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Story #:

Firefly

"Dead or Alive"

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FIREFLY

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"Dead or Alive"

TEASER

1 EXT. SERENITY RAMP - NIGHT

1

A motley group of immigrant workers walk down the ramp onto the dirt of a border planet. MAL and an equally motley bulbous man, the CASHIER, count them as they walk off.

MAL

Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen.
Seventeen.

CASHIER

(bored)
Sixteen.

MAL

Hey, that beefy guy easily ate
enough for two.

CASHIER

Sixteen. Seventeen. Eighteen.

Mal points to a skinny guy off to the side of a larger guy.

MAL

I believe we're up to nineteen.

CASHIER

He was number seven.

MAL

Guess you could be right. Must've
forgot his knapsack. Eighteen.

ZOE follows the last two guys down the ramp.

CASHIER

Nineteen. Twenty.

MAL

And done.

The cashier hands Mal a wad of bills. Mal starts to count it.

MAL (cont'd)

Not that I don't trust you... but
I don't trust you.

(CONTINUED)

Mal counts the last bill. Looks at the Cashier. Beat. The Cashier gives him two more bills. Grumbles, ambles off.

ZOE

Ever full with the customer relations, sir.

MAL

He works for the Alliance.

ZOE

And we worked for him which would technically mean we also worked for the Alliance.

MAL

Yep. Have to say not unhappy to be makin' a buck off 'em.

ZOE

Ah, change is good. The crew?

MAL

Like the makin' money off the Alliance bit, but really don't want to push it by takin' part in their celebratin'... makes me all twitchy.

Zoe just looks at him.

MAL (cont'd)

Fine, but --

KAYLEE comes running down the ramp. Followed by JAYNE and BOOK.

KAYLEE

We're goin' to the fair.

MAL

An hour. Sixty minutes. Nothing more, nothing less, Miss Kaylee.

KAYLEE

No need to do a flippy-hiss, Capt'n. We gotcha.

Mal gives her money. Then Jayne and Book.

MAL

Don't spend it all in one place.

Kaylee puts one arm through Book, another through Jayne.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

You can win me stuff.

BOOK

My pleasure. Always have enjoyed guessing games.

JAYNE

Nope. I win it. I keep it.

Mal hands money to Wash. Wash swings his arm around Zoe's shoulders.

WASH

Let's go get us some of those curly carrots. Love 'em deep fried.

Wash starts to move her off. Zoe stops him, turns to Mal.

ZOE

Capt'n?

WASH

(dropping his arm)
Yeah, dad. Can we go? Promise to be home before midnight.

Zoe gives him a look.

MAL

Go. Wouldn't want to be responsible for cold curly carrots.

ZOE

Thanks, sir.

They move off. Not quite as happily as before. Mal, money in hand, turns to the next person in line. It's INARA.

MAL

(bit awkward)
Guess I'm not giving you money.

INARA

No.

MAL

(smilin')
Well, unless there'd be some kind of benefit for the exchange of said money...

(CONTINUED)

INARA

Definitely, no.

MAL

Then I suppose the least I can do
is escort you to the fair.

INARA

How adolescent... and charming of
you.

They start to walk off when Mal notices SIMON at the top of
the ramp. Mal approaches him.

MAL

Hey.

SIMON

River has never been to a fair and
she hasn't had a chance to do much
that is fun in awhile...

MAL

Alliance jail could be fun.

SIMON

Of course, I just, had to ask. For
River. She'll understand.

MAL

(beat)

Sure.

Mal moves back down the ramp to Inara.

INARA

Everything okay?

MAL

Kids wanted to go to the fair.

They step away. PULL BACK AND UP to the windows of the bridge
where RIVER wistfully looks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

It's a wonderland of lights, tents, games, a carnival
atmosphere. The fair's splayed out in a field in front of a
large factory.

(CONTINUED)

A mixed crowd of border folk and Alliance meander the festivities. Kaylee with a coiled-shaped cotton candy walks into frame alongside Book.

KAYLEE

You shouldn't feel bad you didn't guess the fat lady's weight. I actually thought it was quite sweet to drop fifty pounds.

BOOK

Seemed a wise choice.

KAYLEE

She was an awfully big lady.
(spinning)
Don't you just love a fair?

BOOK

(chuckling)
Have you always been this happy?

KAYLEE

From the day I was born'd. Seems like on all the choices, happy just belonged to me.

They pass;

JAYNE

Who's throwing darts at the last yellow balloon left on a game wall. Five unsuccessful darts surround the balloon. Jayne steadies, carefully throws his last dart. It misses.

JAYNE

Gorramn it!

Jayne pulls out his knife and just skewers the last balloon. The vendor quickly hands him the big prize, a green fuzzy TURTLE, then struggles to pull out Jayne's knife. Jayne happily admires his turtle. Passing him are;

ZOE AND WASH

Wash eats from a carton of fried curly carrots.

WASH

Just sayin' that every once in awhile it'd be nice to not have to clear every single thing.

ZOE

For the last time, he's the Captain.

(CONTINUED)

WASH

Let out some of the starch,
darling. You're not in the
military anymore.

ZOE

It's not that, it's...

WASH

Yeah, yeah. Who you are. The code.

They pass;

MAL AND INARA

Inara has her eyes closed and a plastic ring in her hand. In front of her in a booth is a SPINNING BALL with lots of long pointy sticks attached. Mal next to her, guides her arm.

INARA

Why do I have to close my eyes?

MAL

Makes it more challenging.

Inara tosses the ring. It almost nails the vendor who's helping someone else on the other side. Inara opens her eyes.

INARA

How'd I do?

MAL

Perhaps challenging was not the
best place to start.

Mal picks up a few rings. Tosses one. He makes it.

INARA

I do end up doing the most
interesting things with... since I
came aboard Serenity.

MAL

Now you can't tell me that an
attractive lady like yourself has
never been escorted to a fair?

INARA

(laughing)

They weren't quite the thing where
I was raised.

Mal stops, not loving that comment, then tosses another ring.
Makes it again.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Poor little Inara, not allowed to get her hands dirty with us common folk.

INARA

(taken aback)

That's not what I --

(Mal throws another)

I guess not everyone's lucky enough to fulfill their lifelong dream of becoming an expert ring tosser.

Inara stalks off. Mal drops the rest of the rings on the edge. Follows her. Doggin' her steps.

MAL

Where I was raised, we'd celebrate the foundin' of Shadow with a fair, just like this one. That is until the Alliance outlawed our quaint celebration. It was a little against unification spirit. Guess your folk wouldn't mind though, with it not exactly being "quite the thing."

They've stopped near a stage where an Alliance mucky-muck, COMMANDER TANAKA, dedicates the new factory. A large banner hangs above him, ALLIANCE REWARDS THOSE WHO REWARD THEMSELVES.

TANAKA

Thanks to the good Alliance people of Verbena, our gear shift factory is opening ten days ahead of schedule.

The crowd around the stage CHEERS. Mal claps, HOLLERS.

MAL

Oh, yeah. Let's all hear it for the good Alliance.

INARA

Mal.

MAL

Just being supportive. Oh, sorry, did that offend you. You probably supported 'em in the war.

Inara doesn't say anything. Mal stares at her.

