still intact.

SIMON

That's a hell of a --

ZOE

I said the fighting was over. But you see they left us there. Wounded, and sick, and near to mad as can still walk and talk. Both sides left us there while they 'negotiated the peace'. For a week. And we just kept dying. When they finally sent in Medships, he had about a hundred and fifty left, and of our original platoon, just me.

She stands.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Mercy, forgiveness, trust... Those are things he left back there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZOE (CONT'D)

What he has now is the ship, the ship and us on it. You get Kaylee through this and I think he'll do right by you. He won't kill unless he's got no other option.

SIMON

What if he tells you to kill me?

ZOE

I kill you.

SIMON

(grim smile)

Just getting the lay of the land.

She starts to go.

SIMON (CONT'D)

If that battle was so horrible, why'd he name the ship after it?

She considers the question.

ZOE

Once you've been in Serenity, you never leave. You just learn to live there.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Mal arrives on the bridge, moving fast. Wash is watching a screen, very apprehensive.

MAL

How the Hell did they find us? I thought you said we could get around 'em.

WASH

It's not Alliance.

MAL

You're sure?

WASH

It's a smaller vessel.

MAL

Commercial?

WASH

Um, yeah, I read it as an older model, Trans-U.

MAL

I didn't think Trans-U still operated.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH
They don't.

MAL
Get me a visual.

WASH
They're still too far out to --

MAL
Get me something!

WASH
I'm picking up a lot of
radiation... they're burning
without core containment. Well,
that's < nuts >, that's suicide...

He looks at Mal, getting it.

MAL
Reavers.

Mal looks out toward a tiny speck that approaches them.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

Where we see, for the first time, the ship. Once it was a commercial spaceliner, now it's a war machine. Tricked out, ornament and painted, with giant torpedo-looking tubes jerry-rigged near the front. Everything about this vessel says 'savage'.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Where Mal continues to stare ahead, and Wash repeats softly:

WASH
Oh god... oh god... oh god...

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

We see the two girls laid out, unconscious. Book is quietly standing at the foot of Kaylee's bed, bible folded in his hands. Mal's voice comes over the com:

MAL

(O.S.)

This is the captain.

INT. PASSENGER DORM HALL - CONTINUING

Zoe has started out of Simon's room, has stopped to listen. He steps out of his room, listening as well.

MAL

(O.S.)

We're passing another ship. Looks to be Reavers. From the size, probably a raiding party.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUING

She listens, too. Gravely.

MAL

(O.S.)

Could be they're headed somewhere particular, could be they've already hit someone and they're full up. So everybody stay calm.

INT. JAYNE'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Jayne pulls down a decorative blanket to reveal an arsenal on his wall. He his silent and serious.

MAL

(O.S.)

We're holding course. They should pass us in a minute, we'll see what they do.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

MAL

Zoe, you come on up to the bridge.

INT. PASSENGER DORM HALL - CONTINUING

Zoe is going as Simon stops her with:

SIMON

I don't understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZOE

You've never heard of Reavers?

SIMON

Campfire stories... Men gone savage
at the edge of space, killing,
and...

ZOE

They're not stories.

SIMON

What happens if they board us?

ZOE

If they take the ship, they'll rape
us to death, eat our flesh and sew
our skins into their clothing and
if we're very very lucky, they'll
do it in that order.

She exits. Simon moves quickly to:

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

Where he moves near River. He and Book look at each other.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

We see the ships nearing each other. Slowly and silently.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUING

Inara digs out a small, hidden box. She opens it. Inside is a
modern syringe gun, smaller than the one Simon used on River,
and a vial of black liquid. Unmarked.

She stares into the box.

INT. JAYNE'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Jayne is loading bullets the size of D batteries into a big-
ass rifle. His hands are shaking slightly.

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Bound and gagged, Dobson waits in terror.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The ships are almost upon one another. The reaver ship is
nearly twice the size of the Firefly.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Zoe enters, says nothing. She stands behind Wash, slips her
hand onto his shoulder. He covers it with his own.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wash looks out the window at the ship, sees the attachments on the front. Also speaks softly.

WASH
Magnetic grapppler. They get ahold
of us with that...

