

# Firefly - "Serenity"

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Two big changes between [Wiki](#) and *Companion* are the Teaser and negotiations with Patience.  
A smaller change was moderating the Chinese cursing.

## Teaser

EXT. SERENITY VALLEY - NIGHT

Battle rages. Dead bodies, explosions -- we see rapidfire images of bloody conflict. The INDEPENDENTS hold a narrow gulch that overlooks a desert valley, which the ALLIANCE troops swarm through, trying to take the position. From above, a small Alliance SKIFF flies by, strafing the ground and several men.

ANGLE: behind an outcropping:

are six soldiers, all in conference, sweaty, haggard, shouting over the din. Amongst them are SGT. MALCOLM REYNOLDS, clearly in charge, ZOE, his unflappable corporal, BENDIS, a terrified young soldier, and GRAYDON, an exhausted but tough radio operator. Around them, other soldiers are laid out, firing, keeping back the onslaught of Alliance troops.

GRAYDON

Sergeant! Command says air support is holding til  
they can assess our status!

MAL

Our status is that we need some gorramn air support!  
Get back on line and --

ZOE

That skiff is shredding us, sir --

GRAYDON

They won't move without a  
lieutenant's authorization code, sir --

Mal breaks past them, moves to a corpse of at least two days in officer's gear. He rips a rank symbol off the corpse's arm.

Hands it to Graydon, flipping it over so we can see a series of numbers and letters on the other side.

MAL

That's your code. You're lieutenant Baker,  
congratulations on your promotion,  
now get me air support!

Turns to the two other soldiers.

MAL (cont'd)

(to one)

Pull back just far enough to wedge 'em in here.

(to the other)  
Get your squad to the high ground, you pick 'em off.

ZOE  
High ground's death with that skiff in the air.

MAL  
That's our problem and thank you for volunteering.  
(to the scared guy)  
Bendis, you give us cover, we're going duck hunting.

A soldier falls back between them, dead.

MAL (cont'd)  
(to all)  
Just focus.  
Alliance said they were gonna waltz through  
Serenity Valley and we've choked 'em with those words.  
We've done the impossible and that makes us mighty.  
Just a little while longer, our angels'll be soaring overhead,  
raining fire on those arrogant cods, so you hold. You HOLD!  
Go.

Two of them scamper off, Bendis moving into position, back to the rock, ready to give cover fire but still scared shitless.

Mal and Zoe move over to a small cache of arms and he picks up a rifle.

ZOE  
Really think we can bring her down, sir?

MAL  
Do you even need to ask?

Unseen by her, he pulls a small cross from a chain on his neck, silently kisses it, puts it back.

MAL (cont'd)  
Ready?

ZOE  
Always.  
(shouts)  
Bendis! BENDIS!

But he is too scared. Can't move.

ZOE (cont'd)  
Rut it.

She pops up herself, firing a machine gun, strafing the area. A moment, and Mal goes, also firing, Zoe behind.

As they run to an anti-aircraft gun, three Alliance troops come into view.

They each shoot one but one gets in close to Mal and they tangle, Mal adroitly outfighting him, knocking him on his ass and moving on as Zoe follows, firing a burst into the gut without even stopping.

She reaches a little cover, throws herself down. He goes higher, for a clear view of the sky.

ANGLE: THE SKIFF

streaks through the night sky, firing short, deadly bursts. A single-person fighter, it looks like nothing so much as a boomerang.

Mal shoots the soldiers by the anti-aircraft gun, then jumps in and grabs it. There is much with buttons and dials and whirring and clicking. He sights up...

MAL  
Give me a lock...

ANGLE: THROUGH THE SCOPE:

More of the skiff, but with calibrations and infravision and whatnot.

A moment, and Mal fires.

ANGLE: THE SKIFF

is hit direct, explodes, fragments of it coming straight for camera -

Mal bolts, slamming into Zoe and diving with her out of the way as a huge flaming chunk of skiff spins over them and into his position, exploding.

They hit the ground and roll, fire raining down around them.

ANGLE: behind the outcrop --

They return, Bendis still unmoving.

ZOE  
Nice cover fire.

MAL  
What's the status on --

But they see that Graydon is dead.

MAL (cont'd)  
Zoe.

She starts pulling the radio off his corpse. Mal moves to Bendis, gets in his face.

MAL (cont'd)  
Listen to me. Look at me!  
Listen. We're holding this valley. No matter what.

BENDIS  
We're gonna die...

MAL  
We're not gonna die!  
We can't die, Bendis, and do you know why?  
Because we are so very pretty.  
We are just too pretty for God to let us die,  
look at that chiseled jaw, come on...

BENDIS  
I'm sorry...

Mal hears something -- a growing roar. He smiles.

MAL  
You won't listen to me, listen to that.

That's our angels,  
come to blow the Alliance right to the hot place.

Bendis hears it too. It changes him, hope suffusing his expression.

MAL (cont'd)  
Zoe, tell the eighty second to --

ZOE  
They're not coming.

Mal stops. Zoe lowers the radio.

ZOE (cont'd)  
Command says it's too hot. They're pulling out.  
We're to lay down arms.

Mal is uncomprehending at first.

MAL  
But... what...

The noise grows louder. IN SLO MO, Mal rises, the first light of day hitting his face as he scans the valley.

ANGLE: THE VALLEY

As out of the sunrise come dozens of Alliance ships, filling the sky.

ANGLE: MAL

as he sees everything lost -- everything he believes, everything he fought for... In the background of the shot, we see Bendis, also looking in horror, be strafed with bullets and fallout of frame.

Mal just stares.

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - NIGHT

We are in a some kind of burnt out wreck -- all we see is twisted black metal, a few stars visible through breaches in the hull. It's 'night' because it's space, so it's always night. But the wreck is not empty.

From top of frame, Mal floats upside-down into a closeup. He is in a spacesuit, the light from inside his helmet glinting off the sweat on his face. He is visibly changed, older and less sickly, so the title reading

SIX YEARS LATER

should not be any surprise.

MAL  
I'm gonna boil it. Give me the sticky.

WIDEN to see Zoe, also six years older, also suited up. She and Mal are in zero grav, floating by a big iron door that has buckled but not burst during whatever tore this ship apart. Floating nearby is

JAYNE: a hulking, wary mercenary who keeps watch as the other two work. His face says "thug". His face don't lie.

Zoe hands Mal a sort of glue gun looking thing. He squeezes and a clear gel comes out. In the center of the gel is a thin thread, like a wire.

Mal squeezes a circle about a foot around on the middle of the door. Zoe reaches in and snips the wire with pliers.

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

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

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

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

ANGLE: THE GEL

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

WASH  
Everything looks good from here...  
(beat)  
Yes. Yes, this is a fertile land,  
and we will thrive.

