

Firefly - "Ariel"

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Teaser

EXT. SPACE

Serenity in space.

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

JAYNE sits at the table, in his Blue Sun shirt, cleaning a pistol. At the coffee table, KAYLEE and INARA, play a kind of two-person mah jong. In the kitchen area, SIMON takes a pot from a burner and spoons a sludgy gumbo into one bowl for himself and one for RIVER. She wrinkles her nose at it.

RIVER
I don't want it.

SIMON
River, you have to eat. It's good,
it tastes like --
(tries it, it's awful)
-- it's good.

JAYNE
Smells like crotch.

KAYLEE
Jayne!

JAYNE
Well, it does.

They sit across from Jayne to eat, River mostly stirring her food around, her eyes often drifting to Jayne. WASH and ZOE enter, mid conversation --

WASH
We don't even have to do anything
fancy. We'll just go to a park or
something, feed the pigeons.

ZOE

Sure. We'll feed the pigeons...
probably get the firing squad for
littering.

WASH

Come on, it's not that bad.

ZOE

Yes, it is. It's a Core planet.
It's spotless, there's sensors
everywhere, and where there ain't
sensors, there's Feds. All the
central planets are the same.

WASH

(to Inara)

Could you please tell my wife the fun
she's missing out on.

INARA

Ariel's quite nice, actually. They
have some beautiful museums, not to
mention some of the finest
restaurants in the Core.

WASH

But not all boring like she made it
sound. There's, uh...

He kicks at Simon's chair: help.

SIMON

There's... there's... hiking. You
can go swimming in a bioluminescent
lake.

ZOE

I don't care if it has sunsets twenty-
four hours a day, I ain't setting
foot on that place.

MAL

(entering)

No one's setting foot on that fancy
rock. I don't want anyone leaving

the ship. Come to think of it, I don't want anyone looking out the windows. Or talking loud. We're here to drop Inara off, that's it.

JAYNE

What's the point of coming to the Core if I can't even get off the boat?

MAL

Could've gotten off with Shepherd Book at the Bathgate Abbey. You could be meditating over the wonders of your rock garden right about now.

JAYNE

Better'n just sittin'.

WASH

(you idiot)

It is just sittin'.

Jayne grumbles, puts away the pistol, starts cleaning his knife.

ZOE

(to Inara)

How long you going to be planetside?

INARA

Shouldn't be more than a day or two.

WASH

Big stop just to renew your license to Companion... can I use "Companion" as a verb?

INARA

It's Guild law. All Companions are required to undergo a physical exam once a year.

Jayne spits a large glob of saliva on his blade, wipes it on his shirt, shining it.

SIMON

Could you not do that while...

(beat)
... ever.

Jayne looks him square in the eye, then does it again. Simon moves down the table; River gets up and goes to the kitchen. Wash resumes his train of thought --

WASH
So, two days in a hospital, huh?
(Inara nods)
That's awful. Don't you just hate
doctors?

SIMON
Hey!

WASH
I mean, present company excluded.

JAYNE
Don't be excluding people, that's
just rude.

A blur. Suddenly something's coming at Jayne. It's River with a kitchen knife. She attacks, slashing at his Blue sun t-shirt. Jayne barks, he's cut. SMACK! He reflexively backhands her across the room. Bedlam ensues, and all of this happens in an instant: Simon and Inara rush to River's side, Mal, Zoe and Kaylee to Jayne's; mah jong tiles spill, food falls from the table, as the following overlaps --

MAL
Jesu --

ZOE
It's deep --
SIMON
River, no --!

INARA
Oh, god, honey...

KAYLEE
He's bleedin'

SIMON
(shocked)
River...

RIVER
(matter-of-fact)
He looks better in red.

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

Mal and Jayne talk as Simon stitches up the shirtless Jayne. Jayne is rightfully irate.

JAYNE
Gorram freak's completely off her
axle.

SIMON
I'm sorry about this. I don't know
what she --

JAYNE
Shut it. I ain't talking to you.
(to Mal)
She's gotta go. Both of them's gotta
go. Ariel's as good a place to leave
them as any. Might even pick us up
a reward for our troubles.

Simon shoots Jayne a nasty look. Jayne couldn't care less. Simon continues what he's doing.

MAL
No one's getting left.

JAYNE
She belongs in a bughouse. You don't
pitch her off this boat right now, I
swear to you...

MAL
What? What do you swear, Jayne?

JAYNE
They don't get gone... you better
start locking up your room at night.
Next time lil' sister gets in a
murderin' mood, might be you she
comes calling on.
(beat)
Maybe Kaylee. Or Inara. You let 'em
stay... we're gonna find out.

Simon glances to Mal, wants to say something. Mal doesn't even look at him, his eyes on Jayne.

MAL

Finish your work, doctor.

(to Jayne)

This is my boat, and they're part of
my crew. No one's getting left.

Best you get used to that.

Jayne steps off the table, not happy. He moves for the infirmary door, addressing Simon without
turning --

JAYNE

You owe me a shirt.

Simon's about to speak, but Mal beats him to the punch.

MAL

She's to stay confined in her room at
all times, no exceptions. You want
to take her to the kitchen, the
infirmary, whatever -- you ask me
first. You understand?

SIMON

I do.

MAL

When I took you and your sister in,
the deal was you keep her in check.
You can't hold up your end, we're
gonna have to revisit that deal.

(after a silent beat)

She's getting worse, isn't she?

SIMON

Yes.

Off Simon, the admission killing him...

OMITTED

EXT. ARIEL - DAY

Serenity flies over the cityscape of the obviously wealthy Core city of Ariel, sweeps past, lands
on a tarmac in the f.g.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Kaylee walks with Inara towards her shuttle. Below, Mal, Zoe, Wash and Jayne toss horseshoes.

KAYLEE

Look at the bright side, maybe you'll
meet a young, handsome doctor and
he'll ask you out and
(beat)
What's Companion policy on dating?

INARA

It's... complicated.

KAYLEE

Figures.

Inara smiles, kisses Kaylee on the cheek --

INARA

Stay out of trouble.

-- and heads into her shuttle.

KAYLEE

You too.

THE HORSESHOE TOSS

JAYNE

How're we gonna find a job if we
don't leave the ship?

MAL

Alliance territory. Ain't any jobs
worth havin'.

WASH

Nor the last three places we been.

JAYNE

My pop always said anyone who can't
find work ain't looking hard enough.
We ain't even looking at all.

SIMON
You can stop looking.

Actually, they all stop and look at him. Kaylee has drifted down here by now.

SIMON (cont'd)
There is client. Me.
(then, to Mal)
I have a job for you.

Off everyone's reactions.

