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Firefly

"Our Mrs. Reynolds"

Written by:

Joss Whedon

Directed by:

Vondie Curtis Hall

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FIREFLY

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"Our Mrs. Reynolds"

TEASER

1 EXT. RIVER IN WOODED GLADE - DAY

1

[NOTE: If a river is an impossibility, wagon in a glade will suffice. But water makes it cooler.]

A farmer in a broad-brimmed hat (Amish-ish) sits by his bonneted wife on the front of a flat boat. There's a pole that sticks out to one side harnessed to a team of two horses. The boat is covered with a tarp, almost covered-wagon style.

We see it from a distance, through the trees - and in the foreground, horses snort and paw. Someone else is watching as well.

A beat, and the riders - four of them - clear the woods and circle the boat (the river being shallow enough to ride in.) The men are bandits, the main one (BANDIT 1) facing the cowed couple.

BANDIT 1

Pardon me for intruding, but I believe y'all are carrying something of mine.

The Farmer doesn't lift his head, barely whispers:

FARMER

T'ain't your'n.

BANDIT 1

(pissed)
You talking words to me? You < steaming crap pile >, you gonna mouth off after what you done? Did you think we wouldn't find out you changed your route? You're gonna give us what due us and every damn thing else on that boat, and I think maybe you're gonna give me a little one-on-one time with the Mrs.

The Farmer lifts his head - it's JAYNE, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

1

CONTINUED:

1

JAYNE

You might wanna reconsider that last part. I married me a powerful ugly creature.

MAL looks up from under his bonnet, shocked.

MAL

How can you say that? How can you shame me in front of new people?

JAYNE

If I could make you prettier, I would.

MAL

You're not the man I met a year ago.

Over this is the extreme confusion of BANDIT 1, who finally gets pissed enough to go for his gun -

- and Mal and Jayne, in mid-spat, raise theirs first, targeting 1 and 2.

MAL

Think very hard. You been birddoggin' this township a while now, and they wouldn't mind a corpse of you. Now you could luxuriate in a nice jail cell but if your hand touches metal, I swear by my pretty floral bonnet I will end you. A beat. The Bandits all look to each other -

Bandit 4 in the back raises his rifle - and a shot from the covered boat knocks him off his horse.

Then everybody's firing, Mal and Jayne dropping 1 and 2 as ZOE dives from the wagon, dropping 3 as she hits the water.

Much falling, much splashing and --

2

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

2

Much celebration, the town gathered around a bonfire dancing, laughing... all the trimmings.

Mal walks through the celebration with INARA, who is dressed down (for her).

(CONTINUED)

MAL

We'll head for Beaumonde in the morning, give you a chance to do some work of your own.

INARA

I appreciate it. This place is lovely, but -

MAL

Not your clientele. I'm wise. You got to play at being a lady.

INARA

Well, yes. So explain to me again why Zoe wasn't in the dress?

MAL

Tactics, woman. I needed her covering the back. Besides, them soft cotton dresses feel kind of nice. There's a whole air flow.

INARA

And you would know that because...

MAL

You can't open the book of my life and jump in the middle. Like woman, I am a mystery

INARA

(laughing)

Best keep it that way. I withdraw the question.

MAL

Care to dance?

INARA

I've seen you dance.

(off his mock hurt)

Go enjoy yourself. You got hired to be a hero for once. It must be a nice change.

ANGLE ON JAYNE: he sits by the fire, drunk as a butter-churn, as a townspeople, ELDER GOMMEN, hands him a big wooden stick filled with beads, that sounds like rain when you turn it over.

(CONTINUED)

2

CONTINUED: (2)

2

ELDER GOMMEN

It makes the rain come when you turn it. The rain is scarce, and comes only when needed most. And such it is with men like you. Jayne's eyes fill with tears.

JAYNE

This is the most... you, friend. You're the guy.

He hugs the Elder hard.

JAYNE (cont'd)

I'll treasure this.

ANGLE ON: BOOK. He stands far off from the noise and light, by a sheet with four pairs of boots sticking out of it, silently reading last rites. Looks over and sees:

ANGLE: BOOK'S POV

Mal sits in a circle, next to Jayne. Book watches as a shyly pretty girl kneels before Mal and places a wreath on his head.

Book goes on with praying.

ANGLE: Mal - as the girl hands him a bowl of wine. Mal drinks and she smiles, moves off into the dance. Others draw Mal and Jayne into the dance as well, Mal finishing his wine sloppily and Jayne not letting go of his rainstick. Mal looks to Zoe, but she is making out with WASH like mad. These are three soused heroes.

Mal and Jayne join in the dance, noise and movement filling the frame, cutting to -

3

EXT./INT. SERENITY AIRLOCK/CARGO BAY - MORNING

3

The noise of the whirling engine coming to life - we pan from it to Mal and Elder Gommen on the ramp, as a couple of townsfolk load crates onto the ship.

MAL

Elder Gommen, thank you for your hospitality.

ELDER GOMMEN

We owe you a great debt. I'm sorry we have so little to pay it with. Though I hope our gifts will show our regard.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: 3

MAL
I don't think Jayne's ever letting
go of that stick.

Zoe runs up to Mal from inside, whispers in his ear:

ZOE
Alliance patrol boat is heading
into atmo right now.

Mal smiles at Elder Gommen as Zoe runs back up.

MAL
Well, we gotta fly. He steers him
off as Elder Gommen replies:

ELDER GOMMEN
We will pray for a safe voyage,
and hope to lay eyes on you again
'ere too long, my friend.

MAL
Count on it. Bye now.

He runs back up, the ramp closing on the still waving Elder.

4 EXT. SERENITY 4
As she takes off and heads up.

5 INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS 5
As Mal is squaring away the goods he comes upon -

MAL
Ahh!

- the girl from last night, huddled shyly in the corner
between various boxes. She wears the same potato-sack shift
she sported before, and sandals. And an expression of extreme
subservient fear. Her name, we will learn, is SAFFRON.

MAL
Who the hell are you?

SAFFRON
What do you mean?

MAL
I think I was pretty clear. What
are you doing on my boat?

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED:

5

SAFFRON

But you know! I'm to cleave to
you.

MAL

To wabba hoo? You can't be here.

SAFFRON

Did Elder Gommen not tell you...

MAL

Tell me what? Who are you?

SAFFRON

Mr. Reynolds, sir... I am your
wife.

We hold on his very stupid expression for a long, long time.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

6 INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

6

Mal is still looking dumb for a while. Finally:

MAL

Could you repeat that please?

SAFFRON

I'm your wife. That was your agreement with Elder Gommen, since he hadn't cash or livestock enough to -

MAL

I'm sorry. Go back to the part where you're my wife.

