

Firefly - "Heart of Gold"

Written by: Brett Matthews

Directed by: Tom Wright

Cast:

Nathan Fillion as "Malcolm Reynolds (Mal)"
Gina Torres as "Zoe Washburne"
Alan Tudyk as "Hoban Washburne (Wash)"
Morena Baccarin as "Inara Serra"
Adam Baldwin as "Jayne Cobb"
Jewel Staite as "Kaywinnit Lee Frye (Kaylee)"
Sean Maher as "Simon Tam"
Summer Glau as "River Tam"
Ron Glass as "Shepherd Book"

Guest Cast:

Melinda Clarke as "Nandi"
Kimberly McCullough as "Chari"
Tracy Leah Ryan as "Petaline"
Fredric Lehne (as Fredric Lane) as "Rance Burgess"
Sandy Mulvihill as "Belinda"
Heather Black as "Helen"
Angie Hart as "Lucy"
Doan Ly as "Emma"
Sandy Mulvihill as "Belinda"
Jim Lau as "Puppet Theater Narrator"

Episode #: 1AGE10

Story #: E01807

SHOOTING SCRIPT: October 29, 2002

BLUE REVISIONS: October 30, 2002

PINK REVISIONS: October 31, 2002

YELLOW REVISIONS: December 16, 2002

Teaser

EXT. SPACE

We are in deep space. A planet comes into frame from above, and we rocket towards it, past it to a circling moon, closer, see the landmasses, the landscape come all the way down toward a glittering house in the desert --

EXT. HEART OF GOLD BORDELLO - DAY

A plain but stately-in-its-own-way multi-storied wood frame structure, alone and secluded on this pleasant moon.

A PRETTY GIRL (late teens) and a PRETTY BOY (same age) are currently out front, hanging the laundry. Sheets. They giggle and laugh. Picture perfect country tranquility. They react to the SOUND of POUNDING HORSE HOOVES...

THROUGH THE BILLOWING SHEETS

HORSES on the horizon. Coming up fast over a rise. And now, in between them, bouncing up INTO VIEW -- A HOVERCRAFT, a badass SPACE JEEP, zooming over its buffeting hover-current.

THE BOY AND GIRL register recognition. React --

PRETTY GIRL
Nandi! NANDI!

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, early 30's, NANDI, the madam of this concern, appears from the house. Sees the trouble approaching in the distance.

NANDI
Get inside.

But they are frozen to the spot as the riders and hovercraft get closer. Some other GIRLS are appearing variously at the door and windows. All of them are varying degrees of pretty -- prostitutes.

NANDI (cont'd)
GO!

The frightened girl and boy head in. Nandi mentally runs through her options. There is only one: stand tough. The horses gallop up. She is immovable.

NANDI (cont'd)
We ain't open for business. It's the
sabbath. We don't do no trade on the
sabbath.

The HOVERCRAFT glides to a stop. Piloting it is RANCE BURGESS. A handsome, fancified imperious GENTLEMAN. But he's anything but gentle...

BURGESS
Shut up, whore.

NANDI
And you we don't trade with at all,
Rance Burgess. You're no longer
welcome in this establishment. You
been told that.

BURGESS
Been told a great many things. I'm
here for what's mine.

NANDI
Ain't nothing here belongs to you.
You don't get gone, we'll be well
within our rights to drop you.

BURGESS
Only rights you got are the ones I
give you.
(to his men)
Find her.

The horsemen move to the door, push their way in.

NANDI
She ain't here. Girl left this moon
more'n a month ago. It was you
chased her off.

BURGESS
I got information says different.

Nandi is poker-faced. Some SCREAMING and CRYING from inside. Crying he recognizes. He smiles at the stone-faced Nandi.

BURGESS (cont'd)
We'll look to dealing with your
prevaricatin' ways another time.

Rance's men now hustle a struggling GIRL out through the door -- young PETALINE. She'd be the picture of scrubbed wholesomeness -- except for the fact that she's very, very pregnant. 'bout ready to pop. She's terrified. They force her to her knees.

BURGESS (cont'd)
Petaline. Good thing you didn't
leave with my baby.

PETALINE
This baby ain't yours!

BURGESS
So you've been saying.

He nods to his men, who rip open Petaline's dress, exposing her belly. Rance pulls a FUTURISTIC HYPO DEVICE from his coat, plunges it into her belly. She winces and gasps in sudden pain. He brings the device away from her.

BURGESS (cont'd)
If this DNA is a match to mine --
know I'll be back for my child.

Rance climbs on his hovercraft, his men to their horses.

BURGESS (cont'd)
And if you decide to close your legs
for once in your life and that baby
hasn't been born by the time I'm
ready -- I'll cut it out of ya.

They go. Nandi and some of the other girls move to Petaline, who's quietly sobbing. Help her to her feet.

NANDI
Shhh. Quiet, now. It's all gonna
work out.

Among the whores helping to steady Petaline are CHARI, a petite and refined prostitute, maybe the prettiest one here, and HELEN, a more hardy whore. They watch the men leaving.

CHARI
He'll do it too. He'll do what he
says.

NANDI
No he won't. We won't allow it.

HELEN
How we gonna stop him, Nandi?

NANDI
We'll get help. That's how.

CHARI

Help? There's not a soul on this moon'd go up against Rance Burgess.

HELEN

She's right. Ain't nobody strong enough. And even if there was -- who'd help us?

CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM

MAL

in a wicked-cool CLOSE UP whips his gun at us with a stylish rack to the barrel. He's cleaning and checking it, looking casually heroic. Spread out on the dining room table are an assortment of his best guns and such.

INARA enters behind him. He doesn't hear her.

INARA

Hi.

MAL

BWAAA!

INARA

Sorry. I didn't mean to startle.

MAL

You didn't.

(repeating as if he meant to, points gun)
BWAAA! That's kind of a warrior...

It's a... strikes fear into...

(nothin')

Bwaa?

(then, fuck it)

You know, it ain't altogether wise, sneaking up on a man when he's handling his weapon.

INARA

I'm sure I've heard that said. But perhaps the dining area isn't the place for this sort of thing?

MAL

What do you mean? Only place with a table big enough.

INARA

Of course. In that case...

(rearranges guns)

Every well-bred petty crook knows -- the small concealable weapons always go to the far left of the place setting.

Mal bristles at the term "petty crook". Before he can speak, WASH enters from the bridge.

WASH

Got a distress call coming in.
Some folks asking for help.

MAL
Really? Folks asking for help? From
us petty crooks?

WASH
Well...

MAL
(at Inara)
Maybe I should take that right away.

Mal makes to do that, but Wash stops him with:

WASH
Well, it's for her.

MAL
Huh?

WASH
They didn't ask for you, Mal. Call's
for Inara.

INARA
I'll take it in my shuttle.

WASH
I'll send it back there.

MAL
This distress wouldn't be taking
place in someone's pants, would it?

She throws a look, goes one way, Wash goes the other. Mal is left alone. A beat.

As Mal whips his gun back up into a heroic frame,

MAL (cont'd)
(all cool)
Bwaa.

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

Act One

EXT. SPACE

Serenity gently moving through the big black.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - DAY

Inara sits at her cortex screen, where WE SEE the live image of NANDI.

NANDI
-- And I got word you were in the
area... I'm imposing, but I got no

one else to ask.

INARA

It sounds like the sort of thing this crew can handle. I can't guarantee they'll handle it particularly well, but --

NANDI

If they got guns, and brains at all...

INARA

They have guns.

NANDI

(worried)

Payment won't be a problem. We just ain't equipped for this.

INARA

Nandi, it's gonna be all right.

NANDI

The House would tell you not to come. I know they ordered you to shun me when I left.

INARA

That isn't why I haven't seen you, Nandi. The house can < engage in a feces hurling contest with a monkey > [gun HOE-tze bee DIO-se]. I would have waved long ago, I just...

NANDI

Doesn't matter.

(smiles)

Who'd've thought we'd both end up all the way out here?

INARA

Who'd've thought.