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

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

WASH (cont'd)  
(as Steg)  
We will rule over all this land,  
and we will call it...  
This Land.  
(as T-rex)  
I think we should call it...  
your grave!  
(Steg)  
Curse your sudden but inevitable betrayal!  
(T-rex)  
Ha HA! Mine is an evil laugh!  
Now die!

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

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

ANGLE: THE RADAR SCREEN

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

quadrant, closing fast.

WASH (cont'd)  
Oh, motherless son of a b--

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

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

ZOE  
Full pressure. The goods should be intact.

MAL  
Assuming they're still there.

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

ANGLE: INSIDE THE CHAMBER

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

MAL (cont'd)  
Okay. Looking good.

A voice sounds simultaneously in all three headsets: Wash.

WASH (O.S.)  
We have incoming! Alliance cruiser,  
bearing right down on us!

MAL  
<Ta ma de.> [Dammit.]  
(continuing)  
Have they spotted us?

WASH  
I can't tell if --

MAL  
Have they hailed us?

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

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

MAL  
<Bizui.> [Shut up.]  
(continuing)  
Shut it down, Wash. Everything but  
the air.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH  
Shutting down.

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

WASH (cont'd)  
Kaylee! KAYLEE!

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

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

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

She hits the com --

KAYLEE  
<Shi> [Affirmative],  
(continuing)  
going dark --

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

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Okay. Now I can't get down.

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

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

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

MAL  
Not yet. They slowing down?

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

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

WASH  
<Shi.> [Affirmative.]

Mal looks at the other two. They wait.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

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

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

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

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

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

ENSIGN  
Locals swept it right after.

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

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

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

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

ANGLE: MAL'S FACE

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

He is silent. So are the others.

EXT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

A MAN seated at a screen suddenly brow-furrows.

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

CAPTAIN  
Do a sweep.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

An alarm sound, lights blink.

WASH  
<Aiya! Huaile.> [Something's wrong.]  
(continuing)  
Captain! We're humped!

INT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

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

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

It's still pitch black in here.

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

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

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

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Wahh!

EXT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP

Mal, Jayne and Zoe move straight up through twisted metal, pushing their crates. Jayne is first, reaching the top and then proceeding forward, pushing off with crate in hand before him.

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

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

Mal hits the com.

MAL

Wash! We're on! Go!

EXT. BLOWN-OUT SHIP - CONTINUING

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

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

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

The Captain is watching on his screen.

CAPTAIN  
What the hell?

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash is seated, all business now.

WASH  
Hang on, travellers...

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Everyone grabs something, as Jayne pulls off his helmet.

JAYNE  
Let's moon 'em.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

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

The ship fires away from us.

INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Mal hits the com:

MAL  
Cry, Baby, Cry.

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

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

MAN

It's a transport ship. Firefly class.

ENSIGN  
They still make those?

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

ENSIGN  
Should we deploy gunships, bring her  
in?

CAPTAIN  
Do it.

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

EXT. DORTMUNDER - CONTINUING

We move from a front shot of the bridge below the Dortmund, to see gunships preparing to launch.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The crybaby beeps.

INT. DORTMUNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

CAPTAIN  
(considering)  
Gunships'd never get back to us in  
time...all right. Let's go help  
those people.  
(to the ensign)  
Put a bulletin out on the Cortex, and  
flag Interpol: a Firefly with  
possibly stolen goods aboard.  
(almost to himself)  
Maybe someone'll step on those  
roaches.

INT. CARGO HOLD - CONTINUING

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

WASH (O.S.)  
We look shiny, Captain. They are not  
repeat not coming about.

ZOE

Close one.

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

MAL  
Right.

He looks away, darkness in his gaze.

MAL (cont'd)  
We win.

END OF TEASER

## Act One

INT. CARGO HOLD - LATER

A crate is jimmied open. It is Jayne with the crowbar, Mal who pulls the top off, looking in. Zoe, Wash and Kaylee are also about. Zoe, Jayne and Mal are already dressed in their regular clothes. [Add shot from inside hidden compartment.]

MAL  
Well. There we are.

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

KAYLEE  
(excited)  
They're awfully pretty...

WASH  
I'd say worth a little risk.

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

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

MAL  
(harshly)  
<Bizui.> [Shut up.]

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

ZOE  
Problem, sir?

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

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

JAYNE  
What the hell they doing this far  
out, anyhow?

KAYLEE  
Shining the light of civilization.

JAYNE  
Doesn't do us any good...

KAYLEE  
Well, we're uncivilized.

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

MAL  
How long til we reach Persephone?

WASH  
Three or four hours.

MAL  
Can we shave that?

WASH  
(shakes his head)  
We're down to the wire on fuel cells.  
We run hot, we might not even make it.

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

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

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

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

MAL  
It's fine. I just wanna get paid.

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

MAL (cont'd)  
Jayne, Kaylee, let's get these crates

stowed. I don't want any tourists  
stumbling over them.

KAYLEE

We're taking on passengers at  
Persephone?

ANGLE: POV FROM HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

MAL

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

JAYNE

Pain in the ass...

KAYLEE

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

JAYNE

Captain, can you please stop her from  
being cheerful?

MAL

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

He smiles at her, never stopping working.

MAL (cont'd)

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

She grins and kisses his cheek.

KAYLEE

I love my captain.

INT. UPPER CORRIDOR/BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

ZOE

I know something's not right.

WASH

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

ZOE

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

WASH

Man needs a break. In fact...

He pulls her towards him.

WASH (cont'd)  
We could all use a couple days leave.

ZOE  
We still gotta drop the goods --

WASH  
And when we do, we'll fly off to Boros rich and prosperous.  
Well, less poor. But with enough to find  
some sweet little getaway...

ZOE  
(loosening up)  
Wouldn't mind a real bath...

He moves in on her, wrapping her in his arms.  
They're getting closer, soon to be kissing, yes.

WASH  
And a meal that included some form of food...  
Just a couple of days, lying around...  
You with the bathing,  
me with the watching you bathe...

They're so close...

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

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

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

ZOE  
He's the captain, Wash.

WASH  
Right. I'm just the husband.

He lands in his seat. She still stands.

ZOE  
Look, I'll ask him.

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

MAL  
Who likes what?

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

ZOE  
It's nothing, sir.

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

MAL  
Has the Ambassador checked in?

WASH  
Nah. I think she had a pretty full docket.

MAL  
Well, after you talk to Badger, let her know  
we may be leaving Persephone in a hurry.

ZOE  
Inara knows our timetable, she should be checking in.

WASH  
I can tell her to cut it short, meet us at the docks.

MAL  
No, no. Don't wanna get in her way if we don't have to.  
(leaving)  
Someone on this boat has to make an honest living.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

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

INARA  
Oh... Oh... Oh my god...

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

INARA (cont'd)  
(softly)  
Oh my boy...

INT. SAME - LATER

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

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

THE YOUNG MAN  
Is that where you studied? To be a  
Companion?