SAFFRON

(downcast)

I don't please you.

MAL

You can't please me. You've never met me.

Zoe and Jayne enter.

MAL

Zoe, why do I have a wife?

JAYNE

You got a wife?

ZOE

What's she doing here?

JAYNE

All I got was that dumb-ass stick that sounds like it's raining. How come you got a wife?

MAL

I didn't.
(to Saffron)
We're not married.

SAFFRON

I'm sorry if I shame you...

(CONTINUED)

MAL

You don't shame me! Zoe, get Wash down here.

ZOE

(hits comm)

This is Zoe. We need all personnel in the cargo bay.

MAL

All -- I said Wash!

ZOE

Captain. everyone should have a chance to congratulate you on your day of bliss.

MAL

There's no bliss! I don't know this girl.

JAYNE

Then can I know her?

ZOE

(tough)

Jayne...

(sensitive)

Don't sully this.

MAL

Zoe, you are gonna be cleaning the latrine with your face, you don't cut that out.

Everyone is in now.

BOOK

Who's the new recruit?

ZOE

Everybody, I want you to meet Mrs. Reynolds.

ANGLE ON: INARA

True pain crosses her face.

KAYLEE

(excited)

You got married?!

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Well, that's -- congratulations...

WASH

We always hoped you two kids would get together. Who is she?

MAL

She's no one!

Saffron starts to cry.

KAYLEE

Captain!

MAL

(at a loss)
Stop that.

SAFFRON

I'm, sorry...

WASH

You brute.

Kaylee goes up to Saffron --

KAYLEE

Oh, sweetie, don't feel bad. He makes everybody cry. He's like a monster.

MAL

I'm not a monster! Wash, turn the ship around.

BOOK

(to Simon)
Have you got an encyclopedia?

SIMON

< Of course. >

He goes off. Wash and Mal are still talking throughout:

WASH

Can't.

MAL

That's an order.

WASH

Yeah, but can't.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

What the hell is wrong w --

WASH

Alliance touched down the second we left. And there's already a bulletin on the cortex as to the murder of a prefect's nephew - that's right, one of our bandits had some family ties. So unless you feel like walking into a gallows, I suggest we continue on to Beaumonde and you enjoy your honeymoon.

MAL

This isn't happening.

(to Saffron)

Will you stop crying?

INARA

Oh, for god's sake, Mal, can you be a human being for thirty seconds?

WASH

Speaking as one married man to a another...

MAL

I am not married!

(to Saffron)

I'm sorry. You don't shame me, you have very nice qualities but I didn't ever marry you.

BOOK

(holding encyclopedia)

I believe you did. Last night. Mal hesitates. As does everyone

MAL

(to Jayne, quiet)

How drunk was I last night?

JAYNE

I don't know. I passed out.

BOOK

It says here, the woman lays the wreath upon her intended - which I do recall - which represents his sovereignty.

(CONTINUED)

6

CONTINUED: (4)

6

MAL
(to Saffron)
That was you?

BOOK
And he drinks of her wine. This represents his obeisance to the life - giving blood of her -- I'll skip this part and then there's a dance, with a joining of hands.

(closes book)
The marriage ceremony of the Triumph settlers, been so over eighty years. You, sir, are a newlywed. A beat.

MAL
So what does it say in there about divorce?

Saffron runs from the room, to the infirmary.

KAYLEE
< You don't deserve her, you fink.
>

MAL
< Mind your own business. >
(starts after her)
Everyone go back to... whatever.

ZOE
Really think you're the one to talk to her, sir?

MAL
Way I see it, me and her got a thing in common. We're the only ones who don't think this is funny.

His words ring true, and he storms out, passing Inara last, who doesn't particularly feel like laughing either.

7

INT. PASSENGER DORM - CONTINUOUS

7

Mal enters, finds no one. A quick look --

MAL
Hello? Woman-person? He starts up the stairs.

8 INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

8

Mal enters, finds Saffron huddled in the corner. She has been crying, but has stopped.

MAL
You all right?

SAFFRON
I thought last night during the ceremony... you were pleased.

MAL
Well, yeah, last night I was. I had some mulled wine, pretty girl gave me a hat made out of a tree, nobody said I was signing up to have and to hold...

SAFFRON
You don't have marriage where you're from?

MAL
Well, sure, we just... we do it different.

Awkward beat.

SAFFRON
Are you going to kill me?

MAL
What? What kind of crappy planet is that? Kill you?

SAFFRON
In the maiden's home, I heard talk of men who weren't pleased with their brides, who...

MAL
Well I ain't them. And don't you ever stand for that sort of thing. Someone tries to kill you, you try to kill 'em right back. Wife or no, you're no one's property to be tossed aside. You got the right same as anyone to live and to try to kill people. I mean, you know. People that are... That's a dumb planet.

(CONTINUED)

SAFFRON

What will you do with me?

MAL

Not rightly sure. We're bound for Beaumonde, it's a decent kind of planet... might be able to set you up with some sorta work...

SAFFRON

I'll not be anyone's doxy.

MAL

I don't mean whoring, there's ... factories and the like. Some ranches, if you're more for the outdoors... I don't know - near a week before we get there, we'll figure something.

A small beat.

SAFFRON

I'd be a good wife.

MAL

Well, I'd be a terrible husband. You got five whole days to figure that out.

SAFFRON

Five days, we'll be together?

MAL

We'll be together on the ship, not in any --

She stands, visibly cheered.

SAFFRON

That'll be fine. I'll do for you or not, as you choose.

MAL

Well, shiny. You hungry? Kitchen's just through there. And she slips by him, excited.

SAFFRON

I'll cook you something!

MAL

No, I meant if you --

(CONTINUED)

SAFFRON

I'm a fine cook, everyone says.

MAL

Yeah, but --
(She's down the hall)
She turns.

MAL

I ain't ever even --

SAFFRON

(smiling)
My name is Saffron.

And she goes. He stands there, bemused. Book appears from the infirmary hall. He has seen that nice moment between the two.

BOOK

Divorce is very rare and requires dispensation from her pastor. I can send him a wave, see what I can do.

MAL

I'd appreciate it. She's a nice girl.

BOOK

Seems very anxious to please you.

MAL

That's their way, I guess.

BOOK

(bright, casual)
I suppose so. If you take sexual advantage of her, you're going to burn in a very special level of hell. A level they reserve for child molesters and people who talk at the theater.

MAL

Wha - I'm not - Preacher, you got a smutty mind.

BOOK

Perhaps I spoke out of turn.

MAL

Per maybe haps, I'm thinking.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (3)

8

BOOK

I apologize. I'll make her up a room in the passenger dorm.

MAL

Good.

Book goes back. A beat and his head pops back in:

BOOK

A special hell...

