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# *Firefly*

"Bushwhacked"

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FIREFLY

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"Bushwhacked"

TEASER

1 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

1

BANG! MAL lands hard against a wall. Ouch. He's sweaty, out of breath. We're in the middle of some violence. Now a winded Zoe appears, coming to his aid.

MAL  
We're dead.

ZOE  
I believe we still have a shot,  
sir.

MAL  
Haven't really learned a terrible  
lot about losing -- have you, Zoe?

ZOE  
Only since I've been under your  
command, Sir.

MAL  
Fair.

She pulls him back into the fray of a BASKETBALL GAME. Or some raucous, post-modern version of one, anyway. Book joins them as they head back into it --

BOOK  
I think we've got 'em on the run  
now!

MAL  
Our cunning strategy of getting  
our asses plainly whooped must be  
starting to confound 'em.

The teams are: MAL, ZOE, BOOK versus JAYNE, KAYLEE, WASH. It's a messy free-for-all, with everyone pretty much all over the place. Kaylee has the ball, gets past Mal, passes over to Wash. Wash shoots to a sideways hoop which hangs high, connected to the hoist chain. Scores!

Mal goes after the ball, but Jayne barrels through, steals it, drives past Book, past Zoe, passes the ball back to Wash. Wash dribbles, looks for an opening.

(CONTINUED)

WASH

Somebody cover my wife.

JAYNE

(has appeared at his side)

Everytime you ain't lookin'.

Jayne moves off. Wash to Kaylee:

WASH

He's dampening my team spirit.

Kaylee has noticed --

-- SIMON appears on the uppermost catwalk level with RIVER. Here to watch. Kaylee sees him, grins. Simon smiles.

KAYLEE

Gimme the ball.

He does. She drives forward, Mal tries to intercept, but she sidesteps him. He goes sprawling. Kaylee, intensely aware of the handsome doctor watching, shoots -- scores!

MAL

(aside to Zoe)

Don't s'pose I could threaten to put her off the boat, she does that again?

ZOE

You could, Sir. But she's the only one who knows how anything works.

MAL

There's a point.

The bash and crash of the game resumes. Jayne gets the ball, passes it, but Zoe intercepts. It's keep-away time.

INARA emerges from her shuttle. Smiles at the camaraderie.

Wash scoops up the ball. Zoe is hot on him. Kaylee clatters to an upper level. Wash passes over Zoe's head, Kaylee catches the ball. Mal tears off after her, coming up the steps, gonna get her from behind.

KAYLEE

Ah! Jayne!

Jayne runs up, gets under Kaylee and she climbs up on his shoulders. She just escapes Mal. As she rides Jayne toward the hoop, she sees --

(CONTINUED)

-- Inara is moving along the catwalk, over to:

SIMON

Hello.

Kaylee shoots. Misses. Badly. The rest of the players dive in. The chaos is on again, as above... Inara stands next to Simon. They both watch the game.

INARA

Who's winning?

SIMON

I can't really tell... they don't seem to be playing by any civilized rules that I know.

INARA

Well, this far out, you kind of make your own.

She glances over at River who seems delighted with the game unfolding below her, but we can just see that her mouth is moving, muttering to herself...

INARA (cont'd)

How is she?

SIMON

She's... good. Better. She has her days.

INARA

Don't we all.

SIMON

There're even moments when she seems like the little sister I used to know... but then it passes. She still won't talk about what it was they did to her at the Academy.

INARA

Perhaps she's not sure herself.

SIMON

She dreams about it. I know that much. Nightmares. I can't begin to imagine what the government...

(then)

You know I supported Unification?

(CONTINUED)

INARA

So did I.

SIMON

I believed everything they told us. How The Alliance would solve our problems. Right the wrongs. I wanted to be a part of that.

INARA

Things are better for a great many.

SIMON

It would have been unthinkable, three years ago, that I'd be on a ship like this, with people like that.

INARA

They're good people.

SIMON

Yes. And I'm grateful. Very grateful that Captain Reynolds has allowed us to remain on board. I just... I don't know if I'll be able to help her here. And I need to help her.

INARA

Simon. You are. I think your sister understands what you risked to rescue her from that place... leaving your whole world behind. That was incredibly selfless.

SIMON

I "selflessly" turned us both into wanted fugitives.

INARA

(a wistful smile)

Well. We're all running from something, I suppose.

He looks at her, curious. She doesn't expound. But her wise smile hints at something. The moment is interrupted by an ELECTRONIC BEEPING, an alert.

The game is halted as everyone reacts to the BEEPING.

(CONTINUED)

ZOE

Proximity alert. Must be comin' up  
on somethin'...

WASH

Oh, gawd! What could it beee?  
We're doomed! Who's flyin' this  
thing?

(then, deadpan)

Oh. Right. That'd be me. Back to  
work.

He tosses the ball to the others, heads off.

KAYLEE

Hey, guess that leaves us a man  
short, don't it?

JAYNE

Little Kaylee's always a "man  
short."

Kaylee slugs Jayne in the arm as she calls up to:

KAYLEE

Say, Doc? Why don't you come on  
down, play for our side. Inara  
won't mind.

Wash arrives on the bridge, the proximity alert still beeping.  
Through the cockpit window --

A DERELICT SHIP

A vessel about the size of Serenity, eerily rolling in place.

Wash slides into the pilot's seat, absently switches off the  
alert, leans forward peering through the window to get a  
better look at the... DEAD BODY that lolls into view, directly  
in front of him. Eyes just black staring sockets in a pruned-  
up purple face, mouth stretched back in a grimace. Wash  
recoils with a start, instinctively grabs the controls and  
banks the ship hard.

Simon is coming down the metal steps as the ship lurches.  
Simon grabs hold of the rail, manages not to take a tumble.  
Everyone reacts to the sudden shift --

4 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

4

The entire gang, Mal leading, appears.

MAL

Wash, you have a stroke or something?

WASH

Near enough.

ZOE

What happened...?