MAL
Just tell me if they alter course.

They wait.

Everybody waits.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The ships pass silently. The reaver ship comes close enough to cast a shadow on the smaller ship.

But it passes.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

After a few long seconds...

WASH
They're holding course.

Mal lets out a looong breath. Looks at the other two.

WASH (CONT'D)
I guess they weren't hungry. Sure
didn't expect to see them here...

ZOE
They're pushing out further every
year, too.

MAL
Getting awful crowded in my sky.

he hits the com:

MAL (CONT'D)
Jayne.

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - LATER

Jayne and Mal are in the room with the tied and gagged cop.

MAL
I'm in a tricky position, I guess
you know. On one side I got
mindless savages as like to kill me
as fart, and on the other I got the
Law. Honestly not sure which I like
less.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL (CONT'D)

I got to know how close the Alliance is, exactly how much you told them 'fore Wash scrambled your call. So I've given Jayne here the job of finding out.

Jayne pulls out a big-ass knife.

JAYNE

He was nonspecific as to how.

Mal says to Jayne, very quietly:

MAL

You only gotta scare him.

JAYNE

(grinning at Dobson)
Pain is scary...

MAL

Do it right.

Mal exits, shutting Jayne in with Dobson. Jayne pulls the gag out and the cop drags in ragged breaths.

DOBSON

Do you have any idea how much trouble you're in?

JAYNE

Gee, I never been in trouble with the Law before...

DOBSON

Not like this you haven't. You think this is just a smuggling rap? The package that boy is carrying --

JAYNE

It's a girl. Cute, too, but I don't think she's all there.

(ugly grin)

'Course, not all of her has to be...

DOBSON

That girl is a precious commodity. They'll come after her. Long after you bury me they'll be coming.

JAYNE

I ain't gonna kill you, Dobson -- what's your first name?

DOBSON

Laurence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAYNE

Laurence, I'm just gonna cut on ya'
til you tell me how much they know.

DOBSON

They know everything. Every name,
every record -- they know how many
nosehairs you've got.

JAYNE

(genuinely disappointed)
Oh, see -- they don't know a damn
thing. It's all over your face and
I ain't even... I was gonna get me
an ear. Aren't you an officer of
the law, don't they teach you how
to.... you know, withstand
interrogation? Can't even tell a
damn lie.

DOBSON

Okay. I can see you're not an
idiot.

JAYNE

Wish I could say the same,
Laurence, but this is disappointing
as hell.

DOBSON

Let me speak a language you will
understand. Money. This girl is
worth a lot of money. I mean a lot.
You kill me, there's nothing. But
you help me out, you'll have enough
to buy your own ship. A better one
than this piece of crap.

JAYNE

Does helping you out mean turning
on the Captain?

DOBSON

Yes it does.

Jayne thinks a moment.

JAYNE

Let's talk money, Larry.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Mal is looking at River, silent.

KAYLEE

Captain...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns. She has woken, is woozy and quiet.

MAL

Hey... Hey little Kaylee, what's the news?

KAYLEE

I'm shiny, Captain. A-okay. Can't feel much below my belly, though. And I'm... it's gettin' cold.

Mal moves to get her another blanket, lays it on her -- all the while hiding his feelings at hearing that.

MAL

You just gotta rest. Something on this boat's gonna break down real soon, and who else I got to fix it?

KAYLEE

Don't worry none... Doc fixed me up pretty. He's nice.

MAL

Don't go working too hard on that crush, < little sister >. Doc won't be with us for long.

KAYLEE

You're nice, too.

MAL

No, I'm not. I'm a mean old man.

KAYLEE

He wasn't gonna let me die. He was just trying to... It's nobody's fault. Promise me you'll remember that?

MAL

(takes her hand)
I'll keep it in mind.

KAYLEE

You are a nice man, Captain. You always look after us. But you got to... you got to have faith in people.

He says nothing, just holds her hand.

Her eyes drift to River, still sleeping.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)

She is a beauty, isn't she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She smiles... and her eyes gently close.

Her hand slips from Mal's.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Simon is there, as Inara hands him a couple of packets.

SIMON

Thank you.