And he's gone again. Mal sighs.

9 INT. DINING ROOM

9

Mal sits as Saffron places a plate in front of him, mostly mush (and a few bao), but well presented and aromatic.

MAL

Thank you.

Zoe and Wash enter as he tucks in.

WASH

Something smells good...

ZOE

Having yourself a little supper, Captain?

MAL

Well, Saffron insisted on... I didn't want to make her feel... it's damn tasty.

He can't figure out who to be careful around - so he just starts shoveling it in.

WASH

Any more where that came from?

SAFFRON

(downcast)

I didn't think to make enough for your friends.

(to Zoe)

But I've everything laid out if you'd like to cook for your husband...

(CONTINUED)

Wash looks at Zoe for a microsecond of hope - her eyes narrow - and he laughs overcompensationally.

WASH

Ta-ha-ha-- Isn't she quaint? I'm just not hungry.

He sits, Zoe sitting as well. Her hilarious mood has abated. Saffron retires to the pantry.

ZOE

So, are you enjoying your own nubile little slave girl?

MAL

(mouth full)

I'm not... nubile...

(swallows)

Look, she wanted to make me dinner. At least she's not crying...

WASH

I might. Did she really make fresh bao?

(off Zoe's glare)

Quaint!

ZOE

Remember that sex we were planning to have ever again?

MAL

Y'all are making a big deal and I would appreciate it if one person on this boat did not assume I was an evil, lecherous hump.

ZOE

Nobody's saying that, sir.

WASH

Yeah, we're mostly just giving each other significant glances and laughing incessantly.

(to Mal)

Is that cider?

MAL

(finishing his)

By the stove.

(CONTINUED)

9

CONTINUED: (2)

9

WASH
(going for Mal's glass)
Yum. I'll give you a refill.
(to Zoe)
Hon?

Saffron is suddenly in the frame, grabbing Mal's glass from Wash.

SAFFRON
That's for me to do.

She fills Mal's glass, places it by him. Everyone is quiet and uncomfortable as she stands by Mal, waiting for him to continue eating.

MAL
You know, you weren't lying about your cooking. If I hadn't just eaten...

SAFFRON
You don't want to finish.

MAL
No, I just, I have captain-y stuff I have to do, but truthfully, that's a fine meal. Thank you. He rises.

SAFFRON
Do you need anything else?

MAL
(rising)
No, no. You just, you eat something yourself, I'm gonna go... captain.

SAFFRON
If you're done with supper, would you like me to wash your feet?

There is a pause. Mal exits.

Saffron goes back into the kitchen. A moment and Wash grabs Mal's plate, digging in. Zoe goes for it as well, elbowing in with a fork.

10

EXT. SHIP - LATER

10

Through the space she floaty.

11 INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - LATER

11

Inara is working her screen, talking to it as the graphics change accordingly.

INARA
Beaumonde, City of New Dunsmuir.
Arrival, October 24, Departure...
Mal comes to the door.

MAL
Can I come in?

INARA
(touches screen to
deactivate voice command)
No.

He does anyway.

MAL
See, that's why I usually don't
ask.

INARA
What do you want?

MAL
I just needed to, um... hide.

INARA
So I take it the honeymoon is
over?

MAL
She's a fine girl, don't misread -
hell of a cook too.

INARA
(pointedly)
I'm sure she has many exciting
talents.

MAL
Do you ever, um, wash your
client's feet?

INARA
(no)
It's my specialty. We'll be on
Beaumonde at least two weeks,
right?

(CONTINUED)

11

CONTINUED:

11

MAL

Can't be exactly sure, but --

INARA

Well, I need you to be exactly sure, Mal, I can't make commitments and then not keep them. That's your specialty.

MAL

I'm sorry. Are you tetchy 'cause I got myself a bride or 'cause I don't plan to keep her?

INARA

I find the whole thing degrading.

MAL

That's just what Saffron said about your line of work.

INARA

Maybe you should think twice about letting go of "Saffron". You two sound like quite a match.

MAL

Maybe you're right. Maybe we're soulmates.

INARA

Yes. Great. I wish you hundreds of fat children.

MAL

(laughing fondly)

Can you imagine that? Me with a passel of critters underfoot? Ten years time, I could teach 'em to --

INARA

(standing)

Can you leave me alone for five minutes please?

Mal is surprised by the force of her outburst. He exits.

12

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

12

He calls back as he goes:

(CONTINUED)

12

CONTINUED:

12

MAL

I wasn't looking for a fight...

Turns and sees Jayne standing with meanest looking future
shotgun imaginable. He cocks it, stonefaced.

MAL

I always do seem to find one,
though...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

13 INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

13

JAYNE

Do I have your attention?

MAL

We're kind of going to extremes here, ain't we?

JAYNE

There's times I think you don't take me seriously. And I think that oughta change.

MAL

Do you think it's likely to?

JAYNE

You got something you don't deserve.

MAL

And it's brought me a galaxy a'fun I'm here to tell you.

JAYNE

Six men came to kill me one time, and the best of them carried this. It's a Callahan fullbore autolock, customized trigger and double cartridge thorough-gage.

He holds it out to Mal.

JAYNE (cont'd)

It's my very favorite gun.

MAL

<The explosive diarrhea of an elephant>, are you offering me a trade?

JAYNE

A trade? Hell, it's theft! This is the best gun made by man, and its got extreme sentimental value! It's miles more worthy'n what you got.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

"What I got" - she has a name.

JAYNE

So does this! I call it Vera.

MAL

Well, my days of not taking you seriously are certainly coming to a middle.

JAYNE

Dammit, Mal, I'd treat her okay...

MAL

She's not to be bought. Nor bartered, nor borrowed or lent. She's a human woman, doesn't know a damn thing about the world and needs our protection.

JAYNE

I'll protect her!

MAL

Jayne! Go play with your rainstick.

Mal heads downstairs. Jayne clearly not letting it go, but heading back up to his quarters.

Mal comes to ground level and runs into Saffron - he jumps a bit.

MAL

Gah! You do sneak about, don't you.

SAFFRON

You're a good man.

MAL

You clearly haven't been talking to anyone else on this boat...

SAFFRON

I don't wish to be wed to the large one. I'd rather... if I'm not to be yours, I'd rather have that work you spoke of. I could be useful on a ranch.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

That's good work. My momma had a ranch, back on Shadow where I'm from. Ran cattle, mostly - wasn't nobody ran 'em harder or smarter. Used to tell me, don't brand the cattle, brand the buyer - he's the one likely to stray.

SAFFRON

She raised you herself?

MAL

Well, her and about 40 hands. I had more family for a kid who -

He stops looking at her.

MAL (CONT'D)

Well, that is odd.

SAFFRON

What?