(CONTINUED)

MAL (cont'd)

Guess we really aren't "quite the thing", are we?

Kaylee races up, pulls on Inara's sleeve.

KAYLEE

You have to come see the tattoo guy. His tattoos keep changin' colors. There's this one it's a sunrise.

(looking at them)

Am I interruptin'?

INARA

No.

MAL

Wouldn't touch those tattoos if I were you, be a shame if you got your hands all dirty.

Inara lets Kaylee drag her off. Mal turns back to Tanaka.

TANAKA

Verbena was scarcely surviving, barely more than a piece of barren rock, but now with the Alliance factory opening you and your families will be able to lead full and satisfying lives.

MAL

<Jackass.>

Mal turns and runs right into, LIEUTENANT QUILLAN, 40's, tough female head of security on this planet.

MAL (cont'd)

(fake cheerleader)

Go Alliance.

He turns to quickly leave when;

BOOOOOOM!!!

The factory spectacularly blows up. A huge fireball goes into the sky and shards of metal and wreckage are strewn into the crowd. The force of the explosion knocking people to the ground, including Mal.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

3 EXT. FAIR - NIGHT

3

Mal struggles to his feet a bit dazed. Carnage all around. People crying, screaming, bleeding. Parents desperately hunt for their children among the smoke and wreckage.

Mal starts moving, searching the devastation for his people. Like everyone else his clothing is dirty, bits of ash, debris on it. Finally sees Inara laying on the ground on her side. Rushes over to her.

MAL

Inara.

She moves, stunned but unhurt, starts to sit up. Mal helps her.

MAL (cont'd)

Are you okay?

INARA

Yeah. You?

MAL

Fine.

INARA

What happened?
(quickly looks around)
Kaylee? Kaylee!

KAYLEE (O.S.)

I'm here.

They both turn. A dazed Kaylee walks up. Kneels down next to both of them. Hugs Inara. Inara looks up at Mal.

INARA

The others?

MAL

I don't know.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. FAIR - CONTINUOUS

4

Over near a decimated tent, Zoe and Wash help each other stand, brush each other off. Speechless as they soak in everything around them.

WASH
Sure you're okay?

ZOE
(trying to smile)
Think we lost your curly carrots.

Wash puts an arm around her shoulders, leans into her.

WASH
You can always buy me more.

Zoe leans back into Wash, thankful.

WASH (cont'd)
What the hell happened?

ZOE
Concussion bomb. Probably tied
into the factory's power grid.
Local remote trigger.

WASH
Okay. Thanks. Doesn't make me feel
better.

ZOE
We need to find everyone else.

Wash nods. They move out.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. FAIR - CONTINUOUS

5

Jayne sits up, knocks a couple pieces of burnt wood off himself. The turtle, a bit singed, sits in Jayne's lap. Jayne's hand clutched around it.

JAYNE
<Wow.>

(CONTINUED)

Jayne stands. His turtle's neck took a hit, it's a bit floppy with stuffing coming out. Jayne pushes the stuffing back in. Tucks the turtle under his arm, starts moving.

CUT TO:

Mal and Kaylee help Inara stand. Zoe and Wash come up behind. Mal turns to them.

MAL

We need to get out of here.

ZOE

Sir?

WASH

Thanks, no really we're good.
Fine. A little bruised. You?

MAL

This place is going to be crawling
with Alliance security.

He glances at Inara and Kaylee.

MAL (cont'd)

Head back to the ship. We'll find
Book and --

Jayne approaches, turtle in hand. Holds it up.

MAL (cont'd)

Jayne.

JAYNE

<Bastards> singed my turtle.

They all just stare at him.

ZOE

Let me find a medic.

JAYNE

Thanks.

Kaylee looks around at all the wreckage, sees bodies not moving, crying children, so much destruction. A man, AZURIA CALVERT, 50's, farmer-type hugs his dead wife. Kaylee turns to Mal.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

Who would do this?

MAL

Not for us to find out.

Mal nods at Inara.

INARA

(to Kaylee)

Time to go.

Kaylee lets herself be led away. Mal turns to Wash.

MAL

Go with 'em.

WASH

Yeah, I know. Get the ship ready
to fly. Copy.

Wash with one last glance at Zoe, follows Kaylee and Inara. He catches up with Kaylee, puts his arm around her.

Mal looks around, finally sees Book. Book's picked up a man's shoulders and is dragging him toward a large tent being used as a triage center. Mal jogs over to him, grabs the man's feet, walks with Book.

BOOK

Thanks.

MAL

No problem.

They walk into;

INT. TRIAGE TENT - CONTINUOUS

Where people are trying to help the injured. Mostly confusion at this point. Book and Mal set the guy on a table. A woman comes over to check him out. Mal and Book step aside.

MAL (cont'd)

We need to be leavin'.

Book shakes his head.

BOOK

There's work to be done here.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

In case you've forgotten,
Shepherd, we've got two Alliance
fugitives on our ship.

BOOK

(pointing behind Mal)
Afraid not anymore.

Mal turns. Simon's rushed inside carrying his medical bag. He moves over to a groaning man, starts shouting orders as he examines the man.

SIMON

We need to categorize the
injuries, identify the most
critical.

A woman rushes over to Simon as he starts pulling things out of his bag.

MAL

Son of <deranged ringworm>!

Zoe comes up behind Mal.

ZOE

Sir?

Mal nods toward Simon

MAL

Looks like we're stayin' a bit.

BOOK

Good. We can use the help.

Book moves toward the entrance to the tent. Mal looks at Zoe, then follows.

EXT. FAIR - NIGHT - LATER

Mal and Zoe clean off their hands at a pump water faucet. A crowd mills around the open area. Some trying to clean-up, some still moving wreckage. But many just angry and frustrated.

MAL

Simon should be done in a couple
of hours. As soon as he is we're
outta here.

ZOE

Captain.

(CONTINUED)

Zoe nudges Mal. An officious Alliance officer, CORPORAL GRAYSON, 20's, comlink in hand, quickly moves toward Lt. Quillan.

GRAYSON

We ran the manifest from the factory through the cortex and flagged one of the workers. Suspicious background.

Quillan takes the comlink. Looks at an image of, DECLAN EVERTON, late 20's, a few paragraphs of text next to the image. Quillan quickly scans it.

QUILLAN

Independent in the war. Let's bring him in.

GRAYSON

We're searching for him now.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

An independent did this?

Quillan spins around. She didn't realize the crowd had come so close to her. An ANGRY LOCAL stands right behind her. The crowd is pressing up behind him.

ANGRY LOCAL

Who is it?

QUILLAN

Not your business.

ANGRY LOCAL

Not our business? This is our town. These were our people.

QUILLAN

(to Grayson)

Reinforcements.

Grayson moves off. Quillan turns back to the crowd.

QUILLAN (cont'd)

Alliance justice will handle this man.

ANGRY LOCAL

It's one of those gorramn brown coats, right?

CROWD VOICE #1

Had to be from the factory.

(CONTINUED)

CROWD VOICE #2

That guy, working electric, he
never drank with us.

QUILLAN

Settle down!

CROWD VOICE #1

Yeah, too good for us. Lyin' sack
of --

CROWD VOICE #2

Saw 'im at the saloon.