INARA

This is just standard Companion immunization package. I'm not sure it'll help in this --

SIMON

It won't hurt. The supplies down there are pretty rudimentary.

INARA

Is there anything else I can do?

SIMON

I don't think so. But I appreciate it.

INARA

Kaylee's very dear. To all of us.

SIMON

I'm sorry. For my part in what happened. I've never... I don't know how to --

INARA

You're lost in the woods. We all are. Even the captain. The only difference is, he likes it that way.

MAL

(entering)

No the difference is, the woods are the only place I can see a clear path.

(to Simon)

What's your business here?

INARA

It's my business, the usual. I gave the boy a free thrust, since he's not long for this world. What are you doing on my shuttle?

MAL

It's my shuttle. You rent it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INARA

Then when I'm behind on the rent,
you can enter unasked.

Simon elbows his way out. Mal and Inara look at each other a moment.

MAL

Thought you were leaving, anyhow.

INARA

Well I guess that depends on you.

Mal turns and goes.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

Simon is walking away, but Mal stops him:

MAL

You'll ruin her, too, you know.

Simon turns.

MAL (CONT'D)

This is the thing I see you're
uncomprehending on. Everyone on
this ship, even a 'legitimate
businesswoman' like her, their
lives can be snatched away because
of that Fed. You got a solution for
that? Got a way round?

SIMON

I don't.

MAL

Comes time, somebody's gonna have
to deal with him. That should be
you, but I don't think you have the
guts. And I know you don't have the
time.

SIMON

What do you mean?

MAL

Kaylee's dead.

He is steely, contained. Simon is quietly devastated.

Mal turns and walks toward the bridge. A moment, and Simon starts in a daze for the infirmary, running, unable to accept it as he enters:

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

To find Kaylee sitting up a bit, talking weakly but happily with Book. Simon turns and looks out where Mal left, true shock in his eyes.

SIMON
The man's psychotic.

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mal, Wash, Jayne and Zoe are all laughing.

WASH
Okay, you are psychotic.

MAL
No, but you should have seen his face... ahhh.... I'm a bad man.

ZOE
And Kaylee's really okay?

MAL
I'll tell you the truth, I didn't expect her to heal this quick. The doctor knows his trade, I'll give him --

There is a noise from a console. Wash checks it out.

WASH
We're being hailed.

MAL
That'd be Patience. Put her up.

We briefly see an image on a screen, a weathered, pioneer-looking woman of about fifty.

PATIENCE
I talking to Malcolm Reynolds?

MAL
Hello, Patience. Long time.

PATIENCE
Mal. Hear you got some treats for me.

MAL
Delectable treats, three boxes, two hundred for the lot. In coin.

PATIENCE
I'm not even sure I have that much paper, come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

Paper's no good to us, Darlin'.
Coin. Cargo's worth it.

PATIENCE

I might maybe scrounge up one
fifty.

MAL

I might maybe fly on to Three
Hills.

PATIENCE

All right. You got what I need. But
I'm cross with you, holding me over
a barrel in this time of need.
You're not gettin' a kiss, don't
even bother begging.

MAL

My burden to bear.

PATIENCE

Snake. I'll meet you at oh nine
hundred, few miles out of town.
Uploading telemetry and coordinates
now.

MAL

See you in the world.

He hits a button, ending the talk.

MAL (CONT'D)

Hell of lady. Dropped on that rock
with nothing, owns half the damn
town.

ZOE

It's a trap?

MAL

Oh yeah. She's gonna kill us. Not a
doubt.

JAYNE

She did give in awful easy.

MAL

Time was, she never would've
been... But I'm sure. It was in her
voice.

WASH

So, what, we fly on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL

We do not. We're gonna finish this.
There's obstacles in our path,
we're gonna deal with them. One by
one.

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - CONTINUING

We see Dobson sawing away at his bonds with a tiny, jagged
piece of metal.

MAL

(O.S.)

And maybe, if we're any kind of
lucky, we end this day alive and
free.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. WHITEFALL - DAY

We see the desert planet below, as Serenity rockets down toward it.

EXT. WHITEFALL - LATER

We're on the surface now -- rocks and sagebrush jutting out of low hills. Serenity touches down, the airlock door beginning to open.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

We see a small valley, dotted with brush, hills all about. Pan slowly across it to find our three looking at it.