NANDI

Let me know what your people say.

INARA

Of course.

NANDI

I'll wait to hear from you.

(then)

< Blessing on you, dear sister. >
[TZOO-foo nee, mei-mei.]

INARA

And you.

Inara touches the screen. Nandi's image FREEZES there. Inara sits there quietly contemplative for a beat. Then:

INARA (cont'd)

I suppose you heard most of that?

Mal appears, peaking around the corner at the entrance.

MAL

Only 'cause I was eavesdropping.
(then, no bullshit)
Your friend sounds like she's in a
peck of trouble.

INARA

She is. There's no authority on that
moon she can turn to. They're
totally alone.

MAL

Some men might take advantage of that.

INARA

One man.

MAL

And she's lookin' for someone to come
along and explain things to him?

INARA

That's essentially it, yes.

MAL

A whole house full of companions...
How they fixed for payment?

INARA

They're not companions.
(then)
They're whores, Mal.

MAL

Thought you didn't much care for that
word?

INARA

It applies. None who work for Nandi
are registered with the Guild.
They're --

MAL

-- independent?

INARA

Yes.
(then)
If you agree to do this, you will be
compensated. I'll see to it. I've
put a little aside...

MAL

You keep your money. Won't be
needing no payment.

INARA

Mal. Thank you. I'll contact Nandi
at once.

(he smiles; she turns
away)

But you will be paid. I feel it's
important we keep ours strictly a
business arrangement.

Her back's to him now, so she doesn't see the stung look.

MAL

I'll speak to the crew.

INARA

Good.

She never looks back. Off Mal, waiting a beat before he goes --

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Mal has EVERYONE assembled (except Inara.) He's letting Zoe brief the troops. He's to the side, the silent commander.

ZOE

Those who have a mind are welcome to
join. Those who just as soon stay on
the ship can do that, too.

JAYNE

Don't much see the benefit in getting
involved in strangers' troubles
without a upfront price negotiated.

BOOK

These people need assistance. The
benefit wouldn't necessarily be for
you.

JAYNE

S'what I'm sayin'

ZOE

No one's gonna force you to go,
Jayne. As has been stated -- this
job's strictly speculative.

JAYNE

Good. 'cause I don't know these
folks. Don't much care to.

MAL

They're whores.

JAYNE

I'm in.

MAL

(moving off)
Wash -- plot a course.

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Serenity lands amidst cover.

EXT. HEART OF GOLD - DAY

We see The Bordello, in all its tinfoil splendor.

Reverse on our people, in a long-lens tight group, heading towards it.

JAYNE
That's the whorehouse?

INARA
(you're an annoying
idiot) Yes...

JAYNE
How come it looks like a frozen
dinner pack?

KAYLEE
It's solar sheeting. Cheap power.

JAYNE
(genuine concern)
Hope the whores is prettier'n the
house...

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - DAY

Our gang files into the lobby. The girls are all hanging about, some making a bit of a show of themselves, draped about as if for customers, some more earnest or just curious. Inara is in the process of coming towards Nandi for a great big hug. Mal is behind her, waiting as is Zoe.

As for the rest, they politely nod and greet the whores, Kaylee guilelessly, Simon politely, Book kindly, Jayne grinningly, Wash uncomfortably, River inquisitively. Much adlibbing from them as have speaking parts. (Chari and Petaline are not present).

INARA
Nandi, darling.

NANDI
It's so good to see you, Mei Mei...

INARA
You look wonderful.

NANDI
And you look exactly the same as the
day I left. How do you do that out
here?

MAL
Sheer force of will.

INARA
Nandi, this is Malcolm Reynolds.

NANDI

I appreciate your coming.

She shakes his hand, firmlike.

MAL

Any friend of Inara's is a strictly
businesslike relationship of mine.

The dig is not lost on Inara, nor is her reaction lost on Nandi

MAL (cont'd)

This is my first mate, Zoe. I'll
introduce you to the rest in a bit.
They're good folk.

JAYNE

(calls out from across the room, no
'tude)
Can I start getting sexed already?

MAL

Well, that one's kind of horrific.

Jayne has Helen by the shoulder, is pointing at her...

JAYNE

This one'd could sex me okay...

NANDI

He good in a fight?

MAL

'Bout the best.

NANDI

(calls out)

Helen, why don't you show our new
friend what a Palastinian Somersault
is.

Helen giggles. Jayne looks confused and excited.

JAYNE

Is that good?

ZOE

(ugh)

Can we talk business?

NANDI

(indicating lounge)

In here.

(to the others)

Rest of you, there's food and some
liquor at the sideboard, make
yourselves to home.

The four exit. We stay with the others.

JAYNE

(to Helen)

Just let me get a drink in me, and
then we'll get to that Panatarian...
thing you do.

Kaylee nudges Simon and Wash, indicates the two young men.

KAYLEE

Look, they got boy whores! Isn't
that thoughtful? Wonder if they
service girlfolk at all.

WASH

Let's not ask.

SIMON

Isn't there a pregnant woman I'm to
examine?

WASH

(to Kaylee)

You'd really lie with someone being
paid for it?

KAYLEE

(pointedly forlorn)

Well, it's not like anyone else is
lining up to, you know, examine me...

JAYNE

(joining them)

Man, my John Thomas is gonna pop off
and fly around the room, there's so
much tasty here.

WASH

Would be you get your most poetical
about your pecker.

Chari brings Petaline up to them.

CHARI

You'd be the Doctor?

SIMON

Yes. And this is Petaline?

PETALINE

Yes sir.

CHARI

She's feeling a mite weak right now.

SIMON

Well, let's get you lying down, take
a look at you.

JAYNE

Now that's a plan!

He goes off with Helen, Simon goes to the back room with the two girls, River trailing.

We see Book making up a sandwich -- he is approached by LUCY and EMMA

EMMA
Shepherd --

BOOK
No thank you!

They smile a bit.

EMMA
We were hoping we might have a prayer
meeting?

LUCY
We ain't had one in months, 'cept
what Emma here reads out on Sunday.

EMMA
Last Shepherd to come by was
springtime. He only read the one
passage, and he took it out in trade
off both of us.

Book has no response.

Kaylee watches the girls chat up Book...

KAYLEE
Everybody's got somebody...
(wistfully)
Wash, tell me I'm pretty...

WASH
Were I unwed, I would take you in a
manly fashion.

KAYLEE
'Cause I'm pretty?

WASH
'Cause you're pretty.

KAYLEE
Thank you. That was very restorative.

INT. BORDELLO - LOUNGE - DAY

Mal, Zoe, Nandi and Inara. Mid talk.

MAL
So I take it reason doesn't enter
into this?

NANDI
Not with Rance Burgess. The man is
a taker.

ZOE

You think the kid is his?

NANDI

(firm)

I think it's Petaline's.

INARA

But the blood test...

NANDI

Well, he did favor Petaline pretty exclusively, but she had others. Fifty-fifty, not that it matters. The man ain't fit to raise a cactus plant. His barren prairie shrew can't bear him an heir, so he takes it into his head to pull it outta us. That's not gonna happen.

MAL

(likes her strength)

I see that's the case.

NANDI

And you see the way we live here. Go into town, it's the same. Some places come up rustic 'cause they ain't got more'n the basics. Rance Burgess has money enough to build a city, a real community. He keeps people living like this so he can play cowboy, be the one with the best toys. Turned this moon into a gorram theme park. Someone stands up to him... He means to burn me out.

MAL

He sounds like a fun guy. I'd like to meet him.

NANDI

This won't be solved with talk.

MAL

I'm gonna fight a man, it helps to size him up.

NANDI

Well, he'll be at the theatre tonight, that's a certainty.

MAL

Then so will I. Inara, think you could stoop to being on my arm?

INARA

Will you wash it first?

He smiles at the light dig, turns to Zoe.