MAL

I just don't - I'm not one talks about his past. And here you got me...

SAFFRON

Does your crew never show interest in your life?

MAL

No, they're, they're... They just know me well enough to... What about you? What's your history?

SAFFRON

Not much to say. Life like yours, I fear you'd find mine terrible dull.

MAL

Oh, I long for a little dullness. Truth to say, this whole trip is getting to be just a little too interesting.

14 EXT. SPACE 14

Serenity passes a small (tiny) cracked moon. Zoom in to see a device webbed about the surface of the moon, with a dozen tiny camera faces all firing flashes one after another.

ANGLE: A COMPUTER

As a 3D image forms (fed by the camera's info) of Serenity. Pull back to:

15 INT. CHOP SHOP OFFICE 15

As two men, CORBIN and BREED, look at the screen. They are clearly disreputable, their outfits as hodge-podge and junky as the room they're in. Corbin is tough, strong, in charge. Breed is seedier, but also not to be underestimated. Bad guys.

BREED

It's a wreck.

CORBIN

No, no. This is good.

BREED

It's parts. A lot of cheap parts we'll never unload.

CORBIN

This is why you'll never be in charge, Breed. You don't see the whole. The parts are crap -

BREED

I said exactly that -

CORBIN

- but you put'em together, you got a firefly. Thing will run forever, they got a mechanic even half awake.

BREED

It's got no flash...

CORBIN

Some people ain't looking for flash. She's a good catch. She comes our way, you prep the nets.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 15

BREED

Lotta effort we're going through here... hoped we'd hit a t-bird, at least.

CORBIN

Just keep complaining. The sound is soothing. He's on his way out.

BREED

Kill the crew?

CORBIN

Save me the pretty ones. You know the drill.

IF POSSIBLE - This entire talk has been one slow pull-out from the screen, and now pull-out further, through the window to see:

16 EXT. SPACE - FLOATING CHOP SHOP - CONT. 16

Which is basically a giant floating ring - The office sits on top like a giant crab, the rest of the ring made up of connecting tunnels and chambers, and mostly by ships and parts of ships. Some gleam enticingly, some are cannibalized. Electricity crackles silently along the rim, fired up at six key points (this, we will see, forms the net). Ten Serenities could pass through the ring at once.

A flash of electricity flares out to:

17 OMITTED 17

18 INT. ROOM/PASSENGER DORM - LATER 18

Book is making up a room for Saffron, making the bed. He finishes smoothing it out, admires his work. We hold a still, wide frame as River enters and pulls the bed apart quickly and calmly and exits again, taking the pillow. Book sighs, starts out after River.

Simon is coming the other way, interrupts River. She takes him by the hand, turns back to Book.

SIMON

What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

BOOK

Seems River doesn't want me making up a bed for our young guest. Or she's starting a pillow collection. I'm still collating data.

SIMON

I'm sorry. I'll take care of the room -

RIVER

It's not important!
(to Simon)
Tell him.

SIMON

Tell him what?

RIVER

(to Book)
We want you to marry us.

SIMON

What? We - no! What?

RIVER

Two by two. Everyone has a mate, a match, a dopple. I love you.

SIMON

No, River, mei-mei. of course I love you too, but we can't be married.

(to Book, mortified)

She's... really crazy. River kicks him in the shin.

SIMON

OW! I don't mean crazy - that's just not something brothers and sisters do. I mean on some planets, but only pretty bad ones.

RIVER

The captain took a wife...

BOOK

Well, that's also complicated.

SIMON

I don't know where this is coming from...

(CONTINUED)

RIVER

We'll take care of each other.
I'll knit. You don't love me. Mal
enters with Saffron.

MAL

What's going on?

SIMON

I really couldn't say.

MAL

I was gonna show Saffron her
quarters, did they get squared
away?

BOOK

Once upon a time...

SAFFRON

I don't need anything, I'm really
just fine -

RIVER

(turning)

You're a thief.

Slight beat as Saffron recoils from River's accusation. Book notices that she shrinks a bit toward Mal, who puts a protective hand to her back.

MAL

Well, ho, let's play nice here.
(to Simon)
Your sister's got some funny
notions.

SIMON

That's not untrue.

SAFFRON

I'm sorry...

They all turn to her, surprised, as she pulls a packet of food from her dress pocket. River responds by stuffing her pillow under her shirt.

SAFFRON

(handing the packet to
Mal)

I didn't know when I was to be
fed, and I was afraid...

(CONTINUED)

MAL

You made that fine meal, didn't eat nothing yourself?

SAFFRON

That was for you. Weren't but pot lickings left, so I took this for later, I didn't know she saw me.

RIVER

(to herself)

Didn't see you...

BOOK

Well, there's certainly no harm done...

MAL

(forcefully)

And I'd say there is. Good deal a'harm, and its starting to tick me off.

Saffron is frightened, and Mal turns her to him.

MAL (cont'd)

Now, I got no use for people sneak around taking what ain't theirs.

BOOK

(wryly)

Yes, we frown on that here.

MAL

But what I got even less use for is a woman won't stand up for herself. Five days hence we're puttin' you in the world, and you won't last a day by bowing and sniffing for handouts. You want something, you take it, or ask for it. You don't wait to be told when to breathe, you don't take orders from anyone. Except me - and that's just 'cause I'm the captain, and people take orders from captains even in the world. But for the rest, damnit, be like a woman is. Not no petrified child.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (4) 18

MAL (cont'd)

There's more'n seventy little
earth's spinning about the galaxy,
and the meek have inherited not a
one. Do you understand what I'm
saying to you?

SAFFRON

(with quiet strength)

I do.

He tosses the food back to her. Looks to Book.

MAL

Shepherd, would you show Saffron
her room please?

Mal exits, Book leading Saffron the other way. Simon is left
with pillow-belly River.

RIVER

Now we have to be married.
(hands on belly)
I'm in the family way.

Simon cannot think of a response.

ZOE (V.O.)

She's clearly out of her mind.

19 INT. BRIDGE - LATER 19

Zoe and Wash in mid-conversation.

WASH

Well, she's led a sheltered life.

ZOE

Did you see the way she grabbed
that glass from you?

WASH

Every planet's got its own weird
customs. 'Bout a year before we
met, I spent six weeks on a moon
where the principal form of
recreation was juggling geese. My
hand to God. Baby geese. Goslings.
They were juggled.

ZOE

Of course the man rushes in to
defend her...

(CONTINUED)

19

CONTINUED:

19

WASH

(huh?)

I'm talking about geese.

ZOE

Captain shouldn't be baby-sitting
a damn groupie. And he knows it.

WASH

Okay, when did this become not
funny?

ZOE

When you didn't turn around and
put her ass back down on Triumph
where it belongs.