The crowd starts surging.

QUILLAN

(shouting)

Stop it. Now. Stop!

The angry local just pushes past her.

ANGRY LOCAL

Out of our way.

The mob surges with the angry local.

MAL AND ZOE

Watch from the side. They talk quietly.

MAL

This is gettin' ugly.

ZOE

What do you want to do?

MAL

Grab Simon. It's time to go.

As the crowd moves all around them. Mal and Zoe quietly walk
toward the triage tent. They pass a group of bodies.

Azuria touches his wife's face, unable to believe she's gone,
kisses her forehead, not even paying attention to the
commotion all around him. SHOUTS ring out. Azuria looks up.

CROWD VOICE #1

We've got 'em.

More SHOUTS are heard as the crowd surges closer to;

MAL AND ZOE

(CONTINUED)

Who've stopped moving. They fade into the background. The surging crowd drags a man past them. The guy wears a brown coat similar to Mal's. Zoe and Mal look at each other.

The mob drops the guy in the middle of the crowd. They angry local kicks him.

ANGRY LOCAL
Murderous independent.

Azuria breaks through the crowd, pushes the angry local to the side and just starts whaling on the independent.

BANG! Lt. Quillan shoots her gun into the air. Grayson and a couple of armed Alliance soldiers are with her.

QUILLAN
The next person to touch that man
is dead.

The crowd and Azuria reluctantly back away from the barely breathing man. Quillan reholsters her gun, grabs some papers from Grayson, weeds through the people. Gets to the guy, bends down, turns him over. He's a mess.

QUILLAN (cont'd)
(to crowd)
It's not him.

Quillan stands. The crowd starting to quiet.

QUILLAN (cont'd)
We know who the culprit is and
he's no longer in town. He's taken
a land shuttle.

She nods to her soldiers who pick up the mistaken guy and move him out of the crowd.

QUILLAN (cont'd)
There's a bounty for whoever
captures this guy. <\$10,000> But
he has to be brought in alive. If
anyone harms the target they'll
face Alliance justice.

Mal snorts at that. Zoe elbows him to be quiet.

QUILLAN (cont'd)
Every available ship in port is
now under my control. Alliance
personnel and volunteers will be
assigned to each in order to go
after and apprehend the target.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

QUILLAN (cont'd)
Captains please report to Corporal
Grayson.

A couple of men head over to Grayson. Mal and Zoe share a
look. Quillan walks straight up to Mal.

QUILLAN (cont'd)
Captain Reynolds.

MAL
Yep.

QUILLAN
I'll be going with you.

MAL
(beat)
Shiny.

Quillan hands him a piece of paper.

QUILLAN
Our target. Have your ship ready
to go by oh-one-hundred.

She walks back to Grayson. Mal glances down at the picture.

ZOE
We can tell them we're grounded.
Kaylee can fake a problem with the
engines. Shouldn't be that hard.

MAL
Pissin' hell!

ZOE
Sir?

He nudges her. Shows her the picture of Declan.

ZOE (cont'd)
It's Private Everton.

MAL
(beat)
Guess we're going a'posseing.

Mal crumbles up the paper. Throws it on the ground.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

7 EXT. SERENITY RAMP - NIGHT

7

Mal speaks with Inara, who has River next to her.

MAL

Don't talk to anyone.

INARA

Thanks, Mal. I think I've got that covered.

MAL

Okay, fine. But don't let moonpie talk to anyone, either. You think you can handle these guys but... just don't let your guard down.

Inara bristles a bit, but then River motions Mal over to her, like she has a secret.

MAL (cont'd)

Yeah?

RIVER

Purple elephants are flying.

MAL

Good. Thanks for the update.

Lt. Quillan approaches. Mal turns to Inara.

MAL (cont'd)

The Alliance has assured us the delay won't be too long, Miss.

Inara nods, starts walking River down, her hand on River's arm. Quillan stops her as they pass.

QUILLAN

My apologies for the inconvenience.

INARA

It's no problem. I hope you catch the monster responsible.

QUILLAN

We will.

(CONTINUED)

RIVER
(happily)
I'm going to the fair.

Quillan looks at her strangely. Mal steps up, motions Inara and River down.

MAL
If you'll stop bothering my paying customers, we can be off.

QUILLAN
There'll be three others joining us.

Two skeezy looking bounty hunters, JONAH, a talker, and MATHER, a grunter, come up. Jonah checks out Serenity.

JONAH
Well, shoot, doubt this piece of rustin' dust would be able to find a stick of dynamite up a donkey's ass.

MAL
Well, lucky for us there's no donkeys on this planet.

They move into the cargo bay as Azuria comes up. Azuria doesn't even look at them. Just walks up and into the cargo bay. His big SHOTGUN strapped to his back.

MAL (cont'd)
(to Quillan)
Fun group. Better be able to control 'em. They disrupt my ship and I'm tossing 'em off.

QUILLAN
I don't need to remind you, Captain, who's in charge here.

MAL
Never had no doubts about that.

QUILLAN
We're checking the northern sector. I'll give your pilot the coordinates.

Quillan walks up. Mal looks around, then follows.

8 INT. TRIAGE TENT - NIGHT

8

In a quiet corner, Book prays over an elderly male body. Beat. Pulls the sheet over his head. Then moves onto the next body. There's a whole row of them.

PULL BACK to see the energy and flurry all around of people trying to save lives. It's a hodgepodge of folks. Most not really knowing what they're doing, but trying. They're making due with whatever they can find.

Simon's the only one with any real triage experience. He's currently bandaging a drooping man around his ribs. He sees;

INARA AND RIVER

Enter the tent. River races over to him.

RIVER
Simon. Simon. The fair.

Inara quickly approaches.

INARA
(to Simon)
I'm sorry. I didn't think anywhere else was safe.

SIMON
No, it's fine.

RIVER
Cotton candy. Play. Play!

Simon glances at some Alliance soldiers helping others over against a far wall. Simon grabs Inara's hand. Places it on the bandage.

SIMON
Hold this steady, firm.

INARA
(uncertain)
Okay.

Simon leads River over to a quiet corner. Simon sits her down. River drops down cross-legged on the dirt.

SIMON
Please, River. Wait here.

(CONTINUED)

RIVER

Pretty blue ocean. Waves crashed.
Castle all knocked down.

SIMON

You have to be quiet, good.
Please. It's important.

River smiles. Starts playing. Running her fingers through the dirt, making circular patterns. Simon watches her for a beat. Then moves back to Inara.

SIMON (cont'd)

Thank you.

INARA

What should I do?

Simon hands her a roll of bandages.

SIMON

Tie it off.

INARA

Simon, I'm good with anatomy, but
not like this...

SIMON

You'll do fine.
(off her unsure look)
Will you do fine?

INARA

Sure.

Simon nods, then starts cleaning his tools to go onto the next patient. Inara starts awkwardly to finish the bandage. A flurry at the tent pulls both their eyes.

Two Alliance soldiers with Grayson hovering next to them bring in a stretcher.

GRAYSON

Doctor!

SIMON

Over here.

Simon points to the empty table next to Inara. They bring over the stretcher. Set it down. It's Commander Tanaka. He's issuing orders even though he's in great pain. His arms wrapped around his stomach.