ZOE

Nice place for an ambush.

MAL

That it is.

Jayne arrives at a decent clip. He hands one bar from the crate to Mal.

JAYNE

I buried 'em good. Equipment's back on the boat.

Mal steps forward, looking about him, the wheels in his head turning. After a time.

MAL

She'll figure we buried the cargo. Which means means putting us to our ease 'fore there's any action. She'll come at us from the East, talk the location of the cargo out of us. She'll have the coin, to show us first. We get it, give the location, snipers hit us from....
(points)
There. And there.

JAYNE

Figure they're in place yet?

MAL

Should be. Feel like taking a walk around the park?

JAYNE

(grinning)
Sure you don't just wanna piss yourself and back down like you did with Badger?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mal stares at him til he stops smiling.

MAL

Walk soft. I want Patience thinking they're in place. And don't kill them if you don't have to. We're here to make a deal.

Jayne takes off. Zoe and Mal look over the meeting place some more.

ZOE

I don't think it's a good spot, sir. She still has the advantage over us.

MAL

Everyone always does.
(turns back to her,
smiling)
That's what makes us special.

INT. PASSENGER DORM HALL/DOBSON'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Book is there, wrestling with his conscience. He looks toward the infirmary, looks toward Dobson's room. After a moment, he heads toward the latter, stops at the door. Knocks.

BOOK

Lawman, it's Shepherd Book.

He opens the door --

BOOK (CONT'D)

I believe you're in more danger than --

Dobson SLAMS his chair into the Shepherd, sending him flying back into the hall.

Is on him in a second with a makeshift truncheon, hits him in the head. Book slumps, unconscious. Dobson looks out to make sure no one heard. Then, his face contorted with pent-up rage, he whips the truncheon down twice more, pure fucking spite. Starts dragging Book into his room.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

We are high and wide above Mal and Zoe, watching them walk across the valley. Them small, landscape big.

Closer in, we track with them, moving slow. They keep their eyes peeled all ways, hands near their holsters.

A ways more, and they are nearing a rise -- Over which appear:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE: PATIENCE and her crew of six -- as they crest the hill on horseback -- all but one, who drives a vehicle not unlike the one on Serenity. They're maybe twenty yards from our two.

Patience is in a weatherbeaten duster, grey hair flyblown about her face. Her men are a hodgepodge of old and modern clothes -- not quite Road Warrior gear, but more eclectic and raggedy than even our gang is used to. One wears a shiny black top hat.

MAL
(quietly)
Jayne better come through...

PATIENCE
Mal! How you doing, boy?

MAL
Bitter and strange, same as ever.

PATIENCE
Well that's just fine. Thanks for meeting me out here. Don't like the town to see my business.

MAL
Well, why would you?

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOKING THE MEETING PLACE - CONTINUING

A sniper is set to take a bead on Mal. Jayne drops on his like a stone, knocks him unconscious. Grabs his rifle and takes his position. He finds a mark, smiles.

ANGLE: IN HIS SIGHTS:

Is Mal.

Jayne smiles, wicked-like.

INT. ANOTHER DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

As Dobson busts in, moves to his suitcase. He opens it, digs in and grabs his tiny computer, turns it on. The screen has icons on it, including CONNECT TO CENTRAL CORTEX. He hits it, waits. It comes up: INTERFERENCE: UNABLE TO CONNECT. Furious, he hurls the computer against the wall, smashing it. Reaches into the bottom of his suitcase.

He pulls out another gun. And another.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

The exchange continues.

PATIENCE
I don't see my cargo anywhere...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

And you're not gonna, til I'm
holding two hundred in platinum.

PATIENCE

Oh, come on, Reynolds. I'm supposed
to take it on faith you've got the
goods?

Mal pulls out the bar from the crate. He tosses it to
Patience.

PATIENCE

(re: bar)
This is imprinted.

MAL

That's why you're paying two
hundred instead of five. It's pure,
Patience.

She rips the foil off to reveal what looks like one of those
awful energy bars, which, by the by, is what it is. She
sniffs it.