She trails off as they all now see the Derelict Ship.

JAYNE

(in Chinese)

Mother of god. [Wuh de ma.]

MAL

Anyone home?

WASH

Been hailing her. But if whoever's there's as healthy as the guy we just ran over, can't imagine they'll be pickin' up.

MAL

Bring us in a little closer.

WASH

Get you close enough to ring the doorbell.

SIMON

What is it?

Everyone craning to get a good look now at the dead ship just rolling, rolling... We move past this discussion to find...

...River who has pressed herself tight against the wall in the foredeck hall, just outside the cockpit. From where she is she can't see the ship, and still she says to herself:

RIVER

Ghosts.

Off that --

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

5 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

5

Where we left off. Everyone eyeing the DERELICT SHIP silently spinning in the distance.

MAL

So what do we figure? Transport ship?

WASH

(nods)

Converted cargo hauler or short range scow, maybe.

KAYLEE

You can see she don't wanna be parked like that. Port thrust's gone, which is makin' her spin like she is.

SIMON

A short range vessel? This far out into space?

WASH

Retrofitted to carry passengers.

ZOE

Travellers pick 'em up cheap at government auction. A few modifications and they serve well enough for a one-way push to the outer planets.

BOOK

(realizing)

Settlers.

WASH

Probably squeeze fifteen, maybe twenty families on a boat that size, you pack 'em tight enough.

INARA

Families...

(CONTINUED)



JAYNE

Tell you what I think. I figure that fella we ran into did everyone on board, killed 'em all, then decided to go for a swim, see how fast his blood'd boil out his ears.

WASH

You're a very "up" person.

BOOK

Shouldn't we report this?

MAL

To who? Alliance? Right, 'cause they're gonna run right out here lickety-split, make sure these taxpayers are okay.

BOOK

Then we'll have to.

JAYNE

Rudderless boat this far out, probably canned fish by now.

KAYLEE

You can't know that for sure.

JAYNE

If there's folks in need of help, why ain't they beaming no distress call?

ZOE

(to Mal)

It's true. There's no beacon.

MAL

(taking her meaning)

Which means it's likely nobody's looking to find 'er.

BOOK

All the more reason for us to do the right thing.

JAYNE

How 'bout you just say a prayer while we slide on by? That oughta do it.

(CONTINUED)

BOOK

Shall I remind you of the story of  
the Good Samaritan?

MAL

Rather you didn't.  
(then)  
But we will check it out.

JAYNE

So we a search and rescue tug now?

MAL

No. But the Shepherd's not wrong.  
Could be survivors. And if not,  
well -- then no one's gonna mind  
if we take a look around, see if  
there's not something of value  
they might've left behind.

JAYNE

(hadn't thought of that)  
Right. Yeah... No. Someone could  
be hurt.

MAL

(as he goes)  
Wash, hook us up.

6

EXT. SPACE

6

Serenity is piloted in close, locks into the spin-cycle of the  
derelict ship. Ka-chunk -- Serenity's airlock latches onto the  
other ship's standard matching bulkhead.

As it does, WE SEE a web of insect like electronic tentacles  
attach themselves at the seam. RED LIGHTS within this weird  
network start blinking...

7

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

7

Simon appears, entering. He's carrying his portable med-kit.  
He slows and stops as he sees --

SIMON'S POV

Over near the airlock, Mal and Zoe suiting up (there are  
several spacesuits hanging there), going through the checklist  
as they prepare to board the derelict.

JAYNE (O.S.)

Where you think you're headed?

(CONTINUED)

Jayne is there, stepping up behind Simon. We see he's loading Zoe's shotgun, prepping weapons.

SIMON

I thought I'd offer my services,  
in case anyone on board required  
medical attention.

JAYNE

Yeah, well, Cap and Zoe are going  
in first. We'll holler if we need  
ya.

Simon's not looking at Jayne, a bit spellbound, watching as Mal and Zoe pull on their helmets. Jayne reads Simon's discomfort at the suits, smiles.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Somethin' wrong?

SIMON

Hmmm? Oh. No. I... I suppose it's  
just the thought of a little mylar  
and glass being the only thing  
separating a person from...  
nothing.

JAYNE

Impressive what "nothing" can do  
to a man. Like that feller we  
bumped into. Yeah. He's likely  
stuck up under our belly about  
now. That's what space trash does,  
ya know. Kinda latches onto the  
first big somethin' stops long  
enough. Hey -- now that'd be a bit  
like you and your sister, wouldn't  
it?

Jayne works the pump action on the shotgun. Cha-chunk. He crosses off, toward Mal and Zoe. Off Simon --

8 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK

8

Mal's gloved hand hits the airlock control button. WHOOSH. The door opens. Mal and Zoe, fully suited and armed, step into the airlock. The door closes behind them.

9 INT. SERENITY - AIRLOCK

9

Mal speaks to Wash through the com-link in his suit.

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Okay, Wash. Ask Serenity to knock for us.

WASH (O.S.)

Just as nice as you please...

A light on the derelict's airlock door goes from RED to GREEN. WHOOSH. It opens. A beat. Mal and Zoe fire up their flashlights, enter into --

10 INT. DERELICT 10

They take a few steps and -- THUNK. The airlock door shuts automatically behind them. The ship is running on emergency power only. Footlights marking the way. Mal and Zoe move with caution, their weapons at the ready. As they go:

MAL

Emergency power's up. Dashboard light.

We move with them as they step carefully down the dark passageways. They pass an abandoned child's TRICYCLE. Share a look, keep moving, to

11 INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL 11

Mal and Zoe enter. They both stop, look to --

-- cafeteria style. Several tables set up. A high chair here and there. Slop counter with sneeze guard. And here's what's weird -- plates of food in various states of being consumed. Big ladles still buried in (gnarly old looking) grub in the tins behind the slop counter. Evidence that folks were in line with trays.

MAL

Whatever happened here happened quick.