WASH

Oh, hey, now it's even my fault!
Is there anything else on your
mind I should know about? There's
all sorts of twists and cul-de-
sacs, it's wild.

ZOE

She's trouble

WASH

I'm getting that.

ZOE

I'm going to bed.

She exits.

WASH

I'm gonna stay here, where it's
safe and quiet, and I'm gonna play
with some of these dials and
stuff.

He's watching her go, confused and unhappy.

WASH (cont'd)

I might, you know, steer. She's
long gone. He spins back around.

20

INT. JAYNE'S ROOM - LATER

20

Jayne sits on his bed, unhappily turning his rainstick over
and listening to it.

21 INT. FOREDECK HALL - NIGHTPHASE 21

It's empty as Mal starts down his ladder, we follow him into:

22 INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 22

Mal enters, pulls off his shirt. Tosses it in the corner, turning to see:

ANGLE: IN THE BED is Saffron. She is quiet, a bit apprehensive and more than a bit naked.

MAL

(jumps)

Wah! Yo - hey. You're, um... well, there you are

SAFFRON

I've made the bed warm for you.

MAL

It, uh, looks warm.

SAFFRON

And I've... made myself ready for you.

MAL

Let's ride right past the part where you explain exactly what that means. Didn't you see you got a room of your own?

SAFFRON

And... I'm to sleep there?

MAL

That's the notion. Assuming you're, yeah, sleepy...

SAFFRON

But we've been wed. Aren't we to become one flesh?

She is soo insouciantly sexy. Mal looks up where his shipmates would be, resolve wavering...

MAL

Well, no, I think we're still two fleshes here. And that your flesh oughta sleep somewhere else.

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED:

22

SAFFRON

I'm sorry. When we talked, I'd hoped... but I don't please you.

She says it shamefacedly, the covers slipping down as she sits naked before him.

MAL

Hey! flesh! Look Saffron, it ain't a question of pleasing me. It's a question of what's... uh... morally right.

SAFFRON

I do know my bible, sir. "On the night of their betrothal, the wife shall open to the man, as the furrow to the plough, and he shall work in her, in and again, 'till she bring him to his fall, and rest him then upon the sweat of her breast."

Beat.

MAL

Whoa. Good bible.

SAFFRON

I'm not skilled, sir, nor a pleasure to look upon, but -

MAL

Saffron. You're pleasing. You're... hell, you're all kinds of pleasing and it's been a while... a long damn while since anybody but me took a hold a'my plough so don't think for a second that I ain't interested. But you and me, we ain't married. Just 'cause you got handed to me by some < bastard > couldn't pay his debts, don't make you beholden to me. I keep trying to explain -

SAFFRON

Let me explain.

(he waits, surprised at the grown up tone)

I lived my life in the maiden house, waiting to be married off for trade.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2) 22

SAFFRON (cont'd)

I seen my sisteren paired off with ugly men, vicious or blubberous, men with appetites too unseemly to speak on. And I've cried for those girls, but not half so hard as I cried the night they gave me to you.

MAL

(suddenly insecure)

Well, what - you - is there blubber?

SAFFRON

I cried for I'd not dreamed to have a man so sweet, so kind and beautiful. Had I date to choose, I'd choose you from all the men on all the planets the night sky could show me.

She stands getting close to him.

SAFFRON (cont'd)

If I'm wed, I'm a woman and I'll take your leave to be bold. I want this. I swell to think of you in me, and I see you do too.

Mal looks down, embarrassed.

MAL

Well, that's just...

SAFFRON

Leave me at the nearest port, never look on me again, I'll make my way with the strength you've taught me... only let me have my wedding night.

They're inches apart. He's dying.

MAL

(looking up at the door)

I'm gonna go to the special hell...

She kisses him, slowly and sweetly. He pulls away, his face still close to hers, sad resolve in his eyes.

MAL (cont'd)

I really wish it was that simple, girl. But I just -

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED: (3)

22

She kisses him again, and he gives massively in, putting his arms around her, their tongues intermingling...

He takes a step back, confusion on his face. Puts a hand to his lips.

MAL

Son of a -

He is already stumbling as he goes for his gun - it drops to the ground with the same lifeless thud as he does.

She looks at him a moment as he snores. The expression on her face, one we've not seen before, is sly triumph.

SAFFRON

Night, sweetie.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

23 INT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

23

Wash pilots alone. Saffron enters, tentatively - all shy girl (and dressed) again. Wash hears, turns -

WASH

Well, if it isn't the master chef.
Not sleepy?

SAFFRON

Am I let to be up here?

WASH

Well, sure, why not. Not like
anyone else is taking up space.

She enters, eyes on the window.

SAFFRON

I've never been off world before.

WASH

Beautiful, isn't it? Endless. You
stare at it long enough, as long
as I have, it becomes almost...
preternaturally boring.

SAFFRON

(brow furrowed)

I don't think you're serious.

WASH

(smiling)

'Bout half. You stop seein'em
after a spell, but they are your
very first charts. Time and again,
you look up from your screens and
remember that.

SAFFRON

It's like a dream.

WASH

Planet I'm from, you couldn't see
a one, pollution's so thick.
Sometimes I think I entered flight
school just so I could see what
the hell everyone was talking
about.

(CONTINUED)

23

CONTINUED:

23

She smiles at him, her warmth enfolding his sweet reminiscence. A beat, and she moves to the door, quietly shuts it.

WASH

What are you doing?

She moves to the middle of the room, stands there, almost trance-like.

SAFFRON

Now we're alone. Us and the stars.
No ship, no bellowing engines or
crew to bicker at each other...
look. Come look...

He's hesitant, but comes to stand next to her. They stare out at the brilliant black

SAFFRON

Do you know the myth about Earth-
that- was?

He can feel her closeness, her excitement - tries to be cool amidst the hard-on.

WASH

Not so much.

SAFFRON

That when she was born, she had no sky, and she was open, inviting and the stars would rush into her, through the skin of her, making the oceans boil with sensation, and when she could endure no more ecstasy, she puffed up her cheeks and blew out the sky, to womb her and keep them at bay, 'til she had rest some, and that we had to leave 'cause she was strong enough to suck them in once more. Beat.

WASH

Whoa. Good myth.

She turns to him, eyes nearly moist with pleading.

SAFFRON

My whole life, I saw nothing but roofs and steeples and the cellar door. Few days I'll be back to that life and gone from yours.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (2) 23

SAFFRON (cont'd)
Make this night what it should be.
Please...

Her face is inches from his.

SAFFRON (cont'd)
Show me the stars.

They're practically touching and she moves to kiss him, but he pulls away at the last minute.