(CONTINUED)

TANAKA

Grayson, update.

GRAYSON

(to Simon)

They just got him free, the wreckage had him trapped.

TANAKA

Now!

Grayson rushes off. Simon worried, looks over to River, who still quietly plays, then to Inara. Inara shares his look. Not sure what to do. They hear the RUMBLE as;

9 EXT. TOWN - NIGHT - EFFECT

9

A shiny Alliance shuttle rises. Followed by three spaceships of various shapes and sizes, none of them particularly elegant or new. The final lift-off is Serenity. All the ships going off in different directions.

10 INT. SERENITY BRIDGE - NIGHT

10

Wash flies, checks his controls in the background while Mal and Zoe discuss.

ZOE

Everton... come on, he was so by the book he'd get upset if I pissed without getting your approval to leave.

MAL

Remember when he wanted to write up Winters because he wouldn't shave.

ZOE

Well, it was a pretty stupid lookin' mustache.

MAL

Yeah, only time I ever agreed with him. Just like the Alliance to want to convict a man with no evidence.

ZOE

We need to reach him first.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

If we don't, he's gonna be
railroaded or worse, dead, if that
lynch mob gets to him.

Quillan enters. Zoe goes to check on Wash.

MAL (cont'd)

Lieutenant. Anything yet from the
other ships?

QUILLAN

No.

MAL

(all conversational)

So, do you guys have anything on
this guy other than he was an
independent?

QUILLAN

I have my men checking other
leads, but to be honest Captain,
this feels right.

MAL

Really? And you deduced that by
some sort of intuition...

QUILLAN

I deduced that by the fact that he
ran.

MAL

Sure. Gotcha. Good logic. Seems
all matter of smart...

(beat)

Course, guess I'd run too if I had
a herd of yokels lookin' to beat
the horses' snot out of me.

Quillan checks out Mal's brown coat.

QUILLAN

You're an independent.

MAL

Was called that at one time.

Loaded stare. Then Quillan gets a BEEP from her comlink. She
takes it off her belt. Reads it.

QUILLAN

They've found a trail.

(CONTINUED)

Mal shares a look with Zoe.

11 INT. SERENITY DINING ROOM - NIGHT 11

Jayne sits at the table with Jonah and Mather. They're comparing weapons. Jayne has out his big-ass gun. Jonah's more sleek, shiny while Mather has a wicked looking energy powered crossbow. They all ignore Azuria who sits in the corner. Jonah lifts Jayne's gun.

JONAH

Nice heft.

JAYNE

You should see the hole it can make in a man.

Jayne holds his hands five inches apart.

JONAH

Sweet. But for pure accuracy can't beat my compressed airgun. Cut clean through a roach's butt at hundred yards. Course, not as pretty as Mather's.

Jonah picks up the crossbow, tosses it to Jayne. Kaylee walks in, ignores the boasting at the table and goes to get herself some coffee.

JONAH (cont'd)

Nuclear power pack, 200 psi, titanium arrows, go through ten inches steel.

JAYNE

Could work. Personally, I would've gone with the T4 model at 300 psi, but it'll get the job done.

Mather GRUNTS. Kaylee sees Azuria, walks over to him.

KAYLEE

Did they offer you any coffee? It's a bit sludgy and gross tasting, but the punch'll keep ya goin' till dawn.

Azuria doesn't look up as he talks.

AZURIA

No, thank you.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

Um, okay.

Kaylee turns to go, but turns back. Heart on her sleeve.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

I saw you. At the fair, well,
after the fair, after the... I'm
so sorry. Was that your --

AZURIA

No, thank you.

KAYLEE

Okay, you don't want to talk, I
don't blame you, but if you ever
feel like you do --

AZURIA

No.

Beat, then Kaylee moves away. Cues in on what's being said at the table.

JONAH

So, me and Mather, all into this
factory gig, just came in on a
ship yesterday. Couldn't be as bad
as some other <crappin'> we've
done before. But now that job's
all and done.

JAYNE

(shakin' his head)
Can never depend on no job.

Mather just GRUNTS again.

JONAH

But then this bounty thing came up
and hey, I can shoot. This could
be a deal, maybe be even better.
Make more doing this then working
at that ruttin' factory for a
month.

Jayne sets down Mather's weapon. Sits up straighter in his chair. Kind of squares off with Jonah.

JAYNE

Nothing personal with all that bad
luck and your fancy weapons and
such, but just so we're clear...
the bounty's mine.

(CONTINUED)

JONAH

(squaring back)

Now, not that I don't appreciate a man who's all boasty about his weapons, but --

Kaylee steps up to the table.

KAYLEE

What are you saying?

JAYNE / JONAH

Huh?

KAYLEE

(disgusted)

You insensitive louts. Have you no shame. People lost their lives and all you can think about is money.

She smacks Jayne on the head. Storms out.

JAYNE

Hey!

Jayne rubs his head. The other louts laugh. Azuria never moves.

Inara finishes bandaging a little girl's arm. Inara wears a white apron over her clothes.

INARA

You'll be okay now, sweetie.

Inara picks up the little girl and looks around for someone to take her, but everyone's busy. She's not sure what to do. Someone taps her on her arm. She turns. It's River, holding out her arms.

INARA (cont'd)

That's all right, River. I'm sure her mother is around here somewhere.

RIVER

(sad)

Mother gone.

River runs her hand down the little girl's hair.

(CONTINUED)

INARA
(hugs the girl)
Oh.

SIMON (O.S.)
Inara?

River holds her arms out again. Inara hesitates.

SIMON (O.S.) (cont'd)
Inara!

Inara hands the little girl over to River. River smiles at the girl and then carries her back to where she was sitting.

13 EXT. VERBENA SKYLINE - NIGHT - EFFECT 13

The winking lights of the five ships, including Serenity, can be seen in the darkness as the ships fly a similar path.

14 INT. SERENITY BRIDGE - NIGHT 14

Wash's flying as Zoe enters.

ZOE
Captain should be right behind me.

WASH
Thanks.

Wash checks something else on his controls. Keeps watching those as he talks with Zoe.

WASH (cont'd)
Zoe?

ZOE
Yeah.

WASH
What if this guy, you know, did it?

ZOE
Trust me, darling, this guy couldn't even tie his shoelaces if it wasn't described to him using step-by-step graphics.

(CONTINUED)

WASH

Sure.

(beat)

But, well... people change.

ZOE

All we want to do is hear his story. We at least owe him that.

MAL (O.S.)

Besides, I trained this guy...

Mal steps into the discussion. Zoe straightens.

MAL (cont'd)

One would hope he'd have a smarter escape plan than limping along in a land shuttle.

(to Wash)

What's up?

WASH

I've been tracking his flight plan. We'll be on him in another hour, easy.

MAL

And?

WASH

For the last <twenty minutes> the pattern the shuttle is flying has continually repeated. Every zig, every zag. A little too precise with a human at the wheel.

Mal and Zoe look at each other.

MAL

He bailed out. Knew we'd catch up to him.

ZOE

Do you think the other ships'll pick up on it?

MAL

Wish I could count on 'em being stupid, but our luck's never been that good.

(to Wash)

Track it back, see where he dropped. I'll go explain it to our guests.