MAL

Zoe, start getting the lay of the place: fortifications, weak spots and whatnot. I'll slip into my Sunday best, and see what passes for entertainment in this town.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

A CIRCULAR SHADOW representing Earth-That-Was FILLS THE FRAME. Silhouetted shapes appear. SPACESHIPS. They radiate out from the shadow sphere. We're witnessing some form of Balinese puppet theater. A nattily attired NARRATOR (speaking in Chinese: [click to see addendum](#)) presides before the backlit gauze screen across which the shadows play. It's the story of the destruction and fleeing of Earth-That-Was.

WIDER - Well-heeled PATRONS mill about as the show continues on a small stage in the b.g. The theater itself is upscale, ornate in its own particular way. Asian and Pacific influences abound.

Mal and Inara enter, arm-in-arm. They're dressed to kill.

MAL
I'll never understand rich folk. All that money, this is what they do with it.

INARA
It's art.

MAL
It's puppets.

INARA
It's puppet art.

A waiter passes with a tray of strangely-colored drinks. Mal grabs one, takes a sip. His face immediately contorts.

MAL
< Weak-ass sauce! > [LAN-dan JIANG!] I swear to you, its like money and good taste are inversely proportional.

INARA
That might make you the most tasteful man I've ever met.

MAL
Funny.

He swirls his colored drink. Eyeballs it.

MAL (cont'd)
Maybe you drink enough of this stuff, the puppets start makin' sense.

Inara smiles, enjoying him. It fades as her eyes lock on something beyond Mal. Off her reaction:

MAL (cont'd)
Found our boy?

Inara nods, and Mal turns to find Burgess lording over a particularly influential crowd. He's holding court, his guests laughing with disturbing frequency and force. On Burgess' arm is his wife,

BELINDA. Pale and slight, she's dressed a cut about most every woman there, fiscally speaking. Conservative excess.

MAL

I've a sudden itch to see how the
other half lives.

Mal offers his arm to Inara, she takes it and they stroll up to where a conversation is in progress.

BURGESS

(midstream)

... so I explained to the boy: you
take a clean woman's virtue, you take
the woman. And that's for life. Boy
said his vows right then and there.
Took very little persuading on my
part.

Burgess pats his laser pistol which hangs conspicuously on his belt. LAUGHTER from the assembled. And now Mal is among them, laughing LOUDER and LONGER than any of them. Finally everyone's starting at him.

***Sc. 9 -- INSERT to be shot, (if not gotten already) Rance (double) pulls coat aside to pat lasergun!

MAL

Nice to know there's some places
left in the 'verse where old-
fashioned values still mean a thing.

(to Inara)

Isn't that right, dear?

INARA

(forced smile)

Mmmm.

BURGESS

I don't think I know you...

MAL

(hand extended)

Name's Malcolm. Malcolm Reynolds.

Burgess takes Mal's hand. They shake. Mal doesn't let go as he leans in a bit closer, says:

MAL (cont'd)

And might I just say? She is quite
a beauty.

Mal releases Burgess's hand. Burgess looks at him.

BURGESS

Thank you.

He unholsters his laser gun, offers it up to Mal.

BURGESS (cont'd)

You ever have an occasion to handle
one, Mister Reynolds?
(offering it)

Silk trigger active return bolt laser.

Mal takes the laser pistol, looks it over

MAL

Lighter than it looks. Thought it'd
have more heft to it.

BURGESS

Don't let that fool you. Won't find
technology like that short of
Alliance. And even their issues
don't yet have the auto-target
adjust. Had that one crafted special.

MAL

Didn't think firearms such as this
were generally legal -- for a private
owner, I mean.

BELINDA

My husband makes a distinction
between legality and morality,
Mister Reynolds.

Mal glances over at Belinda, holds her eyes for a beat.

MAL

I've said that myself.

BURGESS

Bending one unjust law is a small
thing when it comes to protecting
one's family.

MAL

I think I understand you.

BURGESS

(smiles)

And as you say -- she is a beauty.

MAL

She sure is.

(hands it back)

'course, I was referring to the lady.

(nods to Belinda)

Ma'am.

Mal steers Inara away. The others watch them go.

Now Burgess' FUTURE CELLPHONE BEEPS. He takes it out of his pocket, his eyes still on the retreating Mal --

BURGESS

Yes?

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Mal and Inara exit the theater hastily. Mal walks quickly, looking to put distance between himself

and the theater.

INARA
Well?

MAL
Well what?

INARA
You said you wanted to look him in
the eye. You've done that. So
what's the plan?

MAL
Plan is -- we get back to Serenity
and we get off this rock just as fast
we can.

Mal hasn't slowed his pace. Off Inara, surprised --

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Burgess is in a private-ish corner speaking on his future cell phone. Belinda joins him, expectant.

BURGESS
(into cell)
And there can be no mistake? Good.

Beat. Burgess snaps the cell shut. Mulls

BELINDA (O.S.)
Rance?

BURGESS
The DNA matches. The child's mine.
And Belinda -- it's a boy.

PUSH IN on Belinda. Registering that.

BELINDA
A son... A son.
(then)
Come first light, you ride over
there... and you get me my boy.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

Act Two

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - NIGHT

Mal stands in the center of the bordello's lobby, his finery from the previous scene taken down a notch. The crew and the staff of the Heart of Gold surround him.

MAL
We run.

Nandi takes this with stoic calm, but some of her girls GASP with surprise.

MAL (cont'd)

Math just don't add up. Our weapon store ain't exactly overpowerin' at the moment, and I don't much like what we'd be up against...

The Serenity crew looks a bit surprised by this as well.

MAL (cont'd)

Nothing worse than a monster who thinks he's right with God. We might turn Burgess away once, but he'll keep comin' -- won't stop 'till he gets what he thinks is his. So we--

NANDI

Captain Reynolds, I understand. You have your people to think of, same as me. And this isn't your fight.

MAL

Don't believe you do understand, Nandi. I said 'we run'.

(Nandi gives no response)

We. My people. Your people. And whatever bits of precious you got in this place you can't part with. We load up Serenity and leave Burgess in the dust.

Nandi steps closer to Mal, all strength and resolve. Despite the audience of listeners, she and Mal talk with intimate intensity, as if they're the only ones there.

NANDI

Captain Reynolds... It took me years to cut this piece of territory out of other men's hands. To build this business up from nothing.

MAL

Nandi--

NANDI

It's who I am. And it's my home. I'm not going anywhere.

MAL

He'll kill you.

(re: her people)

Kill every last one of them, it comes to that. And he'll sleep well that night.

NANDI

And how well will you sleep, Captain?

Mal has no answer for that. Nandi holds her stare on him as she calls to her staff.

NANDI (cont'd)

Any of you want to take up the Captain's offer, you do it, with my

blessing.

Behind her, much head shaking by the whores. No one's going anywhere. Nandi turns to Petaline, voice gentle.

NANDI (cont'd)
Petaline, that means you, too.

Petaline sits in an overstuffed chair, sweating, clearly uncomfortable. Simon takes her pulse.

PETALINE
No, Miss Nandi. I ain't leavin' the
Heart of Gold. Ain't leavin' you...

Nandi turns back to Mal.

NANDI
Rance Burgess is just a man... And I
won't let any man take what's mine.
I doubt you'd do different, in my
position.

Eyes still locked on each other, a stalemate of personal cool, until Mal shakes his head slightly.

MAL
Well, lady I must say--
(admiring smile)
You're my kinda stupid.

He turns to Zoe and the rest of his crew.

MAL (cont'd)
Y'heard my points of contention with
this thing. But I got a lifetime of
good night's rest to consider, so I'm
goin' back on that.
(glances at Inara)
There's still money in the job, for
them that want to throw in--

Jayne, arm around Helen, shrugs.

JAYNE
Hell, he ain't expectin' much of a
fight. We might catch him with his
drawers low.

Mal raises his eyebrows. Zoe checks the chamber of her gun, cocks it.

ZOE
(nods)
He'll probably ride in by daylight,
but I figure a three point watch,
say, four hour shifts, be on the safe
side.

WASH
(nods, mock expertise)
Three-point, four-hour, should do it.

Mal gives a slight smile, then Book steps up.

BOOK
I'm fair handy with a hammer, Captain.

