

# Firefly - "Ariel"

Written by: Jose Molina  
Directed by: Allan Kroeker

## 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:

Dennis Cockrum as "Blue Glove (1)"  
Jeff Ricketts as "Blue Glove (2)"  
Roma Chugani as "Receiving Doctor"  
Ira Steck as "Young Intern"  
Michael Nagy as "Particularly Dressed Man"  
Alex Connie as "Patient"  
Cate Cohen as "Crash Team Nurse"

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## Teaser

EXT. SPACE

Serenity in space.

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

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

RIVER  
I don't want it.

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

JAYNE  
Smells like crotch.

KAYLEE  
Jayne!

JAYNE  
Well, it does.

They sit across from Jayne to eat, River mostly stirring her food around, her eyes often drifting to

Jayne. WASH and ZOE enter, mid conversation --

WASH

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

ZOE

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

WASH

Come on, it's not that bad.

ZOE

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

WASH

(to Inara)

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

INARA

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

WASH

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

He kicks at Simon's chair: help.

SIMON

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

ZOE

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

MAL

(entering)

No one's setting foot on that fancy rock. I don't want anyone leaving the ship. Come to think of it, I don't want anyone looking out the windows. Or talking loud. We're here to drop Inara off, that's it.

JAYNE

What's the point of coming to the

Core if I can't even get off the boat?

MAL

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

JAYNE

Better'n just sittin'.

WASH

(you idiot)  
It is just sittin'.

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

ZOE

(to Inara)

How long you going to be planetside?

INARA

Shouldn't be more than a day or two.

WASH

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

INARA

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

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

SIMON

Could you not do that while...  
(beat)  
... ever.

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

WASH

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

SIMON

Hey!

WASH

I mean, present company excluded.

JAYNE

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

A blur. Suddenly something's coming at Jayne. It's River with a kitchen knife. She attacks, slashing

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

MAL  
Jesu --

SIMON  
River, no --!

ZOE  
It's deep --

INARA  
Oh, god, honey...

KAYLEE  
He's bleedin'

SIMON  
(shocked)  
River...

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

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

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

JAYNE  
Gorram freak's completely off her  
axle.

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

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

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

MAL  
No one's getting left.

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

MAL  
What? What do you swear, Jayne?

JAYNE  
They don't get gone... you better  
start locking up your room at night.  
Next time lil' sister gets in a  
murderin' mood, might be you she  
comes calling on.  
(beat)

Maybe Kaylee. Or Inara. You let 'em  
stay... we're gonna find out.

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

MAL

Finish your work, doctor.

(to Jayne)

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

Best you get used to that.

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

JAYNE

You owe me a shirt.

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

MAL

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

SIMON

I do.

MAL

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

(after a silent beat)

She's getting worse, isn't she?

SIMON

Yes.

Off Simon, the admission killing him...

OMITTED

EXT. ARIEL - DAY

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

KAYLEE

Look at the bright side, maybe you'll  
meet a young, handsome doctor and  
he'll ask you out and

(beat)

What's Companion policy on dating?

INARA  
It's....

KAYLEE  
Figures.

Inara smiles, kisses Kaylee on the cheek --

INARA  
Stay out of trouble.

-- and heads into her shuttle.

KAYLEE  
You too.

THE HORSESHOE TOSS

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

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

WASH  
Nor the last three places we been.

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

SIMON  
You can stop looking.

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

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

Off everyone's reactions.

END OF TEASER

## Act One

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

MAL  
You got a job for us?

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

WASH

Well, he's got my attention.

JAYNE

Not me. We don't work on spec.

ZOE

Work on spec all the time.

Simon pulls a vial out of his pocket.

SIMON

Do you know what this is? It's a common immunobooster called ivoprovalyn. Street value for a dosage of this size, a hundred platinum, maybe sixty credits.

(another vial)

Propoxin, one-fifteen.

(another)

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

WASH

So the medvault's not the job?

SIMON

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

MAL

What's in the diagnostic ward?

SIMON

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

MAL

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

SIMON

Yes.