(CONTINUED)

Wash nods, turns back to his controls as Mal exits.

15 INT. SERENITY FORWARD CORRIDOR - NIGHT 15

Mal talks with Quillan.

QUILLAN

You're not trying to keep me away
from the target, are you, Captain?

MAL

Yes. Your instincts are
incredible.

QUILLAN

Actually, my instincts are usually
pretty dead on. And right now
they're telling me you're not
sharing everything you know.

MAL

Fine. I'll turn the ship back
around and we can follow all the
other dupes, and when we take down
an empty ship, then --

QUILLAN

Okay. We'll play it your way.

Mal nods, turns to go back to the bridge.

QUILLAN (cont'd)

Captain?

MAL

Yes?

QUILLAN

Pulled up your service record.

MAL

And?

QUILLAN

You were very loyal to your
troops. An admirable quality, but
I hope that you're not under any
illusions that just because this
man was an independent, that he's
innocent and needs your
protection.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

(shrugs)

The war was awhile back. Now I'm just looking to make that bounty.

Mal turns back to the bridge. Quillan's not convinced.

16 INT. TRIAGE TENT - NIGHT 16

Simon uses his fancy tools to save Tanaka. Inara assists, blood smeared on her apron, her arms. Tanaka's barely conscious. Simon has a metal tool holding the wound open.

SIMON

Keep this steady.

Inara does. Tries not to look down. Simon reaches in to do something icky that we don't see. Grayson appears. Simon sees him, continues to operate as he talks.

SIMON (cont'd)

Not now. Whatever fell on him caused internal bleeding and since we don't exactly have x-ray equipment here I've had to operate.

But Tanaka stirs. Spots Grayson, struggles to talk.

TANAKA

Report.

GRAYSON

In can --

TANAKA

Grayson!

GRAYSON

They believe the target had dropped onto land, they're currently heading to the estimated drop zone.

Book's come up near Simon and Inara. Putting clean bandages to the table behind them.

TANAKA

Who?

GRAYSON

He was a private in the war. Independent.

(CONTINUED)

TANAKA

(difficulty breathing)

Damn brown coats. Should've wiped
out when had chance.

BOOK

Leans closer to Inara as she grabs some of the bandages he
just put down.

BOOK (cont'd)

(quietly)

Always thought you needed a bit
more evidence to convict a man
than the color of his coat.

INARA

So did I.

Inara turns back to help Simon.

17

EXT. SERENITY RAMP / FOREST EDGE - NIGHT

17

Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Quillan, Jonah, Mather and Azuria come down
Serenity's ramp, each holding glowsticks. They're part
lantern, part flashlight. Mal checks out the landscape as
Quillan preps the troops.

QUILLAN

Keep in constant contact. We don't
know how dangerous this man is.
Assume that he's armed.

JONAH

(hefting his gun)

Not a problem.

Mal quietly pulls Jayne away from the others. Mal motions
toward the opposite side of the clearing.

MAL

(whispering)

That direction. Like we talked.

JAYNE

Give 'em the show.

MAL

Yeah. But --

Jayne's already taking off, storming through the group.

(CONTINUED)

JAYNE

Watch out.
(sniffin')
I got the scent.

Jayne examines the bushes. Sniffs one more time. Then RACES headlong into the bushes.

JAYNE (cont'd)

(laughing gleefully)
He's mine!

The others follow him, except for Zoe. Who heads over to Mal.

MAL

(finishing his sentence)
... don't overplay it.

ZOE

Not full with the finesse.

MAL

At least he's effective.

JAYNE (O.S)

Stay away you freaks!

Lots of Jayne CRASHY noises in the distance. Mal sadly shakes his head, then moves in the opposite direction.

MAL

(all business)
Denser brush this way.

They move into it.

Jayne tromps through the forest. Shining the flashlight part of his glowstick in front of him. Searching behind trees, rocks, etc.

JAYNE

Come out, come out, wherever you
are. We won't hurt you... much.

Slowly stalking behind him are Jonah, Mather and Azuria. All with weapons out.

19 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT 19

Mal and Zoe go carefully through the forest. Zoe squats down to check a bush. Mal sees a broken branch.

MAL
(quietly)
Over here.

Zoe stands, goes to him. They continue moving.

20 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT 20

Quillan follows Jayne's path. Jayne and troop make noise in front of her. She stops. Looks around. Then turns back.

21 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT 21

Mal and Zoe quietly enter. Mal watching the ground. He stops by a very thorny looking bush.

ZOE
(whispering)
Think he's holing up?

MAL
It's what I taught him to do.

ZOE
So, your superior tracking skills
are gonna find him...

MAL
Correction. My superior tracking
skills have found him.

Mal coolly reaches into the bush and proceeds to STICK himself on a couple of thorns. Quickly pulls his hand out. Sucks on a finger.

MAL (cont'd)
Ouch! Gorramn it, Declan. Come
out!

DECLAN EVERTON, late 20's, nervous noodge, crawls out, looks at Mal, surprised.

DECLAN
Sgt. Reynolds? Zoe?!?

Mal looks at Zoe, smug.

22 EXT. FOREST - NIGHT 22

Quillan, now with her gun out, has completely separated from Jayne's group. She quietly continues on her path.

23 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT 23

Declan's shaking Mal's hand. Zoe's.

DECLAN

I ran as soon as I heard where that crowd was headed. Was sure they were gonna get me... God, it's good to see you guys.

ZOE

You, too.

DECLAN

(to Mal)

I didn't do it, Sgt. Reynolds. I swear.

Mal puts his hand on Declan's shoulder.

MAL

I know.

And Mal CLOCKS him. Knocks him to the ground. Zoe looks at Mal surprised. Quillan steps into the clearing, gun raised.

MAL (cont'd)

(calmly)

We've apprehended your bounty.

Quillan checks them all out. Still a little suspicious, but she walks up to them.

QUILLAN

Good.

Mal and Zoe roughly pull a quiet Declan to his feet. Quillan finally holsters her weapon, steps forward and cuffs Declan's hands in front of him. KA-CHUNK. They all turn. Azuria has his shotgun aimed right at Declan.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

24 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

24

Azuria still has his shotgun aimed straight at Declan. Quillan steps between them, into the line of fire, gun in her hand. Zoe and Mal off to the side, assessing.

QUILLAN

You don't want to do this.

AZURIA

If you don't move than I'll just shoot right through you.

QUILLAN

This man is going back to stand trial. Step back.

Mal comes closer to Azuria. Azuria doesn't waver, but;

AZURIA

Stop movin'!

Mal stops.

QUILLAN

If you don't set down your gun, I'll be forced to kill you.

AZURIA

I'm already dead. Nothing else matters except I take this <vermin> with me. Now move!

Quillan stands firm. Declan stays entrenched behind her.

MAL

(casually)

This really isn't the way to do this.

AZURIA

Shut up!

MAL

No, I mean you need to angle higher if you're hoping to shoot both of 'em.

Mal carelessly moves forward as he talks. Zoe fades further to the side, watching Mal, unsnaps the button holding her gun.

(CONTINUED)

MAL (cont'd)

Though I'd step back a pace if I were you, it'll be a might bit messy with all that blood and gore and everything.

AZURIA

(to Quillan)

Move. Please.