MAL
That so, Shepherd--?

BOOK
Been following the footsteps of a
carpenter for some time now. I think
I can do something about our
fortifications.

Mal looks over the rest of his people, Kaylee smiles and nods, Simon looks up from Petaline, then back to his task. we feel Mal take understated pride in knowing them.

MAL
OK then...

His strategy wheels start turning, as UNDERSTATED 'GET SHIT DONE' MUSIC starts to build.

MAL (cont'd)
We start shootin', they'll most like
try to burn us out, save their sweat
and bullets. Nandi, What's the water
supply here?

NANDI
Underground well. Pump that draws it
up's antiquated, but it don't break
down.

Quietly, off to the side of the action, Petaline stops with a jolt. She puts a hand to her belly.

MAL
Kaylee-- think you can swing an
upgrade for their waterworks?

Kaylee moves closer to him, beaming happily.

KAYLEE
I'll talk to Serenity, see what she's
got we might use.

MAL
Good. And we better find some--

River is suddenly at their side

RIVER
It's starting.

Kaylee gives a little STARTLED JUMP, unseen by Mal.

MAL
That's a sure fact. But time is on
the enemy's side so--

PETALINE
(pained yelp)

Dr. Tam--!

Mal sees Petaline, who Simon helps to her feet as she pants with contraction.

MAL
Oh -- It's starting -- Okay.
(a little panicky)
It's starting! -- No one panic --
It's gonna be fine--

Simon leads Petaline toward the bordello's back room, nodding to Mal.

SIMON
I got this one, Captain.

Mal looks around at everyone else, who smile, at the brink of chuckling, at his display. He CLAPS his hands, resuming his heroic authority.

MAL
Come on people! Let's get to work.

INT./EXT. HEART OF GOLD - DAY

Various angles:

Book nailing planks

Planks being put on windows

Jayne checking weapons

Wash and Zoe testing booby trap (Already shot)

Feet burying rope in the sand (for booby trap)

Inara passing Nandi with steaming towels

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - BALCONY - DAY

Book wields a hammer, boarding up windows. Lucy and Emma, the "church" whores, assist.

EMMA
The girls and I've been talkin',
Shepherd.

He stops, turns to face her.

EMMA (cont'd)
We've been discussin' what we'd like
said over us if we should happen to
fall --

BOOK
No.

Book reaches out, places a hand on her.

BOOK
I only bury the dead, child. And no
one here is going to die. Not a one

of you.

He smiles and the tension disappears. Lucy returns it.

SMASH TO:

INT. BORDELLO - UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY

JAYNE

Now, there's people gonna die.

Jayne sits in front of a large window, its field of view panoramic. Across from him, Helen sits attentively.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Ain't no way 'round that. And with people dyin' comes guts and screamin' and that can bring on all sorts of screwed-up behaviors, a person's not used to it. When the time comes, most important thing is you keep your wits about you. Clear?

Helen nods. Jayne reaches over to a nearby table strewn with weapons and ammunition.

JAYNE (cont'd)

These here are my favorites, and you're to keep 'em comin' till there ain't no more to be had. I shoot, I run out you just hand me the next biggest and so on. Is there an understanding here?

HELEN

Yes.

JAYNE

All right, then. Lets get to work.

Giggling, Helen hops on top of Jayne, straddles him. She plants wet kisses all over. Jayne craning his neck to keep his mouth out of reach.

EXT. BORDELLO - DAY

Wash sweeps a pile of dry earth over a wood-and-rope contraption, securing and camouflaging the device.

WASH

All I'm saying is we're living pretty deep in the rough and tumble, and I don't see that changing any time soon.

Zoe rises up behind him, a large spool of wire in her hands.

ZOE

Nor do I.

She crouches, begins to wind the wire between one of two stakes buried deep in the ground, some fifteen feet apart.

WASH

Well, I'm not sure now is the best
time to bring a tiny little helpless
person into our lives.

Wash lies flat, secures the wire to the stake. He takes a pair of WIRECUTTERS and cuts the wire.

ZOE
That excuse is getting a little worn,
honey.

WASH
It's not an excuse, dear. It's
objective assessment. I can't help it
if it stays relevant.

Zoe stands, starts kicking dirt over the lines of their trap.

ZOE
I don't give a good gorrám about
relevant, Wash. Or objective. And I'm
not so afraid of losing something
that I won't try havin' it. You and
I would make one beautiful baby. I
want to meet that child one day.
Period.

WASH
And this beautiful baby of ours, you
don't mine that it's going to grow up
on a spaceship?

ZOE
Worked fine for me.

Beat. Wash considers, nods.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Burgess stands in the street, jacket swept back behind his holstered LASER PISTOL, tumbler of whiskey in one hand. He takes a swig then FAST DRAWS, firing THREE SHOTS from his laser. Just before the third, we CUT TO:

ANGLE ON TARGET DUMMY

A stuffed burlap dummy, tied to a rough wood tripod. The last LASER BEAM sears into its head, IGNITING IT, HOLD ON the dummy as it bursts into FLAMES.

INT. NANDI'S ROOM - EVENING

Mal looks out the window. We can't see what he sees, but we hear a cluster of gunshots, followed by the barking of Jayne:

JAYNE (O.S.)
That ain't nothin'! Y'all are
pulling, not squeezing like I said.
Next one doesn't hit that board is
giving up a special treat, < you
understand? > [dong MA?]

Mal closes the window, smiling a little.

MAL

That man is gonna use up all our
credit 'fore we've earned it.

NANDI

Well, after you've saved our lives
you can do some chores, maybe.

She is getting a box from her bottom drawer. As they talk she lays it on the bed, pulls out a few fancy looking pistols.

MAL

I'm a fair hand with a mop.

NANDI

So your legend tells.
(chuckling)
Truth is, I expected a whole lot more
of you to be taking payment in our
trade.

MAL

Well, we're an odd conglomeration.
Got a preacher, a married fellah, and
the doctor... well he'd have to relax
for thirty seconds to get his play,
and that'd be more or less a miracle.
(re: guns)
These are fetching little pieces.
They work at all?

NANDI

Don't got many rounds for the
Chaplain there, but the rest'll be of
use.
(picks one up)
This is my favorite.

MAL

What's its history?

NANDI

Violence and crime, sad to say. What
about you?

MAL

Similar.

NANDI

No, I mean, when are you planning to
avail yourself of some of our trade?
My girls is clean and kind-spirited.

MAL

Well, I got the job in mind. After,
I'm sure I'll... trade. They're a
fine bunch.

NANDI

You ain't looked at one of 'em as
long or as lovin' as you looked at
those pistols. You're not sly, are

you? 'cause I got my boys...

MAL
(totally comfortable
with the question)
Sly? No. I lean towards womenfolk.
Just one thing at a time. Never like
complications.

She smiles, knowingly.

NANDI
I'm certain of that.

MAL
Something to be smiling at?

NANDI
I trained as a companion, remember?
I read people pretty well.

MAL
Well, that's nice for you.

He's examining the weapons, deliberately.

NANDI
She's a hell of a woman, ain't she?
(off his look)
Inara.

MAL
(casual)
Oh. Yeah. She's a cherry blossom, no
denyin'.
(still looking at
gun)
'spect you know her better'n I do,
comin' up together and all.

NANDI
Imagine I do. She ever tell you why
she left Sihnon?

MAL
Never asked.

NANDI
Yes you did, and I don't know my own
self. I was gone long before. And
I'll tell you, it was a shock, her
leaving. She was special. There's
forty women in House Madrassa and
you'd pick her out in a second.
Coulda been House Priestess, few
years time.

MAL
Is that right.

NANDI

Had her eyes on it, too. Very focused. She's like you, more than a little.

MAL
And how exactly is that?

NANDI
She hates complications.

A moment between them. A small understanding.

MAL
They do crop up though, don't they?

NANDI
Such is life.

INT. BORDELLO - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Petaline is in bed, letting out an impressive YELL. She's sweaty and breathing hard. Inara is by her side, mopping her brow supportively.