INARA  
(nodding)  
I was born there.

THE YOUNG MAN  
I can't imagine ever leaving.

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

INARA  
Well, I wanted to see the universe.

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

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

THE YOUNG MAN  
You play beautifully.

INARA  
Thank you.

He looks down at his cup a moment.

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

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

INT. SAME - LATER

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

THE YOUNG MAN  
A very -- it was very good. Thank  
you.

INARA  
The time went too quickly.

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

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

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

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

WASH (O.S.)

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

INARA  
I'll join you there, thanks.

WASH (O.S.)  
Looking forward. We missed you out here.

INARA  
(softly)  
Yeah. Me too.

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

EXT. CITY - DAY

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

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Wash deftly pilots Serenity, light shifting across his face as the ship descends into atmo.

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

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

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

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

MAL  
(to Kaylee)  
This shouldn't take long. Put us down for departure in about three hours.  
(to Wash)  
Fuel her up, and grab any supplies we're low on.

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

CAPACITY: TWELVE

DEPARTURE TIME: 1500

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

MAL

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

KAYLEE

Compression coil busts, we're  
drifting...

MAL

Best not bust, then.

Zoe, Jayne and Mal start off.

WASH

Zoe.

(then)

<Zhu yi.> [Watch your back.]

ZOE

We will.

He watches her move through the crowd.

EXT. EAVESDOWN DOCKS - DAY

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

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

MAN

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

BOOK

I never married.

MAN #2

What?

BOOK

I'm not a grandpa.

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

MAN #2

-- three berths left, junior suites,  
we are not interested in Asian or  
Catholic passengers, thank you, we

will be bidding for the last three  
berths --

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

KAYLEE  
You're gonna come with us.

BOOK  
Excuse me?

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

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

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

BOOK  
She don't look like much.

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

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

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

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

BOOK  
They can dress her up pretty, but a  
Gurtlser engine's always gonna get  
twitchy on ya.  
(re: Serenity)  
The aught three still use the trace  
compression block?

KAYLEE  
Til they make something better.

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

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
So how come you don't care where  
you're going?

BOOK  
'Cause how you get there is the

worthier part.

KAYLEE  
You a missionary?

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

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

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

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

KAYLEE  
Oh, Grampa...

BOOK  
I never married.

INT. - HALLWAY - DAY

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne walk down a hallway, past a row of gunmen.

INT. UNDERGROUND 'OFFICE' - DAY

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

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

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

BADGER  
Let me see your teeth.

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

BADGER (cont'd)  
Yes.

She looks apprehensively pleased as she is shuttled behind the curtain. As she is, yet another thug

leads Mal, Zoe and Jayne down the stairs. Badger doesn't look at them, heading for his desk.

BADGER (cont'd)

You're late.

MAL

You're lying.

Everybody tenses as Badger turns.

BADGER

What did you just say to me?

MAL

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

A beat. A mean little smile from Badger.

BADGER

You're later than I'd like.

MAL

Well I am sorry to hear that.

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

BADGER

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

MAL

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

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

BADGER

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

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

BADGER (cont'd)

Oh, you noticed that. You were gonna hand over imprinted goods and just

let me twist, is that the case?

MAL

We didn't pick the cargo.

BADGER

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

ZOE

That ain't fair.

BADGER

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

JAYNE

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

Guns are raised, cocked.

Mal shoots Jayne a look that shuts him right up.

Mal steps forward and Badger rises -- but Mal is reasonable of tone.

MAL

Doesn't have to go this way. You  
know you can still unload those  
goods. So I can't help thinking  
there's something else at work here.

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

BADGER

(re: one)

Yes.

(re: other)

No.

(to Mal)

I don't like you.

He makes a face, reconsidering --

BADGER (cont'd)

(to his thug, re:  
other)

Dyeahh... yes.

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

BADGER (cont'd)

But keep her in the back, yeah?

MAL

I'm not asking you to like me --

BADGER

(overlapping)

What were you in the war?  
That big war you failed to win -

you were a sergeant?  
Yeah, Sergeant Malcolm Reynolds,  
Balls and Bayonets Brigade,  
big tough veteran,  
now you got yourself a ship and  
you're a captain!  
Only I think you're still a Sergeant, see.  
Still a soldier, man of honour  
in a den of thieves.  
(in his face)  
Well it's my gorramn den and  
I don't like the way you look down on me.  
I'm above you. Better than.  
I'm a businessman, yeah?  
Roots in the community.  
You're just a scavenger.

MAL

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

BADGER

Try one of the border planets --  
they're a lot more desperate there.  
Of course they might kill you, but  
you stay here and I just know the  
Alliance'll track you down. I have  
that feeling.

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

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

MAL

Wheel never stops turning, Badger.

BADGER

That only matter to the people on  
the rim.

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

EXT. EAVESDOWN DOCKS - LATER

OPEN ON: The clash of wooden swords as two kabuki actors fight on a raised dais for the crowd. Whip pan off this action to track quickly in front of Mal, Zoe and Jayne as they head back to the ship.

JAYNE

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

MAL

We'd be dead. Can't get paid if you're dead.

JAYNE

Can't get paid if you crawl away like a bitty  
little bug, neither. I got a share in this job,

and ten percent of nothing,  
uh - hold on. Let me do the math here...  
Nothing into nothing... Carry the nothing.

ZOE  
(overlapping him)  
We'll just find a buyer on Boros. There's gotta be --

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

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

Mal looks over at:

ANGLE: TWO COPS looking around them, as though searching for something.

MAL  
If he hasn't already.

ZOE  
Alliance catches us with government goods,  
we'll lose the ship.

MAL  
That's never gonna happen.

She stops, turns to him.

ZOE  
We could just dump the cargo, sir.

JAYNE  
No rutting way! We ain't had a job in weeks!  
I didn't sign up with this crew to take in the sights,  
all right? We need coin!

MAL  
Jayne, your mouth is talking. You might wanna look to that.

JAYNE  
(belligerent)  
I'm ready to stop talking whenever --

MAL  
You're right, though.

This stops Jayne - didn't expect to hear that.

MAL(cont'd)  
Last two jobs we had were weak tea.  
We got nothing saved, and taking on  
passengers won't help near enough.  
We don't get paid for this cargo,  
we won't have enough money to fuel the ship,  
let alone keep her in repair.

She'll be dead in the water.

ZOE  
So we do like Badger said?  
The border planets?

MAL  
(nodding)  
I'm thinking we can hit Whitefall,  
maybe talk to Patience.

Zoe is clearly unhappy with this notion.

ZOE  
Sir, we don't wanna deal with Patience again.

MAL  
Why not?

ZOE  
She shot you!

MAL  
Well, yeah, she did a bit. Still...

He starts walking again, the others falling into step.

ZOE  
So we find someone else. Horowitz.