KAYLEE

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

ZOE

Government run facility. They'd have

it restocked in a matter of hours.

SIMON

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

MAL

And folks on the rim could use it.

WASH

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

SIMON

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)

Like all Core Hospitals,  
Ariel City Hospital

*(in the TV episode Simon said St. Lucy's )*  
has its own dedicated security force...

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Continuing the movement. SIMON paces into FRAME...

SIMON

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)

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

MAL

Back up to the ident scans. You and your sister are tagged fugitives. How you figure we're gonna get, you in the building?

SIMON

Through the front door.

(off their looks)

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

the real trick...

More pacing.

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

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

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

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. JUNKYARD - DAY

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

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

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

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

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

As Wash starts looking around...

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

Wash waves Kaylee over to where he is -- he's found something. He points to --

-- a highly crappy, broken down and discarded body of an old AMBULANCE SHUTTLE.

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Simon's still pacing...

SIMON

We'll have to look like we belong.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

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

SIMON (V.O.)

That means uniforms, ID badges...

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

INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA

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

SIMON (V.O.)

All of these items are easy to obtain.

OMITTED

INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

Simon stops pacing. Looks to the group.

SIMON

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

CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

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

MAL

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

SIMON

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

ZOE

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

SIMON

Infusers. Right. What about the  
cortical electrodes?

This asked of Jayne. He hesitates.

JAYNE  
..... we forgot 'em?

SIMON  
Let's try that again.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

As before --

MAL  
Pupils were fixed and dilapidated --

SIMON  
Dilated.

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

VARIOUS SHOTS

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

And one more time --

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

SIMON  
Yes. Which methods did you use?

ZOE  
We used the, pulmonary stimulators and  
cardiac infusers.

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

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

This, once again, asked of Jayne --

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

Simon reacts -- it'll have to do.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

SIMON  
That's amazing.

We don't yet see what he's looking at as he's joined by  
Kaylee and Wash.

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

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

KAYLEE  
And the finishing touch --

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

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

MAL  
Now all we need's a couple of  
patients.

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

JAYNE  
I'm startin' to like this plan.

PRELAP --

SIMON (V.O.)  
We're going to be asleep.

OMITTED

INT. SERENITY - RIVER'S ROOM

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

SIMON

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

RIVER

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

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

SIMON

That's right.

RIVER

I don't want to do it.

SIMON

I know.

RIVER

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

SIMON

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

RIVER

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

SIMON

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

Very much not okay, River nods.

SIMON (cont'd)

Okay. Lie back.

She does. Simon preps his syringe.

SIMON (cont'd)

It's time to go to sleep.

He injects her.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

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

MAL

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

ZOE

Yes, sir.

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

JAYNE

(really just  
muttering)

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

MAL

Jayne?

JAYNE

Yeah, yeah I got it.

MAL

Are we gonna have a problem?

JAYNE

I know what I gotta do.

MAL

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

JAYNE

That's up to him.

MAL

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

JAYNE

It's a good plan.

MAL

What?

JAYNE

Doc did good, coming up with this  
job. Don't mean I like him any

better... but nothing buys bygones  
quicker'n cash.  
(then)  
Maybe I'll give him a tattoo while  
he's out.

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

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

As Jayne goes back to muttering his script...

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

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

MAL  
(to Wash)  
One hour.

And they're moving --

EXT. HOSPITAL - GANGWAY - NIGHT

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

INT. HOSPITAL - RECEIVING CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

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

RECEIVING DOCTOR  
What have you got?

MAL  
Couple DOAs. By the time we got --

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

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

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

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

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

they're in.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT

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

MAL  
Let's get 'em out.

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

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

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

JAYNE  
Got it.

Mal and Zoe wheel their gurneys back out.

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

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

JAYNE  
I'm in.

AGENT MC GINNIS  
Do you have the fugitives?

JAYNE  
You got my reward?

AGENT MC GINNIS  
Yes. Just like we talked about.

JAYNE  
Then I got your fugitives.