WASH
< Holy mother of god and all her
wacky Nephews > do I wish I was
somebody else right now. Somebody
not married, not madly in love
with a beautiful woman who can
kill me with her pinky.

SAFFRON
I've been too forward.

WASH
No. Well, yes. But I actually like
that in a woman. That's part of
why Zoe and I are, as previously
mentioned, married.

SAFFRON
I thought... she didn't seem to
respect you.

WASH
Not everybody gets me and Zoe at
first glance. Did it get very hot
in here? I need airflow. He moves
to the door. She stops him with...

SAFFRON
You love her very much.

WASH
Yeah.

He turns to open the door. Saffron rolls her eyes with bored exasperation as he continues heading for the door -

WASH (cont'd)
I never did meet a woman quite
like her. The first time we -

And Saffron sidekicks him in the back of the head, slamming his face into the door. He slides down, unconscious.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED: (3) 23

She pulls the door open, drags the body into the space before the stairs, hidden off to the side from view. Shuts the door again, locking it.

She moves to the console, hits the screens, working the nav like an expert. We see the course setting come up on the screen, see her change the coordinates and lock them in. Hits another screen and opens a channel to signal the new destination of arrival.

Just as swiftly and expressionlessly, she slides under the console, chooses a few wires and rips them out, sparks flying. Crosses a couple of others (we see the nav screens wink out) and she's up, back at the door, opens it, looking to see if she's alone.

She reaches under her dress and pulls a strip of tape from the hem, sticks it on the interior lock of the door and pulls off a layer, which causes a bubbling not unlike the burning glue of the pilot. As the lock begins to melt and fuse she slams the door shut, locking herself out of the bridge.

24 INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER 24

She comes down the stairs, gets her bearings straight for a sec, then heads to the second shuttle. Opens the door and runs smack into:

INARA.

SAFFRON

Oh!

INARA

Are you lost?

Instantly she's subservient Saffron again, looking down. She backs up as Inara comes down a few stairs.

SAFFRON

I'm sorry. I thought the other shuttle was yours.

INARA

It is. I was on the cortex and my screen shorted. This one's out too.

SAFFRON

Looking for customers?

(CONTINUED)

INARA

What were you looking for?

SAFFRON

I don't mean to be rude... A companion's life is so glamorous and strange... I wish I had the skill for such a trade...

By God, she's moving from subservient to seductive...

INARA

You'd like to please your new husband.

SAFFRON

Oh, he'll have none of me... For true I'm somewhat relieved... if I'm to learn of love, I'd want it to be at the hands of someone gentle... someone who could... feel... what I feel...

Their faces are close. Inara is as intimate in tone as Saffron:

INARA

But Mal said... you don't approve of my work...

SAFFRON

Sure and he said that to keep you from me... I was too curious about you, ever since I saw you... They are face to face.

INARA

Come to my shuttle.

SAFFRON

You would... you would lie with me?

The alarm goes off, red lights spinning - Saffron looks around in innocent alarm, looks back to Inara, who drops the act.

INARA

I guess we've lied enough.

Saffron drops the act as well.

SAFFRON

You're good.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2) 24

INARA
You're amazing. Who are you?

SAFFRON
I'm Malcolm Reynold's widow.

All the color drains from Inara's face. (okay, not all the color, she's from Future-Brazil so she still has a hue, but she's upset, okay?)

Saffron punches, hard but Inara blocks - a spinning kick from Saffron and Inara rolls out of the way, Saffron moving to the shuttle and slamming the door behind her.

Inara is on her feet in a heartbeat, racing toward the foredeck hall...

25 INT. COCKPIT OF 2ND SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS 25

Saffron pulls some chips from her dress and inserts them into the console, brings the shuttle to life.

26 EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUOUS 26

As the shuttle takes off and heads the opposite way.

27 INT. FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUOUS 27

Inara comes in as Zoe is at the entrance to the bridge, holding a dazed Wash. Jayne is trying to open the bridge door (it won't budge) as Kaylee is coming sleepily up out of her room. They all overlap:

ZOE
Baby wake up... He's bleeding...

JAYNE
There's nobody in there -

KAYLEE
What's going on?

Inara ignores them all, slams Mal's ladder in and drops down as fast as she can -

28 INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS 28

She finds Mal draped like the dead on the floor, rushes to him, fearing the worst -

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: 28

INARA
Mal Mal Mal Mal -

She goes down, pulls up his head - and he moans - still alive. Unwanted wetness springs into her eyes as she gasps, relieved -

INARA (cont'd)
<Merciful buddha...>

And she kisses him, once, hard, then holds him to her, collecting herself - laying him back down and heading to the ladder as she calls out to above:

INARA (cont'd)
Get the doctor! Mal's hurt...
he...

She starts to sag. Puts a finger to her lips, recognizing the taste - she turns to Mal, scorn in her drooping eyes...

INARA (cont'd)
Oh, you stupid son of a -

And she collapses, unconscious, out of the frame.

BLACKOUT AND

FADE UP ON:

29 INT. - SAME - LATER 29

Fuzzy close on Mal awakening. Gets more focus as he looks about him, blinking.

MAL
Is it christmas?

Reverse angle: The entire gang (minus River, Jayne and Kaylee) is staring at him. Simon closest, with his doctor bag, and Inara on his bed propped up like a rag doll.

SIMON
Well, he's back...

ZOE
Yes, sir, it's christmas. That special night when Nick the Saint comes down your chimney, changes your course, blows out the navcom, seals the bridge and takes off in your shuttle.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

What happened about me...?

ZOE

Your blushing bride was a plant.

(re: him and Wash)

She took both of you out.

MAL

How did...

SIMON

A narcotic compound, probably
spread over a seal on her lips.
You get it on yours and pow.

ZOE

Lips, huh?

MAL

Well, no...

SIMON

We used to get a lotta guys
brought in on the night shift at
the E.R. - usually robbed and very
groggy. Called it the "goodnight
kiss".

ZOE

So you two were kissing.

BOOK

(pointedly, to Mal)

Well, isn't that special...?

MAL

(trying to change the
focus)

Wash? How did -

WASH

Hey, I just got kicked in the
head.

ZOE

My man would never fall for that <
cheap floozy >.

WASH

Most of my head wishes I had.

(CONTINUED)

29

CONTINUED: (2)

29

MAL

You guys don't understand...

BOOK

Seems pretty simple from here. You were taking advantage of a -

MAL

(standing clumsily)

I was the one being taken advantage of!

BOOK

My apologies, you were victimized, Wash was beaten and Inara found you here.

INARA

(defensively slurred and sleepy)

And then I fell. My head got hurt like Wash.

MAL

I don't get any of this.

INARA

I only fell is all.

MAL

What the hell is our status?

ZOE

We're shut down. Jayne and Kaylee are still trying to get us on the bridge.

