

# Firefly - "The Message"

**Written by:** Joss Whedon & Tim Minear

**Directed by:** Tim Minear

## **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:**

Jonathan M. Woodward as "Tracey Smith"  
Richard Burgi as "Womack"  
Al Pugliese as "Amnon"  
Tod Nakamura as "Fendris"  
Craig Vincent as "Skunk"  
Morgan Rustler as "Barker"

Episode #: 1AGE13

SHOOTING SCRIPT: December 10, 2002

BLUE REVISIONS: December 12, 2002

PINK REVISIONS: December 16, 2002

## Teaser

EXT. SPACE BAZAAR - DAY

(Black, space-y day.) Ships land and take off from this decrepit but inviting old structure, clearly clapped together from several different ships and stations. We hold on it, silent but for a bit of intro music and a sudden, booming voice:

BARKER (O.S.)  
We are not alone!

INT. BAZAAR - CONTINUING

It's a giant flea market/ food court/ carnival/ bar/ post office/ whatever the hell anybody needs out here station. We see the scope of the place as we push in (low angle) towards a BARKER, standing in front of a small, curtained off space. He's talking from the top, very fast, selling hard.

(NOTE: This is not a large build -- it's the size of a large closet, curtained off on all sides, with but one display.)

BARKER  
Forget what you think you know.  
Forget what your mother told you when  
she tucked you in at night, forget  
the lies of our oppressive,  
cabalistic Allied governments!  
Behind this curtain lies the very  
secret they don't want you to see --  
the most astounding scientific find  
in the history of humanity. Proof!  
Of Alien life. Yes, go ahead and

laugh, sir, but what you see inside  
this room will change your life  
forever! It will haunt your dreams  
and harrow -- YES -- your very soul.  
For six bits you can unlock -- this  
lady wants to go, I cannot allow her  
to be near such wonder, such  
thrilling horror, unescorted. Who  
will go with her? Who will see the  
unholy truth, the only captured  
specimen -- in existence -- of Alien  
life!

INT. BARKER'S BOOTH - CONTINUING

Hold a still frame on Simon and Kaylee, staring intently at something in a big jar that we can't see very well. Wait a beat.

SIMON

Yep. That's a cow fetus.

KAYLEE

Guess so... Does seem to have an  
awful lot of limbs...

SIMON

It's mutated. Most of the breeding  
on the outer planets was done by  
shipping DNA scrip instead of  
animals. The first herds were grown  
in labs, then set loose. Every now  
and then...

KAYLEE

But cow? How do you figure?

SIMON

It's upside down.

She cranes her head upside down, looks. Nods, sagely...

KAYLEE

Okay, then. Cow.

SIMON

And I'm out twelve bits. I really  
know how to show a girl a...  
disgusting time.

KAYLEE

Oh, it's sweet. Poor little thing  
never even saw the light of day, now  
it's in show business!

He looks at her, admiringly.

SIMON

You manage to find the bright side to  
every single thing.

KAYLEE

(coming closer)  
Also, we get the booth to ourselves  
for five whole minutes...

SIMON  
(glances at jar)  
We are not alone, remember?

KAYLEE  
(taking his hands)  
He won't squawk. Tell me more good  
stuff about me.

SIMON  
(smiles)  
Well, you're kind of a genius when it  
comes to machines... you always say  
what you mean, and your eyes...

KAYLEE  
Yeah? Eyes, yeah?

SIMON  
I don't know how to...  
(joking)  
Plus, every other girl I know is  
either married, professional, or  
closely related to me, so you are  
more or less literally the only girl  
in the world.

Those famous eyes of her darken considerably. She draws back.

KAYLEE  
That's a hell of a thing to say.

SIMON  
I was joking...

KAYLEE  
No, no, I get it. Back on Osiris you  
probably had nurses and debutantes  
crawling all over you. But down here  
at the bottom of the barrel, there's  
just me.

SIMON  
That is not even --

KAYLEE  
Well, I'm glad I rated higher than  
dead bessie here. < Why don't you tell  
the cow about its beautiful eyes? >  
[Nee GAO-soo NA niou, TA yo shwong  
mei-moo?]

She is storming out just as Wash and Zoe are coming in. Simon watches Kaylee despairingly.

WASH  
Oh my god, it's grotesque! Oh, and

there's something in a jar.

He ogles the fetus as Zoe come up to Simon.

ZOE

Scared her away again, did you?

SIMON

This may come as a shock, but I'm actually not very good at talking to girls.

ZOE

(not unkindly)

Why, is there someone you ARE good at talking to?

WASH

(in the background,  
to the jar)

Do not fear me. Ours is a peaceful race, and we must live in harmony...

INT. BAZAAR - CONTINUING

Mal and Inara walk through, talking.

INARA

Struck out again, did you?

MAL

It's like something from a fable!  
I've got a priceless artifact, the biggest score of my unseemly career, and no one will touch it.

INARA

The Lassiter is universally known, Mal. Fencing it has to be like... like fencing the Mona Lisa.

MAL

The Mona Who?

INARA

You're out of your league. You should think about my offer --

MAL

I done that thinking, and you're to stay clear.

INARA

I know people in the highest ranks of --

MAL

Jabber jabber, I ain't listening. Just 'cause you helped on the job don't make you a crook, and I don't want you jeopardizing your career

over this.

INARA

The career you abhor and look down on?

MAL

I don't want you in the way a'  
trouble. Take it as you like.

(calling out)

Amnon, How've you been?

The have reached a more official looking section of the bazaar, with a sign reading: POST, FREIGHT and HOLDING.

AMNON DUUL, the postman, wears a sort of combination of a postal uniform and hasidic wear. He is decent and more or less unflappable, and happy to see Mal.

AMNON

(shaking his hand)

Malcolm, an old friend's face is a  
balm in this age.

MAL

It's been too long.

AMNON

No, just about the right amount. Too  
much of you is less of a balm.

(to Inara)

I'm disappointed to see you haven't  
found a better berth by now.

INARA

I'm a little confused myself.

MAL

I read your wave. You're holding  
post for us?

AMNON

Got yourself a haul this time. You  
can sign for everyone?

MAL

Sure.

Amnon goes into a back room as Mal starts filling out a form.

Book arrives, with River in tow. They both hold short sticks that dangle strings off the end. Each string runs through the middle of a ball of ice cream that is supported by a bowl shaped cookie attached (under the ice cream) to the string. They're sort of like little mace and chains, and eating them is not altogether convenient, since they swing a bit.

BOOK

Any packages for me?

MAL

Don't know yet.

RIVER

My food is troublesome.

Jayne arrives, toting a couple boxes of ammo.

JAYNE

Girl's a mind-readin' genius, can't figure out how to eat an ice-planet.

MAL

You get everything?