Simon is at the foot of the bed, looking under the tent of sheet they've rigged up. River looks over his shoulder, completely agape.

SIMON
You're not completely dilated yet. Should be pretty quick but don't try to force it. These contractions are still preliminary.

PETALINE
What's he saying?

INARA
It's gonna be a little while, sweetie.

PETALINE
But it hurts! Child wants to be born, I know it.

SIMON
(to Inara)
Can you grab the green vial from my bag. We can dull the pain some.

Inara crosses, pausing by Simon, whispers --

INARA
How many babies have you actually delivered?

SIMON
As the primary? This would be the first. You?

INARA
My first too.

RIVER

(looking even closer)
Mine too.

They look at River a moment.

SIMON
Gonna be a long night.

Inara gives him a peck on the cheek for luck.

INARA
You'll do great, Doctor

RIVER
(still staring)
Who do you think is in there...?

Petaline huffs and puffs...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - NIGHT

Book is standing with his Bible, about half the whores standing or kneeling before him.

BOOK
...forgive us our trespasses, as we
forgive those who trespass against
us, and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil, for thine
is the kingdom, the power and the
glory, Amen.

WHORES
Amen.

They rise, some squaring away tools and weapons and such.

BOOK
Not much more we can do tonight. I
think it best we all get some rest.
Is there... is there a room I can lay
down in?

EMMA
(sweet but sly)
Alone?

They all look at him, guilelessly sexy. He waits perhaps a bit much of a beat.

BOOK
Alone.

They laugh, and he smiles along with them.

BOOK (cont'd)
Thank you.

INT. BORDELLO - NANDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's very late, and Mal and Nandi are on the couch. He throws back a shot. They've both been drinking for a while.

NANDI

It was the dulcimer.

MAL

The Dulcimer drove you out of Sihnon.
What, did you kill a Dulcimer in a
terrible passion?

NANDI

(smiles)

Actually, yes.

MAL

And that Dulcimer's family is looking
to get even. I get it.

NANDI

I was at practice. You never stop
practicing, you know, not a true
companion. Some baroque place, and
the instructor keeps saying "You're
playing it, not feeling it". And the
fifth time he said it I took the damn
thing and smashed it into kindling.
And that's when it occurred to me
that a companion's life might just be
a little too constricting.

She crosses to the dresser to pour two more shots.

NANDI

So I trucked out to the border,
learned to say "ain't" and came to
find work. Found this place.

MAL

It's a nice place.

NANDI

It was a dungheap. Run by a pig who
had half the girls strung out on
drops. There's no Guild out here;
they let men run the houses, and they
don't ask for references. We didn't
get along.

MAL

Where's he at now?

NANDI

(sitting)

Let's just say he ain't playing the
dulcimer anymore either.

They clink glasses. Knock 'em back.

MAL

You are a remarkable woman, you don't

mind my saying.

NANDI

Long as it's you saying it, and not
my fine rice wine.

MAL

It takes more'n a few drinks to
render my judgement blurry. What
about you? Am I getting any prettier?

NANDI

By the minute.

She is so sweetly seductive that they hold on each other a moment. Then he breaks it, all
conscience.

MAL

(rising)

I should check the barricades, make
sure everyone's ready to --

NANDI

Everyone's asleep. Well, them as
can, night before a fight.

She heads for the dresser, to pour again.

NANDI (cont'd)

Can you?

MAL

What?

NANDI

Sleep?

Another beat, as that loaded question settles in. Mal's reply is intimate in tone as well, as he steps
forward.

MAL

Miss Nandi, I have a confession to
make.

NANDI

Maybe I should get the Shepherd.

MAL

Well, I ain't sinned yet, and I'd
feel more than a little awkward
having him here when I do.

NANDI

You expect to accomplish something
sinful then, do you?

MAL

If I'm overstepping my bounds, you
let me know.

NANDI

< Extraordinarily impatient Buddha >
[jen mei NAI-shing duh FWO-tzoo],
Malcolm, I been waiting for you to
kiss me since I showed you my guns --

They're kissing. It's soft, but not without heat. He pulls away, looks at her.

NANDI (cont'd)
You okay with this?

MAL
I'm just waiting to see if I pass
out. Long story.

NANDI
I want you to bed me.

MAL
I guess I mean to.

A small beat, as he strokes her hair.

NANDI
I ain't her.

MAL
Only people in this room is you and
me.

She hands him one of the newly filled shotglasses, takes one herself

NANDI
So, my child... How long has it been
since your last confession?

MAL
Longer than I care to tell.

NANDI
You gonna remember where everything
goes?

MAL
Let's just say I plan to take it real
slow.

They drink. They kiss. They sink to the bed.

INT. BORDELLO - NANDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

It is later, and they are still in the act. They are both naked, him sitting up at the foot of the bed and her astraddle, sheets pooled about their lower portions of them and clever camera work concealing the more interesting details of the upper. Their movement is slow, deliberate -- and not quite so rhythmic as to be entirely specific. They are drenched in sweat.

He runs his hands along the side of her head, his thumb sliding indelicately into the corner of her mouth, Nandi biting down lightly, eyes closing, then opening again, near startled as his hands slip to her hips and they look at each other with something resembling need.

She brings his head to her breast, still moving, eyes wet with tears not spilt.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

BURGESS
So the whore's got herself a
champion, has she?

He is standing in the light of a couple of torches, on the balcony of a two story building, couple of his men behind him. He looks over the railing a moment, amused. Looks back to the person he's addressing.

BURGESS (cont'd)
This great man got a name?

REVERSE to see CHARI is the one feeding him info. Why, she's a TURNCOAT!

CHARI
Reynolds. Malcolm Reynolds.

BURGESS
(thoughtfully)
Yes, I've met the man. How many does
he have with him?

CHARI
Just a few, and only two real
fighters besides himself. But they
got the girls stirrin' for a battle.

BURGESS
Well, I certainly wasn't counting on
a battle.

He turns out over the railing, addressing his men.

BURGESS (cont'd)
Seems the Heart of Gold has got
itself a few mercenaries. I guess
we'd best call the whole thing off!

As he say this, the camera pans over to take in the view of the men -- and they number at least thirty, many on horseback, all total bad-asses. A ROAR of laughter meets Burgess' statement.

*** SFX add to crowd and/or RESHOOT with much bigger crowd for cheer at end of act.

Burgess grins, turns back to Chari.

BURGESS (cont'd)
Earned yourself quite a bag
of silver, little kitten. Got a few
more chores in mind afore you get it,
though.

CHARI
I'm ready.

He motions for her to come closer, puts his arm around her as he addresses the men.

BURGESS
Now Chari here, she understands a

whore's place, don't she?

General assent and applause.

BURGESS (cont'd)
But Nandi, and those others, they
spit on our town.
They've no respect for the sanctity
of fatherhood, for decency or family.
They got MY CHILD held hostage to
their decedent ways and that I will not
abide!

More cheers.

BURGESS (cont'd)
We will show them what power is! We
will show them what their position in
this town is! Let us all remember,
right here and now, what a woman is
to a man!

He turns to Chari, no longer smiling.

BURGESS (cont'd)
Get on your knees.

She looks startled. Looks out at all the men watching. But Burgess is unwavering, and she hesitantly sinks out of the frame.

ANGLE: THE MEN

There is a pause. Then an uproarious cheer.

END OF ACT TWO

Act Three

EXT. BORDELLO - DAWN

The sun creeps over the horizon. The MORNING OF.

INT. BORDELLO - NANDI'S ROOM - DAWN

Mal and Nandi are asleep together, in a tangle of sheets, in a tangle of limbs. Content.

Sunlight streams in from the horizon, cutting her across the eyes. They blink awake. she looks at him sleeping awhile.

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - MORNING

Mal is coming quietly out of Nandi's room, doing up his shirt, just as Inara is coming from the back hall. He stops, totally busted.

MAL
Um...

INARA
Well.

She is startled, but doesn't seem shocked. That doesn't stop Mal from excusifying.