MAL  
He can't afford it.

ZOE  
The Holden boys.

MAL  
They wouldn't touch it.  
You want me to run down the list?  
The Capshaws are brainblown, Gruviek's dead...

ZOE  
He's dead?

MAL  
Town got hit by Reavers.  
Burned it right down.

JAYNE  
Hey, I'm not going anywhere near Reaver territory.  
Those people ain't human.

MAL  
Whitefall is the closest and the safest.  
Been a long while since Patience shot me, and that was  
due to a perfectly legitimate conflict of interest.  
I got no grudge. She owns half that damn moon now,  
she can afford what we got and she might just need it.

ZOE

I still say the old lady's not --

MAL

(turns to her)

There's only one thing that matters.  
She looks at him, then up past him,  
as he turns as well to look at:

ANGLE: SERENITY. They have reached her.

MAL (cont'd)

I'm not saying it won't be tricky.  
But we got no kind of choice.

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

DOBSON

Dobson... Thank you...

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

MAL

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

(Mal turns to the  
others)

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

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

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

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

SIMON

(to Wash)

Please be careful with that.

KAYLEE

Mal, this is Simon. This is our  
captain.

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

SIMON

Captain Reynolds.

MAL

Welcome aboard.

(to Kaylee)

This all we got?

INT. CARGO BAY

Wash and Jayne are unloading stuff. We see Book and Simon unpacking -- pan over to find Zoe moving to Mal, who is near the hidden compartment.

ZOE

So now we got a boatload of citizens  
right on top of our stolen cargo.  
That's a fun mix.

MAL

There's no way in the 'verse  
they could find that compartment,  
even if they were looking.

ZOE

Why not?

MAL

... 'Cause.

ZOE

Yeah, this is gonna go great...

MAL

If anybody gets nosy, you just,  
you know... shoot 'em.

ZOE

Shoot them.

MAL

Politely.

INT. BRIDGE - DAY

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

WASH

Inara. You're just in time.

INARA (O.S.)

Let me guess. We're in a hurry.

WASH

Looks like. Port hatch green for  
docking.

INARA (O.S.)

Locked in five. Four.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

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

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash turns, calls back:

WASH  
The Ambassador has returned.

He is talking to Zoe, who moves to the

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

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

ZOE  
We got a full house, Captain.

He turns to the airlock:

MAL  
Kaylee. Lock it up!

EXT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Kaylee looks around once...

KAYLEE  
(softly)  
All aboard...

ANGLE: SIMON

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

EXT. PERSEPHONE - DAY

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

END OF ACT ONE

## Act Two

EXT. SPACE - LATER

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

INT. PASSENGER DORM - LATER

MAL (O.S.)  
Meals are taken here in the dining  
area, the kitchen is pretty much self  
explanatory, you're welcome to eat  
what there is at any time...

We see Dobson hurriedly coming up the stairs from the passenger section to the upstairs

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

as Mal has already begun addressing the other two passengers. Zoe and Kaylee are up there as

well.

MAL

... What there is  
is pretty standard fare, I guess,  
protein in all the colors of the  
rainbow. We do have sit-down meals,  
the next being at about 1800 --

KAYLEE

(excited)

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

MAL

(to Book, less  
excited)

You're a Shepherd.

BOOK

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

KAYLEE

Of course not!

(to Mal)

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

MAL

No.

(to the bunch)

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

SIMON

Some of my personal effects are in  
the cargo bay.

MAL

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

BOOK

Jake by me...

SIMON  
What medical supplies?

MAL  
I honestly didn't ask.

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

MAL  
Alliance says jump...

SIMON  
All right.

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

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

ZOE  
I wish there was another way...

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

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

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

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

MAL  
Zoe, why don't you take 'em  
down to the cargo bay?

ZOE  
Yes sir.

As the others start leaving, Mal moves close to Wash:

MAL  
You send word to Patience?

WASH  
Ain't heard back.  
Didn't she shoot you one time?

MAL  
Everyone's making a fuss...

INT. CARGO BAY - LATER

People are getting the luggage they need. Dobson is spilling clothes out of his case -- he's a perpetual bumbler.

Simon is also placing things into an elegant little valise -- all while eyeing his special blue box.

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

ANGLE: THE SECOND SHUTTLE HATCH

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

MAL  
The Ambassador graces us with her  
presence.

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

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

KAYLEE  
Hey you.

INARA  
Hey you.

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

MAL  
Ambassador, this is Shepherd Book.

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

BOOK  
Well, I wasn't expecting to see a  
state official, either.  
(takes her hand, bows  
slightly)  
Ambassador.

Mal laughs. Inara glowers at him.

BOOK (cont'd)  
I'm missing something funny.

KAYLEE  
(glaring at Mal)  
Not so funny.

INARA  
"Ambassador" is Mal's way of --

MAL  
She's a whore, Shepherd.

Book's clearly a little thrown. And disapproving.

KAYLEE  
The term is "Companion".

MAL  
Yeah, but the job is whore.  
(to Inara)  
How's business?

INARA  
None of yours.

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

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

INARA  
(turns to go)  
It's all right.  
I mostly keep to myself.  
(passing Mal)  
When I'm not whoring.

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

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

Inara and Kaylee head out together.

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

INARA

Just the one. I think I'm slipping.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

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

She swallows it. Smiles, broad and bright.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

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

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

ZOE

Oh, this is incredible.

BOOK

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

SIMON

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

ZOE

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

BOOK

(to Simon)

Well, it won't last, and they're never the same when they're frozen. The important thing is the spices. A man can live on packaged food from here til Judgement Day if he's got enough Marjoram.

DOBSON

(over this, to Jayne)

Can you pass me the tomatoes?

He does, after taking several slices. People settle.

BOOK

Captain, would you mind if I say grace?

MAL

Only if you say it out loud.

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

SIMON

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

MAL

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

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

DOBSON

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

ZOE

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

MAL

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

SIMON

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

KAYLEE

(to Simon)

You're a Doctor, right?

SIMON

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

MAL

Long way from here.

KAYLEE

(to Simon)

You seem so young. To be a doctor.

SIMON

(changing the subject)

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

KAYLEE

No how. Machines just got workings,

and they talk to me.

BOOK  
That's a rare gift.

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

JAYNE  
Little Kaylee just wishes you was a gynecologist.

Kaylee, visibly humiliated, looks down.

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

JAYNE  
(pushing)  
You don't pay me to talk pretty.

MAL  
Walk away from this table. Right now.

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

SIMON  
What do you pay him for?

MAL  
What?

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

Mal stares a moment.

MAL  
Public relations.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

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

INARA  
<Qing jin.> [Come in.]

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

BOOK  
If I'm not intruding...

INARA  
Not at all.

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

INARA (cont'd)  
I expected you.

BOOK  
Can't really say the same.

INARA  
So. Would you like to lecture me  
on the wickedness of my ways?