JAYNE

They didn't have rounds for the Buhnder, but we're ammoed up pretty good. Got a discount too, on account of my intimidating manner --

Amnon returns, wheeling in a man-sized crate. He tosses a couple of smaller package on the counter.

AMNON

This one's addressed to you and Zoe, Mal.

MAL

I don't remember ordering any parts...

He gives Amnon a hand, settling the crate and starting to open it.

AMNON

The little one's for Cobb.

Jayne hurried puts the ammo on the counter and takes the small package.

JAYNE

I got post?

BOOK

Might we all want to step back a few paces before he opens that?

JAYNE

Haw haw. It's from my mother.

During this, Inara finds a small package, squarish, addressed to her. She smoothly slips it beneath her outfit without anyone noticing, turns to see Kaylee arrive, looking glum.

INARA

(to Kaylee)

So, do aliens live among us?

KAYLEE

One of 'em's a doctor. No post for me?

Amnon shakes his head. Inara puts her arm around Kaylee, Kaylee putting her head on Inara's shoulder as Jayne tears open his package and pulls out a letter.

Zoe and Wash wander up with Simon trailing behind as Jayne reads, with the classic toneless hesitation of a slow reader:

JAYNE

"My dear boy. I hope you are well  
and that you get this soon in your  
travels."

AS JAYNE CONTINUES: Mal motions for Zoe to help him.

MAL

You order equipment?

ZOE

No sir.

JAYNE

"Thank you for the credits you  
forwarded, they have helped as Matty  
is still sick with the Dampfung. He  
waves hello, and so does your father.  
He is in good spirits and there was  
layoffs but the foreman said no one  
can weld like a Cobb so he has  
employment still. I made you the  
enclosed" --

He digs in the box --

JAYNE (cont'd)

Ooh! Enclosed!

He reaches in and pulls out a woolly knitted hat with earflaps and a pom pom. He is clearly moved.  
He puts it on, continues reading.

JAYNE (cont'd)

-- " the enclosed to keep you warm on  
your travels. Hope to hear from you  
soon, love, mother."

He closes the letter, proudly adjusting his hat.

JAYNE (cont'd)

How's it sit? Pretty cunning,  
don'tchya think?

It's faintly ridiculous, but are you gonna tell him that? Anyway, Kaylee likes it, wistful as she is.

KAYLEE

I think it's the sweetest hat ever.

BOOK

Makes a statement.

JAYNE

Yeah, yeah!

WASH

A man walks down the street in that  
hat, people know he's not afraid of  
anything.

JAYNE

Damn straight.

Mal and Zoe are just finishing unlocking the crate, trying to pry it open.

MAL  
Well I hope we got us some fun hats  
too.

As he's saying it, they pry the lid off and we see the corpse of a young man lying, arms folded, inside.

Mal and Zoe look at him with somber recognition. Everyone goes very quiet, looking inside.

The last to bother is Jayne, who cranes his head into frame, hat still perched proudly, looking quizzically at the body.

JAYNE  
What'd you all order a dead guy for?

As Mal and Zoe look at each other:

END OF TEASER

## Act One

INT. /EXT. BUDDHIST TEMPLE - NIGHT

Just inside the temple we see TRACEY, who is a green but gutsy private. Right now he's sweaty and tense. He looks out over the remains of a wall slowly, looking for enemies.

Light from the occasional explosion or far away burst of gunfire gives us a better view of the place - it's being held by about six Independents, all looking out in different directions.

Tracey sees nothing. He takes a moment and lays down his weapon. Reaches into his bag and pulls out a can of beans. As he does, we see an Alliance Soldier creeping towards him from the other side of the wall. Tracey doesn't see --

-- Till the guy's foot hits a rock -- Tracey moves, scrambling for his rifle -- too late as the Alliance Soldier raises his --

CLOSE ON: The Alliance Soldier -- as Zoe calmly appears behind him and draws a knife across his throat.

Angle on: Tracey -- as a few blood splatters hit his face.

Zoe drops the soldier and enters, taking the extra rifle.

TRACEY  
Thanks. Didn't know you were there.

ZOE  
(stone cold)  
That's sort of the point. Stealth,  
you may have heard of it.

TRACEY  
I don't think they covered that in  
basic.

ZOE  
Well, at least they covered "Dropping

your weapon so you can eat beans and get yourself shot".

TRACEY

Yeah, I got a badge in that.  
(off her look)  
Won't happen again.

ZOE

It does, I'm just gonna watch.

TRACEY

Anything interesting out there, you don't mind my asking?

ZOE

(indicating)

'Bout 30 troops behind those buildings. Mortars, but no rollers yet. I expect they plan to pick at us a spell before they charge. They had two scouts sniffin, about ten yards out, but I took 'em down.

TRACEY

(impressed)

I didn't hear a single thing.

ZOE

First rule of battle, little one.  
Never let 'em know where you are.

Mal runs in, screaming and firing behind him, and dives over a wall for cover, lands nearby, bullets zinging over his head.

ZOE (cont'd)

Of course, there's other schools of thought...

Mal scrambles over to them, laughing.

MAL

Oh! That was bracing. They don't like it when you shoot at them. I worked that out myself.

ZOE

Did you find Vitelli?

MAL

Vitelli's out of it. That bumblebee laid down arms at the first sign of inevitable crushing defeat, can you imagine such a cowardly creature?

TRACEY

Northwest quadrant's open, then?

MAL

Tracey. Ain't you been killed yet?

TRACEY  
(looking sheepishly  
at Zoe)  
No fault of my own, I promise.

MAL  
(disappointed)  
I really wanted your beans.

ZOE  
They're gonna be coming right through  
here. They got rollers?

MAL  
They got every damn thing. How's the  
lieutenant?

TRACEY  
He started screaming. All of a  
sudden, about his arms, where were his  
arms, we hadda go back and find 'em.

ZOE  
What the hell hap --

TRACEY  
He ain't even hurt! Got ten pretty  
fingers like the most of men, but  
he's screaming they're gone, crying.  
Then he ain't said a word in two  
hours.

MAL  
(mournful anger)  
These kids...

ZOE  
Sir. Do we hold?

TRACEY  
(breaking a bit)  
I don't want to die here. Forgive me  
saying, but this rock ain't worth it.  
Not our lives.

MAL  
Everybody dies, Tracey. Someone's  
carrying a bullet for you right now,  
doesn't even know it.  
(smiles)  
The trick is to die of old age before  
it finds you.

ZOE  
We can still cut through to the 22nd  
a the school system. Make a decent  
stand there.

MAL  
We can't do any good here. And I  
sure as hell ain't laying down arms.  
Zoe, you heard the Lieutenant give

the order to join up with the 22nd?

ZOE  
I did.