Zoe nods. Mal starts moving again. Zoe follows, to --

12 INT. DERELICT - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS 12

They enter the bridge -- more of the same, basically: a book is open, coffee cup, some board game in mid-play, etc. More personal detail which suggests habitation. But no people. Zoe looks at the controls, computers, etc.

(CONTINUED)

ZOE

Everything was left on... Ship  
powered down on its own.

(continues looking)

No sign of struggle. Just --

MAL

-- gone.

As Zoe moves to the control panels:

ZOE

(seeing something)

Sir.

He moves to her.

ZOE (cont'd)

Personal log. Someone was in the  
middle of an entry --

Her look says "shall I?" Mal nods. Zoe hits the log button --  
and the screen BURSTS with EAR PIERCING STATIC.

River sits up INTO FRAME, sweaty and freaked -- GASPS.

Simon pushes into her room, never far from her. He moves to  
her bed, kneels down.

SIMON

Shhh. It's okay. I'm here. Bad  
dreams again?

RIVER

(shakes her head "no")

No. Can't sleep. Too much  
screaming.

He looks at her, his sadness for her state right there on his  
face. Gently:

SIMON

River. There is no screaming.

She looks at him, utterly lucid, and says, darkly:

RIVER

There was.

He holds her look for a beat. He starts a bit at --

(CONTINUED)

JAYNE

Grab your medkit and let's hoof  
it. Mal wants us both over there  
on the double.

Jayne is at the door, loading (yet another) weapon.

SIMON

They've found survivors?

JAYNE

(shrugs)  
Didn't say.

SIMON

Right.  
(torn)  
I'll ask Inara to look in on  
River.

JAYNE

Yeah, whatever. I ain't waiting.  
(as he goes)  
Meet you over there. But don't  
take forever. Still gotta get  
suited up.

And he exits. Off Simon --

14 INT. DERELICT 14

The airlock door opens revealing... SIMON. All packed into one  
of the suits. He loathes this. He looks into the dark, creepy  
derelict. Hesitates. Finally he steps across the threshold.

WHOMP. The door shuts behind him. His breathing becomes more  
rapid.

As he moves, we play a lot of this from his point of view...  
through the face plate of the helmet... that thin, transparent  
sliver of life. The building rhythm of his BREATHING  
practically scoring this sequence.

15 INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL 15

As Simon continues his tense passage.

16 INT. DERELICT - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS 16

Simon comes around a corner, sees -- Mal, Zoe, Jayne and  
Kaylee.

(CONTINUED)

All of them space-suit-and-helmet-less, having a conversation he can't hear. Simon reacts. So do the others. Bemused, Simon clutches at his helmet. It's not coming off. Kaylee runs to him, helps him with it. He's gasping for breath. Before Simon can ask anything --

MAL

What are you doing here?

(also)

And what's with the suit?

Simon glances over to Jayne who's trying to stifle his gales of laughter. Simon's furious, humiliated.

SIMON

(glaring at Jayne)

Oh, you're hilarious. Sadist.

MAL

(forces back his own  
smile)

Alright. That's enough. We ain't got time for games.

(to Simon)

Long as you're here, you might as well lend a hand. You can run with Kaylee.

He tosses Simon a canvas loot bag. (Mal and the others also have their portable salvage kits with them now.)

MAL (cont'd)

Let's do this quick, people.

Coupla loads each. No need to be greedy.

SIMON

Where are all the people?

MAL

Ship says the lifeboat launched more'n a week ago. We're gonna assume everyone got off okay. Anyway, we're just here to pick the bones. You two start in the engine room. Jayne, take the galley.

They head off. As they go:

KAYLEE

(re: helmet)

You had this on wrong.

(CONTINUED)

That's kind of a horrible thought. Simon blanches. Makes Jayne laugh all the harder. Once Mal and Zoe are alone:

ZOE

Sir... I count sixteen families signed on. Lifeboat wouldn't hold a third of that.

MAL

I know.  
(into transmitter)  
Wash? Any luck?

INTERCUT WITH:

Up on the screen, ship schematics. Wash scrolls through.

WASH

Think I found something pretty well matches that class. Layout looks about right. Seems to me any valuables, if there are any, likely be stored somewhere in C-deck, aft.

MAL (O.S.)

Good work. Keep the motor running. Won't be long.

Wash signs off, leans back/swivels in his chair. Sees Book standing in the doorway behind him.

BOOK

Can't say I much care for this business.

WASH

It's abandoned, Shepherd.

BOOK

And if that's the result of some violence? What if that ship's a crime scene?

WASH

Well -- if it wasn't before, it certainly is now.

Book smiles unhappily at the attitude.



18 INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS 18

Inara approaches River's quarters with a tray of food. Knocks. No answer.

INARA

River? It's Inara. Are you hungry, sweetie?

She pushes the door open...

INARA (cont'd)

I brought you a little...

Inara reacts. The room is empty.

INARA (cont'd)

River?

Off the empty room --

19 INT. DERELICT - AIRLOCK 19

The door opens with a WHOOSH, revealing River. The gust from the door gently blowing her hair. She seems to be in an almost trance-like state. Barefoot, she pads onto the derelict ship.

20 INT. DERELICT - PASSAGEWAYS 20

Mal and Zoe arrive at a storage door.

MAL

This'd be it.

ZOE

(tries it)

Locked.

MAL

Well -- now I'd say that's like to be a very good sign.

He brings up a mini-blow torch. Sparks it.

21 INT. DERELICT - ENGINE ROOM 21

Kaylee and Simon going through the engine room. Kaylee examines the machinery.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON  
Aren't you the least bit curious?

KAYLEE  
'bout what?

SIMON  
Well -- what happened here. Why  
would anyone abandon their ship in  
the middle of nowhere like this?

KAYLEE  
Oh, all sorts of reasons...  
(as she realizes)  
Just... not mechanical...

SIMON  
What?

KAYLEE  
(a little surprised)  
Well.. there ain't nothing wrong  
with this. Not that I can see,  
anyhow. Some of this's like new.