MAL (CONT'D)

Genuine A-grade foodstuffs.
Protein, vitamins, immunization
supplements... One of those'll feed
a family for a month. Longer, if
they don't like their kids too
well.

She slices off a piece, chews the very end.

PATIENCE

Yeah, that's the stuff.

She pulls a small bag from her hip pocket, tosses it to Mal.
He reaches in and pulls out a silvery coin.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

So where's the rest?

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

River pulls her hand from Kaylee's, sitting up. True fear is
on her face.

RIVER

Simon...

KAYLEE

What's wrong, sweetie?

River doesn't answer -- she moves to the door -- where Dobson
GRABS her, sticks a gun to her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOBSON

Look at you, all woke up.

Kaylee starts to move -- he pulls out the other gun, points it at her.

DOBSON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about what happened before. But make so much as a sound and the next one goes through your throat.

She looks at him with genuine horror. He pulls River back toward the dorm.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

MAL

Then half a mile east, foot of the first hill. You'll see where it's been dug.

PATIENCE

Reckon I will.

MAL

Well then.

PATIENCE

Yep.

Nobody moves.

MAL

I'd appreciate it if you all would ride back over and circle around. I don't much feel like walking backwards out of this valley, and should I turn, well, I'm not sure I trust your boys here not to get entrepreneurial.

PATIENCE

You are holding an awful lot of coin, there. I can see how the lads might bet tempted.

MAL

But you're a business woman.

PATIENCE

A practical one.

This is heading to the wrong place and Mal and Zoe both know it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAL

It ain't practical to welsh on a deal.

PATIENCE

And I don't like to. But it was a long damn winter, Mal. Hard times.

MAL

Shouldn't change things between us.

PATIENCE

You keep talking like we're friends. You're just a means to an end, Mal. Just another rocket-jock riding the raggedy edge til his time is up. Which yours just now is.

ANGLE: JAYNE'S POV, through the sights of the gun. Still on Mal, they now swing over to Patience and her gang as Mal tosses the money to her.

MAL

You got the money back. There's no need for killin'.

ZOE

We're just gonna walk away, sir?

MAL

Guess that's up to Patience here.

PATIENCE

It ain't personal, Mal. You know you'd do the same.

She lifts a walkie talkie to her mouth.

MAL

Who's your best shot? In this bunch, who's the best.

PATIENCE

(pauses)

That'd be Two-Fry, here.

Two-Fry smiles. He is scruffy and mean, and wears the shiny top hat.

MAL

Two-Fry. Nice hat.

Two-Fry is BLOWN off his horse by a shot from the unseen Jayne.

And then a lot of things happen at once.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Mal draws and nails a second man, Zoe a third (the one on the vehicle) -- as the gang opens up, a fourth man blasts his shotgun, nailing Zoe right in the chest.

She goes flying back -- as Mal hits shotgun man, moving, diving behind some brush cover as Patience and the remaining two fire at him, their horses rearing in panic, one of them drops off his, comes up firing, Mal and he can't really find each other through the dust at this point --

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Simon and Wash are there, talking.

WASH

Should think about asking the captain to drop you somewhere else. Whitefall ain't exactly civilization in the strictest sense...

SIMON

You don't have to worry about me.

WASH

Zoe's out on a deal, I always worry. So it's not out of my way --

Kaylee's voice comes over the com, weak and whispered...

KAYLEE

He took her...

Simon bolts out of the room. Wash is about to as well, but there is a beeping -- a proximity warning.

He stops, looks at his screen.

WASH

Oh, don't... don't you dare...

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Simon runs out, sees Dobson with River below, his grip on her loose right now as he looks around him, heading for the closed airlock --

Simon JUMPS right down on top of him -- two men go tumbling, two guns go flying -- and both men lie there in extreme pain, unable to get up and get the guns.

River backs into a corner, wild with terror.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

ANGLE: JAYNE fires, but everything is moving too much -- he misses, cursing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNE

< Damnit! >

Patience dismounts, shooting from behind her horse, as Mal and the other man on the ground continue firing at each other --

The last man on his horse starts to ride away in panic --

ANGLE: ZOE

Still flat on her back. Raises her gun and shoots him in the back. He falls off the still moving horse.