Quillan lets Mal talk.

MAL

Not that I don't get your reasons and everythin', but come on you're not a murderer. And that's what you'd be, if you pulled that trigger.

AZURIA

Thirty years we been married, last week. Not always best of times being out here, but we were there for each other, always there. Couldn't think of my life without her, can't think...

MAL

Then you need to ask yourself... would your wife really want you to throw away your life like this.

Azuria hesitates for a second, then steadies his shotgun.

AZURIA

<Screw you.>

Azuria's finger starts pressing the trigger. Mal, realizing he's going to shoot, moves toward him.

Suddenly, SPOTLIGHTS from the other ships shine down, dirt stirring up from the downdraft. Azuria looks up, startled. Mal wrestles the shotgun out of his hand.

MAL

It's over.

AZURIA

(spits at Mal's feet)

It'll never be over.

MAL

Anger. Good emotion. Let's get that all out.

(CONTINUED)

Quillan's clamped a hand on Declan's arm. Uses her other hand to talk into her comlink. Mal turns to Zoe, who has her gun sights on Azuria.

MAL (cont'd)

Take him back to the ship.

Zoe pushes Azuria in front of her. Quietly turns to Mal.

ZOE

Movin' speech, sir.

MAL

Really? I was afraid it might've come off a little insincere.

Zoe just moves Azuria away. Mal walks over to Quillan. Mal points toward the ships above them.

MAL (cont'd)

Gonna let them set down? Not that I don't think you can keep 'em all from lynching our target, you know you being so successful with just that one guy...

QUILLAN

They're not landing.

MAL

Good.

QUILLAN

But they will be escorting us back to town.

Quillan grabs Declan, pushes him in front of her. Starts walking. Mal glances up at the other ships, then follows.

A weary Inara carries clean water through the room. She loses her grip on the bucket. It slips, dropping to the floor sloshing water onto the dirt, onto her shoes.

INARA

<Crap!>

Inara bends down next to the bucket, tired. Bit overwhelmed.

RIVER (O.S.)
(sweet voice)
And the beautiful princess every
night prayed for her handsome
prince...

Inara stands, turns. Behind her is River, who's currently surrounded by a group of children. Some bandaged, most sleepy. Another child is added to the group as Inara watches.

RIVER (cont'd)
... to fight through the terrible
ivy of thorns and climb up to her
room and slay all the wicked, evil
demons...

Inara smiles at the spellbound children. Then takes a deep breath, picks up the bucket and moves on. She threads back through the people and tables to Simon.

Grayson's back near Tanaka's head. Inara sets the water on a table. Starts to clean the blood off some of the utensils, places them next to Simon. Simon's hands are still in Tanaka.

SIMON
Thank you. I've cauterized one
laceration and if I can just
reroute this crushed artery --

Tanaka GROANS. Barely conscious, in major pain.

GRAYSON
Help him!

SIMON
Local's wearing off. He's lost too
much blood to be put completely
under.

Tanaka GROANS again. Simon loads some liquid into his hypo-gun, presses it into Tanaka's neck. Beat. Tanaka SIGHS, visibly relaxes. Looks at Grayson.

GRAYSON
Sir?

TANAKA
Go. Get estimated time.

GRAYSON
Yes, sir.

Grayson hurries off. Tanaka can't feel anything below his neck.

(CONTINUED)

Gathers more strength without the pain, though still pretty breathless.

TANAKA

Pain gone.

SIMON

You may feel good but it's just an illusion. You need to relax. I should be done soon.

TANAKA

What give me?

Simon pays more attention to what he's doing, then what he's telling Tanaka.

SIMON

Moxoceline B.

TANAKA

Fancy stuff for border doctor.

Inara looks up at Simon. Then puts her hand on Tanaka's shoulder.

INARA

Please don't exert yourself.

TANAKA

(ignoring her)
Not to mention tools.

Without Tanaka seeing it, Inara puts her hand on Simon's arm, squeezing it to warn him.

TANAKA (cont'd)

Who are you?

Simon glances quickly up at Inara.

Wash at the controls. Zoe talks with Jayne behind him.

ZOE

I want you to have your gun ready.
Be prepared.

JAYNE

For what? To run or fight?

ZOE

Either. Both.

JAYNE

No ruttin' way. We earned that bounty.

WASH

(spins around)

<Pull me outta a monkey's ass!>

Wash stands. Faces Zoe.

WASH (cont'd)

Gun handy? You're not thinking about shooting a fed. Tell me you're not gonna freakin' shoot an Alliance officer.

ZOE

Do you know what they'll do to Declan if we take him in?

WASH

What? He'll get a fair trial.

ZOE

Yeah, right. From the Alliance.

WASH

Well, unless he's guilty.

ZOE

That hasn't been proven. And until it is we don't abandon one of our men.

JAYNE

Hey, I wasn't in no war with you. He isn't one of my men.

ZOE

Don't be stupid.

JAYNE

What did I sign up on... good ship suckers.

ZOE

I said be ready, gorramn it. So be ready.

Zoe storms out. Wash pissed, drops into his chair, spins it back to the controls. Jayne kicks the wall.

27 INT. SERENITY SPARE CREW QUARTERS - NIGHT

27

Declan still in cuffs, paces while Mal leans against the downed ladder.

DECLAN

A shuttle. That's all I'd need.
Okay, maybe a little money, but I
promise I'll pay you back.

MAL

Hold for a minute. Firstly, I need
the story of what happened back
there.

DECLAN

I swear I was just helping 'em
build the factory. It wasn't the
best job, but it's a <bitch> to
get any work after the war. No one
wants to hire an independent. I'm
untrustworthy just cause we lost.

MAL

Yeah. Been there.

DECLAN

You know the Alliance'll just pin
this on me so it looks like
they're actually doing something
out here. I don't want to cause
trouble for you or your crew,
Sarge, but... we were on the same
side, you've got to get me outta
here.

Boots THUNK above Mal's head. He looks at Declan. Puts his
finger over his lips. Quillan comes down.

MAL

Lieutenant.

Quillan waits until she's down and facing Mal to show she
overheard. Declan sits on the bed, let's them fight it out.

QUILLAN

You served with this man.

MAL

I was his sergeant.

QUILLAN

And you didn't tell me.

(CONTINUED)

MAL
Seemed wise at the time.

QUILLAN
Sure.
(beat, then pissed)
Gorramn it, Captain, how do you
think this makes you look?

MAL
Why don't you tell me.

QUILLAN
Like you helped him. Like I'm a
sucker for trusting you. God, did
you not see all those people dead.
All those lives destroyed.

MAL
(icy)
I was there.

QUILLAN
Obviously not, if you're helping
this murderer.

MAL
There's been no proof that he is
or that we're involved, but hey,
if your intuition's goin' then how
can the facts compare to that.

Beat.

QUILLAN
We know who you are. Your ship,
your crew. There's nowhere you
could run.

MAL
Now you're threatening me.

QUILLAN
Not threatening, warning. Now get
out. No one is allowed access to
the prisoner from this point on.

Off Mal, pissed.

Kaylee steps in from the corridor. She's carrying a tray of
mushy food for Azuria.

KAYLEE

Thought you might be a bit hungry.