SIMON  
Well, that makes it even more...

KAYLEE  
(brightening)  
Oooh, here's a good'n!  
(as she pries away)  
Hold the bag open.

She starts tossing pieces in, as --

22 INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL 22

Jayne tears the place apart, loading up, and snacking. He  
pauses, thinks he senses something. Takes out his gun... moves  
to the door. Nothing. He resumes his work, as --

23 INT. DERELICT - PASSAGEWAYS 23

River haunts this place like a ghost herself, drifting along,  
drawn by something --

24 INT. DERELICT - STORAGE ROOM 24

THUNK. The blow-torched door falls forward. Mal and Zoe enter.  
Very dim light in here. They use their flashlights.

(CONTINUED)

Zoe whips a tarp off some crates, cracks one open. Within, family photo albums, heirlooms, like that. She runs her light along the front of the other crates -- various FAMILY NAMES emblazoned there. All personal stuff.

MAL

Here --

Zoe joins him. Their FLASHLIGHT BEAMS illuminate stacks of government issue terraforming supplement materials. They are emblazoned with the AngloSino insignia of the Alliance.

MAL (cont'd)

Gen-seed, protein, crop supplements. Everything a growing family needs for a fresh start on a new world.

ZOE

Hard subsidies for fourteen plus families... that's...

MAL

...about a fortune.

(rising)

We forget the rest and just take this stuff. We'll need a hand hauling it out of here.

ZOE

Sir... even on a lifeboat. You'd think those who escaped would have found room for some of this.

MAL

(looking past her)

No one escaped...

ZOE

Sir?

MAL

I'm feelin' like nobody left this boat. Nobody...

She turns to see what he's looking at... Standing in the storage room doorway is...

RIVER. She seems to not even notice the two of them, her attention is directed above them. Mal turns, aims his flashlight upward, way up, into an overhead shaft. Zoe reacts with disgust...

THE BODIES

(CONTINUED)

are strung up from the ceiling. Three clumps of twisted flesh. The skin pale, almost luminescent (the bits of it we do see.)

ZOE

There's no blood. Not a drop anywhere...

MAL

Just our luck! [Jen dao mei!]  
(pulls transmitter)  
I know what did this.

River starts to wander in.

MAL (cont'd)

(re: River)

Keep her out of here.

Zoe moves to do that, as --

MAL (cont'd)

(into transmitter)

Jayne --

Jayne gorges and gathers -- Mal's voice from his transmitter.

MAL (O.S.)

Jayne -- drop what you're doing  
and get to the engine room. I want  
you to take Kaylee and the doctor  
off this boat.

Jayne reaches for it, his mouth is full. He swallows, puts the transmitter to his mouth -- but that's when the attack comes. The THING that ATTACKS him from behind is a BLUR. It comes so fast, so violently, he never had a chance to respond at all. Off his fallen transmitter and Mal's voice:

MAL (O.S.) (cont'd)

Jayne? Jayne, do you read? Jayne?!

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

26 EXT. SPACE 26

Serenity still attached to the rotating derelict, as --

27 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE 27

Wash sits up straight in his chair as he hears MUFFLED GUNFIRE over the two-way. He pounds on the mic --

WASH  
Captain? Captain?  
(then)  
Zoe?

More GUNFIRE.

28 INT. DERELICT - PASSAGEWAYS 28

Mal and Zoe, who is steering River by the shoulders, emerge. Mal has his gun out. So does Zoe.

ZOE  
Came from above, Sir.

MAL  
Galley --

They start to move but nearly collide with --

SIMON AND KAYLEE

coming around the corner, reacting to the gunfire. Kaylee gasps, realizes it's Mal.

KAYLEE  
We heard shootin' --

SIMON  
River...? What are you...

RIVER  
I followed the voices.

SIMON  
(moves to her)  
Don't ever leave the ship. Not  
ever.

(CONTINUED)

MAL  
(on the alert, to Simon,  
re: River)  
Handle her, will you, son?

WASH (O.S.)  
What the [tyen shiao duh] is going  
on in there?!

ZOE  
(into transmitter, quickly  
and professionally)  
Not now, dear.

She clicks him off. Nods to Mal that she's ready to roll.  
Together they move off, guns leading the way...

Tense beat as Mal enters the mess hall, his gun leading.  
Evidence of violence, upturned table, gross food on the floor.  
A noise -- Mal whips around with his gun... and finds himself  
drawing down on...

JAYNE  
who has his gun pointed right back  
at Mal. They both relax. Jayne is  
a bit mussed, but not really hurt.

MAL  
What'd you see?

JAYNE  
Didn't. Came at me from behind.  
Big, though. Strong. Think I  
mighta hit him.

Simon has entered with Kaylee and River.

SIMON  
You did...

Simon points to tell-tale blood droplets. Mal moves to him,  
notes that the blood droplets lead to a grate in the wall. Mal  
eases Simon out of the way. Indicates to Zoe to hand him her  
shotgun. He pushes the grate up with the nose of it.

WALL GRATE

Mal's face appears. He squints at --

A YOUNG MAN

(CONTINUED)

Cowering in the shadows. He's feral, fearful, drawing himself as small as he can.

SURVIVOR

(muttering)

Mercy... mercy... no. Mercy.

MAL

Easy, now. Nobody's gonna hurt you.

(noticing gunshot wound in arm)

Any more than we already did...

SURVIVOR

No mercy...

MAL

Oh, we got mercy. We got lots and lots of --

WHAM!, suddenly Mal comes up and gives the poor bastard the butt of the shotgun right in the kisser.

MESS HALL

As Mal pulls the unconscious guy out through the hole and lets him drop to the floor, a heap. Not big at all, just average. Practically a kid.

SIMON

(to Jayne)

Oh, yes. He's a real beast. It's a wonder you're still alive.

JAYNE

(confounded)

Looked bigger when I couldn't see him.