MAL  
Round 'em up, then.  
(to Tracey)  
You also heard the lieu --

TRACEY  
I wouldn't rat you out, Sarge, hell  
I --

MAL  
Ain't me I worry on. Lieutenant gets  
his mind back in order, he shouldn't  
have this on his record. Weren't his  
fault he couldn't take it.

TRACEY  
That's more'n he woulda done for --

Mal raises a hand, intense, for quiet. Tracey doesn't get it, doesn't hear the growing whine of --

ZOE  
SEEKER!

Things happen very quickly (or very slowly, depending on Mr. Minear). Zoe dives for cover as Mal pulls a flare from his belt that activates the moment he touches it, hurls it above his head --

-- and a tiny missile zooms at the group, suddenly turning up, hitting the flair 30 feet up --

The explosion lights up the air, Mal also diving over Tracey as shrapnel rains down --

TRACEY  
AAGH!

Mal is hit in the back and arm. He rolls off Tracey, who's taken it in the leg pretty badly.

TRACEY (cont'd)  
Is it bad? Is it bad?

MAL  
(ignoring his own  
wounds)  
It's glorious.  
(calls out)  
We gotta move!

TRACEY  
I can't...

MAL  
Time to run!  
(to Zoe)  
Zoe! Get the Lieutenant!

TRACEY  
Sarge, I really can't run here.

MAL  
Well, you know the old saying...

He hoists Tracey over his shoulder and runs just as a tank bursts through the wall --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BAZAAR - CONTINUING (PRESENT DAY)

Close up of that same Tracey, all stiff and dead and blue.

After a moment, Mal slides the lid back over him.

MAL  
This don't make any kind of sense.  
Zoe?

ZOE  
I got nothing. But it's definitely  
Tracey.

WASH  
You know this guy?

INARA  
Is this a warning of some kind?

AMNON  
(quietly)  
Listen, Mal, you gotta get this thing  
out of my station.  
(Mal starts to object)  
Human transport on a postal route is  
very very illegal. Anybody even  
knows I took a corpse in, I'll lose  
my franchise.

MAL  
Well who sent it to you?

AMNON  
No return.

ZOE  
How long has it been here?

AMNON  
Near a week, that's why I waded you.  
If I'd known...

JAYNE  
He don't smell.

MAL  
I know. He's been decently preserved.  
(to Zoe)  
Give me a hand.

JAYNE  
We're taking him on board?

MAL  
We are.

JAYNE  
Don't figure the percentage in that.

MAL  
Don't strain your brain trying, then.  
Might break something.

Mal and Zoe haul the box up, start walking. Book moves to help --

ZOE  
(stony)  
We got him.

They cart him off, the others folding in behind, quietlike. Simon approaches, oblivious, hoping to win Kaylee into a conversation.

SIMON  
What's going on? Did we get  
something fun?

A glare for Simon. River passes him, ice cream swinging --

RIVER  
You are such a boob.

INT. CARGO BAY - A BIT LATER

The box is open again. Everyone is about.

JAYNE  
How do we know he ain't plague-ridden  
or some such?

ZOE  
We know.

WASH  
We don't, actually. I mean, I  
respect you guys have a history,  
but... What are you doing?

Zoe is reaching in, pulling something from the corpses folded hands.

KAYLEE  
He's so young...

SIMON  
(to Mal)  
If you want me to do a proper  
autopsy --

KAYLEE  
Cut him up?

MAL  
Not just yet, thank you doctor.

KAYLEE  
(muttering)  
Robot.

Zoe produces a **FUTURISTIC DEVICE!** That is a tape recorder -- of the **FUTURE!** (Somebody design this please.)

MAL  
What do you got?

She turns it on. The voice stops them all. It is hesitant at first, and weak, as though the talker were straining for breath, But soon settles into a rhythm...

TRACEY (V.O.)  
Uh. Okay. Um, recording... Hi, I guess. It's me. Tracey. This is a message for Zoe, and for Malcolm Reynolds, and I really hope you all are the ones listening to it. Or, I guess I don't. I guess I hope I'm upright and telling you this tale myself, and we're laughing about how stupid I am, but that don't look likely.

We move over everyone as they listen, soberly.

TRACEY  
No, it's more probable I've gotten myself dead, which is a shame if you're me.  
I'll spare you the boring details, falling in with untrustworthy folk, making a bunch of bad calls... All that matters is I expect to be shuffled off, and you two are the only people I trust to get me where I'm going. Which is home. I'd like my body to be with my folks on **St Albans**. We got the family plot there, and my Mom and dad deserve to know I died. If you can come up with some heroical lie as to the how, I'd be... no. I'd just like to be able to lie with my kin, and for them to know that's what I wanted. It's funny. We went to war never looking to come back, but it's the real world I couldn't survive. You two carried me through that war. Now I need you to carry me just a little bit further. If you can. Tell my folks that I'm at peace and all. When you can't run anymore, you crawl, and when you can't do that... well, you know the rest. Thanks, both of you.  
Oh. Yeah. Make sure my eyes is closed, will you?

A moment, and the tape ends. Everyone is quiet.

Wash rises, heads to the stairs --

MAL  
Wash?

Wash turns back.

WASH  
St Albans ain't two days ride, we burn hard  
enough.

A moment, and Mal nods. Wash continues up and Mal turns to replace the lid again, says to Inara:

MAL  
This might make your schedule a  
little --

INARA  
It's all right.

He nods again, not much with the verbal thank you's right at this moment. He and Zoe lift the top together --

ANGLE: FROM INSIDE THE BOX as they cover it.

EXT. SPACE BAZAAR - MOMENTS LATER

Silent but for music, we see Serenity gently lifting off. It passes another ship -- a slightly larger, ALLIANCE SHORT RANGE ENFORCEMENT VESSEL. It's basically an oversized, beat up squad car. As it lands right near where Serenity took off, the music changes to indicate this might be not wonderful.

INT. BAZAAR - MOMENTS LATER

We TRACK BEHIND three men as they stride through the Bazaar. If they're cops, they're detectives, since they have no uniforms to speak of. The man in the middle is called WOMACK. He's been around the block, and likely beaten up everybody on it. The other two, FENDRIS and SKUNK, aren't much different, but they clearly defer to Womack.

They make their way through the place with purposeful indifference. Pass the barker:

BARKER  
That's right, gentlemen, you've been  
told tales all your life, but Alien  
races exist among us, the proof is  
right inside, you'll be amazed and  
astounded, what is the government not  
telling us? Alien life! Six bits!

WOMACK  
(to the others, an  
ugly growl)  
It's fake. I seen it. It's a pig or  
some such.

ANGLE ON: Amnon. He is going through papers, behind his counter. He arranges them carefully --

ANGLE ON: his papers.

-- as a badge is dropped on top of them.

Amnon looks up to see Womack standing right in front of him. Amnon hesitates, and before anything can happen Skunk is already going in his back room to search. Fendris is behind Womack, checking his rather large pistol and watching out for pain-in-the-ass innocent bystanders.