END OF TEASER

Act One

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Right where we left off. Mal and the others looking at Simon.

MAL
You got a job for us?

SIMON
One that'll pay for itself ten times
over.

WASH
Well, he's got my attention.

JAYNE
Not me. We don't work on spec.

ZOE
Work on spec all the time.

Simon pulls a vial out of his pocket.

SIMON
Do you know what this is? It's a
common immunobooster called
ivoprovalyn. Street value for a
dosage of this size, a hundred
platinums, maybe sixty credits.
(another vial)
Propoxin, one-fifteen.

(another)
Hydrozapam, three hundred. And these
are just from the med kit I had with
me when I came on board. At a
hospital like the one in Ariel City,
they'd have crates of this stuff.
Whatever the take, more than enough
payment for what I have in mind.

WASH
So the medvault's not the job?

SIMON
That's the payment. I tell you how
to get in, get out, and what's worth
taking. If you help me get River
into the hospital's diagnostic ward.

MAL
What's in the diagnostic ward?

SIMON
A 3-D neuroimager. If I can get
River in there, I might be able to
figure out what they did to her at
the Academy.

MAL
So we get you and your sister into
the whatchathing, you tell us how to
clean out the hospital?

SIMON
Yes.

KAYLEE
Not to be negative -- but don't the
hospital need that medicine?

ZOE
Government run facility. They'd have
it restocked in a matter of hours.

SIMON
She's right. They'll never miss it.

MAL

And folks on the rim could use it.

WASH

You know, it's very sweet -- stealing from the rich and selling to the poor. But we are talking about breaking into a highly secure Alliance facility. How do you plan on getting around security?

SIMON

It's not easy, but it can be done.

Simon starts to pace, laying it all out...

SIMON (cont'd)

Like all Core Hospitals, Ariel City Hospital has its own dedicated security force...

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Continuing the movement. SIMON paces into FRAME...

SIMON

... a small battery of local Alliance
Federals, substationed here.

-- the dining area has been turned into a war room, with a portable cortex screen on the kitchen table, and assorted diagrams and schematics scattered around. Simon pauses occasionally to indicate on the cortex --

SIMON (cont'd)

Every floor, every doorway, every room is equipped with sensors. And at all points of entry: patient ident scans. However, once clear of those checkpoints, movement within the facility itself should be relatively unhindered. The standard layout should put the medvault somewhere...

MAL

Back up to the ident scans. You and your sister are tagged fugitives.

How you figure we're gonna get, you in
the building?

SIMON

Through the front door.

(off their looks)

Believe me, Captain -- getting the
two of us in is going to be easy.
The rest of you... that's going to be
the real trick...

More pacing.

SIMON (cont'd)

We'll have to procure a few items off
ship. I've made a list. Given my
status as a fugitive, someone else
will have to...

Kaylee, Wash and Jayne all instantly thrust their hands in the air. Mal and Zoe just look at them.

SIMON (cont'd)

We have some volunteers... good.
Before we ever make it to the front
door, we're going to have to breach
the perimeter. Only official
vehicles are allowed in. So, we'll
need one.

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

BIG SHINY CITYSCAPE. TILTING DOWN TO FIND, on the edge of the city --

SIMON (V.O.)

Obviously, we can't steal what we
need. Any illegal activity in the
planning stages could end this thing
before it starts.

DECREPIT SANDLOT. Kaylee and Wash in the junkyard every corner is littered with engines,
carburetors, rusted out shuttles, carts, etc.

SIMON (cont'd; V.O.)
Ariel City Hospital contracts with a
local municipal dumpyard for its
large disposals.

KAYLEE
Figures... first time on the Core,
what do I get to do? -- dig through
trash. Why couldn't he send me
shopping at the triplex, or --
(sees something)
Ooh, synchronizers!

As Wash starts looking around...

SIMON (V.O.)
Big hospitals mean big waste. We
shouldn't have any trouble.

Wash waves Kaylee over to where he is -- he's found something. He points to --
-- a highly crappy, broken down and discarded body of an old AMBULANCE SHUTTLE.

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Simon's still pacing...

SIMON
We'll have to look like we belong.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Jayne loiters at a PUBLIC VIDPHONE. He sees a PARTICULARLY DRESSED MAN moving
his way. He's carrying a PAIR OF BUNDLES under his arm. As he passes the vid-phone
"booth", he reaches out and picks up an ENVELOPE that is sitting on a lip near Jayne.

SIMON (V.O.)
That means uniforms, ID badges...

He keeps walking. A few steps, and he drops the bundles, never losing stride. Jayne walks over
and sweeps up the bundles, heads off.

INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA

Jayne dumps the bundles from the street onto the common area table. He picks out a PHOTO ID from amidst the stash which includes EMT uniforms -- looks at the ID. An Asian man is pictured. Jayne starts cutting out the picture.

SIMON (V.O.)

All of these items are easy to obtain.

OMITTED

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Simon stops pacing. Looks to the group.

SIMON

They'll get us up to the door. Now
in order to get in...

CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

Simon sits on the examination table, Mal, Zoe and Jayne gathered around him. Mal is mid-schpiel --

MAL

-- the patients were cynical and not-
responding and we couldn't bring 'em
back.

SIMON

So they were cyanotic and non-
responsive and you were unable to
resuscitate. Good. Which methods
did you use?

ZOE

We tried the, uh, pulmonary
stimulators and the cardiac, um...

SIMON

Infusers. Right. What about the
cortical electrodes?

This asked of Jayne. He hesitates.

JAYNE
..... we forgot 'em?

SIMON
Let's try that again.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Wash screws open a plastic panel, pulls out a motherboard, starts fussing with the parts. A CLICK and a WHOOSH and he turns to see Kaylee brandishing a lit blowtorch.

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

As before --

MAL
Pupils were fixed and dilapidated --

SIMON
Dilated.

MAL
Dilated, dilated -- < frog-humping
sonofabitch. > [Ching-wah TSAO duh
liou mahng.]

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

VARIOUS SHOTS

--Wash untangling a mess of wiring, straightening them out and connecting one part to another.

--Kaylee welding two metal plates together, a rain of sparks around her.

--Wash manning a paint gun, spraying white paint over a smooth metal surface.

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

And one more time --

MAL
-- by the time we got there, the
patients were cyanotic and, uh... non-
responsive. We tried, but we
couldn't revive them -- resuscitate
them -- despite our best efforts.

(beat)
They kicked.

SIMON
Yes. Which methods did you use?

ZOE
We used the, pulmonary stimulators and
cardiac infusers.

(beat)
Or is it cardiac stimulators and
pulmonary infusers?