BOOK  
I brought you some supper.  
But if you'd prefer a lecture,  
I've a few very catchy ones prepped.  
Sin and hellfire. One has lepers.

INARA  
I think I'll pass. But thank you for these.

BOOK  
The Captain said you might like them.  
I was surprised at his concern.

INARA  
For a lowly whore?

Book's face clouds.

BOOK  
It was unjust of him to say that.

INARA  
He dislikes pretension.

BOOK  
Still, a lady shouldn't --

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

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

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

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

BOOK

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

A beat, a she laughs. He smiles disarmingly.

BOOK (cont'd)

Fact is, I don't know how long I'm gonna be with you all. I always heard that by law, Companions are educated in the literary arts, philosophy and whatnot. Among, well other things but I just thought it might be nice to be able to talk once in a while.

INARA

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

BOOK

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

INARA

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

BOOK

I thought he was a sadistic boor.

INARA

He's a lot of things.

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

INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING

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

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

WASH (O.S.)

Mal, you might wanna get up here...

Mal's up the ladder in a flash.

INT. FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Where Wash is studying a screen.

MAL  
What is it?

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

MAL  
Tell me you scrambled it.

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

MAL  
<Ni ta ma de. Tianxia suoyoude ren. Dou gaisi.>  
[Everyone under the heavens ought to die.]

WASH  
We got a mole on board.

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

INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER

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

He turns and Mal is standing before him.

MAL  
Forget your toothpaste?

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

SIMON  
Are you out of your mind?

MAL  
Just about. What'd you tell them?

SIMON  
(standing)  
Tell who?

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

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

SIMON  
You are a lunatic.

MAL  
And you're a gorramn fed.

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

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

Dobson holds a gun on Mal.

MAL  
(defeated)  
Son of a bitch.

DOBSON  
Drop that firearm, Captain Reynolds.

A beat, and Mal does.

MAL  
This is not my best day ever.

Dobson moves the gun to point it at Simon.

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

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

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

END OF ACT TWO

## Act Three

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

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

DOBSON

(to Simon)

Get on the ground. Get on the ground!

SIMON

Lawman, you're making a mistake.

MAL

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

BOOK

I think everybody could stand to calm  
down a bit.

He is moving slowly towards Dobson, hoping to defuse.

DOBSON

This isn't your business, Shepherd.

BOOK

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

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

MAL

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

DOBSON

(pointing the gun at  
Mal again)

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

MAL

(icy calm)

Well now. That has an effect on the  
landscape.

BOOK

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

DOBSON

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

MAL

Might have less than that.

DOBSON  
Yeah, threaten me...

BOOK  
(still moving)  
For God's sake --

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

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

MAL  
Just take the kid!

SIMON  
Get your hands off --

DOBSON  
Stand the hell down --

KAYLEE  
Hey, what's --

Dobson spins and FIRES.

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

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Wait, why are you...

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

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

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

INARA  
Kaylee!

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

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

JAYNE  
Get out of the way.

BOOK  
You're not killing this man.

JAYNE  
Not right away...

BOOK  
He's not a threat.

JAYNE  
Move.

BOOK  
Not gonna happen.

JAYNE  
(raising his gun)  
I'm not joking with you, Preacher --

ZOE  
Jayne!

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

ZOE (cont'd)  
Just tie him up. Do it!

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

ZOE (cont'd)  
The gun, Shepherd. Please.

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

ANGLE: KAYLEE AND THE OTHERS

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

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

SIMON  
Lie back. How do you feel?

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

Inara and Mal join them.

SIMON  
(to Inara)  
Put something under her head.

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

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

He and Inara exchange a glance that means something very different.

KAYLEE  
Big... mosquito...

SIMON

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

KAYLEE

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

Her eyes start to roll back --

SIMON

She's going into shock.

INARA

Kaylee, <xiao meimie> [little sister],  
You gotta focus.

Simon pushes Kaylee's stomach and she screams.

SIMON

(to Mal)

The infirmary working?

MAL

We got it stocked.

They move to pick her up --

WASH (O.S.)

(on the com)

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

Mal and Simon look at each other.

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

SIMON

Change course. Run.

MAL

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

INARA

Mal...

SIMON

She's dying.

MAL

You're not gonna let her.

SIMON

Yes I am.

MAL

You can't.

Simon looks at Kaylee, helpless and sweet.

ZOE  
No way the Feds'll let us walk.

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

KAYLEE  
(delirious)  
Everybody's so mad...

INARA  
It's okay, baby...

SIMON  
You know what a stomach wound does to  
a person?

MAL  
I surely do.

SIMON  
Then you know how crucial the next  
few minutes are.

ZOE  
(to Simon)  
You let her die you'll never make it  
to the Feds.

SIMON  
She'll still be dead.

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

SIMON  
I don't kill people.

MAL  
Then do your job!

SIMON  
Turn the ship around!

INARA  
Enough! Mal, do it.

MAL  
Don't ever tell me --

Kaylee screams again.

Mal and Simon stare at each other.

MAL (cont'd)  
(eyes on Simon)

Zoe. Change course.

SIMON  
Help me get her up.

Mal and Inara hoist with Simon.

INARA  
It's back behind you.

ZOE  
(hits the com)  
Wash, change course and go for hard  
burn. We're running.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

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

SIMON  
You have an extractor?

MAL  
Laser saw. We can go in --

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

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

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

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

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Simon washes off his hands. He turns to Mal.

SIMON  
I can't do anything more until she  
stabilizes.

MAL  
Will she?

SIMON  
Can't say yet.

INARA  
I wanna know what's going on here.

MAL  
Well then why don't we find out?

He moves quickly from the room.

SIMON  
What are you... no!

Simon follows, as do we, back into

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

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

SIMON  
Stay away from that!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The top won't go. Mal rears back and slams his heel into it. It flies off, clattering to the floor as the

smoke clears from over what's inside.

Mal steps forward, looks.

ANGLE: ABOVE THE BOX

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

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

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

MAL (cont'd)  
Huh.

END OF ACT THREE

## Act Four

>INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

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

SIMON  
I need to check her vitals.

MAL  
Is that what they call it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIMON  
River --

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
River. It's okay. It's okay. I'm  
here.

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
River...

RIVER  
Simon...?

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

RIVER (cont'd)  
Simon... They talk to me, they want  
me to... to talk...

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

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

MAL  
What the hell is this?

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

SIMON  
This is my sister.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

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

For a moment, they all just wait.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

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

SIMON (O.S.)  
I'm very smart.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

SIMON  
Went to the best Medacad on Osiris,  
top three percent of my class,  
finished my internship in eight  
months. Gifted. Is the term. So

when I tell you that my little sister  
makes me look like an idiot child, I  
want you to understand my full  
meaning.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

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

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

SIMON

River was more than gifted. She  
was... a gift. Everything she did,  
music, Maths, theoretical physics --  
even dance -- there was nothing that  
didn't come as naturally to her as  
breathing does to us.  
(smiles, remembering)  
She could be a real brat about it,  
too. She used to tell me --  
(losing the train)  
I mean, she's a kid. You know? Like  
everyone else, except she  
**understands**. So much.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

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

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

Simon pauses a moment.