AMNON  
Can I help you...?

WOMACK  
You are an ugly looking little quim,  
you know that?

AMNON  
If there's a problem --

WOMACK  
So you have to be asking yourself,  
ugly as you are, how repulsive  
looking the guy that makes you his  
lady friend is gonna be. I mean,  
prison is a lonely place, and you  
sure as a hundred moons ain't gonna  
be pitching, so what kind of sorry  
ass troll is gonna get blue enough to  
grapple with you? Shudder to think.

AMNON  
I've broken no law.

WOMACK  
Transportation of human cargo --  
especially dead cargo -- through the  
Allied postal system is punishable by  
five to ten years on a penal moon.  
Plus, you don't know this yet, but  
you resisted arrest.  
(off Amnon's terror)  
Where's my body?

AMNON  
I didn't... I don't...

WOMACK  
The dead guy. He got shipped here.

Skunk comes out, shakes his head no.

WOMACK (cont'd)  
And shipped back out, I guess. Where.

AMNON  
I never saw a body. But there was a  
crate big enough for one, I did hand  
that over just a while ago.

WOMACK  
Lovely. Who got it?

Amnon hands over the register, points to a name.

WOMACK (cont'd)  
Malcolm Reynolds. And where would  
you suppose he's off to?

AMNON  
I swear on my soul I don't know. But  
he just left. He captain's a firefly,  
you should be able to capture them if  
you leave now.

WOMACK  
Are you telling me to leave?

AMNON  
No, no...

WOMACK  
Relax, you've been great. I was only  
bluffing with that stuff about  
arresting you, who needs that kind of  
paperwork? Skunk. Light him on fire.

Skunk sprays Amnon with lighter fluid he keeps in a cool container in his jacket. With swift graceful motion, he holds up a suddenly lit match. Amnon backs into a huddle in the corner, utterly terrified.

Womack stands next to skunk, over the cowering postman.

WOMACK (cont'd)  
Tell anyone we were here, warn  
(looks at the  
register)  
'Malcolm Reynolds' that we're coming, and  
you'll wish we'd burned you.  
< understand? > [Dong ma?]

Amnon nods frantically.

WOMACK (cont'd)  
Boys... let's go find us a corpse.

He blows out Skunk's match.

END OF ACT ONE

## Act Two

INT. ENGINE ROOM - NIGHT

Kaylee lies in her hammock, listening to the recording of Tracey's voice. She clearly has been doing this for a while, and has gotten awful misty about the lad.

TRACEY (V.O.)  
All that matters is I expect to be  
shuffled off, and you two are the  
only people I trust to get me where  
I'm going. Which is home. I'd like  
my body to be with my folks on St  
Albans. We got the family plot there,  
and my Mom and dad deserve to know I  
died.

INT. AFT HALL - CONTINUING

Simon comes up, looking for Kaylee. He stops outside the engine room door. Sees her, hears the recording...

TRACEY (V.O.)

If you can come up with some heroical  
lie as to the how, I'd be... no. I'd  
just like to be able to lie with my  
kin, and for them to know that's what  
I wanted.

Simon slowly slips away, realizing with regret he is unwanted.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Book stands at the head of the crate/coffin, bible in hand, head bowed. WIDEN to see that during his little silent service, Jayne is busily lifting weights. Jayne replaces the barbell in its holder, the metal noisily clattering. Book looks around.

JAYNE

Hey, I'm sorry, Preacher. Makin' too  
much noise?

BOOK

No, no, I was just.... saying a few  
words. Don't know the boy's  
denomination, but...

JAYNE

It's good. Lord should oughta look  
after the dead.

Over the following, Jayne pats himself down with a towel -- he's quite sweaty. Really been going at it.

JAYNE (cont'd)

You wanna do a set? I'll spot you.

BOOK

Not so terribly in the mood.

JAYNE

Most people is pretty quiet right  
about not. I guess the captain and Zoe were  
summat bonded with the kid.

BOOK

It would appear.

JAYNE

Me, I see a stiff -- one I didn't  
have to kill myself -- I just get,  
you know, the urge to do stuff. Work  
out, run around, get some trim if  
there's a willin' woman about... not  
that I get flush from corpses or  
anything. I ain't crazy.

BOOK

Makes sense. Looking to feel alive,

I would venture.

JAYNE

For psychology, that ain't half dumb.  
My kind of life don't last, preacher.  
So I expect I'm invested in making  
good sport of it whilst I can.

He puts on his hat as he says it.

**As they continue talking**, we come around to see River in the background, crawling gracefully onto the coffin. She stretches, catlike, moving her head about in odd fashion, as though listening, then lies flat on her belly, arms out to her sides.

JAYNE (cont'd)

You gonna read over me when I'm taken  
down, Shepherd?

BOOK

Oh, I suspect you'll be around long  
after we're all --

JAYNE

(noticing River)

What the hell is she --

(at River)

-- what the hell are you doing?

BOOK

Oh. River, that might not be the  
best place to...

RIVER

I'm very comfortable.

They consider pulling her off... hesitate...

BOOK

(to Jayne)

I guess we do all have different  
reactions to death.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING

Mal and Zoe are laughing their asses off. We widen to see Inara is with them, laughing as well. They've all had a few drinks, and continue to drink as they talk:

MAL

I really thought I was gonna die.

INARA

How could he possibly have even...

MAL

The colonel was dead drunk. Three  
hours pissing on about the enlisted  
men, they're scum, they're not  
fighters -- and he passes right out.

Boom.

ZOE

We couldn't even move him. So Tracey just snipped it right off his face.

MAL

And you never seen a man more proud of his mustache than Colonel Orbrin. In all my life I will never love a woman the way this officer loved that lip ferret.

ZOE

Giant walrussy thing, all waxed up...

INARA

Did he find out?

Another burst of laughter from Mal and Zoe.

MAL

The next morning, he wakes up, and it's gone. He's furious, but he can't actually say, you know, "someone stole my mustache". So he calls out all the platoons --

ZOE

I thought he was gonna shoot us --

MAL

And he's eyeballing the men something fearsome, not a word, and he comes to Tracey... and Tracey is wearing the gorramn mustache on his face.

ZOE

He glued it on.

MAL

Staring the old man down, wearing his own damn... Oh god...

The laughter falters, Mal looking into his drink a moment. Inara looks at him sympathetically, tries to jump start the conversation again:

INARA

Well, the colonel must have said SOMETHING to --

The SHIP ROCKS with force of an explosion. They all start out of their chairs.

ZOE

Are we hit?

MAL

Too damn close --

And they are racing to the

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Where Wash is piloting intently.

WASH  
They're behind us. Fired over the  
port bow.

MAL  
Warning shot?

WASH  
They coulda hit us...