SIMON
You had it right the first time.
What about cortical electrodes?

This, once again, asked of Jayne --

JAYNE
Yeah... we, uh... they, uh... I don't
ruttin' know!

Simon reacts -- it'll have to do.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

TRACKING WITH SIMON as he enters the cargo bay, a pleased expression on his face.

SIMON
That's amazing.

We don't yet see what he's looking at as he's joined by

Kaylee and Wash.

SIMON (cont'd)
You two did an incredible job.

Now we see what they're looking at -- the broken down shuttle has been retrofitted to look just
like a shiny new Ariel City Hospital ambulance.

KAYLEE
And the finishing touch --

Out of the ambulance emerge Mal, Zoe, and Jayne dressed in EMT uniforms, complete with clipped-on IDs and keycards, looking very much the part.

SIMON

If I didn't know better, I'd say
you're ready to save some lives.

MAL

Now all we need's a couple of
patients.

SIMON

Corpses, actually. For this to work,
River and I will have to be dead.

JAYNE

I'm startin' to like this plan.

PRELAP --

SIMON (V.O.)

We're going to be asleep.

OMITTED

INT. SERENITY - RIVER'S ROOM

River sits on her bed, Simon at her side, explaining.

SIMON

Captain Reynolds and the others will
have to pretend that we're dead to
sneak us into the hospital, but once
we're inside we'll wake up and
everything will be fine. You
understand?

RIVER

You're going to suspend cerebral,
cardiac and pulmonary activity in
order to induce a proto-comatose
state.

Simon reacts -- of course she'd get the science.

SIMON
That's right.

RIVER
I don't want to do it.

SIMON
I know.

RIVER
I don't want to go to that place.
don't want to die.

SIMON
No one's going to die. It's okay.
The others will take care of us while
we're asleep and when we get back.

RIVER
(on and on)
No, no, no --

SIMON
Shhh... it's okay. River. River.
(she calms)
This could be what we've been hoping
for. When this is over... I'll be
able to help you. I'll be able to
make the nightmares go away. Okay?

Very much not okay, River nods.

SIMON (cont'd)
Okay. Lie back.

She does. Simon preps his syringe.

SIMON (cont'd)
It's time to go to sleep.

He injects her.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Jayne, Mal and Zoe all huddled in the M.A.S.H-like medi- shuttle. We're IN FLIGHT but it's all tight and interior.

MAL

We speak only when spoken to, we
avoid any unnecessary contact and we
stay together until we reach the
morgue. Understood?

ZOE

Yes, sir.

Jayne doesn't reply -- he's mouthing his lines. Trying to get them right.

JAYNE

(really just
muttering)

Applied the cortical electrodes.
Unable to get a neural reaction...

MAL

Jayne?

JAYNE

Yeah, yeah I got it.

MAL

Are we gonna have a problem?

JAYNE

I know what I gotta do.

MAL

That's not what I'm talking about.
Am I gonna have a problem with you
and Simon?

JAYNE

That's up to him.

MAL

Look, I know you got some call to be
tetchy. You got a little stabbed the
other day, that's bound to make
anyone a mite ornery.

JAYNE

It's a good plan.

MAL
What?

JAYNE
Doc did good, coming up with this
job. Don't mean I like him any
better... but nothing buys bygones
quicker'n cash.
(then)
Maybe I'll give him a tattoo while
he's out.

MAL
You let him do his thing, then you
get them out. No messing with him
for a laugh.

JAYNE
Don't worry about me. Long as I get
paid, I'm happy.

As Jayne goes back to muttering his script...

EXT. HOSPITAL - E.R. LANDING STRIP - NIGHT

The ambulance lands in front of the hospital, a pair of body bags attached nacelle-like to the side of the ambulance. [NOTE: the body bags are hard, silver shells without a discernible zipper.]
Mal, Zoe, Jayne and Wash (in his EMT uniform) spill out of the ambulance, unhook the bodybags. As they finish --

MAL
(to Wash)
One hour.

And they're moving --

EXT. HOSPITAL - GANGWAY - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe and Jayne wheel the gurneys towards the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECEIVING CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, Jayne wheel in the body containers toward A NURSE and a RECEIVING DOCTOR.

RECEIVING DOCTOR
What have you got?

MAL
Couple DOAs. By the time we got --

The doctor writes something on a beeper-like device, attaches it to the body bags and the bags go from silver to black --

RECEIVING DOCTOR
(abruptly)
Take them down to the morgue.

Mal, Zoe and Jayne just sort of blink. Receiving Doctor goes back to whatever it was she was doing. Jayne isn't about to go without blurting:

JAYNE
We applied the cortical electrodes
but were unable to get a neural
reaction from either patient!

The Receiving Doctor just looks up blankly. She didn't ask. A beat and our people move off. And they're in.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe and Jayne wheel in the gurneys. Jayne takes in the many blue-tinged bodies on slabs and examination tables, many of them in various stages of post-mortems. He'd rather be anywhere but here.

MAL
Let's get 'em out.

Jayne and Zoe pull a tab on each body bag and they slide open neatly, parting down the middle. They pick up Simon and River and lift them to a pair of nearby examination tables. Another pull on the tab and the body bags close, retaining their shape.

Mal pulls a hypo out of his med bag, injects Simon and River.

MAL (cont'd)
That should bring them out of it in a few minutes. As soon as they're up, get them to the imaging suite, let Simon do his thing, then haul it back to the roof. Fifty minutes.

JAYNE
Got it.

Mal and Zoe wheel their gurneys back out.

JAYNE (cont'd)
I'll just... sit here.

And he does. For a beat. Creeped out by all the dead people. Another beat, then Jayne peeks out the door before moving out into --

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Jayne walks down a corridor, stops at a cortex terminal. He swipes a card on the terminal, and in a moment a face appears on the cortex screen -- this is AGENT MCGINNIS.

JAYNE
I'm in.

AGENT MC GINNIS
Do you have the fugitives?

JAYNE
You got my reward?

AGENT MC GINNIS
Yes. Just like we talked about.

JAYNE
Then I got your fugitives.

AGENT MC GINNIS
Good. We'll see you shortly.
Congratulations. You're about to
become a very rich man.

Off Jayne --

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT

Jayne slips back into the morgue, where Simon and River still lie unconscious. Now that he's alone, Jayne is even more spooked by this place. Especially the quiet. He moves through the room, spots a toe tag on a corpse, reads --

JAYNE
(to himself)
"John Doe." What kind of dumbass
don't even have a name?

Behind Jayne (and unseen by him) River SITS UP INTO FRAME. She's just woken up and is a bit dazed, disoriented. She's inches behind him as she says --

RIVER
A copper for a kiss.