MAL

(grim)

Let's get him out of here.

In the common area are Inara, Kaylee, Jayne, Zoe, Wash. Book is there, too, sitting, clutching his Bible. Kaylee and Inara are watching as inside the infirmary Simon can be seen tending to the Survivor, Mal over his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

INARA

I wonder how long he'd been living like that?

KAYLEE

Dunno. Must be real brave, though. Surviving like that when no one else did.

JAYNE

Yeah, a real hero. Killin' all them people.

KAYLEE

What? No. We don't believe that.  
(turns toward Zoe)  
We don't, do we?

ZOE

Captain wouldn't have brought him on board were that the case.

But she doesn't sound as convinced as she might.

31

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

31

Simon has patched up the arm wound. The patient mutters in his delirium.

SIMON

Pulse is rapid, blood pressure's high side of normal. To be expected.

SURVIVOR

Weak. They were all weak.

SIMON

Other than the bullet wound, there doesn't appear to be any exterior trauma. Though that crack to the head you gave him probably didn't do him any good.

The patient rises up a bit, tries to focus on the faces outside the glass. This isn't lost on Mal.

SURVIVOR

Cattle. Cattle for the slaughter.

MAL

Dope him.

(CONTINUED)



SIMON

I don't think that's --

MAL

Just do it.

Simon moves to load a syringe. Mal eyes the muttery patient.

SURVIVOR

No mercy... No resistance...

Simon leans over him. The man's hand grabs Simon's wrist.

SURVIVOR (cont'd)

Open up. See what's inside.

Simon gives him a shot. Pulls away from the man's weak grip.

MAL

Let's chat.

Mal moves to the door. Simon glances at his patient, who is slipping into semi-consciousness. He follows to --

OUTSIDE INFIRMARY DOOR

As Simon appears here, he looks to Inara.

SIMON

River?

INARA

Resting in my shuttle. Not to disparage the other accommodations on this ship, but I think she'll find it more comfortable. And the door locks.

SIMON

Thank you.

KAYLEE

So? How's our patient?

SIMON

Aside from borderline malnutrition, he's in remarkably good health.

BOOK

(some relief)

So he'll live, then?

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Yes.

MAL

Which, to my mind, is unfortunate.

The others react, surprised.

BOOK

Not a very charitable attitude,  
Captain.

MAL

Charity'd be putting a bullet in  
his brainpan.

INARA

Mal!

MAL

Only save him the suffering.

Mal shuts the infirmary door, bolts it from the outside.

MAL (cont'd)

Nobody goes in there. Nothing more  
we can do for him now. Not after  
what he's seen.

SIMON

What do you mean?

MAL

That ship was hit by Reavers.

Mal turns, heads off. The others don't follow right away as  
the horror hits them.

JAYNE

(fear)

Reavers...

Wash looks to Zoe who doesn't deny it -- she knows it, too.

WASH

Crap. [Tzao gao.]

Inara glances back into the infirmary, where the man is  
writhing in his delirium. She knows what this means.

Mal's pouring himself some coffee as the others follow him in.

(CONTINUED)

INARA

Mal, how can you know?

JAYNE

He don't, that's how. No way.

Mal sips his coffee. Whatever you say.

JAYNE (cont'd)

It was that other fella. The one we run into. It's like I said before -- he went stir crazy, killed the rest, took a walk into space.

KAYLEE

A second ago you were saying --

JAYNE

Don't matter what I said.

MAL

One of 'em was just lucky enough to get out, that's all.

WASH

He was the lucky one?

MAL

Luckier'n the rest.

JAYNE

Couldn't be Reavers. Wasn't Reavers. Reavers don't leave no survivors.

MAL

Strictly speaking -- wouldn't say they did.

BOOK

What are you suggesting?

MAL

Don't matter we took him off that boat, Shepherd. It's the place he's gonna live from now on.

BOOK

I don't accept that. Whatever horror he witnessed, whatever acts of barbarism, it was done by men. Nothing more.

(CONTINUED)

JAYNE

Reavers ain't men.

BOOK

Of course they are. Too long removed from civilization, perhaps -- but men. And I believe there's a power greater than men. A power that heals.

MAL

Reavers might take issue with that philosophy. If they had a philosophy. And if they weren't too busy gnawing on your insides.

(then)

Jayne's right. Reavers ain't men. Or they forgot how to be. Now they're just... nothing. They got out to the place of nothing. And that's what they became.

JAYNE

Why we still sittin' here? If it was Reavers, shouldn't we be gone?

WASH

Have to say I was kinda wondering that myself.

MAL

Work ain't done. Substantial money value still sitting over there.

JAYNE

Pffft. I ain't going back in there with them bodies. No rutting way. Not if Reavers messed with 'em.

ZOE

(stop your blubbering)

Jayne. You'll scare the women.

SIMON

I'll go.

They all look at him.

SIMON (cont'd)

I've dealt with bodies. They don't worry me.

(CONTINUED)

BOOK

I'd like to go with him. Maybe see what I can do about putting those folks to rest.

MAL

They're already "resting" pretty good, Shepherd. Reavers saw to that.

BOOK

How we treat our dead is part of what makes us different than those did the slaughtering.

MAL

(considers)

Alright. You go say your words.

(then)

Jayne, you'll help the doctor and Shepherd Book cut down those people. Then you'll load up the cargo.

JAYNE

I don't believe this. Now we're gonna sit put for a funeral?

MAL

Yes, Jayne. That's exactly what we're going to do. I won't have these people lookin' over my shoulder once we're gone. Now I ain't sayin' there is any peace to be had. But on the off chance there is -- then those folks deserve a little of it.

JAYNE

Loopy in the head. [Fong luh] All of you.

He storms off. Simon follows. Book takes a beat, might say something, decides against it then goes. Kaylee's beaming at her Captain. Inara now moves to Mal.

INARA

And just when I think I've got you figured out.

She holds the look. Might kiss him. Doesn't. Instead she moves off. He watches her go.