ZOE  
Feds.

The screen comes to life, Womack's face on it.

WOMACK  
This is Lieutenant Womack of Allied  
Enforcement. You are in possession  
of stolen goods and are ordered to  
cut thrust and prepare for docking.

MAL  
The Lassiter.

ZOE  
That was quick.

INARA  
Think Saffron tipped them off?

Mal hits the screen com:

MAL  
This is captain Reynolds, I think  
there's been a mistake.

WOMACK  
There's been a lot of mistakes,  
Captain. The latest of which is you  
taking that crate.

He looks at the others. "Crate?"

MAL  
(to Womack)  
We took in a lot of inventory today.  
If something got mixed in, we'll sure  
hand it back, but I don't think we're  
your men. Let me check through the  
cargo -- is it marked at all?

WOMACK  
You might wanna think twice about  
playing games with me. I will blow  
you out into fragments.

MAL

You do that, your precious crate  
gonna be in bitty shards.  
Now I got deliveries to make,  
officer, so you just lock onto my  
trajectory and I'll see if there's  
anything here fits your description.

He turns off the screen.

WASH  
Police procedure has changed since I  
was little.

MAL  
They call back, you keep them  
occupied.

WASH  
What do I do, shadow puppets?

BOOK  
We'll take care of it.

ZOE  
I don't get this. They're after  
Tracey?

MAL  
Or there's something else in that box.

INT. CARGO BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tracey's body lies on the floor as Mal, Zoe and Jayne go through both the crate and the box, looking for something. The others including Simon, Inara and River (minus Wash and Book) look on.

MAL  
Anything?

JAYNE  
(smashing planks)  
Not unless this crate's made a'  
magical wish-granting planks.

MAL  
(to Zoe)  
Check his pockets.

KAYLEE  
That ain't right...

MAL  
Neither's being blowd up. There's  
nothing about this sits well with me.

ZOE  
Empty.

MAL  
Well, they want this body for  
something, and I'm guessing it ain't

a proper burial.

Looks around. No option. Looks to Simon:

MAL (cont'd)  
Well, doctor... I guess you are doing  
an autopsy.

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Mal, Zoe and Jayne watch as Simon prepares to open up the now naked (but sheet covered) body.

ZOE  
You really think there's something in  
there.

MAL  
Using corpses for smuggling is a time-  
honored repulsive custom.

JAYNE  
Maybe it's gold!

ZOE  
And maybe this was a friend of ours,  
and you wanna show a little respect.

JAYNE  
I got respect. But I'm just  
saying... **gold**...

SIMON  
He's been opened before.

MAL  
How's that?

SIMON  
It's good work. The scar's nearly  
invisible, but...

He traces his finger all the way down the chest.

MAL  
Well, let's see what's in there.

He looks at Zoe, hating this. A tense moment. Simon takes his scalpel and starts cutting.

And Tracey **SCREAMS**.

END OF ACT TWO

## Act Three

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

Where we left off. Everyone backing away from the SCREAMING Lazarus. Tracey looks with horror to his bleeding chest, then to the man who holds the scalpel -- Simon. Simon sees the blood, makes an instinctive move to see to the wound. All Tracey sees is the knife. He gives a PRIMAL CRY as he lunges off the table at Simon. They struggle, knocking shit over. Mal and Zoe jump into the

fray. Mal calling to Jayne:

MAL  
Get hold of him!

JAYNE  
Spry for a dead fella!

Mal pins him to the floor, ends up sitting on top of him.

MAL  
SETTLE! That's enough!

TRACEY  
He was cuttin' on me, Sarge!

MAL  
I know it! I told him to!

TRACEY  
You told him to! What for?!

MAL  
You were dead!

TRACEY  
(coming back to him)  
Hunh? Oh. Right. Suppose I was.  
(sees Zoe)  
Hey there, Zoe.

ZOE  
Private.

MAL  
You feeling a mite calmer now?

TRACEY  
Yes, Sarge.  
(then)  
Sarge?

MAL  
What?

TRACEY  
I think I'm nekked.

A beat. Mal's straddling a naked man.

MAL  
Okay. We're gonna get up off this  
floor, you're gonna stand like a  
person, cover yourself, and the  
doctor's gonna tend to that gash.

Tracey nods. Mal gets off of him. He rises. Looks a bit sheepish. Pulls the sheet up around his waist as he sits on the edge of the table. As Simon starts to tend to the wound:

TRACEY  
Sorry for jumping on you the way I

did. I was a little confounded.

SIMON

Emerging from that state can be disorienting. Was it byphodine?  
(clarifying)

The drug you took to make it appear as though you were dead. Do you remember what it was called?

TRACEY

Never did ask.

SIMON

(puts gauze to wound)

Hold that there.

(casually, to Jayne)

Bring that pan, please.

Jayne, not knowing why, brings a bedpan over. Simon positions Jayne's hand with pan in front of Tracey without explanation, then moves to his med supplies.

TRACEY

Fella sold it to me said I'd be under a week or more. He told me I wouldn't dream. But I did. Dreamt of my family.

Simon has moved back to his patient, reaches out, repositions the bedpan as Tracey suddenly HEAVES forward (leaning forward so all spew is sound fx.) Jayne reacts. Simon doesn't, was expecting it. Gives Tracey a shot:

SIMON

This should take the edge off the nausea.

(to grossed-out Jayne)

You can take that.

Simon goes about checking Tracey's vitals, hooking him up to the scanners and reading the monitor in the b.g.

MAL

Alright. Now you care to explain why it is you got yourself all corpseified and mailed to me? What're you running from?

TRACEY

Running to, not from. Just want to get home is all. That's all I ever wanted. 'cept there's them took exception to that. To me leaving... while I's in possession of their property...

MAL

What'd you boost, Tracey? More important, who'd you boost it from?

SIMON

Captain... Captain, I don't mean to... I think we may have a medical

emergency here...

They all look at him; he's looking at the monitor.

SIMON (cont'd)

This man... he appears to be in  
cardiac arrest...

MAL

What? Tracey, you having a heart  
attack?

(to Simon)

Don't look like he's having a heart  
attack...

TRACEY

(laughs)

Don't pay no attention to your  
machines, doc. They'll fib to ya.  
Heart's just fine. Better'n fine.  
Runs a bit hotter'n normal, is all.

SIMON

(off, monitors)

My god... it's not just the heart  
muscle... it's everything...

TRACEY

All the movin' parts. That's what I  
took, Mal. And that's what they want  
back.

MAL

Tracey -- you want to explain what in  
the < name of all that's sacred > [TYEN  
shiao-duh] you're talking about?

TRACEY

(distracted)

Sure, Sarge... sure...

Now the MONITOR really starts to go nuts, Tracey's heart beating ever faster. The others look from the monitor to him, then follow his gaze to...