MAL

I was just, um, I had to tell Nandi about the... It's near time to... big fight today.

INARA

Mal. Please.

MAL

Hey, no, I've got, I've been up thinking...

INARA

(sincerely)

So you took to bed with Nandi. I'm glad.

MAL

Thinking and pondering the -- glad?

INARA

Yes! She's a dear friend, and probably in need of some comfort about now.

MAL

Well, I...

INARA

(amused)

One of the virtues of not being puritanical about sex is not being embarrassed afterwards. You should look into it.

MAL

Well, I just... didn't want you to think I was taking advantage of your friend.

INARA

She's well worth taking advantage of, I sincerely hope you did.

MAL

So you're okay. Well, yeah. Why wouldn't you be?

INARA

I wouldn't say I'm entirely okay. I'm a little appalled at her taste.

Smiling, she turns and exits, leaving him come-backless.

INT. BORDELLO - UPSTAIRS ROOM - MORNING

The sun's a mite higher now. Jayne stirs, stretches, as does Helen. Then he rolls over and goes back to sleep.

INT. BORDELLO - BACK ROOM - MORNING

We see Petaline, having dozed off. Track across the room to find Inara sitting on the floor in the corner. Sobbing her eyes out.

EXT. PLAINS - MORNING

Wash and Kaylee trek towards Serenity, which looms in the distance (for one -- and only one -- shot). Wash sips his coffee from a lidded MUG. He has a PISTOL holstered at his side.

Mal's voice comes in over Wash's RADIO HANDSET.

MAL (O.S.)

Wash -- are we there yet?

Wash pulls his radio off his belt and answers.

WASH

All but. Nice day for a last stand,
innit?

MAL (O.S.)

Nope. Plan to make a healthy few
stands after this one. Just hopin'
for some air support from your
quarter, is all.

WASH

(nods)

Couple of low fly-overs, engines
tipped earthward at full blast,
should give our guests something
other than killin' you to think about.

MAL (O.S.)

What I like to hear... Out.

Wash clicks off his radio and clips it back to his belt.

KAYLEE

Captain seem a little funny to you at
breakfast this morning?

WASH

Come on, Kaylee. We all know I'm the
funny one.

INT. BORDELLO - MORNING

Mal walks behind some of the women, who stand in position at the bottom floor lobby windows, holding rifles. He himself is now armed for battle. He wears a RADIO EARWIG.

MAL

You ladies all locked and loaded?

LUCY

Yes, sir.

MAL

Good. Remember, shoot the man, not
the horse. Dead horse is cover, live

horse is a great pile of panic.

He stops as a TRANSMISSION crackles in over his earwing.

JAYNE (O.S.)
(lewd chuckle)
Whoa now, girl, that's just plain
dirty--

He holds a finger up to the women, and hits the transmit switch.

MAL
Jayne-- You aware your radio's
transmittin'?

INT. BORDELLO - UPSTAIRS ROOM - MORNING

CLOSE ON RADIO HEADSET - which sits in a twist of bedspread. Jayne's hand enters frame, fumbling for it.

MAL (O.S)
Cause I ain't feelin' particular
girlish or dirty at the moment.

Jayne picks up the radio and speaks into it as he untangles himself from Helen. He's dressed for war. She, not so much.

JAYNE
Oh, uh, just up here waitin'
Captain. Ready one-hunnert-percent.

He grabs his weapon and looks out his window.

MAL (O.S.)
Better be.

Jayne gives Helen a sharp businesslike nod, and she nods back

***NOTE -- Scene 31 (in which Nandi sees Inara's pain) will play before scene 30 (and before A30), and contain looped lines indicated in the script.

INT. HEART OF GOLD - A BIT LATER

Nandi comes to where Mal is. They get rifles ready over:

MAL
Morning. How'er you feeling?

NANDI
Mite tense.

MAL
(indicating upstairs)
I'd like you best on the balcony with
me. We can see everyone, and --

NANDI
You didn't give me the whole truth,
Mal.

MAL
'bout what?

NANDI
'Bout her feelings for you.

MAL
I really don't know --

JAYNE
(on cam)
Mal! Looks like we got some imminent
violence!

EXT. PLAINS - ELSEWHERE - MORNING

A beat of quiet. Then the FAR-OFF SOUND of horses as a cloud of dust rises on the horizon. SMASH CUT TO --

-- MID-THUNDER with the MERCENARY HORSEMEN surging forward at full gallop, flanking Burgess' hovercraft.

Burgess pilots the hovercraft, expressionless, behind stylish mirrored goggles. Over his face, PRE-LAP Petaline's SCREAM OF PAIN --

INT. BORDELLO - BACK ROOM - MORNING

CLOSE ON Petaline, who writhes in the throes of a contraction.

PETALINE
(continued scream)

Her legs are up and spread apart, concealed by a sheet. Inara holds her hand.

Inara leans in towards Petaline's face.

INARA
You're stronger than this thing,
honey. I can feel it in your grip...
(Petaline SCREAMS
again)
Petaline, look at me--

Petaline looks up at Inara, who catches her eyes in an intense, almost hypnotic stare.

INARA (cont'd)
This is just a moment in time... Step
out of it and let it happen...

Nandi enters, stopping at Inara's side.

NANDI
How is she, Doctor?

Simon speaks from a counter a short distance away, as he fits a VIAL OF MED into his HYPO-GUN.

SIMON
She's at ten centimeters. Not long.

Nandi turns to Inara. They share a subtle exchange of looks. This should be cut to show they're

communicating via expression alone -- Companions wordlessly reading each other.

Nandi smiles sadly, rest a hand on Inara's shoulder.

NANDI (O.S)
Inara... I thought it was just him
that...

Inara turns to Simon, sees he's still engaged, then quietly:

INARA
Nandi, believe me. I'll be fine.

They share a look and Nandi exits.

EXT. BORDELLO - MORNING

BINOCULAR POV - of Burgess and his riders, charging forward in the distance, trailing a plume of dust.

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - MORNING

Mal, now standing on the interior balcony, lowers a slim pair of BINOCULARS. He is not at all pleased.

MAL
Zoe, Jayne -- you seein' this?

JAYNE (O.S.)
Gotta be thirty men out there.

ZOE (O.S.)
Confirm that. Plus a mounted gun on
that hovercraft.

JAYNE (O.S.)
What's that you said about runnin'
for it?

Mal takes a moment, visibly adjusting to the new odds. He lifts up his RIFLE.

MAL
All right, folks -- We got no
shortage of ugly ridin' in on us. But
that don't change the plan.

Nandi climbs the stairs, gun in hand, addressing the whores.

NANDI
Anybody here goes down, you drag 'em
to the back, then get back to
the shooting. Only way to help them is to
finish this.

She cocks her rifle then turns to Mal, smiles at him sweetly for a quick beat.

NANDI (cont'd)
Morning.

Mal smiles back.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Kaylee and Wash enter through the SMALL DOOR. Kaylee closes the door behind them; something's not right-- She scans the bay as they start for the stairs. Mal CRACKLES IN over Wash's radio:

MAL (O.S.)

Wash -- gonna be tradin' injuries in
under two minutes. Like my sky a
little less empty --

WASH

Copy that, Mal. We--

Kaylee sees SHADOWY FIGURES on the catwalk above, and tackles Wash just as GUNFIRE rains down at them, SPARKING off the metal.

Wash slams down behind some metal crates, Kaylee on top of him. The radio skitters off into open floor; unreachable. But they have cover for the moment. Wash looks up into her face.

WASH (cont'd)

I told you, Kaylee -- I'm a married
man --

Kaylee knits her brow at him, as another SHOT ricochets off their cover.

KAYLEE

(flatly)

You ain't all that funny.

EXT. BORDELLO - DAY

The hovercraft HUMS forward, just ahead of the horsemen.

Lead horse SNAPS A TRIPWIRE, and the ROPE springs up out of the dirt, singing taut, catching THREE RIDERS in the throats and pitching them off their horses. The other riders duck, some slide sideways in their saddles, clearing the line.