Jayne jumps -- she startled the hell out of him.

JAYNE
Jesu--! What -- what did you say?

River falters -- even she's not sure what that just came out of her mouth.

In the b.g, Simon now bolts awake with a CHOKED GASP. Jayne jumps again. Simon goes into a coughing jag, every cough causing him noticeable pain.

JAYNE (cont'd)
What's the matter with you?

SIMON
Nothing, just after-effects from the
drugs.
(coughs, it hurts)
I'll be fine, just give me a second.

JAYNE
(you weenie)
Your sister seems okay.

From behind Jayne comes the sound of River throwing up. Jayne looks behind him, sees the mess -- yuck. He turns back to Simon and tosses him a bundle of clothes.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Get dressed. We gotta move.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A pair of elevator doors open and Mal and Zoe push their gurneys down a quiet corridor.

MAL

Two rights, two lefts and we're
there. You see anyone, smile.

ZOE

I don't think people smile in
hospitals.

MAL

'Course they do. It's the Core,
everybody's rich and happy here. Why
wouldn't they smile?

From O.S., a voice calls to them

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR (O.S.)

'Scuse me --

Mal turns, sees an OFFICIOUS DOCTOR.

MAL

(big smile)

Hi!

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR

(unsmiling)

Where are you taking those bodies?

MAL

Just downstairs to the morgue.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR

(pointing behind them)

Downstairs is that way.

MAL

Right. Must've got turned around.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR

Let me see your badge.

Mal hands it over.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Simon and Jayne wheel River down a corridor in a wheelchair. She's in a hospital gown, Simon is in scrubs, Jayne still wears his EMT uniform.

RIVER

We're doing it backwards. Walking up
the down slide.

JAYNE

Keep her quiet.

Simon leans in close to River as he walks, as soothing as ever --

SIMON

This is the recovery ward. This is
where patients come to get better.

RIVER

They're going to die.

SIMON

No one's going to die.

RIVER

(indicates a patient)
He is.

Simon looks where River's indicating. A fortysomething PATIENT lies in bed, a YOUNG INTERN tending to him.

SIMON

No, he's not. That man standing next
to him is his doctor, he's going to
help him.

RIVER

He's not going to help him right.

SIMON

River, the doctors here are the best
in the system. This is one of the
top hospitals in the Core or anywhere
else.

RIVER

Where you should be.

Simon does his best to not react to that. River grabs the wheels on the wheelchair, effectively slamming the brakes. She starts to get up; Jayne won't let her.

JAYNE
Uh-uh. No wandering off.

RIVER
(to Simon)
You have to help him.

SIMON
River, we don't have time to --

RIVER
(loud)
He's killing him!

The monitors by the Patient start BEEPING, alarms going off. And now River is struggling against Jayne, trying to get up out of her chair.

YOUNG INTERN
Code blue!

RIVER
Help him help him help him...

NURSES converge on the trauma area, some of them taking note of the frantic girl trying to wriggle free of the large EMT. Simon knows the only way to calm River is to appease her.

SIMON
(to River)
Stay here. Don't move.

With a look to Jayne that says "watch her", Simon jumps into the fray. This is FAST --

SIMON (cont'd)
What do we have?

YOUNG INTERN
Forty two year old, double bypass
post-op. Prognosis was positive --

CRASH TEAM NURSE
BP sixty over twenty, pulse is
thready.

Simon rips the patient's gown open, listens to his heart.

YOUNG INTERN

(to Simon)

Who are you?

CRASH TEAM NURSE

He's crashing --

SIMON

(to Nurse)

Get the cart.

She moves to get the crash cart; that's when a long, constant BEEEEEP starts coming from the EKG --

CRASH TEAM NURSE

We have flatline --

YOUNG INTERN

We gotta crack him --

SIMON

(stern, to Intern)

We're not cracking a post-op.

(to the Nurse)

Get the infusers and point-four of atropine.

(to Intern)

What did you give him?

YOUNG INTERN

Just twenty of alprazaline push.

Simon gives him a look -- whatever that means, it means the intern fucked up.

The nurse hands Simon a hypo and a pair of pen-like devices. (These are cardiac infusers, and they look not unlike a pair of tire pressure gauges.) Simon puts the hypo between his teeth, applies the infusers to the Patient's chest --

SIMON

Clear --

PHUMP! A blip on the EKG, then back to flatline --

SIMON (cont'd)

Clear --

PHUMP! A blip on the EKG, this time it keeps blipping, but another ALARM SOUNDS. Simon gives the infusers to the nurse.

YOUNG INTERN

(an accusation)

He's going tachy.

Simon takes the hypo from his teeth --

SIMON

(dismissive)

But his heart's beating.

-- plugs it into the IV, pushes in the atropine. Instantly, the alarms stop. A beat, then the EKG blips become slower and more regular.

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief, especially the Intern.

YOUNG INTERN

(willing it)

He's okay...

Simon gets in his face, genuinely pissed --

SIMON

Explain to me how you justify administering a vasoconstrictor to this patient?

YOUNG INTERN

Alprazaline's a painkiller, not a --

SIMON

Unless you combine it with droxine, which any first year should know is the standard prep medicine your patient was taking before his surgery. Your patient should be dead. And you'd be standing here scratching your head as to why.

YOUNG INTERN

I -- I'm... sorry, doctor.

SIMON
Good.

Simon moves back to River and Jayne. River's practically beaming. Jayne's not unimpressed.

SIMON (cont'd)
Let's go.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe and the Officious Doctor, moments after we left them. The Doctor examines Mal's ident badge carefully.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR
(moving towards a
vidphone)
Walk with me a minute.

Mal gives Zoe a look -- better do something. She sidles over to a crash cart.

MAL
Where we going?

The Doctor stops, actually seems offended at the question. He holds up his ident card.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR
You see this badge? It says
"doctor". I say walk with me, you
walk with me.

Mal stays put -- he already hates this guy.

MAL
Yeah, but... where we going?

Now the doctor is pissed --

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR
You must be new.
(Mal doesn't deny it)
Don't get comfortable; your type
doesn't last long here. When your
supervisor hears about the rude and
disrespectful attitude you just --

PHUMP! The Doctor collapses to the ground. Zoe stands behind him, a pair of cardiac infusers in hand.

ZOE
Clear.

INT. HOSPITAL - IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

Simon and Jayne push River into the suite, Jayne hanging back and looking both ways out the door before shutting it.

Simon crouches next to River, as soothing as he can be --

SIMON
Ready?

Although clearly apprehensive, River nods.

INT. HOSPITAL - ANOTHER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe push their gurneys down the corridor, stop at a door.