Now it's just Patience and the one other. He fires and clips Mal in the arm -- Mal returns in kind, blasting his hip. The other guy goes down, screaming in pain.

Patience pulls out her shotgun, still with the cover of the horse.

Mal stands, no longer moving or hiding.

MAL

Zoe?

ZOE

Ahhhh... armour's dented.

She pulls at her shirt -- there is a beat up kind of superthin Kevlar underneath.

PATIENCE

Mal, don't take another step --

She doesn't really have a bead on him or she woulda shot him, but she's close, gun leveled on the back of the horse.

Mal walks toward her, shoots the horse and it collapses half onto her. He comes up to her and sticks his gun in her face.

MAL

I did a job. I got nothing but trouble since I did it, not to mention more than a few unkind words as regards to my character so let me make this abundantly clear. I do the job.

He takes the money back.

MAL (CONT'D)

I get paid.

He moves his gun from her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL (CONT'D)
And that's all.

Jayne runs up to him, holding out a walkie-phone.

JAYNE
Mal! It's Wash! We got a ship
coming in. They followed us. The
Gorramn Reavers followed us!

Everyone still alive looks scared.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

As the Reaver ship whips past camera, heading towards
Whitefall.

END OF ACT SIX

ACT SEVEN

INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dobson lunges for his gun -- and Simon throws himself on top of him. They can both barely stand from their crash before. They struggle in ugly fashion, until Dobson gets an elbow free and jerks it into Simon's face.

He gets free enough to crawl for the weapon, but Simon rolls around and grabs the other one, points it:

SIMON

Don't move!

WASH

(O.S.)

(on the com)

REAVERS! Reavers incoming and headed straight for us. We are in the air in one minute!

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH

(to himself)

Guess they got hungry again.

He starts warming the ship up.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Inara comes out of her chamber, sees the action below.

Simon holds the gun on Dobson. His hand shakes.

DOBSON

You gonna do that? You gonna kill a Lawman in cold blood. I know what you did for your sister and I understand. It doesn't make you a killer.

A barely conscious Book also comes to the entrance, holding onto it to stay up.

DOBSON (CONT'D)

I don't wanna hurt anybody. I have a job to do. To uphold the Law. That's what we're talking about here. There's nowhere you can take her that the law won't find. Nobody's gonna hurt her... unless you hurt me.

SIMON

I said don't move!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOBSON
It's your call.

Simon doesn't know what to do. He looks over at River.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The Reaver ship breaks into atmo, headed down to the planet.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash is getting more and more freaked --

WASH
Come on, come on....
(into walkie)
Where the hell are you guys?!?

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

As we see Mal, Zoe and Jayne RIDE into frame on horseback, moving just as fast as they can.

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

The airlock starts to open, the noise and motion distracting Simon long enough for Dobson to grab his gun and fire --

INARA
Simon!

-- missing but sending Simon diving for cover as Dobson grabs River and puts himself behind her, gun to her head. Simon steps out, between him and the airlock.

DOBSON
I'm not playing anymore.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

The three pull up on their horses, jump off, Mal striding in as the others shoo the horses off.

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Mal walks in behind Simon --

DOBSON
Anybody makes so much as a --

-- and shoots Dobson in the face. He flies back, letting go of River and dead before he lands. Tilt up from him to see Book, unable to move.

MAL
Wash! We're on!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We pulls the Lawman's body up and dumps it out the closing airlock as Jayne and Zoe enter. Simon moves to River, just shocked and silent.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

The hatch is still closing as the ship takes off.

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mal and Zoe come up to Wash, Inara hanging back behind.

MAL

How close are they?

WASH

About twenty seconds from spitting distance.

JAYNE

We'll lose 'em!

MAL

(to Zoe)

Give me rear vid.

She punches it up. ON THE SCREEN, we see the ship approaching from behind.

ZOE

< We're in big trouble. >

MAL

(to Wash)

How close do they need to be to fire the grapples?

JAYNE

Wash, you dumbass, dodge 'em!

WASH

If everybody could just be quiet a moment...

He's incredibly calm. He veers hard left, snakes through:

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

-- the hills, where we see the ship moving fast -- but the reavers right on them.