(CONTINUED)

KAYLEE

That was real pretty, Captain.  
What you said.

WASH

Didn't think you were one for  
rituals and such.

MAL

I'm not. But I figure it'll keep  
the others busy for awhile. No  
reason to concern them with what's  
to be done.

ZOE

Sir?

CUT TO:

Mal pulls a visual up on a screen. The tendril like booby trap  
connected where the two airlocks joined.

MAL

It's a real burden being right so  
often.

Wash, Zoe and Kaylee at his side, looking at the screen.

WASH

What is it?

MAL

Booby trap. Reavers sometimes  
leave 'em behind for the rescue  
ships. We triggered it when we  
latched on.

WASH

And when we detach --

MAL

-- it blows.

WASH

Okay -- so we don't detach. We  
just, I don't know, sit tight  
until...

ZOE

What? Reavers come back?

(CONTINUED)

Kaylee's been studying the image on the vid screen.

KAYLEE

Looks like they've jerry-rigged it with a pressure catch. Only thing that'd work with all these spare parts. Could pro'lly bypass that easy, we get to the DC line.

MAL

You tell me now, little Kaylee -- you really think you can do this?

KAYLEE

Sure. Yeah. Think so. 'sides, if I mess up, it's not like you'll be able to yell at me.

34 EXT. SPACE 34

Serenity and the derelict, locked together in a death grip. And under the soundlessness of space, MUSIC, carrying us through...

35 INT. DERELICT - STORAGE 35

Simon, Jayne and Book all have paper dust masks on as they lower down the bodies. This is done in an elliptical way, more a suggestion of the carnage than a strict depiction.

36 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 36

The bombay doors are pulled open by Mal. Kaylee climbs in first, then Wash. Mal and Zoe stand topside, nervous.

37 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY 37

The tortured delirium of the survivor in his fever sleep. Somehow his distress seems to be affecting...

38 INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE 38

River, who is sleeping in Inara's bed. Her sleep becomes more and more fitful. Nearby, Inara reads a book, not yet noticing River's sleep become more and agitated, as...

39 INT. SERENITY - INNARDS 39

Kaylee has to squeeze in tight to the confined space. She's looking at the seam where the two airlocks meet. The tendrils of booby trap are visible, flashing RED.

WASH is in the pit, a bit above her, with a box full of tools. He hands her some wrench-like gadget. She blows a strand of hair out of her eyes, goes to work on the device.

40 INT. DERELICT - STORAGE 40

Jayne dragging crates, slamming them onto a dolly, looking over with some disdain, to --

Book reads from his Bible, saying a few words for the dead. Simon shows respect, bowing his head.

41 INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE 41

Inara reacts now as she sees River's state, growing ever more agitated, as

42 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY 42

The patient's eyes SNAP OPEN.

43 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 43

Kaylee working on the booby trap.

-- Wash handing her down more tools.

-- Mal and Zoe waiting helplessly, nervously, topside.

-- Kaylee takes a stab at the booby trap. We see her recoil, nervous. Still here. She really concentrates, goes back at it. Cuts into some of the tubing and a dark OOZE drips out.

44 INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE 44

River's really thrashing now. Inara goes to her, gathers her in her arms, holds her close, tries to soothe her. River starts to clam, but GASPS with a START as...



45 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY 45

A drawer of SURGICAL TOOLS hits the floor, and with it returns the SYNCH SOUND. A HAND reaches in, picks up one of the more more evocative and lethal looking surgical tools.

46 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 46

WHOOSH -- the airlock door opens and Jayne rolls in the dolly with the cargo. He reacts as he sees -- -- CLANG. As the bombay doors are dropped shut. Mal, Kaylee, Wash and Zoe look over at him.

JAYNE  
What's going on?

MAL  
Not a thing.  
(looks to Kaylee)  
Right?

She nods her little greased smudged face.

KAYLEE  
Not a gorram thing.

Mal looks to Wash. Nods. Wash nods back, heads off.

JAYNE  
Looks like a thing to me.

Book and Simon enter from the airlock. Mal hits the controls, closing it behind them:

MAL  
Thought we might have had a situation, but it looks to be taken care of. Let's get that stuff stored.

Jayne, still not convinced, moves to the smuggling compartments, pops a panel.

MAL (cont'd)  
(into transmitter)  
Everybody's home, Wash. Let's go.

We HEAR the start of the detaching process.

47 EXT. SERENITY 47

As the two ships come apart, harmless remnants of the booby trap tearing away.

48 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 48

Mal looks to Zoe and Kaylee. Now they can really breathe. In the b.g., Simon and Book move to Jayne.

Suddenly -- that familiar PROXIMITY WARNING BEEPING. Everyone who was on pins and needles before is right back there -- and Jayne freaks:

JAYNE

No, no. Do not say that -- it's the Reavers! Gorram Reavers come back!

MAL

(already on the move)  
Get that stuff stored.

JAYNE

Like it's gonna matter.

MAL

Just do it!

He's running, now. Zoe right behind him.

49 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE 49

Wash just sits staring straight ahead, hasn't switched off the alert. Mal and Zoe come running up the foredeck hall.

MAL

Reavers?

Wash absently shakes his head "no." A GREEN GLOW starts to overtake the cockpit. They all react as they see --

THROUGH THE COCKPIT WINDOW -- outer space pretty well blotted out by the green glow of an enormous ALLIANCE CRUISER... Over the radio:

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Firefly class transport, you are ordered to release control of your helm. Prepare to dock and be boarded.

(CONTINUED)

MAL  
Looks like civilization's finally  
caught up with us...

50 EXT. SPACE 50

Serenity dwarfed by the looming Alliance Cruiser.

And coming off the Alliance ship: several smaller GUNSHIPS,  
swarming around Serenity --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

51 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER

51

COMMANDER HARKEN watches from the bridge as Serenity moves toward us. An ENSIGN approaches. Harken points to Serenity.