MAL
Twelve oh-five. This is it.

He looks around, makes sure the coast is clear, then swipes his keycard through the scanner. A RED LIGHT flashes on the scanner -- the door won't open. He tries again. Again, red light.

MAL (cont'd)
Zoe.

Zoe tries her keycard. Twice. Same thing: the light blinks red.

ZOE
They must've been de-mag'd.

Mal pulls the tab on one of the bodybags -- it opens to reveal the Officious Doctor, who is MOANING but unconscious. He snatches his keycard, slides it through the scanner. The door opens.

MAL
His works.

INT. HOSPITAL - IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

Simon helps River onto the steel table and she leans back, her eyes staring straight up. This place clearly scares her.

Simon moves to a podium-like control column, wheels it over close to River. He inserts a PLASTIC TAB into the column, then presses a few buttons, turns on the machine. The entire room starts to make a WHIRRING SOUND.

River closes her eyes. Jayne simply watches.

INT. SUPPLY VAULT - NIGHT

This is thief heaven. Simon was right -- the shelves are lined with vial upon vial of medicine. Mal dumps the Officious Doctor on the floor, and he and Zoe start filling the body bags with drugs.

In a series of JUMP CUTS, they quickly, efficiently clean out the room, cramming as many vials as they can into the body bags, reading labels and tossing away the worthless ones before sealing the jammed packed body bags again.

INT. IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

The WHIRRING is a little louder now. Simon works for a moment longer before --

SIMON

River... I'm going to start the scan now. You okay?

River is trying very hard to keep her shit together; she's on the brink of freaking. Her lips are moving fast, but no words are coming out.

SIMON (cont'd)

River?

RIVER

(snapping)

Just do it.

Simon works the controls and a HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE APPEARS, a three-dimensional scan of her brain floating above her like a bizarre rain cloud. Numbers and wave-graphs flank the central image of her brain.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Just outside the supply vault. Mal and Zoe push the gurneys back out into the corridor. Mal shuts the vault door with the Doctor still inside.

INT. IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

Jayne sits in a corner, watching Simon work at the control column. (An LCD window on the column reads DOWNLOADING DATA.) Simon mans the controls like the professional he is -- rotating the image, punching up new numbers and scans. He's riveted by the flood of information, stares at the images before him in disbelief.

SIMON

< Goddamn monsters. > [Tyen-sah duh UH-muo.] How anyone could do this to another person... she's seventeen...

Jayne remains impassive, not wanting to be drawn into this. Nonetheless, Simon turns to him

SIMON (cont'd)

They opened up her skull. Look --

Using the controls, he highlights (Madden-like, but slicker) a straight line drawn across River's temporal lobe -- an incision line.

SIMON (cont'd)

That's a scalpel scar. They opened up her skull... and then they cut into her brain.

Curiosity gets the best of Jayne --

JAYNE

Why?

SIMON

The only reason to make an incision in someone's brain is to lobotomize them -- you go in to remove damaged tissue. Why someone would cut into a healthy brain...

He lets it hang there -- the answer is beyond him.

SIMON (cont'd)

They did it over and over.

The downloading window switches to DOWNLOAD COMPLETE. Simon absently takes the plastic tab out of the machine, pockets it. A moment, as Simon looks at something else.

SIMON (cont'd)
< Jesus. > [Lao TYEN yeh.] They
stripped her limbic system...

Jayne doesn't really want to hear this, so --

JAYNE
We should get moving.

Simon misreads Jayne's hurry for incomprehension, starts to explain --

SIMON
You know how...
(how to explain)
You get scared. Or worried, or
nervous. And you don't want to be
scared or worried or nervous, so you
push it to the back of your mind.
You try not to think about it.
The limbic system is what lets you do
that -- it's like a filter in your
brain that keeps your feelings in
check.
(beat, disturbed by this)
They took that filter out of River.
She feels everything. She can't not.

That's as perturbing to Jayne as it is to Simon, but he's not going to get drawn into River's
problems.

JAYNE
That's fascinating.
(grabs the tab, puts
it in Simon's coat
pocket)
We should get moving.

SIMON
(looks at a wall clock)
We still have twenty minutes.

JAYNE
Plan changed when you were out.
We're meeting out the back way in
five.

RIVER

Her eyes snap open.

THE HOLOGRAM

Images begin to change furiously as River's brain starts firing, going berserk. Greens go to red, levels spike, warning lights flash. Simon has his back momentarily turned, addressing Jayne.

SIMON

I could use another couple of minutes. I'm sure if we contact Captain Reynolds --

JAYNE

Captain gave his orders. We play it by the book.

River lets out an ear-splitting SCREAM OF TERROR.

Simon turns, sees the hyperactive hologram. He shuts off the machine and rushes to River's side. She's in full freak-out mode now; her dialogue overlaps with everyone else's.

SIMON

River -- it's okay, you're okay.

JAYNE

Get her in the chair and let's go.

RIVER

No, no, no -- they come out of the black. They come when you call.

SIMON

It's okay, it's over.
(looks at Jayne)
We're leaving.

River fixes Jayne with a look -- like she sees right into him. It's wiggling him a bit.

RIVER

Your toes are in the sand.

JAYNE

(defensive)

And your head's up your ass.
(to Simon)

Make sure she keeps her mouth shut.
We don't need her screeching while
we're trying to make a quiet getaway.

Jayne goes to the door, looks around outside, then looks back at Simon and River. She's in hysterical tears, her hands clutching his shirt. He's stroking her hair, cooing, trying to calm her.
Off Jayne... is he starting to feel guilty?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Jayne leads the way as Simon pushes River in her wheelchair. Her lips are again moving soundlessly.

SIMON

(quietly, to Jayne)

You should've let me know when the
plan changed.

JAYNE

I told you when you needed to know.
(off Simon's look)

What are you griping about, you got
what you came for.

They turn a corner into

INT. HOSPITAL - ANOTHER CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The reach the back exit doors, are about to push through when River puts the brakes on the chair.

RIVER

No... can't go back, don't want to go
back...

SIMON

Shh, it's okay. We're just going
back to the ship. We're almost home.

River reluctantly allows herself to be pushed through the doors to --

EXT. HOSPITAL - BACK EXIT - CONTINUOUS

The doors aren't even shut behind them when SPOTLIGHTS spark to life, pinning Simon, River and Jayne in their crosshairs.

AGENT MC GINNIS (FILTERED)
Federal Marshals -- don't move.

They shield their eyes... just enough to see that they're surrounded by armed Feds. Lots of them, and moving cautiously towards them, rifles raised.

AGENT MC GINNIS
River and Simon Tam. By the
authority of the Union of Allied
Planets, you are hereby bound by law.