INT. BRIDGE/FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUING

Wash continues to pilot with serene expertise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WASH
I need Kaylee in the engine room
please.

ZOE
Can she even --

MAL
(to Jayne)
Get her in there. Now.

Jayne goes. Mal moves to Inara.

ZOE
(to Wash)
Can we lose them?

He doesn't answer. He's flying.

ANGLE: MAL AND INARA

MAL
I want you to get in your shuttle.
Get the civilians and be ready to
go.

INARA
We can't just leave you here.

MAL
Thought that was the plan.

INARA
Mal, don't --

MAL
We get boarded, you take off, head
for town. We might be able to stop
them from following.

INARA
They'll kill you.

MAL
Inara.

Just saying her name says more than he probably ever meant
to. He puts his hand on the Companion's shoulder.

And pushes her gently away.

MAL (CONT'D)
Go.

He turns back to the bridge. She is going as well, throws a
look back, a little blown away by his caring, then continues
on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL (CONT'D)
 (to Wash)
 How are we doing?

WASH
 I don't want to alarm anybody...
 but I think... we're being
 followed...

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

The reaver ship is hard on Serenity's heels.

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

Jayne is carrying Kaylee out as Inara enters. She speaks to Simon, River and Book:

INARA
 You three. Come with me.

BOOK
 I think I can help Kaylee out.
 (to Simon, re: River)
 Take her. Keep her safe.

Book and Inara share a glance before they go their separate ways.

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Wash flies.

MAL
 Can't keep this up, they get a
 bead, they're gonna lock us down.

WASH
 (into com)
 Kaylee, how're we doing?

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

Kaylee is propped up in a corner, Jayne and Book at the ready.

KAYLEE
 You want me to go for full burn?

WASH
 (O.S.)
 Not just yet, but set it up.

KAYLEE
 (to Book)
 You know where the press regulator
 is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks about, heads to a part of the engine, opens a panel.
Kaylee smiles.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)
Head of the class.

She coughs, wincing in pain.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

ZOE
Full burn in atmo? That won't cause
a blowback? Burn us out?

MAL
Even if it doesn't, they can push
just as hard, keep right on us.
Wash, you gotta give me an Ivan.

WASH
See what I can do...
(into com)
Kaylee, how would you feel about
pulling a Crazy Ivan?

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

KAYLEE
Always wanted to try one. Jayne.
Open the port jet control. Cut the
hydraulics.

JAYNE
Where the hell --

KAYLEE
Look. Look where I'm pointing.

He does, opens a panel near the floor.

KAYLEE (CONT'D)
Okay. Now it's real simple.

ANGLE: JAYNE'S POV: A tangle mess of cables. Real simple.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

The reaver ship has Serenity locked in. The magnetic grapple
warms up, latches flying off.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

MAL
They're on us....

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Inara moves into the pilot's seat as Simon sits River down.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH
(into com)
Kaylee...?

No answer. Then:

KAYLEE
(OS)
Okay!

WASH
Everybody hold on to something.
(softly, to the reavers)
Here's something you can't do...

He SLAMS down a lever and

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

Serenity's port jet flips the other way and the ship LURCHES into a perfect one-eighty, spinning on a dime, the jet flips back and it's headed straight for the reaver ship, which dodges at the last second --

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH
(into com)
NOW!

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

Book hits a big button with the heel of his hand and the room gets lighter --

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

As the ass-end of serenity lights up, sending ripples of fire bursting into the atmosphere as the ship blasts out of there so fast, gradually arcing up toward space...

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash is pulling up at the controls with all his might. Finally he eases off, quietly pleased.

Mal and Zoe are kind of amazed.

ZOE
Ain't no way we they can come
around in time to follow us now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mal hits the com:

MAL
We're good, people.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Extreme, solemn relief.

MAL
(O.S.)
We're out of the woods.

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

Jayne whoops with delight. Even Book smiles.

Kaylee runs her hand along the hull.

KAYLEE
That's my girl... That's my good
girl.

She looks at the boys and beams.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH
(to Mal)
We should have just enough left in
us to hit a fuel station. We'll
need to do some patching up. Hope
we got paid today.

MAL
We did.

Zoe exchanges a look with Wash.