HARKEN

No mandatory registration markings on the bow. Make sure we cite them for that. What is it, ensign?

ENSIGN

Sir, we've identified the transport ship they were attached to. It was licensed to a group of families out of Bernadette. They were due to touch down in Newhall three weeks ago. Never made it. We've been hailing the vessel, get no response. It appears to be derelict.

HARKEN

Continue hailing. Once we secure these vultures, we'll send a team over. Check it out.

A RADIO OPERATOR sits at a communications station speaks:

RADIO OPERATOR

Didn't we have a flag a while back on a Firefly?

HARKEN

Check.

RADIO OPERATOR

Here it is. Alert issued for unidentified Firefly Class, believed to be carrying two fugitives. A brother and sister.

HARKEN

What are they wanted for?

RADIO OPERATOR

Not available. It's classified.

HARKEN

Forty thousand of these old wrecks in the air and that's all they give us?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARKEN (cont'd)

Well, I won't have any surprises on a routine stop. We run into these two, we shoot first. Brass can sort it out later.

52 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 52

Simon helps Jayne and Book finish loading the cargo into the smuggling hold. Mal appears, walking fast, entering the cargo bay. The three look over --

JAYNE

What was it? Was it Reavers?

MAL

Open the stash, pull out the goods.

JAYNE

What? Just got done putting it all in --

MAL

Yeah, and now I'm telling you to take it all out again.

JAYNE

Why for?

MAL

I got no notion to argue this. In about two minutes time this boat's gonna be crawling with Alliance.

SIMON

No...

Inara emerges from her shuttle. Moves toward Zoe, Wash and Kaylee, who have appeared. Kaylee hangs back, Zoe and Wash head further in, toward the others.

INARA

What's happening?

KAYLEE

Alliance. We're being boarded.

INARA

Oh, no.

Zoe and Wash help Book and Jayne with the goods. Simon's in a bit of shock.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

We've gotta run...

MAL

Can't run. They're pulling us in.

SIMON

If they find us they'll send River back to that place. To be tortured. I'd never see her again.

MAL

(to Jayne et al)

Stack everything right here in plain sight. Wouldn't want it to seem as if we're hiding anything. Might give them Alliance boys the wrong impression.

WASH

Or the right one.

MAL

That, too.

(turns to Simon)

Now run fetch your sister.

A beat. Simon suddenly becomes suspicious.

SIMON

What? Why? Are you going to put her in "plain sight," too?

MAL

Don't get tetchy. Just do as I say.

SIMON

Is that why you let us to stay? So you could use us as bargaining chips?

JAYNE

I knew there was a reason!

SIMON

They're not taking her... and you're not giving her to them.

BOOK

(steps forward)

Don't be a fool, son. Do as the man says.

53 EXT. SPACE 53

As Serenity attaches to the bottom of the Alliance Cruiser, just a little bump now on the big ship.

54 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 54

WHOOSH -- the airlock doors open and a compliment of ALLIANCE SOLDIERS streams on to Serenity, their boots clicking on the hard cargo bay floor. Harken appears, looks at --

-- Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Wash, Kaylee, Inara, Book, lined up. No sign of Simon or River. (we may or may not notice the smuggling compartments have been closed up again.)

Harken gives the signal to his lead man. Soldiers move in, start relieving our gang of any weapons.

MAL

Well now, ain't this a whole lotta fuss. I didn't know better, might think we were dangerous.

HARKEN

Is this your vessel?

MAL

It is. Bought and paid for. I'm Captain Malcolm Reynolds.

HARKEN

And is this everyone, captain?

MAL

By way of crew, it is. Though you're gonna find in our infirmary a fella we rescued from that derelict. Saved him, guess you could say.

Harken nods to a couple of his guys, they head off.

MAL (cont'd)

(calling back)

Straight back, next to the common area.

HARKEN

(re: the goods)

And these items -- I take it you "rescued" them as well?

55 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

55

The two Alliance Soldiers force open the infirmary door. The operating table is empty. The place is a wreck. They look over, see something that WE DON'T. One of them turns away, loses his lunch right there. The other one reacts with similar, though less colorful, disgust. Off that --

56 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

56

Harken eyes the "line up."

HARKEN

Looks to me like an illegal salvage operation.

MAL

Does it? That's discouraging.

HARKEN

Alliance property, too. You could lose your ship, Captain. But that's a wrist slap compared to the penalty for harboring fugitives. A brother and sister. When I search this vessel, I won't find them, will I?

MAL

No children on this boat.

HARKEN

I didn't say "children." Siblings. Adult siblings.

MAL

I misunderstood.

HARKEN

No chance they could have stowed-away? No one would blame you for that, Captain. I know how these older Firefly models often have those troublesome little nooks.

MAL

Do they?

HARKEN

Smugglers and the like tend to favor them for just that reason.

(CONTINUED)



Now the two Alliance Soldiers return. The not-nauseated one approaches Harken. Whispers something to him. Harken eyes Mal, Mal looks back, wondering what's happened.

HARKEN (cont'd)

We'll continue this conversation  
in a more official capacity.

Harken motions to one of his men. Instantly some of the Alliance Men start to hustle our guys toward the door. Harken continues with the order-giving:

HARKEN (cont'd)

Every inch of this junker gets  
tossed.

KAYLEE

(as they go)  
Junker?!

MAL

Settle down, Kaylee.

KAYLEE

But, Cap'n! You hear what that  
purple belly called Serenity?

MAL

Shut up.

57 INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS/VARIOUS

57

A MED TEAM wheels a gurney out with the survivor on it. We don't really get a good look at his current state, under an oxygen mask and sheet and the Med Team members mostly concealing him from us. They're moving fast, we follow them, passing SEARCHING SOLDIERS, and they take us to...

58 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

58

...MUCH ACTIVITY. DOZENS of SOLDIERS searching Serenity -- tossing it. We PICK UP a particular SOLDIER who moves into...