Off their reactions --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

Act Three

EXT. HOSPITAL - BACK EXIT - NIGHT

As we left them. The Feds come up to Simon and River, who offer no resistance as they're patted down and cuffed, their hands behind their backs.

AGENT MC GINNIS
Take them to processing.

The officers start ushering Simon and River away, another comes to cuff Jayne, who plays along, takes a slow step towards McGinnis --

JAYNE
(sotto)
So... you gonna take me away for
questioning now, or how d'ya wanna
play it?

AGENT MC GINNIS
You're under arrest for aiding and
abetting federal fugitives. Better
get a lawyer.

Jayne almost laughs. McGinnis doesn't.

JAYNE
You're kidding, right?

McGinnis says nothing.

JAYNE (cont'd)
(through his teeth)
Where's my rutting money?

AGENT MC GINNIS
You mean my money? For apprehending
the three fugitives? I expect I'll
be getting it soon.

With that, McGinnis walks away. Jayne realizes he's been double-crossed. He yanks free of the Fed cuffing him (one cuff on, one off), lunges at McGinnis, when FOOMP! -- a Fed fires his sonic rifle at Jayne. A wave of compressed sound slams into Jayne like a wrecking ball, sending him FLYING hard into a wall.

OMITTED

EXT. HOSPITAL - E.R. LANDING STRIP - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe trot the gurneys out towards the ambulance shuttle. Wash hops out and helps them strap the body bags to the outside of the shuttle. He reacts to the weight of the bags. (They're essentially filled to the brim with liquid.)

WASH
How much did we get?

Zoe smiles at Wash -- it's a lot. Mal downplays it.

MAL
Enough to keep us flying.

ZOE
(psyched)
Can we fly somewhere with a beach?

WASH
Maybe a naked beach.

Wash and Zoe kiss.

MAL
Cut it out. Job ain't done till
we're back on Serenity.

ZOE

Sorry, sir. Didn't mean to enjoy the moment.

MAL

(to Wash)

Where are the others?

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

FED #1 escorts Jayne, Simon and River into the reception area. He sees them to a bench, shoves Jayne onto it. Simon and River take their seats and the Fed departs. In the b.g., McGinnis talks to FED #2, prepping paperwork.

SIMON

(to Jayne)

I saw what you did out there.

A long beat, as Jayne wonders if he's busted. Defensive --

JAYNE

I didn't do nothing.

SIMON

(kicking himself)

More than I did. If those officers hadn't been armed, I think you'd have had a chance.

JAYNE

Guy shoved me, I shoved back. Not like I was trying to mount a rescue.

SIMON

Still. I appreciate you trying.

JAYNE

You know what I'd appreciate? If you'd stop flapping your pretty mouth at me. I'm trying to think of a way out of here and I can't do it with you yammering.

Simon shakes his head -- that's what he gets for thanking Jayne. River turns to Jayne.

RIVER
They took Christmas away.

JAYNE
(what the hell now?)
Christmas?

RIVER
Came down the stairs for the shiny
presents, but they took the tree and
the stockings. Nothing left but coal.

SIMON
River, what are you talking about?

RIVER
Christmas. You can't open your
presents before.

JAYNE
(to Simon)
Shut her up.

RIVER
(to Jayne)
And don't look in the closet, either.
That's greedy. It's not in the
spirit of the holiday.

JAYNE
(very harsh)
Shut. The hell. Up. Right now. Or
so help me I will shut you up.

INT./EXT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe and Wash.

MAL
Time.

ZOE
Ten minutes past rendezvous.

MAL
Something happened.

Wash opens a communication channel with Serenity.

WASH

Kaylee, are you linked?

INTERCUT:

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kaylee's on the bridge, in the pilot's seat. She taps a few buttons and the cortex pops up on the helm screen.

KAYLEE

I am now. What do you need?

WASH

Find out if there's been any kind of security alert in the hospital.

KAYLEE

Hang on...

As Kaylee works --

ZOE

Could be they're just late.

MAL

Not this late. Jayne would've sent up a flag.

Kaylee gets what she's looking for.

KAYLEE

Nothing from hospital security.
Nothing on local pipeline, either.
Although I'm getting some weird babble on the official two-six-two.
Sounds like they're talking about...
ducks?

ZOE

(to Mal)

Code?

MAL

(nods)

Feds got 'em. Kaylee, bring up the hospital schematics on the cortex. Find me a way into the security substation.

Zoe ducks into the ambulance, tosses Mal his gun. He tucks it in his vest; she lifts up her pant-leg and straps her shotgun to her calf with bandage tape.

WASH

Wait a minute, you really think there's Feds in there?

Now Zoe places an earwig in her ear, hands one to Mal, who does the same.

MAL

Most like.

(presses the earwig into his ear)

Check.

ZOE

(re: her earwig)

Coming in clear.

WASH

And you're just gonna walk into the security station through the front door?

MAL

No. You're gonna find me a way round the back.

They shut the ambulance doors and move off.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

Simon and River sit on the bench, her head on his shoulder. McGinnis walks up to the bench, Feds 1 & 2 following with Jayne in restraints.

AGENT MC GINNIS

Get up.

SIMON

What's going to happen to us?

AGENT MC GINNIS

I said get up.

McGinnis grabs Simon by the arm; he yanks himself free, remains seated.

SIMON

Agent McGinnis, I'm certain you're working under a superior who's keeping close tabs on this case. I'm certain of that because important people don't usually do field work. I'm also quite certain your superior wants me and my sister alive. Now, I'm not going to move from this spot until one of two things happen: you answer my very simple question, or you shoot me.

McGinnis bristles, but has little choice but to answer.

AGENT MC GINNIS

We're transferring you to a holding area until you can be retrieved.

SIMON

Retrieved... by whom?

AGENT MC GINNIS

By people who want you alive. People not me.

(to the Feds)

Take 'em.

PRELAP the sound of a BUZZER and --

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA-NIGHT

A security door opens and two Feds escort Jayne, Simon and River through the holding area. The Feds usher the prisoners around a corner and towards a cell.

River and Simon file in, as does Jayne. As Fed #2 goes to shut the door, Jayne springs --
SLAMMING HIS HEAD into Fed #2's nose and shattering it, knocking him out.

Fed #1 raises his rifle, but Jayne rams into him shoulder first, practically lifting him off the ground and CRUSHING him against a wall. The impact is such that both men go down, the rifle skittering away. Jayne quickly wriggles his cuffs past his feet. His hands are in front of him now. He grabs Fed #1 with both hands, one hand on his mouth, the other on his throat.