Burgess calls back to KOZICK, the man on the crafts large MOUNTED GUN.

BURGESS

Open her up, Kozick--

Kozick nods, cranks back a lever and starts shooting -- MASSIVE MACHINE GUNFIRE flares.

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - CONTINUING

Mal sees it coming and swings behind his shielding.

MAL

Cover!

The women do the same, just as a HAIL OF MACHINE GUNFIRE rips through everything that isn't fortified.

MAL (cont'd)

(into earwig)

Jayne -- I believe that's our first

hurdle. Think you might --

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUING

Kozick, FIRING AWAY, is plugged in the chest and FLIPS BACKWARD off the hovercraft.

INT. BORDELLO - UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUING

Jayne pulls his eye away from his sight long enough to speak into his radio:

JAYNE
Think I might, Cap.

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - CONTINUING

Mal calls to his troops.

MAL
Fire!

They all swing out and unleash a BARRAGE OF FIRE from their positions. One WHORE is caught by a shot and falls.

Nandi sees this and bristles, aiming another shot --

NANDI
< dirty bastard sons-of-- > [Wang bao
DAHN--]

She FIRES.

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUING

A HORSEMAN takes it in the neck and flops off his horse.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Wash and Kaylee under fire. Wash is trading shots with his pistol, as THREE OF BURGESS' MEN work their way along the upper catwalk. Wash and Kaylee fall back behind different crates, finally getting close to the door that leads to the COMMON AREA.

WASH
GO!

Kaylee darts out, Wash behind her, fire a FLURRY OF SHOTS to cover their exit.

They get through the door.

The men race down the stairs after them. CAMERA FINDS the radio

MAL
Wash -- Where the hell is my
spaceship!?

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUING

Horsemen criss-crossing, SEVERAL get hit by GUNFIRE from the whorehouse, dropping them from their steeds.

A HORSE GOES DOWN, crashing into the FG and throwing its rider.

The REST RETURN FIRE.

Burgess angles the hovercraft, flying parallel with the house front, still a ways off. He lifts his laser and FIRES a CONTINUOUS BEAM.

The BEAM sears along the front of the house, wavering between the second story windows and the eaves of the roof, which already started SMOKING.

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - CONTINUING

As the LASER BEAM races a RED-HOT LINE along their barricade, FLASHING through the gun-slits as Mal and the others hunker away.

Mal looks up, where he sees SMOKE pouring in from a TORN UP PATCH OF CEILING.

MAL
Ruttin' lasers --
(into earwig)
Book-- Zoe-- Second hurdle--

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUING

FIRE HAS BROKEN OUT on the front facade of the whorehouse PAN/TILT to what looks like a PILE OF BARRELS AND TARPS on the grounds in front of the house.

ZOE (O.S.)
Copy that, sir.

The tarps are thrown away, revealing Zoe and Book. Book holds the hose, Zoe covers his back with her rifle. He starts up the hose, and a HISSING JET OF WATER sprays up toward the wall.

A HORSEMAN turns toward them, levelling his gun at Book. Zoe FIRES, taking him out.

BOOK
Thank you--

Book catches sight of PAIR OF RIDERS behind Zoe, taking aim. He swings the hose around, BLASTING them off their horses with its powerful stream.

ZOE
Don't mention it--

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - CONTINUING

Mal, Nandi, and the others continue BLASTING AWAY. Petaline's SCREAMING comes in from the back room.

INT. BORDELLO - BACK ROOM - CONTINUING

Simon is in position, Petaline is bearing down hard and SCREAMING between breaths. River is fascinated and smiling.

PETALINE
[screams again]

SIMON
That's it, Petaline, one more push--

She bears down.

SIMON
That's the shoulders... Good--

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUING

The horsemen are in chaos now, riderless and wounded horses stymie their efforts to fire on the house. Our guys are kicking ass!

INT. BORDELLO LOBBY - CONTINUING

Up on the balcony, Mal talks into his earwig as he scans the battlefield.

MAL
Jayne -- I lost visual on Burgess --

JAYNE (O.S.)
Same here --

A BOY WHORE falls away from a window down the line, bloodied by a gunshot. Mal RETURNS FIRE.

INT. BORDELLO - SIDE OF HOUSE - CONTINUING

Burgess' hovercraft is up close to the house, and he's leaping off of it to the ground. A BULKHEAD CELLAR DOOR swings open. Chari is there, and ushers Burgess inside.

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA - CONTINUING

The three Mercenaries move through the dining area, grimfaced, covering it with their guns, cursorily checking its nooks and crannies for their prey.

A DOOR LOCKING SHUT calls their attention to the aft corridor.

They see Wash at its end and raise their guns.

WASH
[that weird Robert Mitchum 'hoot!'
from Night of the Hunter]

Wash darts into the engine room, narrowly missed by their FIRE as they move into the AFT CORRIDOR.

Kaylee pops out of CLEVER HIDING PLACE and swings the door shut behind them, then locks it.

INT. SERENITY - AFT CORRIDOR - CONTINUING

Before they can react, Wash swings the ENGINE ROOM DOOR shut as well, locking it. The passage leading off from the middle of the corridor is BARRED BY ITS DOOR (which we have not seen yet in series - a Carey issue). They're trapped.

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING

Wash peers in through the thick glass porthole, issuing adrenaline-charged laughter.

WASH
Got you, you < piss-soaked pikers >
[niao SE duh DOO-gway]
(laughs again, then
realizes he's

trapped in engine
room)
Nobody's going any... where...

He massages the headache his brilliant scheme has occasioned.

INT. BORDELLO - BACK ROOM - DAY

Simon lifts up a SWADDLED BABY, purple, newborn, squealing. Inara and River look on. Petaline is near delirious from childbirth.

SIMON
It's--

RIVER
It's a boy. Healthy.

A DOOR behind Inara opens, and Burgess is there, laser covering them.

BURGESS
Mornin' Petaline...

INT. BORDELLO - LOBBY - CONTINUING

Nandi hears PETALINE'S SCREAM first:

PETALINE
Rance! NO!

Mal is caught in the ebbing FIREFIGHT, but Nandi races down the stairs, toward the rear hall.

INT. BORDELLO - REAR HALL - CONTINUING

Burgess backs out of back room, where Petaline screams. He's got the BABY in one arm, laser pistol in the other. Nandi appears behind him, entering from the lobby, confronts him.

NANDI
Most of your men are dead, dyin', or
run off, Rance.

BURGESS
Don't matter none. Got what I came
here for.

NANDI
Ain't leaving here with it.

BURGESS
This is my blood, woman.

Burgess gestures towards the baby with his pistol.

Suddenly a slim arm snakes a nasty curved RAZOR in under Burgess' chin from behind, digging its tip into the side of his throat, DRAWING BLOOD. It's Inara, accompanied by two ND whores, as cold dead serious as we've seen her.

INARA
(re: blood dripping
down his neck)
No. This is your blood.

(nods to a whore)
Now you give over that child nice and
slow, or I'll spill more than you can
spare.

Burgess complies, wincing at the wound, handing the baby over to a whore, who backs out of the scene to safety.

As this happens, Burgess takes the pause to ELBOW Inara hard in the stomach. As she staggers back, he FIRES his laser from the hip, searing straight through Nandi's chest.

Mal gets to the lobby end of the hall, just as she drops, dead.

END OF ACT THREE

Act Four

INT. BORDELLO - REAR HALL - DAY

The WHORES shout in alarm. They can't believe Nandi has fallen. Even Burgess seems surprised at what he's done. Mal moves to the fallen Nandi -- as Burgess turns and runs for a side door, escaping.

Mal touches Nandi. She's stone dead. He shares a look with Inara, there's murder in both their eyes. He hears the O.S. THRUM of the hovercraft starting up and turns for the front door.

EXT. BORDELLO - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON FRONT DOOR

The front door slams open and Mal stalks out, eyes forward.

Without dropping a beat, Mal PLUGS a horseman off his horse, and swings up into the saddle just as the man finishes falling.