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

Off Jayne --

END OF ACT ONE

## Act Two

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT

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

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

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

RIVER  
A copper for a kiss.

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

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

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

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

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

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

JAYNE  
(you weenie)  
Your sister seems okay.

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

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

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

ZOE

I don't think people smile in  
hospitals.

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

From O.S., a voice calls to them

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR (O.S.)  
'Scuse me --

Mal turns, sees an OFFICIOUS DOCTOR.

MAL  
(big smile)  
Hi!

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR  
(unsmiling)  
Where are you taking those bodies?

MAL  
Just downstairs to the morgue.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR  
(pointing behind them)  
Downstairs is that way.

MAL  
Right. Must've got turned around.

OFFICIOUS DOCTOR  
Let me see your badge.

Mal hands it over.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

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

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

JAYNE  
Keep her quiet.

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

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

RIVER  
They're going to die.

SIMON

No one's going to die.

RIVER  
(indicates a patient)  
He is.

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

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

RIVER  
He's not going to help him right.

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

RIVER  
Where you should be.

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

JAYNE  
Uh-uh. No wandering off.

RIVER  
(to Simon)  
You have to help him.

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

RIVER  
(loud)  
He's killing him!

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

YOUNG INTERN  
Code blue!

RIVER  
Help him help him help him...

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

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
What do we have?

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

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

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

YOUNG INTERN  
(to Simon)  
Who are you?

CRASH TEAM NURSE  
He's crashing --

SIMON  
(to Nurse)  
Get the cart.

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

CRASH TEAM NURSE  
We have flatline --

YOUNG INTERN  
We gotta crack him --

SIMON  
(stern, to Intern)  
We're not cracking a post-op.  
(to the Nurse)  
Get the infusers and point-four of  
atropine.  
(to Intern)  
What did you give him?

YOUNG INTERN  
Just twenty of alprazaline push.

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

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

SIMON  
Clear --

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
Clear --

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

the infusers to the nurse.

YOUNG INTERN  
(an accusation)  
He's going tachy.

Simon takes the hypo from his teeth --

SIMON  
(dismissive)  
But his heart's beating.

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

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief, especially the Intern.

YOUNG INTERN  
(willing it)  
He's okay...

Simon gets in his face, genuinely pissed --

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

YOUNG INTERN  
Alprazolam's a painkiller, not a --

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

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

SIMON  
Good.

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
Let's go.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

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

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

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

MAL  
Where we going?

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

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

Mal stays put -- he already hates this guy.

MAL  
Yeah, but... where we going?

Now the doctor is pissed --

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

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

ZOE  
Clear.

INT. HOSPITAL - IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

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

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

SIMON  
Ready?

Although clearly apprehensive, River nods.

INT. HOSPITAL - ANOTHER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

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

MAL  
Twelve oh-five. This is it.

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

MAL (cont'd)  
Zoe.

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

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

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

MAL  
His works.

INT. HOSPITAL - IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

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

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

River closes her eyes. Jayne simply watches.

INT. SUPPLY VAULT - NIGHT

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

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

INT. IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

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

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
River?

RIVER  
(snapping)  
Just do it.

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

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

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

INT. IMAGING SUITE - NIGHT

Jayne sits in a corner, watching Simon work at the control column. (An LCD window on the column reads DOWNLOADING DATA.) Simon mans the controls like the professional he is -- rotating the

image, punching up new numbers and scans. He's riveted by the flood of information, stares at the images before him in disbelief.

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
They opened up her skull. Look --

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
That's a scalpel scar. They opened  
up her skull... and then they cut  
into her brain.

Curiosity gets the best of Jayne --

JAYNE  
Why?

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

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
They did it over and over.

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

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

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

JAYNE  
We should get moving.

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

SIMON  
You know how...  
(how to explain)  
You get scared. Or worried, or  
nervous. And you don't want to be  
scared or worried or nervous, so you  
push it to the back of your mind.  
You try not to think about it.  
The limbic system is what lets you do

that -- it's like a filter in your  
brain that keeps your feelings in  
check.  
(beat, disturbed by this)  
They took that filter out of River.  
She feels everything. She can't not.