ZOE
Sir? I'd like you to take the helm,
please.
(re: Wash)
I need this man to tear all my
clothes off.

Mal says nothing, just smiles and indicates the way out. Wash
climbs out of the chair and exits with Zoe...

WASH
Work, work, work...

And Mal throws himself down into the pilot's seat. Lets out a
breath he's been holding for, oh, about two days. And starts
flying.

EXT. SPACE - LATER

As Serenity breaks out of atmosphere into the deep silence of space.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Book sits as Inara takes a cloth from a bowl and dabs his head. He is sitting, she stands before him.

INARA

You should really have the young doctor look at this.

BOOK

It's not so bad.

INARA

Well, I'm sure you'll be fine...

BOOK

I didn't say that.

He looks up at her and she sees how upset he is, how lost.

BOOK (CONT'D)

Is this what life is, out here?

INARA

Sometimes.

BOOK

I've been out of the abbey two days, I've beaten a Lawman senseless, I've fallen in with criminals... I watched the captain shoot a man I swore to protect.

(the hard part)

And I'm not even sure if I think he was wrong.

INARA

Shepherd...

He is shaking a bit, tearing up.

BOOK

I believe I just...

(a pained smile)

I think I'm on the wrong ship.

INARA

Maybe. Or maybe you're exactly where you ought to be.

He lowers his head. She puts her hand on it, a kind of benediction. We hold on them a second.

INT. SIMON'S ROOM - LATER

He is tucking River into bed.

SIMON

The shot I gave you will help you sleep.

RIVER

I slept for so long...

SIMON

Just a little while. Then we'll find a place... we'll find a safe place.

He's not convinced, but he smiles at her anyway. She looks suddenly terribly sad.

RIVER

I didn't think you'd come for me.

SIMON

(welling up)
Well, you're a dummy.

He takes her in his arms, holds her tight.

JAYNE

(O.S.)
The girl's a problem.

INT. BRIDGE - LATER

Mal is still at the helm as Jayne speaks to him.

JAYNE

The Lawman said they'd keep looking for her. Something about her brain being all special. Important to the Alliance brass. Sooner we dump those two, the better.

MAL

I suppose so.

Jayne gets up to leave.

MAL (CONT'D)

Funny how the Lawman got out of his room. You having tied him up so well and all.

JAYNE

I didn't have nothing to do with that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAYNE (CONT'D)

Anyway it all turned out just fine.
Buzzards're the only ones gonna
find him...

MAL

But he did try to make a deal with
you, right?

He looks at Jayne, who says nothing.

MAL (CONT'D)

How come you didn't turn on me,
Jayne?

JAYNE

Money wasn't good enough.

MAL

What happens when it is?

JAYNE

(smiling)
Well that'll be an interesting day.

MAL

I imagine it will.

Jayne leaves, passing Simon, who comes up next to Mal. He
sees Mal's arm is a bit bloody.

SIMON

You need me to look at that?

MAL

Just a graze.

SIMON

(a beat, then)
So where do you plan on dumping us?

MAL

There's places you might be safe.
You want the truth, though, you're
probably safer on the move.
(turns to him)
And we never stop moving.

SIMON

I'm confused. No wait -- I think
maybe you're confused.

MAL

It may have become apparent to you,
the ship could use a medic. You
ain't weak. I don't know how bright
you are, top three percent, but you
ain't weak and that's not nothing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAL (CONT'D)

You live by my rule, keep your
sister from doing anything crazy,
you could maybe find a place here.
Til you find a better.

SIMON

I'm trying to put this as
delicately as I can... How do I
know you won't kill me in my sleep?

MAL

You don't know me, son. So let me
explain this to you once: If I ever
kill you, you'll be awake, you'll
be facing me, and you'll be armed.

SIMON

(smiles)

Are you always this sentimental?

MAL

I had a good day.

SIMON

You had the law on you, criminals
and savages... half the people on
the ship have been shot or wounded
including yourself, and you're
harboring known fugitives.

Mal looks out at the black sky.

MAL

We're still flying.

SIMON

That's not much.

Mal answers, almost to himself...

MAL

It's enough.

A beat, then Simon goes. Mal just keeps looking ahead.

END OF SHOW