KAYLEE stands in the doorway, staring at the man come back to life. They hold the look between them.

INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA - (SHORT TIME) LATER

Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Simon, Kaylee and Tracey. Kaylee brings Tracey some water. They will have silent connection throughout the following.

TRACEY

Thank you.

She smiles at him, takes a seat.

MAL

So your innards... ain't your innards?

TRACEY

Mine got scooped out, they replaced every bit.

JAYNE

Why'd you wanna go and do that?

TRACEY

For the money. They're paying me to transport what they stuck in.

ZOE

You're smuggling human organs?

TRACEY

But not from a person. I wouldn't do a thing like that. Grown in a lab. Only way they can be moved is in a person. Not sure why.

SIMON

Because the technology's not ready. The blastomeres are unapproved. Likely unstable. You're not just a carrier -- you're an incubator.

TRACEY

Whichever. It ain't strictly legal, I can tell you that. I was supposed to be at the drop spot two weeks ago. A clinic on Ariel. They were to open me up, take the goods and put back my own workings.

ZOE

And you believed them? That they'd put you back together?

TRACEY

Sure. They want you to make as many runs as you're able. Hell, I met a fella, he's on his third already.

MAL

So what happened?

TRACEY

Well, truth is I had a --

SIMON

-- change of heart?

A beat. Simon's amused. No one else is. Tracey continues:

TRACEY

A better offer. Another buyer, willing to pay three times the going rate. Enough I could get my folks off that rock they been forced to live on, set them up someplace nice, someplace warm, maybe one of the

central planets.

MAL

But your "better offer" went south...

TRACEY

Got myself into a bit of a pickle,  
Sarge. The folks I was working  
for... they musta got wind what I was  
planning. When I showed up... my new  
buyer was dead. There was men there,  
waitin' for me.

KAYLEE

But you got away.

TRACEY

Only just. I knew they'd never stop  
looking for me so long as I was  
alive. Thought my chances'd be  
better if I weren't.

MAL

So you "died" and figured then they'd  
stop looking?

TRACEY

Yeah.

A SUDDEN BLAST from outside. The ship ROCKS with the impact.

Tracey reacts with fear. As Mal rises --

MAL

Think maybe you figured wrong.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING

The Police Cruiser is behind Serenity, pacing. It lets loose with another ELECTRONIC BLAST.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash and Book on the bridge. As Mal and Zoe and Jayne enter behind them:

WASH

I think they're 'bout done being  
stalled, Captain -- WOMACK (ON VID)  
Firefly Serenity, you will prepare to  
be boarded or destroyed.

MAL

He's bluffing. He won't want to  
damage the cargo.

WASH

(as he swivels)  
There's cargGAHHH!

He's just laid eyes on Tracey, who stands in the doorway with Kaylee. Book takes in the sight with interest.

WASH (cont'd)  
Mal, your dead army buddy's on the  
bridge!

MAL  
I know it. How close're we to St.  
Albans?

WASH  
Five from atmo.

MAL  
Pull up the terrain specs. Kaylee,  
take him out of here. And strap in.

Wash brings up terrain maps on the nav monitor. Mal grabs the radio mic, speaks.

MAL (cont'd)  
This is Captain Reynolds of the  
Firefly Serenity --

WOMACK (ON VID)  
Reynolds. I hear you picked up some  
cargo belonged to me.

MAL  
That a fact?

WOMACK (ON VID)  
I stepped over a lot of bodies to get  
to that one you got in your hold.  
You play this right, and yours won't  
have to be among them.

TRACEY  
(scared)  
Sarge...

ZOE  
Private, the Captain ordered you off  
the bridge.

KAYLEE  
Come on.

She starts to lead him away. Mal pages through maps.

MAL  
We'd love to let you boys dock, but  
that last pop you give us knocked out  
our fore-couple. We're gonna have to  
park it if you want the tour.

FOREDECK HALL - Tracey heard that, turns back. Kaylee gently tugs him her way.

KAYLEE  
It's okay. Captain'll take care of  
it. You'll see.

They have arrived at the door to her bunk, she pulls it open. Gives him a little push forward. He looks at her, unsure. But the total, guileless faith in her face persuades. He starts down the ladder

to her bunk. She follows as --

BRIDGE

MAL  
(into mic)  
See you on the ground.  
(clicks off, points  
to map)  
There. Think you can do it?

WASH  
Watch me.

Mal clicks over the feed on the mic, now when he speaks it's an internal SHIP PA.

MAL (AMPLIFIED)  
Attention all crew. Sit down and  
hang on to something...

EXT. SPACE/ATMO - CONTINUING

As Serenity, followed by cops, dips down, heads for a PLANET. Breaking atmo, speeding up, taking a dive, as...

INT. SERENITY - KAYLEE'S BUNK - CONTINUING

Kaylee is coming down the ladder into her room. As the ship heads into the dive, she is sent into Tracey's arms. He catches her. Holds her. They look at each other as --

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Jayne is prepping some weapons, just in case. Wash pilots.

WASH  
Get ready for hard burn --  
(leans on controls)  
They'd be crazy to follow us in here.

Everyone hangs on. Jayne has great sea legs and is all about loading the guns, as --

EXT. ICE CANYONS - CONTINUING

Serenity dives into snowy canyons. The police Cruiser paces them, then pulls up sharply. Serenity thrillingly zooms through the twisty canyons.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash glances up through the top of the bridge windows...

WASH  
Okay. Let's just say they're not  
crazy...

EXT. ICE CANYONS - CONTINUING

Cops follow placidly just above the canyon, pacing. BELOW, Serenity is having a tougher time of it as it maneuvers through the ever precarious canyons.

INT. SERENITY - KAYLEE'S BUNK - CONTINUING

BONDY MOMENT BETWEEN KAYLEE AND TRACEY.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Something here.

EXT. ICE CANYONS - CONTINUING

Serenity goes behind a curve, disappears for an instant, Reappears, then disappears again... then doesn't re-appear. The Police Cruiser circles, looking. No sign.

EXT. /INT. ICE CANYONS/CAVE - CONTINUING

As Serenity backs into ice cave.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

They talk about how long they can hide here.

INT. SERENITY - KAYLEE'S BUNK - CONTINUING

Tracey makes comment that they stopped. He's worried. Wants to check. A DEEP BOOMING from somewhere.

INT. SERENITY - PASSENGER DORM - CONTINUING

Simon and River react to BOOMING.

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Inara reacts to booming.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

The other's react. Talk about depth charges.

EXT. ICE CANYONS - CONTINUING

Where WE SEE Police Cruiser dropping magnetic depth charges.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUING

What are their options? Not a lot. They will find us -- and if depth charge hits them, it'll burn out the ship's innards and they be dug out of here.