The following is dirty, ugly and almost completely silent:

Jayne squeezes hard, crushing his windpipe. The Fed tries to pry Jayne's hands off him, but Jayne's too strong. So the Fed bites down on Jayne's hand; blood streams down, but Jayne keeps his hold on both mouth and throat.

Simon goes to help Jayne, but hears Fed #2 stir -- he's coming to. Simon moves to him, kneels on his throat. He won't make a sound.

Still wrestling on the ground, Fed #1 gouges at Jayne's eyes, gets him pretty good, causing Jayne to look away and allowing the Fed to flip Jayne on his back. Fed #1 straddles him, proceeds to SLAM Jayne's head repeatedly on the marble floor.

River watches the violence.

OMITTED

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe.

MAL

Wash, a little direction, please.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED:

INT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Wash talks into his transmitter --

WASH

Working on it...

-- then into the com --

WASH (cont'd)

Kaylee, whaddya got?

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

Kaylee's looking at the hospital blueprints on the cortex.

KAYLEE

Tell them to make a left when they
get to radiology. They'll see a
door --

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe, moving fast --

WASH

-- go through that door and down to
green level.

Mal and Zoe go through the door and into --

INT. HOSPITAL - PURPLE STAIRCASE - NIGHT

As they descend the steps, taking them two and three at a time. As they do --

MAL

This is exactly what I didn't want.
I wanted simple, I wanted in-and-out,
I wanted easy money.

ZOE

Things always get a little more
complicated, don't they, sir?

MAL

Once, just once, I want things to go
according to the gorram plan!

They reach the bottom of the steps, head for the door, when --

WASH (V.O.)

Um, guys... you might want to hurry.

MAL

Is there a problem?

INT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Wash looks out the window, sees an ominous-looking shuttle descending towards City Hospital and landing on its roof.

WASH

The reinforcements are here.

Off Wash's dread...

OMITTED

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA -NIGHT

Back to the ugly, quiet fight at the substation.

Jayne knees the Fed in the nuts -- it's enough to try to flip on top of him. They roll around, Jayne repeatedly taking punches as he tries to squeeze the life out of this bastard.

Finally about to run out of breath, the Fed reaches down to his ankle and pulls a knife. He's about to bring it down when SIMON FLIES INTO FRAME, tackling the Fed off Jayne... who holds on to his grip. SNAP! The Fed's head is on backwards.

Simon takes the keys off the Fed, without hesitation --

SIMON

Come on.

Jayne grabs the rifle and he and River follow Simon (who undoes cuffs as they go) around the corner to the reception door. Jayne goes for the door.

SIMON (cont'd)

Wait -- you can't go through there.

JAYNE

Why not?

SIMON

There's at least four armed Feds out there.

JAYNE

Six.

(holds up the rifle)

I know.

SIMON

(re: a corridor)

We run. We'll find our way.

JAYNE

I ain't chancing that -- you got no
idea where that goes. I can handle
the feds.

RIVER

Doesn't matter.

Jayne and Simon turn to her. She's hugging her arms to her body as if cold... actually, she's just
terrified.

RIVER (cont'd)

They're here.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

McGinnis stands by reception. CAMERA IS ON HIM -- we don't yet see who he's talking to.

AGENT MC GINNIS

We did everything just the way you
asked. They weren't hurt. They
weren't drugged. They're in perfect
health, sitting in their cells,
waiting for you.

REVERSE - TO INCLUDE TWO MEN

Relatively non-descript, except for the blue gloves they wear. (They will henceforth be known as
the Blue Gloves.)

FIRST BLUE GLOVE

We appreciate your cooperation.

AGENT MC GINNIS

No problem at all. The kind of money
you're offering, it's the least we
could do.

McGinnis is expecting some small talk in response. Gets nothing but silence. So he just keeps
talking.

AGENT MC GINNIS (cont'd)
I have to say, though, that girl's a
real piece of work.

FIRST BLUE GLOVE
I'm sorry?

AGENT MC GINNIS
That girl. She kept rambling about
the weirdest stuff. I mean, just...
crazy.

SECOND BLUE GLOVE
So... you spoke to the prisoner?

AGENT MC GINNIS
We didn't interrogate them -- just
like you said. She was just talking
her nonsense while we were processing
her.

The SECOND BLUE GLOVE reaches in his suit pocket, pulls out a thick rod-like device. He
squeezes it and a thin spicule extends from each end.

FIRST BLUE GLOVE
Did your men also speak with her?

AGENT MC GINNIS
Much as I did.

A trickle of blood drips from McGinnis' nose. He feels it, dabs at it with his hand, sees it's blood.
He reacts to the sight, merely curious.

Then he notices his hands. His fingernails, to be specific. Blood is seeping from under them. He
looks up at the Blue Gloves... and all the color drains from his face.

A drop of red blooms out from his pupil... he SCREAMS... whatever is happening to him is
excruciating... until the red spreads over the entirety of the eye... and a tear of blood trickles
down. He collapses face-first onto his desk. Dead.

The sitting Blue Glove stands. The standing Blue Glove puts away his device.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

Act Four

OVER BLACK

The SOUND OF SCREAMING.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA

Jayne, Simon and River react to the continued SCREAMING... what the hell was that?

RIVER

Hell is coming to breakfast.

Simon looks at River, not certain what that means, but certain he doesn't like the sound of it.

SCREAMS come from beyond the door. First, just the one. Then more -- all in the same agony as McGinnis when he died.

SIMON

We're not going out that way.

Before they can debate, River bolts, running hell-bent-for-leather down a corridor.

SIMON (cont'd)

River!

Simon looks to Jayne as if to say "so much for that decision," then follows. Jayne reluctantly falls in behind Simon.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION

ON MC GINNIS

As we left him, very much dead. Then, CAMERA DRIFTS through the reception area... FINDING another Fed. Also dead, also bleeding out of many orifices. CAMERA CONTINUES TO DRIFT... finding another Fed. Same thing. And another. And another. Every Fed we've seen lies dead in a pool of blood.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO DRIFT... finding the Blue Gloved men walking through the carnage, completely unaffected. They walk up to the separator door, walk through.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The Blue Gloved Men walk in, past the separator door and into the cell area. There, they find the two laid out Feds Jayne took out. First Blue Glove takes the pulse of one, Second Blue Glove the pulse of the other.

FIRST BLUE GLOVE

Dead.

First Blue Glove looks in the direction Jayne and the others went.

SECOND BLUE GLOVE

This one's alive.

Second Blue Glove takes out The Device from his pocket.

INT. HOSPITAL - STEEL ROOM - NIGHT

River leads Jayne and Simon into the guts of the hospital. This space is more industrial, less pristine. She keeps moving fast, Simon and Jayne following.