Azuria doesn't even respond. He's sitting on the bed. She sets the food on a table next to him.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

It's not that good, but supposedly nutritious. Isn't it amazin' that the things that are so good for ya, always taste the worse.

No response, so Kaylee starts moving back to the door. Azuria raises his bloodshot eyes to Kaylee.

AZURIA

(quietly)

You ever love anyone so much that you couldn't imagine taking a breath without 'em being there to hear it? To share it.

KAYLEE

(stuck)

No.

(beat)

But if I did, maybe I'd want to make sure the person responsible for 'em dying would also end up just as dead.

Kaylee exits into;

29

INT. SERENITY PASSENGER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

29

Kaylee rests against the side, upset. She pushes herself up, turns to go and almost runs right into Jayne. Jayne's got his turtle under his arm.

JAYNE

Hey!

KAYLEE

Sorry.

JAYNE

Got any thread?

Jayne holds up the turtle, neck is almost gone.

JAYNE (cont'd)

His floppy neck's makin' me sad.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

No.

Kaylee moves to go around him. Jayne checks her out.

JAYNE

That ruttin' yokel didn't pester
you or anythin'?

KAYLEE

No. I'm okay.

JAYNE

Don't look it.

KAYLEE

Come on, Jayne silly, you know
me... I'm always okay.

Kaylee goes past him. Jayne watchin' her. Jayne looks at his
turtle, glances in the direction that Kaylee went, looks at
his turtle, like he just might give it to her.

JAYNE

Nah.

He tucks the turtle back under his arm. Walks on.

30

INT. TRIAGE TENT - NIGHT

30

Simon's been fielding Tanaka's questions, and the strain is
showing. Inara's next to him. Simon never looks up from the
surgery as he talks.

TANAKA

From where?

INARA

Please, you need to conserve your
strength.

TANAKA

Answer.

SIMON

I told you the core.

TANAKA

Why here?

INARA

Commander.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

I'd never been off-planet before last year. I just wanted a chance to see more of the universe. To travel.

TANAKA

Persphone?

SIMON

I've visited many different worlds since then, Persephone might have been one of them.

TANAKA

(beat)

You're a liar, bad one. Will find out why.

SIMON

(looks right at him)

If you continue to talk and keep your adrenaline levels high, then it won't matter what you find out because you're going to bleed out and be dead.

Simon turns back to the surgery. But not before glancing over at River.

PUSH IN

On River telling her story to the children. She's smiling, enjoying herself.

RIVER

(sweetly sing-songy)

And then the beautiful princess got tired of waiting for her handsome prince and tried to escape, but they found her and to punish her they locked her in a smelly, white, cold room where the evil blue demons strapped electrodes to her face and started to shock her. Zap, zap, zap, until she couldn't stop screaming. Only no one could hear.

River's still smiling, the kids not so much. In fact, they're just a little bit freaked out by the story and by the freaky lady telling it.

31 INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - NIGHT

31

Mal and Zoe finish checking a weapons stash that's hidden in one of the secret compartments.

MAL

No one's gonna tell me what to do on my ship before I figure out what I'm gonna do.

ZOE

Then you know what you're gonna do?

They close up the compartment, stand up. Start walking toward the door.

MAL

No.

(beat)

But if we run we'll be flagged in the cortex and become sittin' ducks for any Alliance cruiser sailin' by.

They walk through the door into;

32 INT. SERENITY PASSENGER LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

32

They continue to talk as they pass the infirmary.

ZOE

Okay, then we don't run, which means we don't fight.

MAL

Yep.

ZOE

(bit frustrated)

Then we sit on our butts and let Declan fry? He's one of ours.

MAL

Thank you, Queen of the not helpful, I know that.

ZOE

Well, time's short and not that I don't enjoy watching you mull over a brilliant plan, sir, but --

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Hey, if you --

Mal stops. Looks at the door where they were keeping Azuria. It's wide open. He and Zoe look at each other.

MAL (cont'd)

<Crap!>

And start running up the stairs. Both pulling out their guns as they go. They end up in the;

33 INT. SERENITY REAR CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 33

Mal and Zoe race through that into;

34 INT. SERENITY DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 34

And stop quickly as they almost trip over an unconscious Jonah. Zoe bends down, examines him.

ZOE

Alive. But his gun's missing.

They stand, continue through the dining room into;

35 INT. SERENITY FORWARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 35

Mal and Zoe step by the open hatch where Declan is being held. The ladder is down. Mal, gun in his hand, slides down the ladder into;

36 INT. SERENITY SPARE CREW QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS 36

Mal lands, turns. But all is quiet. Zoe drops down behind him. Azuria's on the ground, eyes staring, neck broken, dead.

MAL

What?!?

A GROAN behind Mal. In the corner is Quillan, knocked out, starting to come around.

ZOE

Declan?

MAL

He's going for a shuttle. Check on Quillan. Tell Jayne to find the other yokel and sit on him.

(CONTINUED)

36

CONTINUED:

36

Mal starts climbing.

37 INT. SERENITY FORWARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS 37

Mal jumps up onto the foredeck, gun still out, races into the forward stairwell leading into;

38 INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS 38

And is HIT in the jaw right as he enters. He goes end over end down the stairwell, ending with a THUMP on the catwalk. His gun goes flying over the edge.

Mal stumbles to his feet. Above him Declan closes and LOCKS the door. Declan turns, has Jonah's gun at his side. Starts coming down the stairs.

DECLAN

Sorry about that, Sarge. Thought it was the fed.

MAL

(standing)

Sure. Not a problem. What the hell is going on?

DECLAN

That yokel tried to kill me.

MAL

That I can believe.

(rubbing his jaw)

Gotten a little better on the punches.

DECLAN

I've got to get out of here.

MAL

You didn't have to break his neck.

DECLAN

It was instinct, I swear.

MAL

Sure.

Mal moves toward Declan. Declan raises his gun a bit.

DECLAN

You do believe me, don't you, Sarge?

(CONTINUED)

Mal stops.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

39 INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

39

Declan still has his gun raised on Mal. Declan starts moving back on the catwalk toward the shuttle. Mal casually follows.

MAL

Sure, I believe you.

DECLAN

Just let me take the shuttle. You can tell the Alliance that I held a gun on you.

MAL

Which you happen to actually be doing.

DECLAN

Not by choice.

Mal leans back against the railing.

MAL

So, you did do it.

That stops Declan. Declan looks at Mal for a beat. Seems to calm, become stronger, tougher.

DECLAN

And if I did?

MAL

It was an Alliance factory. Why would I give a <baboon's fart> about that?

Declan isn't completely sold.

MAL (cont'd)

Course, am a bit pissed that your explosion almost took out my people. Hell, almost took out me.

DECLAN

Would've warned you if I'd known.

MAL

No you wouldn't have. Trained you better than that. Never take your eyes off the target.

(CONTINUED)

They hold a look. Declan finally relaxes.

DECLAN

God, Sarge. You had me a bit worried there.

Mal laughs, moves a little closer.

MAL

Should kick you on your ass for leaving me with a knocked out Alliance fed on my ship, though.

DECLAN

We could solve both our problems, drop her out an airlock, make a run for it.

MAL

That we could.

Mal casually touches one of the hanging chains.