OMITTED

INT. SERENITY - KAYLEE'S BUNK - CONTINUING

Tracey heads for the bridge, concerned.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash says if they get hit, they're dead. Book says the only thing they can do now is give ourselves up -- just as Tracey is arriving.

Tracey suddenly looks a bit dark and shifty, eyeing some nearby weapons...

END OF ACT THREE

## Act Four

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Sweat-beaded brows, a beat of nervous silence, held breaths.

Then from above a rolling THUNDEROUS BOOM. The bridge vibrates with the OS explosion's force. A cascade of ICE CHUNKS clatters over the windshield and the nose of Serenity.

Wash lets out his breath, checking some of his dash monitors.

WASH  
< Mother-of-Jesus > [Wuo duh MA]  
they're comm' close... They must  
have caught a bead on our heat  
trail --

Jayne turns from the debris still falling to the others. He's extra sweaty, falling prey to his cowardly side.

JAYNE  
I'm with the preacher. I ain't  
gettin' snowed-in permanent cause of  
some jackass kid --

MAL  
(thinking; to Wash)  
What about runnin'?

WASH  
(Washlike dry wit)  
We tried that, remember? That's why  
we're here? In this glacier? 'Bout to  
be buried alive?

ANOTHER BOOM FROM ABOVE - throughout this scene, the depth charges are a slow, regular drum beat, adding rhythmic percussion to the tense-ness.

MAL  
Fine. Book-- You're sayin' you got an  
angle--

BOOK  
(quiet conviction)  
The only one, Captain.

Mal turns to Zoe. They exchange a look. Zoe gives a slight nod - 'can't think of anything else to do'. Mal nods back.

MAL  
Wash... Call the cops. Tell them we  
give up.

Wash nods and flicks the RADIO ON, preparing to call.

TRACEY (O.S.)

No.

ANOTHER BOOM.

Tracey edges the barrel of a gun into the FG, holding it on the others in the bridge.

MAL

Tracey, what are y--

TRACEY

I said NO! Those bastards up there  
are gonna pull this million-credit  
meat outta me and leave me bleedin'--  
(turns gun on Wash)  
Now turn off that radio!

Another depth charge EXPLODES, closer, louder, Jayne braces himself, bolting instinctively to his feet as more ICE SHARDS rain down on the ship.

JAYNE

Ruttin' twerp's gonna get us--

TRACEY

(loud, arresting)  
Don't you move! No one move!  
(gun back to Wash)  
Turn it off! We have to run! NOW!

Book takes a slow step toward Tracey. Tracey swings the gun at him, the model of panicky-guy-with-gun-in-over-his-head and-ready-to-go-postal.

BOOK

Put that thing down, boy. We weren't  
talking about turning--

TRACEY

Shut it, shepherd! I swear to God  
I'll shoot you dead if you don't.  
(manic, bitter laugh)  
Sarge--Zoe-- Why you listening to  
this bible-thumper?

ZOE

We've seen the man fight, Trace. Seen  
him think. And we trust him on both  
counts.

TRACEY

Yeah, well, that's just plum  
stupid -- but then you two were  
always lookin' for someone to spend  
your trust on ... Didn't exactly get  
your war won, did it?

He turns to Mal, whose hands are slightly raised, eyes boring back at Tracey. ANOTHER BOOM.

MAL

Wash. Call the cops.

Wash's eyebrows raise; he points gingerly at Tracey's gun.

WASH  
Um--

TRACEY  
I'll kill him, Wash. I'll put a hole  
right through him.

MAL  
You mailed your ugly business to Zoe  
and me, Tracey, cash-on-delivery.  
I'll go to Hell before I watch you  
turn and bite us for the favor --

ANOTHER BOOM, even closer. Ice, clatter, scary.

MAL (cont'd)  
Wash. You call them up. Tell them  
we'll meet 'em topside.

TRACEY  
No--

MAL  
Do it.

Wash does that funny-under-pressure nod of his, turns to the radio, reaches for the switch--

TRACEY  
NO!

Tracey swings his gun off Mal and fires a SHOT at the radio console. He misses, and it RICOCHETS off the railing above it, grazing across Wash's temple, throwing his head back.

Tracey stands, mouth open. He looks down, and the camera tilts down, to his chest, where a BIG RED HOLE gapes. He looks up at Zoe, who holds her gun on him.

TRACEY (cont'd)  
You sh-- You shot me...

Zoe cocks her gun, sending the spent shell flying.

ZOE  
Damn right I did.

ANOTHER BOOM. A little dazed, but still standing, Tracey backs out of the bridge. Zoe covers him as she calls to Wash.

ZOE (cont'd)  
Wash--? Sweetie--?

Wash dabs a finger at the bullet graze.

WASH  
Ow?

INT. SERENITY - FOREDECK - CONTINUING

Tracey backs down the stairs into the foredeck, gun covering the door to the bridge.

ANOTHER DEPTH CHARGE shakes the ship.

Kaylee races into the foredeck from behind him, not seeing his gun.

KAYLEE  
Tracey! What Happened!? I heard--

MAL (O.S.)  
Kaylee! Get out of here!

Tracey turns on her, swings an arm around her, pulling her against him as a shield. Mal is at the bridge door, gun out.

TRACEY  
Stay back!

He fires a wild shot toward the door, Mal ducks. Tracey herds Kaylee toward the exit to the cargo bay stairs--

INT. SERENITY - STAIRS/CARGO BAY

As Tracey pushes Kaylee down the stairs, her arm in his white- knuckled grip.

TRACEY  
Kaylee, I'm sorry... I don't want to  
scare you... I just--

She sees the blood pouring down his shirt front.

KAYLEE  
Blood..!

TRACEY  
They shot me. They want to turn me  
in...

KAYLEE  
You're lying -- they wouldn't --

ANOTHER BOOM.

TRACEY  
Come on, Kaylee... You've got to fly  
me out of here. We'll take a shuttle  
and go--

They get to the catwalk, and he drags her toward shuttle II's airlock.

TRACEY (cont'd)  
They want to sell me off... You won't  
let 'em do it, will you? I mean, I  
thought-- I thought we had a moment  
back there--

Kaylee digs in her heels at the shuttle's entrance.

KAYLEE  
Tracey--

TRACEY

Didn't we have a moment back there?

ANOTHER BOOM.

KAYLEE  
(scared but firm)  
Tracey, take that gun offa me...

TRACEY  
Kaylee, please--

KAYLEE  
I ain't goin' anywhere with you.

MAL  
Nobody's going anywhere, private.

Mal walks down the stairs from above, gun trained on Tracey.

KAYLEE  
Captain, what's happeni--

He pulls Kaylee back into shield position, gun now raised to her head. He's nothing but panic in a pair of pants now.

TRACEY  
Don't make me do it.

ANOTHER BOOM. Mal gets to the catwalk, angry, but cool as cucumber slices. Zoe moves slowly down the stairs behind him.