Burgess' hovercraft rumbles out from behind the house, heading out for the plains.

Mal spurs the horse hard, and it tears off --

MAL
Hyah!

EXT. OPEN LAND - DAY

A WIDE LANDSCAPE SHOT of Burgess speeding away in his hovercraft and Mal in pursuit, his horse kicking up dust as he whips and spurs it into a breakneck gallop.

Burgess sees Mal behind him and stands in his craft, steering with one hand as he turns back. He FIRES his laser--

The LASER BEAM cuts the air by Mal's head. Mal whips a burst of speed out of his horse as another BEAM sears past him.

Mal is closing in on the hovercraft, an easy shot. Burgess takes careful aim, and pulls his trigger. We hear a RAPID BEEPING. Burgess checks the display screen on his gun--

LASER GUN

The LCD screen flashes "CHECK BATTERY"

Burgess GROWLS, looking up just as Mal flies from his horse tackling Burgess off the hovercraft.

They slam into a hard roll on the plain.

***NOTE -- SFX The hovercraft flips over and explodes!

Burgess has had the wind smashed out of him and writhes on the ground. Mal ain't much better, but drags himself to his feet using sheer force of will.

He grabs Burgess' shirtfront and hauls him up, pulling his pistol from his holster, bringing its barrel up to Burgess' head.

MAL
You're gonna pay for what you took.

BURGESS
(still out of breath)
She was a whore.

Mal seethes with vengeful fury, he's about to pull the trigger, but then -- he flips the gun in his hand and smashes the butt across Burgess' face. Burgess collapses, unconscious.

MAL
That don't enter into it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORDELLO - DAY

Mal and Zoe watch as Inara finishes tying the kneeling Burgess' hands behind his back.

THREE MEN CRASH INTO THE FRAME, as Jayne dumps the bruised and bloodied Serenity-crashers before the bordello steps, Kaylee and Wash close by. Burgess' other men are also tied up.

BURGESS
(calling out)
PETALINE! YOU BRING MY BOY OUT!
RIGHT NOW! YOU HEAR ME? I WANT TO
SEE MY SON!

Petaline appears at the bordello door, the baby nursing at her breast. All eyes watch as she descends the steps and approaches Burgess.

PETALINE
Rance... this is Jonah.
(beat)
Jonah, say hello to your daddy.

BURGESS

Smiles like a proud papa. He's actually moved at the sight of his son.

Petaline raises her free hand in which she holds Nandi's favorite gun. She aims it at Burgess' head.

PETALINE (cont'd)
Say goodbye to your daddy, Jonah.

Burgess blanches.

CLOSE PETALINE: Camera looking up the business end of a gun, she fires.

Petaline looks up from Burgess' dead body, icy --

PETALINE (cont'd)
Anyone else wanna try and take what's
mine?

She scans the rows of Burgess' bound men; every last one avoids eye contact.

PETALINE (cont'd)
Go on, then. Go home. Next time I
see any of you... you best be coming
to get your wick wet. You pay up
front from now on... and for God's
sake, tip a girl once in a while --
especially you, Milo.

Milo nods quickly: whatever you say, Petaline. The men start rising to their feet. Petaline indicates Chari --

PETALINE (cont'd)
You go with 'em. You got no place
here.

Chari is about to speak, before she can:

PETALINE (cont'd)
You let 'em in the back door, Inara
seen it, now go.

CHARI
You can't just make me --

CLICK. Petaline cocks the hammer of her pistol. Chari shuts up, breaks eye contact, falls in step with Burgess' men as they walk away.

Mal approaches Petaline, indicates Burgess' body --

MAL
We'll dispose of that for you.

PETALINE
Thank you, captain.
(beat)
Emma?

Emma (Book's churchy whore) appears at Petaline's side.

PETALINE (cont'd)
Get the spade from the shed.
(beat)
Our Nandi's gonna be buried proper.

HIGH ANGLE

As the crowd disperses, we HOLD for a long moment and PRELAP:

LUCY (V.O.)
(singing)

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

LONG SHOT: A score of mourners have gathered around a makeshift cross beneath a large oak. This is a fusion of BUDDIST and CHRISTIAN ceremony. A number of mourners are dressed in white robes, with Tibetan prayer beads draped over their clasped hands.

Lucy sings in a simple, quiet voice. (Think Margo Timmins.)

LUCY
That saved a wretch like me/
I once was lost, but now am found/
Was blind but now I see...

Lucy continues to sing. One by one, Nandi's staff steps up to the wooden cross marking her grave. At its foot is a low asian-looking table, on which sits a bowl of smoking incense. They bow as they drop pinches of incense into the bowl.

SIMON AND RIVER

Alongside a couple of the girls, their faces a solemn mask.

LUCY
'Twas grace that taught my heart to
fear...

ZOE, WASH AND JAYNE

Zoe and Wash hold hands. Jayne looks at his feet.

LUCY
And Grace my fears relieved/ How
precious did that Grace appear...

BOOK

Holds the Bible to his chest, a tearful Emma with her hands wrapped around his arm.

LUCY
The hour I first believed...

PETALINE

Baby in her arms, the stolid look of someone who's been to war on her face.

LUCY
Through many dangers, toils and
snares/ We have already come...

INARA

Steps up to the small table, dressed in a white shawl, beads draped, and drops a pinch of incense into the bowl. She bows to it and turns away.

MAL

His arm paternally around Kaylee's shoulder, comforting, as tears roll down her face.

Inara takes in the entire gathering now: the unit that is Serenity's crew standing side by side with

the bordello gals. She stands slightly apart from all of them.

LUCY
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus
far...

Lucy's singing continues as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Serenity exits atmo and glides silently into the black.

LUCY (V.O.)
And Grace will lead us home...

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - NIGHT

Mal and Inara stand on the catwalk outside her shuttle. They are contemplative, subdued.

MAL
I think those girls'll do all right.

INARA
She taught them well.

MAL
Yeah.

A beat.

INARA
I'm... I'm glad you were with
her. Her last night. I am.

MAL
I ain't. Hell, I wish I'd never met
her. Then I wouldn't've failed her.

INARA
That wasn't the way of it.

MAL
It's a kindness, but nothing you
say'll convince me different.

INARA
Well, I'm still glad.

A small beat.

MAL
So you weren't before?

He's looking at her direct. She looks away.

MAL (cont'd)
Inara, I ain't looking for anything
from you. I'm just feeling kind of

truthsome right now. Life is too
damn short for ifs and maybes.

INARA

I learned something from Nandi. Not
just from what happened, but from
her. The family she made, the
strength of her love for them.
That's what kept them together.
When you live with that kind of
strength, you get tied to it, you
can't break away. And you never want
to.

They're getting closer to each other, Mal's eyes locked on hers.

INARA (cont'd)

There's something that I... that I
should have done a long while ago.
And I'm sorry -- for both of us --
that it took me this long.

A beat.

INARA (cont'd)

I'm leaving.

Another moment, and she goes past him into her shuttle.

He doesn't move.

END OF SHOW

Addendum (Theater Show)

A CIRCULAR SHADOW representing Earth-That-Was fills the frame.

NARRATOR

(Chinese)

< Little by little, the tribes used
the Earth up. Barren, she had
little left to offer them. >

Silhouetted shapes appear. SPACESHIPS. They radiate out from the shadow sphere, scatter in all
directions. Leave it behind.

NARRATOR

(continuing)

< Swollen of her, they left. And
for the first time since the Great
Burn that birthed her, she was
alone. >

The ships are gone now. A wisp of SMOKE wafts off the sphere, creates a snake of shadow.

NARRATOR

(continuing)

< The Earth cried, and terrible
were her tears. Acid and caustic,
the spawn of the tribes' rape.
They flowed a century. >

The smoke INTENSIFIES, becomes shadowy FLAME.

NARRATOR

(continuing)

< The fire that finally came did so
as a blessing. >

The sphere SMOLDERS now, bits of it breaking up and disintegrating under the intense heat.

[END OF ADDENDUM](#)

[\(Click to return\)](#)