WASH

All we know is we're headed somewhere and it ain't Beaumonde.

Mal starts up the stairs, the others following. Hold on Inara, who says to Simon...

INARA

I'm fine. I don't need to be examined. I'm comfy.

30

INT. HALL CONTINUOUS

30

As Mal and everyone files up (save Simon and Inara) to see Jayne firing up a blowtorch. Kaylee explains -

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED:

30

KAYLEE

She didn't just lock it, she fused it to something. Both entrances.

MAL

Why the big act? What the hell was she after?

BOOK

Besides molesting innocent captains?

MAL

You wanna stow it, preacher? We're in some peril here.

ZOE

If she can fly this thing why just take the shuttle?

Simon is entering as well as:

WASH

Maybe she likes shuttles.
(Off Mal's look)
Some people juggle geese...

RIVER

I told you.

They look at her.

RIVER

She's a thief.

A beat.

ANGLE: THE DOOR

As Jayne pulls it open

31

INT. BRIDGE - LATER

31

Kaylee and Wash are lying side by side under the console, looking up at the wiring.

KAYLEE

She's a pro.

(CONTINUED)

31

CONTINUED:

31

WASH

This is a masterful job of muck-up. See how she crossed the drive feeds --

KAYLEE

Yeah huh --

WASH

So we even try to reroute it'll lock down. < brilliant >.

KAYLEE

And she went straight for the thermal cap!

WASH

Yeah yeah! We are so humped!

They're starting to admire it -- a bit too much for Mal to take. He stands there with everyone else, waiting.

MAL

I'm glad you two are having a good time under there, you wanna progress to the making it right? They poke their heads out.

WASH

That's not gonna happen for a good long while, Cap'n

MAL

We don't have a good long while. We could be headed straight into a nice big solid moon for all we know so hows about you get to work?

KAYLEE

Hey! You're the one whose big make-out session got us into this, sir.

MAL

I was poisoned!

INARA

You were drugged.

JAYNE

That's why I never kiss 'em on the mouth.

(CONTINUED)

There is a moment for everyone's extreme silent horror.

MAL

Well, what CAN you do?

WASH

Give us some time we could get the cortex and navcom back on line, at least see where we're headed.

MAL

That's fine, except for the part where I give you some time. What about steering?

INARA

What about stopping?

WASH

She humped us hard. We're gonna have to do a lot of --

MAL

Do it. It doesn't help me to see where I'm going if I can't change course.

KAYLEE

The girl really knows her ships.

INARA

That's not all she knows. She's well schooled.

SIMON

You mean the sedative? The Goodnight Kiss?

INARA

I only hit my head but Mal... went through that but no, I mean seduction, body language, signals... she had training. As in Companion, as in Academy.

BOOK

Our little Saffron's quite a wonder. I'm beginning to think she married beneath herself.

(CONTINUED)

31

CONTINUED: (3)

31

MAL

(to Inara)

How do you know? About the training?

INARA

She tried to seduce me too.

MAL

(trying not to sound too intrigued)

Really? Did she -- did you --

INARA

You don't play a player. It was sloppy of her to try it, but I think she was in a rush.

MAL

But she had professional... so in my case, it was really...

(to Book)

You woulda kissed her too.

ZOE

Wash didn't.

MAL

But she was naked, and all articulate...

WASH

Okay. Everyone NOT talking about their sex lives, in here. Everyone else, elsewhere.

KAYLEE

Jayne, find me a splicer.

Jayne rummages through tools as everyone else save Book departs. Wash ducks back under with Kaylee.

WASH

Do you really think we have a hope in hell of fixing this?

KAYLEE

Not by talking 'bout it, darlin'.

32

INT. CHOP SHOP OFFICE - LATER

32

Breed is looking at a screen, call out of the room:

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 32

BREED
They're coming!

Corbin rushes in.

CORBIN
How far out?

BREED
Ten minutes or so. Right on
target, speed... a-1.

CORBIN
That girl is a wonder.

BREED
She gets it done. I'll tell the
boys.

He starts out --

33 INT. BRIDGE - LATER 33

As Serenities screens pop back to life.

WASH (O.S)
YES!

He is looking at them, working them. Kaylee's still under the
console, Jayne and book at the ready.

Mal runs in.

MAL
You got it?

WASH
We got life. We got screens. It's
a qualified "yes". A partial.

MAL
What about nav control?

Kaylee comes out to look miserable, shakes her head.

MAL
So where are we headed?

WASH
(working the screens)
Coordinates she entered...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED:

33

WASH (cont'd)
we're headed for something and
it's not too far...

MAL
Did she signal anyone?

WASH
< Hold on a second >... she did.
Same coordinates, no I.D.

JAYNE
Who's out there...?

WASH
Let me see if her signal wave can
translate to a visual, there might
be a -- < Damn! > Heavy
ionization, electrical
interference bouncing the signal
all... look at that.... It's like
a circle.

Mal gets it. He looks at Book, who also does.

MAL
It's a net.

JAYNE
I don't get it. Where are we
headed?

BOOK
The end of the line. Off their
looks:

34 EXT CHOP SHOP RING - CONTINUOUS

34

As the electricity fires up and does in fact form a powerful
net.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

35 INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

35

The same gang are there, as the explanation begins.

BOOK

It's a Carrion House. Scrap shop,
takes ships, pulls 'em apart or
fixes 'em up.

WASH

Doesn't sound that scary...

MAL

That pattern you're looking at is
a net. We fly into that we're more
than helpless. It'll turn the ship
into one big electrical conduit,
burn us all from the inside out.

BOOK

Some of the newer ones'll just
hold you, then the scrappers'll
override the airlocks, pull the Oh-
two, or just gas you. They're not
looking to deal with survivors.

JAYNE

One day you're gonna tell us all
how a preacher knows so damn much
about crime.

MAL

Kaylee.

KAYLEE

I'm trying, sir, but...

MAL

Well, you stay on it. We can't
fall into that net.

He's thinking fast, looks about him.

MAL (cont'd)

We need a plan B.

He hits the com.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: 35

MAL
(into com)
Zoe, get our suits prepped, now.
(to the others)
I figure we got one shot at this.
(to Wash)
Give me a visual as soon as we're
close.

WASH
Won't be long...

JAYNE
What do I do?

Mall turns to him, waits just a hair of a beat.

MAL
You go get Vera.

36 INT. CARGOBAY/AIRLOCK - LATER 36

Mal and Jayne are suited up, save helmets and gloves. Jayne is loading big-ass bullets into Vera while Zoe checks his suit and Simon hooks his encyclopedia to the com console with Book's help.

WASH (OS)
(over the com)
We are two minutes out...