SIMON

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)

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

He can't go on for a moment.

INT. INFIRMARY - EARLIER

She sleeps.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

ZOE  
How did you do it?

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

MAL  
How did you know it wasn't a scam?

SIMON  
I didn't. Until you opened that box.

INARA  
Will she be all right?

SIMON  
She was supposed to re-acclimate before I brought her out, she's in physical shock, but not serious. I don't know if she'll be all right. I don't know what they did to her, or why. I just have to keep her safe.  
(to Mal)  
You asked me what a man like me would kill for. And she's it.

There is a moment.

BOOK  
That's quite a story, son.

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

SIMON  
I never thought that --

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

He doesn't say it.

ZOE

(to Wash)

How much does the Alliance know?

WASH

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

MAL

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

JAYNE

What do we do?

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

MAL

The job. We finish the job. I got word from Patience, she's waiting for us.

Zoe looks unhappy at the prospect.

MAL (cont'd)

We circle round to Whitefall, make the deal, get out. Keep flying.

SIMON

What about us?

Mal looks at him a moment.

MAL

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

SIMON

If she doesn't come through?

MAL

Then you're getting off a mite sooner.

BOOK

That'd be murder.

MAL

Boy made a decision.

INARA

He didn't shoot her.

JAYNE

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

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

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

JAYNE  
He can I.D. us all.

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

WASH  
Can we maybe vote on the whole  
murdering people issue?

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

INARA  
This is insanity, Mal...

WASH  
I happen to think we're a ways beyond  
that now, sir.  
(to Zoe)  
Come on, we're gonna talk this  
through, yeah?

Zoe doesn't answer. Wash is truly pissed.

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

JAYNE  
(smiling)  
Shepherd's got a mean streak. We'd  
best walk soft.

Book looks down, ashamed.

MAL  
<Ta ma de! Nimen de bizui!> [Everybody shut the hell up!]  
(they do)  
Way it is is the way it is. We got  
to deal with what's in front of us.

INARA  
Mal, you know those two wouldn't  
survive a day in Whitefall anyway.

She comes close to him.

INARA (cont'd)  
You throw them out, I'm leaving too.

Mal looks at her, furious at being confronted publicly, truly upset by the thought of her leaving,

taking a moment to push both below the surface.

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

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

INT. AFT HALL - CONTINUING

Simon follows him.

SIMON  
What business is that, exactly?

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

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

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

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

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

ANGLE: THE DINING ROOM

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

JAYNE  
Saw that coming...

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

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

BOOK  
How is she?

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

SIMON  
Touch and go.

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

SIMON  
Of course.

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

SIMON  
That's a talent I seem to lack.

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

SIMON  
It looked disreputable.

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

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

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

BOOK  
I believe it's not.

SIMON  
<Duibuqi?> [I'm sorry?]

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

Simon looks at him.

INT. SIMON'S ROOM - LATER

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

SIMON  
Serenity.

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
Read.

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

ENCYCLOPEDIA

In the war to unite the planets, The Battle Of Serenity was among the most devastating and decisive. Located on Hera, the valley was considered a key position by both sides, and was bitterly fought over.

The Independent Faction, with sixteen brigades and twenty air-tank squads, held the valley against Alliance forces for almost two months, until superior numbers and a brilliant deep-flank strategy by General Richard Wil --

ZOE

What does it say under 'bloodbath'?

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

SIMON

I'm was just trying to --

ZOE

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

SIMON

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

ZOE

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

SIMON

Mal was there with you.

She enters, sits across from him.

ZOE

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

SIMON

That's a hell of a --

ZOE

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

She stands.

ZOE (cont'd)

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

SIMON

What if he tells you to kill me?

ZOE

I kill you.

SIMON

(grim smile)

Just getting the lay of the land.

She starts to go.

SIMON (cont'd)

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

She considers the question.

ZOE

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

MAL

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

WASH

It's not Alliance.

MAL

You're sure?

WASH  
It's a smaller vessel.

MAL  
Commercial?

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

MAL  
I didn't think Trans-U still operated.

WASH  
They don't.

MAL  
Get me a visual.

WASH  
They're still too far out to --

MAL  
Get me something!

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

He looks at Mal, getting it.

MAL  
Reavers.

Mal looks out toward a tiny speck that approaches them.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

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

END OF ACT FOUR

**Act Five**

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

MAL (O.S.)  
This is the captain.

INT. PASSENGER DORM HALL - CONTINUING

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

MAL (O.S.)  
We're passing another ship. Looks to be Reavers. From the size, probably a raiding party.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUING

She listens, too. Gravely.

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

INT. JAYNE'S ROOM - CONTINUING

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

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

MAL  
Zoe, you come on up to the bridge.

INT. PASSENGER DORM HALL - CONTINUING

Zoe is going as Simon stops her with:

SIMON  
I don't understand.

ZOE  
You've never heard of Reavers?

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

ZOE  
They're not stories.

SIMON

What happens if they board us?

ZOE

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

She exits. Simon moves quickly to:

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - CONTINUING

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

She stares into the box.

INT. JAYNE'S ROOM - CONTINUING

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

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - CONTINUING

Bound and gagged, Dobson waits in terror.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

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

WASH

Magnetic grapples. They get ahold of us with that...

MAL

Just tell me if they alter course.

They wait.

Everybody waits.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

But it passes.

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

After a few long seconds...

WASH  
They're holding course.

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

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

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

MAL  
Getting awful crowded in my sky.

he hits the com:

MAL (cont'd)  
Jayne.

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - LATER

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

MAL  
I'm in a situation, I think you're aware.  
Got me a boatload of terribly strange folk  
making my life a little more interesting  
than I generally like. Chief among them,  
an Alliance mole that likes to shoot  
at girls when he's nervous.  
Now, I got to know how close the Alliance is,  
exactly how much you told them 'fore Wash  
scrambled your call. So I've given Jayne  
here the job of finding out.

Jayne pulls out a big-ass knife.

JAYNE  
He was nonspecific as to how.

Mal says to Jayne, very quietly:

MAL  
You only gotta scare him.

JAYNE  
(grinning at Dobson)  
Pain is scary...

MAL  
Do it right.

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

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

(ugly grin)

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

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

DOBSON

Laurence.

JAYNE

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

(genuinely  
disappointed)

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

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

DOBSON

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

JAYNE

Does helping you out mean turning on the Captain?

DOBSON

Yes it does.

Jayne thinks a moment.