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

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

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

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

RIVER  
Her eyes snap open.

#### THE HOLOGRAM

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

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

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

River lets out an ear-splitting SCREAM OF TERROR.

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

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

JAYNE  
Get her in the chair and let's go.

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

SIMON  
It's okay, it's over.  
(looks at Jayne)

We're leaving.

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

RIVER  
Your toes are in the sand.

JAYNE  
(defensive)  
And your head's up your ass.  
(to Simon)  
Make sure she keeps her mouth shut.  
We don't need her screeching while  
we're trying to make a quiet getaway.

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

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

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

SIMON  
(quietly, to Jayne)  
You should've let me know when the  
plan changed.

JAYNE  
I told you when you needed to know.  
(off Simon's look)  
What are you griping about, you got  
what you came for.

They turn a corner into

INT. HOSPITAL - ANOTHER CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

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

EXT. HOSPITAL - BACK EXIT - CONTINUOUS

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

AGENT MC GINNIS (FILTERED)

Federal Marshals -- don't move.

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

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

Off their reactions --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

## Act Three

EXT. HOSPITAL - BACK EXIT - NIGHT

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

AGENT MC GINNIS  
Take them to processing.

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

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

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

Jayne almost laughs. McGinnis doesn't.

JAYNE  
You're kidding, right?

McGinnis says nothing.

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

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

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

OMITTED

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

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

WASH  
How much did we get?

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

MAL  
Enough to keep us flying.

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

WASH  
Maybe a naked beach.

Wash and Zoe kiss.

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

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

MAL  
(to Wash)  
Where are the others?

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

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

SIMON  
(to Jayne)  
I saw what you did out there.

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

JAYNE  
I didn't do nothing.

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

JAYNE  
Guy shoved me, I shoved back. Not

like I was trying to mount a rescue.

SIMON

Still. I appreciate you trying.

JAYNE

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

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

RIVER

They took Christmas away.

JAYNE

(what the hell now?)  
Christmas?

RIVER

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

SIMON

River, what are you talking about?

RIVER

Christmas. You can't open your presents before.

JAYNE

(to Simon)  
Shut her up.

RIVER

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

JAYNE

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

INT./EXT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe and Wash.

MAL

Time.

ZOE

Ten minutes past rendezvous.

MAL

Something happened.

Wash opens a communication channel with Serenity.

WASH  
Kaylee, are you linked?

INTERCUT:

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

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

KAYLEE  
I am now. What do you need?

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

KAYLEE  
Hang on...

As Kaylee works --

ZOE  
Could be they're just late.

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

Kaylee gets what she's looking for.

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

ZOE  
(to Mal)  
Code?

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

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

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

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

MAL  
Most like.  
(presses the earwig  
into his ear)  
Check.

ZOE  
(re: her earwig)  
Coming in clear.

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

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

They shut the ambulance doors and move off.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

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

AGENT MC GINNIS  
Get up.

SIMON  
What's going to happen to us?

AGENT MC GINNIS  
I said get up.

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

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

McGinnis bristles, but has little choice but to answer.

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

SIMON  
Retrieved... by whom?

AGENT MC GINNIS  
By people who want you alive. People

not me.  
(to the Feds)  
Take 'em.

PRELAP the sound of a BUZZER and --

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA-NIGHT

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

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

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

The following is dirty, ugly and almost completely silent:

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

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

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

River watches the violence.

OMITTED

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe.

MAL  
Wash, a little direction, please.

INTERCUT AS NEEDED:

INT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Wash talks into his transmitter --

WASH  
Working on it...

-- then into the com --

WASH (cont'd)  
Kaylee, whaddya got?

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

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

KAYLEE

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

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY WARD - NIGHT

Mal and Zoe, moving fast --

WASH

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

Mal and Zoe go through the door and into --

INT. HOSPITAL - PURPLE STAIRCASE - NIGHT

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

MAL

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

ZOE

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

MAL

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

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

WASH (V.O.)