MAL  
Far as I can see, nobody's **made** you do anything. You brought this onto yourself. Got in over your head with these stone cold gut-runners, then you panicked, and then you brung the whole mess down on all of us...

As he was speaking, we saw Jayne, easing himself onto the catwalk across the bay, gun in hand, quiet like a kitty.

TRACEY  
That ain't how it happened--

MAL  
Oh yes, that's how it happened. And I'm startin' to think that trail of bodies Womack was talkin' about, I'm thinkin' some of that trail was left by you... losin' your head, doin' more or less what you're doin' right now--

Mal looks up, around, then back to Tracey.

MAL (cont'd)  
See there? Hear that quiet? Means the call's already been made.

TRACEY

(breaking up)  
You-- That call --  
(sobs, gun at  
Kaylee's head)  
That call means you just murdered me.

Mal flicks his eyes towards Jayne, who responds by LOUDLY COCKING HIS GUN. Panicky-panic, Tracey spins, trying to see where the sound came from, as Kaylee wrenches free. Mal FIRES, hitting him in the chest, inches from the first wound.

MAL  
You murdered yourself, son.  
(as Tracey sags, eyes  
wide)  
I just carried the bullet for a while.

Tracey drops the gun, slumps to the catwalk floor. Zoe and Mal move briskly toward him, holstering.

WASH (O.S.)  
Captain, they say we got two minutes  
before they start shelling again--

MAL  
Get us up there!

Kaylee heads off.

KAYLEE  
I'll get the doctor.

Zoe and Mal look at Tracey, then at each other, eyes speaking: 'there's no way in hell he's gonna make it.'

EXT. PLANET - DAY

Serenity parked nose-to-nose in front of the cop ship, on a plain of glacial ice.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

The airlock doors slide open -- the blinding glare of sun on snow -- out of that, Womack and his two men emerge, walking up the ramp into the cargo bay, guns drawn.

Womack stops, confronted by Jayne, who stands in the middle of the bay, BIG GUN trained on Womack's head.

WOMACK  
Well now... Somebody left their dog  
off the leash...  
(cold low growl)  
I been shot too many times to be  
scared by a gun, boy.

JAYNE  
(keeping aim)  
I hear you. Most ever'body I know's  
been shot least once. S'no big thing.

A voice trails thin from above.

TRACEY

Womack...

Womack looks up, sees Tracey propped up against the catwalk railing, sees the BLOOD dripping down through the grates.

WOMACK

Smith? You squirrely little piece a'  
go-se, that you?

TRACEY

(delirious chuckle)  
I think I... I think I broke your  
junk...

Mal appears over the railing, gun on the cops as well.

MAL

Little problem during shipping.

Simon is by Tracey up on the catwalk, but there's nothing he can do.

WOMACK

Don't think I need to tell you folk  
the trouble you're in. Wetware  
smugglin', resistin', fleeing an  
officer a' the law... an' I'm sure a  
search of your ship'll come up with  
another few felonies.

Book walks out from behind some crates and stuff.

BOOK

You won't be searching the ship,  
Womack.

WOMACK

That so?

BOOK

It is. You won't be taking us in. Nor  
that boy who's dying up there. You're  
going to turn around, and just fly  
away.

WOMACK

You know, I'm authorized to kill as  
I like, shepherds not withstandin'.

Book is so cool here it's making my hands sweaty.

BOOK

There's nine armed and dangerous  
desperados on this ship. You count in  
at three. Why is it you didn't call  
in for back-up?

(Womack skips a beat)

There's a Fed station eighty miles  
from where you're standing.

(walks closer)

You got your command stripes at the  
Silverhold colonies. Puts you about

eight solar systems away from your jurisdiction...

WOMACK  
Listen here, preach--

BOOK  
But that doesn't bother you. Whole 'verse is your jurisdiction. Procedure is for stiffs.  
(looks him over w/ disdain)  
You're on the take, Womack, clearing routes through your territory for all manner of black market pirates.

WOMACK  
What the hell kinda man of God--

BOOK  
Took a little vacation time to chase down this piece of change for an extra commission, I'm guessing.

Womack raises his gun toward Book. The other two guys nervously follow suit. A GUN COCK echoes from above; Zoe's positioned a ways down the side catwalk, with a clean shot.

BOOK (cont'd)  
Now as I said, we got guns on you you don't even see. You took pains to keep your presence here secret. I don't imagine it'd bother anyone if we laid your bodies to rest at the bottom of one of these canyons.

The cops lower their guns.

BOOK (cont'd)  
Yessir. I'm fair sure we could make you disappear. You done most of that work for us already.

Womack looks up at the dying Tracey, at the various guns trained on him, crunching the numbers. Finally, he spits on the ground.

WOMACK  
Damaged goods, anyhow.  
(to his men)  
Let's go, boys.

They start backing out of the bay. Jayne and Book slowly follow them, Jayne still aimed rock solid on Womack's face. As they get past the open airlock doors:

WOMACK (cont'd)  
Hat makes you look like an idiot.

This, oddly, hits Jayne. He frowns with affront. Book hits the airlock button and the doors SLIDE SHUT.

JAYNE  
Either you spent a lotta time

fightin' bad cops... or bein' one.

BOOK  
Maybe both.

Up on the catwalk, Tracey's life ebbs fast. He looks up to Mal as Zoe enters frame, crouching by him.

TRACEY  
So.. .That was the plan?  
(Mal nods)  
That--  
(coughs)  
That was a good plan.

MAL  
I think so.

TRACEY  
Weird preacher, though...  
(coughs again)  
I'm feelin'... kinda stupid right  
about now.

MAL  
(tender)  
Only cause you are.

He looks to Kaylee, then to all gathered there.

TRACEY  
Kaylee. I'm sorry... Every--  
Everyone... Wasn't never no good at  
life, anyhow... Couldn't seem to make  
sense of it... Always running  
scared...

Zoe brushes his hair from his face gently.

TRACEY (cont'd)  
(sad little laugh)  
'When you can't run anymore, you  
crawl... and when you can't do that--'

Coughs again, this time a trickle of blood falls from his lips.

ZOE  
'You find someone... to carry you.'

Tracey nods, his eyes fluttering, dying.

TRACEY  
Guess I did, at that...

Head slumps. Dead. Sad.

EXT. SNOWY HOMESTEAD - DAY

Tracey's body is carried down ramp by Mal and Zoe, others in attendance. Before them is a homestead, a large EXTENDED FAMILY stands there awaiting their dead son.

As they hand the body over:

TRACEY (V.O.)

It's funny. We went to war never  
looking to come back, but it's the  
real world I couldn't survive. You  
two carried me through that war. Now  
I need you to carry me just a little  
bit further. If you can...

END OF EPISODE