JAYNE

Let's talk money, Larry.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Mal is looking at River, silent.

KAYLEE

Captain...?

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

MAL

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

KAYLEE

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

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

MAL

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

KAYLEE

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

MAL

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

KAYLEE

You're nice, too.

MAL

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

KAYLEE

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

MAL

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

KAYLEE

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

He says nothing, just holds her hand.

Her eyes drift to River, still sleeping.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

She is a beauty, isn't she?

She smiles... and her eyes gently close.

Her hand slips from Mal's.

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

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

SIMON

Thank you.

INARA

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

SIMON

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

INARA

Is there anything else I can do?

SIMON

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

INARA

Kaylee's very dear. To all of us.

SIMON

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

INARA

You're lost in the woods. We all are. Even the captain. The only

difference is, he likes it that way.

MAL

(entering)

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

(to Simon)

What's your business here?

INARA

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

MAL

It's my shuttle. You rent it.

INARA

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

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

MAL

Thought you were leaving, anyhow.

INARA

Well I guess that depends on you.

Mal turns and goes.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Simon is walking away, but Mal stops him:

MAL

You'll ruin her, too, you know.

Simon turns.

MAL (cont'd)

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

SIMON

I don't.

MAL

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

SIMON

What do you mean?

MAL  
Kaylee's dead.

He is steely, contained. Simon is quietly devastated.

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

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

SIMON  
The man's psychotic.

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Mal, Wash, Jayne and Zoe are all laughing.

WASH  
Okay, you are psychotic.

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

ZOE  
And Kaylee's really okay?

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

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

WASH  
We're being hailed.

MAL  
That'd be Patience. We're close  
enough for a vid, put her up.

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

PATIENCE  
Malcolm Reynolds.

MAL  
Hello, Patience.

PATIENCE  
I have to say, I didn't look to be  
hearing from you anytime soon.

MAL

Well, we may not have parted on the best of terms – I realize certain words were exchanged, also certain... bullets, but that's air through the engine, that's past. We're business people. 'Sides, your days of fighting over salvage rights are long behind, what I hear. What are you, mayor, now?

PATIENCE

Just about. You telling the truth about that cargo? 'Cause your asking price is a bit too reasonable for that much treasure.

MAL

It's imprinted. Alliance.  
Hence the discount.

PATIENCE

Government goods, huh?

MAL

If it doesn't work for you, no harm.  
Just thought you could use --

PATIENCE

Alliance don't scare me.  
Just collating data, as they say.  
I like you being up-front about it.  
We can deal. I'll upload coordinates  
for a rendezvous point outside of town.

MAL

See you in the world.

The screen goes black - no more Patience. There is a pause. Everyone knows:

MAL (cont'd)

I believe that woman's  
planning to shoot me again.

JAYNE

She meant to pay you,  
she'd a haggled you down some.

WASH

Just a little effort to hide it  
would've been considerate --

Mal angrily sweeps away a pile of stuff, including a tin cup and plate, off a console and into the wall. Everybody takes a moment to let the outburst pass.

ZOE

Sir, we don't have to deal with her.

MAL

Yes we do.

JAYNE

Well, here's a little concept I been working on:  
why don't we shoot her first?

WASH  
It IS her turn

MAL  
That doesn't get us what we need either.

ZOE  
There's moons on this belt we ain't seen.  
We could try our luck on one of --

MAL  
Our LUCK?  
  
Have you noticed anything particular  
about our luck, last few days?  
Any kind of pattern?

You depend on luck you end up  
on the drift, no fuel, no prospects,  
begging for Alliance makework or  
being towed out to the scrapbelt.

That ain't us. Not ever.

Patience has the money to pay and  
she's going to. One way or another.

JAYNE  
Still say there's gonna be gunplay.

MAL  
Most like. And we'll be ready for that.  
There's obstacles in our path,  
we're gonna deal with them. One by one.

INT. DOBSON'S ROOM - CONTINUING

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

MAL (O.S.)  
We'll get through this. We will.

END OF ACT FIVE

## Act Six

EXT. WHITEFALL - DAY

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

EXT. WHITEFALL - LATER

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

EXT. DESERT - DAY

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

looking at it.

ZOE  
Nice place for an ambush.

MAL  
That it is.

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

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

He sticks an earwig in his ear.

JAYNE (cont'd)  
Testing, test - Captain, can you hear me?

MAL  
I'm standing right here.

JAYNE  
You're coming through good and loud.

MAL  
'Cause I'm standing right here.

Jayne  
Well, but the transmitter's ...

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

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

JAYNE  
Figure they're in place yet?

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

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

Mal stares at him til he stops smiling.

MAL

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

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

ZOE

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

MAL

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

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

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

BOOK

Lawman, it's Shepherd Book.

He opens the door --

BOOK (cont'd)

I believe you're in more danger  
than --

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

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

EXT. DESERT - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

MAL

(quietly)

Jayne better come through...

PATIENCE

Mal! How you doing, boy?

MAL  
Walking and talking.

PATIENCE  
That Zoe?  
You still sailing with this old bum?

ZOE  
That's an awful lot of men  
to haul three crates.

PATIENCE  
Well, I couldn't be sure my Mal here  
wasn't looking for some kind of  
payback. You understand.

MAL  
We're just on the job, Patience.  
Not interested in surprises.

EXT. RIDGE OVERLOOKING THE MEETING PLACE - CONTINUING

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

ANGLE: IN HIS SIGHTS:

Is Mal.

Jayne smiles, wicked-like.

INT. ANOTHER DORM ROOM - CONTINUING

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

He pulls out another gun. And another.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

The exchange continues.

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

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

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

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

MAL  
It's pure, Patience.

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

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

She slices off a piece, chews the very end.

PATIENCE  
Yeah, that's the stuff.

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

PATIENCE (cont'd)  
So where's the rest?

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

RIVER  
Simon...

KAYLEE  
What's wrong, sweetie?

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

DOBSON  
Look at you, all woke up.

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

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

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

PATIENCE  
Reckon I will.

MAL

Well then.

PATIENCE  
Yep.

Nobody moves.

MAL  
I'd appreciate it if you all would  
turn around and ride out first.

PATIENCE  
Yeah, well... see there's kind of a hitch.

MAL  
We both made out on this deal.  
Don't complicate things.

PATIENCE  
I have a rule. I never let go of money  
I don't have to. Which is maybe why  
I'm running this little world and  
you're still in that dinky old boat  
sniffing for scraps.

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

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

ZOE  
We're just gonna walk away, sir?

MAL  
Guess that's up to Patience here.  
(to Patience)  
Could be messy...

PATIENCE  
Not terribly. Ah, Mal... you just  
ain't very bright, are you?

Mal looks at her men, notices one (with a shiny top hat) is carrying a fine looking rifle.

MAL  
That's quite a rifle there. Boy must be  
your best shot, carry that.