MAL (cont'd)

Or we could not.

Declan looks at him and Mal SLAMS the chains into his face. Kicks the gun out of his hand. It falls over the side of the catwalk.

They stand facing each other. The chain swinging between them.

DECLAN

Guess this changes things.

MAL

Might.

DECLAN

You turnin' me in?

MAL

Thinkin' about it...

Declan starts inching toward the shuttle. Mal keeps pace.

DECLAN

It was an Alliance factory. Those gears are an essential part of a new line of military skiffs. You do remember what those skiffs did to our men on the field?

(CONTINUED)

MAL

But they're not using those skiffs on us anymore.

DECLAN

For now. But the next time a planet decides that maybe it would like to celebrate one of their own holidays, what do you think is going to happen? That the Alliance is going to say go ahead? Hey, we'll all bring cake.

MAL

But it wasn't just the factory you blew up.

DECLAN

Commander Tanaka is the top ranking official in this sector.

MAL

And all those people, children?

DECLAN

This is war. Acceptable casualties. You remember that, don't you, Sarge?

MAL

Isn't war when they're not shootin' at you. Then it's just plain murder.

Declan launches at Mal and Mal's only too happy to throw down with this guy. Mal takes a punch and then throws one.

They grapple on the catwalk. Slip to the ground. Rolling one way then the other, almost going over the sides.

DOWN BELOW

Zoe and Quillan race in through the door by the infirmary. Quillan pulls out her gun. Puts her sights on Declan. Zoe pushes Quillan's gun down.

ZOE

He needs to do this.

Quillan gets it, nods.

DECLAN

(CONTINUED)

head butts Mal. Mal grabs Declan by the shirt, tosses him over his head.

They both slowly stand, never taking eyes off each other.

DECLAN

What happened to the great Sgt.
Reynolds who had a cause, who
believed in one?

MAL

The war ended. We lost.

Mal and Declan launch again. It's nasty and messy. Declan lands a pretty vicious right hook and Mal stumbles back.

Mal grabs the hanging chains and pushing off the railing, he swings, kicks Declan in the chest.

Declan sails over the side of the railing. Lands on a pile of boxes, crushing them.

Mal looks over the side, Declan slightly stirs, out but alive. Mal wipes the blood off the side of his face.

TIGHT on Simon's exhausted face. His freaked out emotions.

TANAKA (O.S.)

I can always smell a liar. Trying
to save your sister, weren't you?

Simon furiously looks around. Seems like all the people are watching him. He keeps spinning back to the Alliance soldiers. They seem to be coming closer, closer.

TANAKA (O.S.) (cont'd)

Pathetic! You can't help her, you
can't even help yourself.

A hand reaches out, touches Simon on the shoulder, startling him out of his spin. It's Book.

BOOK

Son, you okay?

Simon looks down. Tanaka is dead, been dead for awhile. His eyes, lifeless, staring out. Simon takes a breath.

SIMON

I thought he was going to make it.
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)

There must have been another
blocked artery. It burst. He bled
to death.

Book reaches down. Closes Tanaka's eyes.

BOOK

I'm sure you did everything you
could, right?

But Simon doesn't answer. Book stares at him, worried.

BOOK (cont'd)

Right?

Stricken, Simon looks at Book.

SIMON

I don't know.

Beat. They both look up as the RUMBLE of the ships returning
is heard.

Mal and Quillan walk a handcuffed Declan down between them.
Quillan has a bandage on her forehead. The other two don't
look much better. No one says anything.

Quillan, Declan and Mal enter. Quillan hands Declan over to a
couple of Alliance soldiers, goes over to a table. A soldier
steps up. Hands her an envelope. She counts the money onto the
table.

QUILLAN

(to Mal)

I believe this is yours.

Mal comes over, scoops up the money, puts it in a leather
pouch. Tucks it into his jacket. Saying nothing, Mal turns to
go. Declan steps into his path.

DECLAN

We're fighting the just cause.
Independent thought, independent
dreams, independent lives. It's a
thing worth dying for.

Quillan steps over. Declan stares at Mal the whole time.

QUILLAN

Thanks. Don't think we need your mission statement.

DECLAN

Just repeating the words taught to me by the man who trained me.

Mal takes that dig. Quillan notices.

QUILLAN

(to soldiers)

Get him out of here.

Declan finally breaks eye contact as they drag him out. Mal turns to Quillan.

MAL

No words about you being right?

QUILLAN

Would it help if I did? Give you a reason to hit me, to hit something.

(beat)

I was right.

Mal walks out.

Jayne sits at the table sewing his turtle's neck. Zoe gets food from the bar by the kitchen. Kaylee walks in with Book.

KAYLEE

Not easy what you did, tellin' his family.

BOOK

Least I could do, losing both parents like that. It'll just take time.

KAYLEE

(quieter)

Heals all pain, right?

BOOK

Usually.

Book touches her on the shoulder, then moves toward the food. Kaylee sees Simon come in. Walks over to him. He's shaking his head, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

What's up, smilin' face?

SIMON

My sister. I haven't seen her this happy in a long time. It's almost like she used to be.

(shaking his head)

I guess she really enjoyed telling stories to those children. She even wanted to go back.

Kaylee follows him into the kitchen. Where he gets some coffee.

KAYLEE

Heard you were pretty amazin'

SIMON

(not looking up)

Not really.

KAYLEE

Doctor, no need to be all bashful and such. You should be proud, saving those lives.

Simon looks up, sees Book watching him. Inara steps over near them, getting coffee as well. Simon gleams onto her almost desperately.

SIMON

If you want to know amazing... you should've seen Inara. Stepping in with no training. Never flinching.

INARA

It was what needed to be done.

They share a smile that Kaylee notices. Zoe moves past them with two plates of food. Walks toward the bridge. Wash meets her at the doorway.

WASH

For me?

ZOE

Yeah.

Wash takes it.

(CONTINUED)

WASH

Thanks.
(checks Zoe out)
Everything okay?

ZOE

(maybe not quite so)
Sure.

Beat.

WASH

You know how I said people change?

ZOE

Yeah?

WASH

You didn't, haven't. You're still
about the moment, still about the
people, your people. Only this
time your people didn't deserve
you.

ZOE

(taking that in)
And that could've gotten the
Captain killed.

Wash isn't sure what to say to that.

JAYNE (O.S)

Hey! Looky who's here.

Mal's walked in on the other end of the kitchen. Jayne, still
with turtle, sits up.

JAYNE (cont'd)

You get it?

Mal pulls out the money pouch. Tosses it to Jayne.

MAL

Divide it up.

JAYNE

Ruttin' cool.

Jayne opens the pouch. Mal keeps on walking. Inara steps up to
him, sensing all is not right here.

INARA

Mal?

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Don't let me interrupt dinner.

He keeps on going. Nods to Zoe and Wash, and exits. Zoe looks at Wash. He motions to her with his head to follow Mal. She does;

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Zoe walks up right as Mal reaches the entrance to his quarters.

ZOE

Captain?

MAL

Yeah.

ZOE

You couldn't have known. Declan wasn't the man we served with. He changed.

MAL

(not looking up)

Guess we all have.

Mal kicks his door. The ladder drops with a THUD.

END OF SHOW