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

MAL

Is there a problem?

INT. AMBULANCE SHUTTLE - NIGHT

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

WASH

The reinforcements are here.

Off Wash's dread...

OMITTED

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA -NIGHT

Back to the ugly, quiet fight at the substation.

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

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

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

SIMON  
Come on.

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
Wait -- you can't go through there.

JAYNE  
Why not?

SIMON  
There's at least four armed Feds out there.

JAYNE  
Six.  
(holds up the rifle)  
I know.

SIMON  
(re: a corridor)  
We run. We'll find our way.

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

RIVER  
Doesn't matter.

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

RIVER (cont'd)  
They're here.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

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

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

REVERSE - TO INCLUDE TWO MEN

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

FIRST BLUE GLOVE  
We appreciate your cooperation.

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

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

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

FIRST BLUE GLOVE  
I'm sorry?

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

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

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

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

FIRST BLUE GLOVE  
Did your men also speak with her?

AGENT MC GINNIS  
Much as I did.

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

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

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

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

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

**Act Four**

OVER BLACK

The SOUND OF SCREAMING.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA

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

RIVER  
Hell is coming to breakfast.

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

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

SIMON  
We're not going out that way.

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

SIMON (cont'd)  
River!

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

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - RECEPTION

ON MC GINNIS

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL - SECURITY SUBSTATION - HOLDING AREA - CONTINUOUS

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

FIRST BLUE GLOVE  
Dead.

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

SECOND BLUE GLOVE  
This one's alive.

Second Blue Glove takes out The Device from his pocket.

INT. HOSPITAL - STEEL ROOM - NIGHT

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

JAYNE  
Where the hell's she taking us?

SIMON  
She must know of an exit this way.

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

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL - HUM ROOM - NIGHT

River runs down the steps, Jayne and Simon following.

RIVER  
(calling back)  
We're almost there.

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

RIVER (cont'd)  
This is it.

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

JAYNE  
Stand back.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

The ramp is in the process of opening as Kaylee comes down the stairs from the bridge, runs into

Inara coming out of her shuttle. She peers out the ramp as she addresses Inara --

KAYLEE  
Hey, 'Nara. How was your checkup?

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

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

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

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

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

MAL  
Tell me we weren't followed.

KAYLEE  
Nothing on sensors.

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

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

Wash books towards the bridge, Zoe in tow.

MAL  
Hey. How was your thing?

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

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

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

MAL  
(nonsense!)

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

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

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

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

Kaylee notes the injuries to Jayne's face.

KAYLEE  
What happened to your face?

JAYNE  
Got it shot.

KAYLEE  
With a gun?!

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

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

JAYNE  
Hey. You're part of my crew.

MAL  
I think I might cry.  
(then--)  
Jayne, help me with the cargo.  
Everyone else... make yourselves  
useful. You got jobs, go do 'em.

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

JAYNE  
Gotta be one of our best takes ever.

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

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

JAYNE  
What're you buying with your cut?

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

EXT. SERENITY

As she takes off and shoots towards the atmosphere.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

JAYNE  
(almost inaudible)  
The hell are you doing?

Mal goes to the intercom.

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

He hits a button and the ramp begins to open.

MAL (cont'd)  
Figured it was a good time for a  
chat. 'Fore it starts getting cold  
out there.

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

MAL  
You called the Feds, didn't you?

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

JAYNE  
Money was too good to pass up.

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

JAYNE  
That would've been the right thing.

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

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

MAL  
About what?

JAYNE  
'Bout why I'm dead.

MAL  
Hadn't thought about it.

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

A long beat.

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - RIVER'S ROOM

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

SIMON  
Hi.  
(sees her scribbling)  
What are you doing?

RIVER  
Drawing.

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

SIMON  
That's really good.

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

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

River nods.

RIVER  
Is it time to go to sleep again?

SIMON

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

Off Simon, hopeful...

BLACK OUT.

END OF EPISODE