PATIENCE  
He's called Two-Fry.  
Always makes it quick and clean.

Two-Fry smiles.

MAL  
Two-Fry. Nice hat.

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

And then a lot of things happen at once.

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

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Simon and Wash are there, talking.

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

SIMON  
You don't have to worry about me.

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

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

KAYLEE  
He took her...

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

He stops, looks at his screen.

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

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

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

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

River backs into a corner, wild with terror.

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

JAYNE  
<Hun dan!> [Damn!]

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

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

ANGLE: ZOE

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

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

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

Mal stands, no longer moving or hiding.

MAL  
Zoe?

ZOE  
Ahhhh... armor's dented.

MAL  
Well, you were right about this  
being a bad idea...

ZOE  
Thanks for saying, sir.

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

PATIENCE  
Mal, don't take another step --

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

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

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

He takes the money back.

MAL (cont'd)  
And then I get paid.

He moves his gun from her face.

MAL (cont'd)  
Go run your little world.

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

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

Gorramn Reavers followed us!

Everyone still alive looks scared.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

END OF ACT SIX

## Act Seven

INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER

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

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

SIMON  
Don't move!

WASH (O.S.)  
(on the com)  
REAVERS! Reavers incoming and headed  
straight for us. We are in the air  
in one minute!

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH  
(to himself)  
Guess the got hungry again.

He starts warming the ship up.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

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

Simon holds the gun on Dobson. His hand shakes.

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

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

DOBSON (cont'd)  
I don't wanna hurt anybody. I have  
a job to do. To uphold the Law.  
That's what we're talking about here.  
There's nowhere you can take her that

the law won't find. Nobody's gonna hurt her... unless you hurt me.

SIMON  
I said don't move!

DOBSON  
It's your call.

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

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash is getting more and more freaked --

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

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

INARA  
Simon!

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

DOBSON  
I'm not playing anymore.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

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

INT. CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK - CONTINUING

Mal walks in behind Simon --

DOBSON  
Anybody makes so much as a --

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

MAL  
Wash! We're on!

We pulls the Lawman's body up and dumps it out the closing airlock as Jayne and Zoe enter. Simon

moves to River, just shocked and silent.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

The hatch is still closing as the ship takes off.

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

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

MAL  
How close are they?

WASH  
About twenty seconds from spitting distance.

JAYNE  
Well lose 'em!

MAL  
(to Zoe)  
Give me rear vid.

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

ZOE  
<Ai ya. Women wanle.> [We're in big trouble.]

MAL  
(to Wash)  
How close do they need to be  
to fire the grapples?

JAYNE  
Wash, you dumbass, dodge 'em!

WASH  
If everybody could just be quiet  
a moment...

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE/FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUING

Wash continues to pilot with serene expertise.

WASH  
I need Kaylee in the engine room  
please.

ZOE  
Can she even --

MAL  
(to Jayne)

Get her in there. Now.

Jayne goes. Mal moves to Inara.

ZOE  
(to Wash)  
Can we lose them?

He doesn't answer. He's flying.

ANGLE: MAL AND INARA

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

INARA  
We can't just leave you here.

MAL  
Thought that was the plan.

INARA  
Mal, don't --

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

INARA  
They'll kill you.

MAL  
Inara.

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

And pushes her gently away.

MAL (cont'd)  
Go.

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

MAL (cont'd)  
(to Wash)  
How are we doing?

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

The Reaver ship is hard on Serenity's heels.

INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

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

INARA  
You three. Come with me.

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

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

INT. BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Wash flies.

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

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

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

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

KAYLEE  
You want me to go for full burn?

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

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

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

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Head of the class.

She coughs, wincing in pain.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

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

WASH  
See what I can do...

(into com)  
Kaylee, how would you feel about  
pulling a Crazy Ivan?

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

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

JAYNE  
Where the hell --

KAYLEE  
Look. Look where I'm pointing.

He does, opens a panel near the floor.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Okay. Now it's real simple.

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

MAL  
They're on us...

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH  
(into com)  
Kaylee...?

No answer. Then:

KAYLEE (OS)  
Okay!

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

He SLAMS down a lever and

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

second --

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

WASH  
(into com)  
NOW!

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

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

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING

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

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

Mal and Zoe are kind of amazed.

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

Mal hits the com:

MAL  
We're good, people.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Extreme, solemn relief.

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

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

Jayne whoops with delight. Even Book smiles.

Kaylee runs her hand along the hull.

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

She looks at the boys and beams.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

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

MAL  
We did.

Zoe exchanges a look with Wash.

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

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

WASH  
Work, work, work...

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

EXT. SPACE - LATER

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

INT. INARA'S CHAMBER - LATER

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

INARA  
You should really have the young  
doctor look at this.

BOOK  
It's not so bad.

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

BOOK  
I didn't say that.

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

BOOK (cont'd)  
Is this what life is, out here?

INARA  
Sometimes.

BOOK  
I've been out of the abbey two days,  
I've beaten a Lawman senseless, I've  
fallen in with criminals... I watched  
the captain shoot a man I swore to  
protect.  
(the hard part...)  
And I'm not even sure if I think he  
was wrong.

INARA  
Shepherd...

He is shaking a bit, tearing up.

BOOK  
I believe I just...  
(a pained smile)  
I think I'm on the wrong ship.

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

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

INT. SIMON'S ROOM - LATER

He is tucking River into bed.

SIMON  
The shot I gave you will help you sleep.

RIVER  
I slept for so long...

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

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

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

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

He takes her in his arms, holds her tight.

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

INT. BRIDGE - LATER

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

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

MAL  
I suppose so.

Jayne gets up to leave.

MAL (cont'd)

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

JAYNE

I didn't have nothing to do with that. Anyway it all turned out just fine. Buzzards're the only ones gonna find him...

MAL

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

He looks at Jayne, who says nothing.

MAL (cont'd)

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

JAYNE

Money wasn't good enough.

MAL

What happens when it is?

JAYNE

(smiling)

Well that'll be an interesting day.

MAL

I imagine it will.

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

SIMON

You need me to look at that?

MAL

Just a graze.

SIMON

(a beat, then)

So where do you plan on dumping us?

MAL

There's places you might be safe. You want the truth, though, you're probably safer on the move.

(turns to him)

And we never stop moving.

SIMON

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

MAL

It may have become apparent to you, the ship could use a medic. You ain't weak. I don't know how bright you are, top three percent, but you

ain't weak and that's not nothing.  
You live by my rule, keep your sister  
from doing anything crazy, you could  
maybe find a place here. Til you  
find a better.

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

MAL

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

SIMON

(smiles)

Are you always this sentimental?

MAL

I had a good day.

SIMON

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

Mal looks out at the black sky.

MAL

We're still flying.

SIMON

That's not much.

Mal answers, almost to himself...

MAL

It's enough.

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

END OF SHOW