JAYNE
This thing needs oxygen around it
to fire, and we don't have a case.

MAL
We're gonna use a suit.

SIMON
Here. We got it.

They look over at:

ANGLE: SIMON'S ENCYCLOPEDIA

Has a visual of the ring on it.

JAYNE
What am I aiming for. The window?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: 36

MAL

That might kill some folk, but it won't disrupt the net. See these six points where it's brightest? Those're the breakers. Hit one and it should short it out.

JAYNE

What do you mean, should?

37 INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING 37

Kaylee slams her wrench against metal, near tears.

KAYLEE

If I just had a stupid conductor cap...

38 EXT. CHOP SHOP RING - CONTINUOUS 38

As we can see Serenity tiny in the distance.

39 INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING 39

Mal opens the door, and he see him suited up, with Jayne as well, Jayne is sitting, holding the gun. It's in a suit, Jayne holding it through the sleeves (which are duct-taped to his), the barrel pointing out through the helmet. The butt of the gun is braced up against containers against the airlock doors.

Angle: their pov

Through the door, of the approaching ring.

MAL

You see it?

JAYNE

Clear as day.

(then softer)

You see, Vera? You dress yourself up, then you get taken out somewhere fun.

40 INT. COCKPIT OF INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING 40

As Kaylee rips out some wires and parts from it.

She comes up and looks out the window, stops -- mesmerized.

41 EXT. CHOP SHOP RING CONTINUOUS 41

As the ship approaches, the net forms fully, electricity silently flaring in a spiders web of power.

42 INT. EXT AIRLOCK/SPACE - CONTINUING 42

Mal waits. Jayne waits.

Jayne FIRES, a silent burst blowing through the helmet, air rushing out as the breaker EXPLODES, the crackling web disintegrating --

-- and Jayne continues firing, aims up at the office itself:

43 INT. CHOP SHOP OFFICE - CONTINUING 43

Corbin and Breed duck and cover as the bullets rake across the window. We hear it crack and groan -- they look at each other in horror --

44 EXT. CHOP SHOP RING - CONTINUOUS 44

And the window and all contents of the office blow out into space -- pan down to see serenity blow through the sparking but harmless ring, continuing on in the distance.

45 INT. BRIDGE - LATER 45

Kaylee, Mal, Zoe. Wash is at the controls. We hear things humming to life.

WASH

We got it. It's not pretty, but we can steer enough to turn the hell around.

MAL

Nice work, Kaylee.

KAYLEE

(despondent)
Weren't soon enough to help.

MAL

Lot easier to pull things apart than to put 'em right. You're still the best mechanic floating.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

He kisses her on the top of her head. She waves him away, but didn't hate the compliment.

WASH

Captain, don't you know that kissing girls makes you sleepy?

MAL

Sometimes I just can't help myself. Let's go visiting.

46 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DUSK

46

Can something be described rustically plush? 'Cause that best describes this little suite.

Saffron sits on the bed, pulling on her boots. She is nothing like the girl we've seen, much more modern and cool (though she still wears a skirt). And she's packing a sidearm in a shoulder holster.

She stops a moment, listening to something.

The door flies open, Mal having kicked it in. Before she can draw, he has his gun to her head.

MAL

Honey... I'm home...

A beat. She knocks his gun aside, it fires as she draws hers but he is in close, they tussle -- he wrenches her gun from her hand as they collapse on bed, him on top.

MAL

Looks like you get your wedding night after all.

She pushes him, they go tumbling to the floor but he's still on top and this time he's got his gun to her chin.

MAL

It's the first time, darlin'. I think you should be gentle with me.

She lets out a breath, smiles at him unfathomably.

SAFFRON

You gonna kill me?

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Can you conjure up a terribly compelling reason for me not to?

SAFFRON

I didn't kill you...

MAL

You turned me and my crew over to those that would kill us, that buys you nothing.

SAFFRON

I made you dinner...

MAL

Why the act? All the seduction games, the dancing about folk -- there has to be an easier way to steal.

SAFFRON

You're assuming the payoff is the point.

MAL

I'm not assuming anything at this juncture.

He sits, gun still well on her. She gets up on her elbows, below but facing him.

SAFFRON

How'd you find me?

MAL

Only a few places that shuttle could make it to from where you left. Happy to find it intact. You always work for Elder Gommen?

SAFFRON

I work with lots of folk. He's thrown me a few choice fish. What'll become of the dear Elder?

MAL

Oh, he'll be laying eyes on me soon enough. And to think I saved his town from vicious bandits.

(CONTINUED)

SAFFRON

(smiling sexily)

You're quite a man, Malcolm Reynolds. I've waited a long while for someone good enough to take me down.

MAL

(also smiles)

Saffron... you even think about playing me again I will riddle you with holes.

Her smile goes. This is the closest we're gonna get to seeing what's inside her, and there ain't much to warm your hands by.

SAFFRON

Everybody plays each other. That's all anybody ever does. We play parts.

MAL

You got all kinds a' learnin' and you made me look the fool without trying, yet here I am with a gun to your head. That's 'cause I got people with me, people who trust each other, who do for each other and ain't always looking for the advantage. There's good people in the 'verse. Not many, lord knows, but you only need a few.

SAFFRON

Promise me you're gonna kill me soon.

MAL

You already know I ain't gonna.

SAFFRON

You know, you did pretty well. Most men, hell, they're on me inside of ten minutes. Not trying to teach me to be strong and the like.

MAL

I got one question for you. Just one thing I'd like to know straight up.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: (3)

46

SAFFRON

Ask me.

MAL

What's your real name?

She looks at him... looks away, considering the question...

-- and he slams the butt of his gun into her chin, knocking her out cold.

He stands, regards her genuinely vulnerable form. Says with a kind of sadness:

MAL (cont'd)

You'd only've lied anyhow.

A beat, and he leaves.

47 OMITTED

47

48 INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE

48

As she is turning off her vidscreen. Mal knocks, enters after:

INARA

Come in.

MAL

We're back on course, should be on Beaumonde just a day or two late. Hope that's all right.

INARA

It should be fine, thank you. And does the vixen live?

MAL

If you can call it that. All's well, I suppose.

INARA

Yes.

MAL

You're a very graceful woman, Inara.

INARA

(surprised)

I... thank you.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

So here's where I'm fuzzy: you got by that girl, came and found me, and then you just happened to trip and fall?

INARA

Wh- what do you mean?

MAL

Come on, Inara, how's about we don't play. You didn't just trip, did you? She holds his look, and acquiesces.

INARA

No.

He smiles, nodding.

MAL

Well isn't that something. I knew you let her kiss you.

Her look changes to one of stupefied disbelief. He exists, chuckling. We hold on her expression for a long, long time.

END OF SHOW