JAYNE

Where the hell's she taking us?

SIMON

She must know of an exit this way.

JAYNE

I don't see any exit, and I got no intention of running around like a rat in a maze till we're dead. We're going back.

From behind them, the SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

SIMON

You want to find out where River's leading us... or you want to find out who that is?

INT. HOSPITAL - HUM ROOM - NIGHT

River runs down the steps, Jayne and Simon following.

RIVER

(calling back)

We're almost there.

She reaches the bottom of the steps, keeps running, Simon and Jayne gaining... then she finally stops at a large steel door.

RIVER (cont'd)
This is it.

Jayne tries the door -- locked. A faint TAP-TAP-TAPPING can be heard in the distance. Jayne looks in its direction fear starting to become evident in his face.

JAYNE
Stand back.

He takes aim at the door with the sonic rifle, BLASTS IT! In these echoey halls, it makes an ENORMOUS REVERBERATING BOOM! But it does nothing to the door. When the sound subsides, the TAP-TAP-TAPPING starts to get closer.

JAYNE (cont'd)
(under his breath)
< Cow sucking > [Shee-niou] high tech
Alliance crap.

Jayne looks towards the tapping sound... about to freak... turns the rifle around, starts wailing on the lock with the rifle butt. WHAM! WHAM! Nothing. WHAM! WHAM! Nothing. Then -- BLAM! That's the sound of a shotgun blast ripping through the lock from the other side.

The blasted door drifts open... and there stand Mal and Zoe, guns in hand, Zoe's shotgun pluming a bit of smoke.

Off Jayne, never so relieved to see anyone...

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

The ramp is in the process of opening as Kaylee comes down the stairs from the bridge, runs into Inara coming out of her shuttle. She peers out the ramp as she addresses Inara --

KAYLEE
Hey, 'Nara. How was your checkup?

INARA
(dismissing it)
Same as last year.
(re: her peering)
What's going on here?

KAYLEE
Well, let's see. We killed Simon and River, stole a bunch of medicine, and now the captain and Zoe are off

springing the others got snatched by
the Feds.

Inara's jaw drops. Before she can ask any questions --

KAYLEE (cont'd)
And here they are now!

The ambulance shuttle flies in. As soon as it touches down, Mal, Zoe, Wash, Jayne, Simon and River spill out. Kaylee and Inara join them on the floor, Kaylee moving to the control panel to close the ramp.

MAL
Tell me we weren't followed.

KAYLEE
Nothing on sensors.

MAL
(to Wash)
Take us out of the world. The
quicker, the better..

WASH
We'll be out of atmo in five minutes.

Wash books towards the bridge, Zoe in tow.

MAL
Hey. How was your thing?

INARA
As advertised. Lots of needles and
cold exam tables. I heard you had
some excitement.

MAL
Nothing much. Just... got into a bit
of a scrape ourselves.

JAYNE
Next time we come to the Core, I'm
staying with the preacher.

MAL
(nonsense!)

You hadn't come, you wouldn't be
getting your big pay day.

Jayne looks to Mal -- is there something behind that seemingly innocuous statement? Mal just
turns to Simon.

MAL (cont'd)
Did you get what you needed?

SIMON
I think I did. I have the
information I downloaded from the
imager. I just have to go over it
and...
(pauses, hint of a
smile)
I'm hopeful.

Kaylee notes the injuries to Jayne's face.

KAYLEE
What happened to your face?

JAYNE
Got it shot.

KAYLEE
With a gun?!

JAYNE
(said with disgust)
One of them "non-lethal" guns.

SIMON
It was a sonic rifle. He was
amazing. I can't begin to tell
you... we wouldn't be standing here
if it weren't for him.
(to Jayne, means it)
Thank you.

JAYNE
Hey. You're part of my crew.

MAL
I think I might cry.

(then--)

Jayne, help me with the cargo.
Everyone else... make yourselves
useful. You got jobs, go do 'em.

Everyone disperses but Mal and Jayne who unload the body bags from the ambulance, haul them over to the smuggling hold. As they work --

JAYNE

Gotta be one of our best takes ever.

MAL

Doc had a good notion. Boy's got a
decent criminal mind.

Jayne kneels by the hold, not noticing that Mal is wrapping one of the hoist chains around his fist -- the ultimate brass knuckles.

JAYNE

What're you buying with your cut?

WHAM! Without warning, Mal strikes Jayne with his chained-up fist.

EXT. SERENITY

As she takes off and shoots towards the atmosphere.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Mal stands by the airlock doors as Jayne comes to, realizes he's stuck between the airlock and the ramp.

JAYNE

(almost inaudible)

The hell are you doing?

Mal goes to the intercom.

MAL

We'll be in space in another minute
or so.

He hits a button and the ramp begins to open.

MAL (cont'd)

Figured it was a good time for a

chat. 'Fore it starts getting cold
out there.

JAYNE
(via intercom)
You out of your gorram mind? Let me
in.

MAL
You called the Feds, didn't you?

With that, the fight goes out of Jayne. He knows he's busted. No use in lying to the captain. A
long beat, then Jayne tries to explain himself.

JAYNE
Money was too good to pass up.

MAL
I should've shot you the second I
found out what you did.

JAYNE
That would've been the right thing.

Jayne takes a long moment, looking at the ramp. He really thinks he's going to die here.

JAYNE (cont'd)
What are you gonna tell the others?

MAL
About what?

JAYNE
'Bout why I'm dead.

MAL
Hadn't thought about it.

JAYNE
Do me a favor...
(beat, genuine)
Make something up. Don't tell them
what I did.

A long beat.

Then Mal hits the controls and the ramp starts to close.

MAL

Next time you decide to stab me in
the back... have the balls to do it
to my face.

With that, Mal goes, leaving Jayne between the ramp and the airlock doors. Jayne doesn't bother calling after Mal; he knows he's lucky to be alive. He simply sits. Someone will come let him out... eventually.

INT. SERENITY - RIVER'S ROOM

River sits at a table, scribbling on a pad. Simon enters, a hypo kit in hand.

SIMON

Hi.

(sees her scribbling)
What are you doing?

RIVER

Drawing.

Simon looks at her pad -- she's drawn a very well-rendered sketch of a matryoshka (a nesting doll), each layered doll lined up from big to small.

SIMON

That's really good.

RIVER

(re: the hypo kit)
What are you doing?

SIMON

Oh, I... brought some medicine. You
remember why we went to the hospital.

River nods.

RIVER

Is it time to go to sleep again?

SIMON

No, mei mei. It's time to wake up.

Off Simon, hopeful...

BLACK OUT.

END OF EPISODE