59 INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE

59

...Inara's shuttle. Reacting to the lavish difference.

HARKEN (O.S.)

You're a Companion.

(CONTINUED)

INARA (O.S.)

Yes.

60 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 60

Inara sits in the sterile surroundings. Harken will be doing the grilling. (We'll be INTERCUTTING between INTERROGATIONS and THE SEARCH quite liberally throughout the following)

HARKEN

You were based for several years on Sihnon. It's only been in the last year that you've been shipping out with the crew of The Serenity.

INARA

It's just "Serenity," and that's correct. In a few weeks it will be a year. Why is this important?

HARKEN

Just trying to put the pieces together. It's a curiosity. A woman of stature such as yourself falling in with these... types.

INARA

Not in the least. It's a mutually beneficial business arrangement. I rent the shuttle from Captain Reynolds, which allows me to expand my client base, and the Captain finds that having a Companion on board opens certain doors that might otherwise be closed to him.

HARKEN

And do you love him?

TIME CUT TO:

61 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 61

Zoe sitting rigidly in the interrogation room.

ZOE

I don't see how that's relevant.

(CONTINUED)

HARKEN

Well, he is your husband.

ZOE

Yes.

62 INT. SERENITY - ZOE AND WASH'S ROOM

62

SOLDIERS moving in here, examining the evidence of Wash and Zoe's private life together...

HARKEN (V.O.)

You two met through Captain Reynolds?

ZOE (V.O.)

Captain was looking for a pilot, I found a husband. Seemed to work out.

63 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

63

HARKEN

You fought with Captain Reynolds in the war.

ZOE

Fought with a lot of people in the war.

HARKEN

And your husband?

ZOE

Fight with him sometimes, too.

HARKEN

Is there any particular reason you don't wish to discuss your marriage?

ZOE

Don't see that it's any of your business, is all. We're very private people.

TIME CUT TO:

64 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 64

Wash looking much more relaxed in the interrogation.

WASH

The legs. Oh, yeah. Definitely  
have to say it was her legs. You  
can put that down.

65 INT. SERENITY - VARIOUS 65

The search continues, moving into the engine room...

66 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 66

Still indignant.

KAYLEE

...six Gurstler's crammed right  
under every cooling drive so that  
you strain your primary artery  
function and end up having to  
recycle secondary exhaust through  
a bypass system just so's you  
don't end up pumping it into the  
main atmo feed and asphyxiating  
your crew. What < genius > thought  
up that lame design? Now that's  
"junk."

TIME CUT TO:

67 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 67

JAYNE just sits there, closed mouthed. Arms crossed. We play  
the silence for a moment, then --

68 INT. SERENITY - JAYNE'S ROOM 68

Knives. Guns. Girly magazine (with Chinese markings.) Another  
knife.

69 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 69

Jayne sits silently. Not a word. More shifting. More silence.

70 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 70

KAYLEE  
She ain't "junk."

71 INT. SERENITY - BOOK'S ROOM 71

As the Soldiers toss Book's room: Bible, a cross, etc.

HARKEN (V.O.)  
Pirates with their own Chaplain.  
There's an oddity.

72 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 72

BOOK  
Not the only oddity this end of  
space, Commander. Way of things  
not always so plain as on the  
central planets. Rules can be a  
mite fuzzier.

HARKEN  
Not for me. Our rules are written  
down. In books.

BOOK  
I take my rules from a book, too.  
But just the one.

HARKEN  
(smiles)  
Southdown Abbey. Home to a fairly  
pious order. How long were you in  
residence there, Shepherd?

BOOK  
Don't right recall. Didn't tend to  
keep track of the days there.  
Seemed like long enough, though.

HARKEN  
You met up with Captain Reynolds  
and his crew on Persephone.

BOOK  
That's true.

(CONTINUED)

HARKEN

These fugitives we're looking for,  
the brother and sister... they  
were last seen on Persephone.

73 INT. SERENITY - VARIOUS 73

The swarm of the search team continues. One of the Soldiers  
looks at the panels of the stash. Moves to it...

BOOK (V.O.)

That a fact?

HARKEN (V.O.)

They also left port aboard a  
Firefly class transport. Just  
about the time you shipped out  
with Serenity.

He presses -- a panel opens. He calls some others over. They  
rip the panels up -- empty.

74 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 74

BOOK

Well, Persephone's a big place.

HARKEN

Yes. But that Firefly isn't. And  
if there is anyone hiding anywhere  
on it -- we will find them.

75 INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM 75

The Soldiers are starting to pack up, file out. As the swarm  
begins to disperse... CAMERA pulls back and up, out past the  
overhead windows, moving to --

76 EXT. SERENITY 76

-- the outside of the ship. Where WE FIND SIMON and RIVER both  
in space suits, clinging to the side of the ship.

Simon is just freaking out, his gloved hands the only thing  
keeping his sweaty palms from losing purchase on the side of  
the ship. He touches the seam of his helmet, making sure it's  
connected properly. He looks to River, worried. But he reacts -  
-

(CONTINUED)

River stares off into the limitless void of space, seemingly taking a kind of deep comfort from the vastness of it. She's doing something that we haven't really seen her do... she's smiling. Off Simon, continually amazed by his sister...

77 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 77

Mal sits alone in the room. Presently, the door opens. Harken enters, carrying a thick folder. Harken moves to the chair opposite Mal. Harken studies his documents. Won't look at Mal. A calculated move to put Mal on edge. Mal breaks the silence:

MAL

I figure by now you been over to that derelict. Seen for yourself.

HARKEN

Yes. Terrible thing.

MAL

You want my advice, you won't tow it back. Just fire the whole gorram thing from space. Be done with it.

HARKEN

That ship is evidence. I'm not in the habit of destroying evidence.

MAL

'course not. Be against the rules. I'm gonna make a leap and figure this is your first tour out here on the border.

Harken finally looks at Mal.

HARKEN

That's a very loyal crew you have there. But then I see by your record you tend to inspire that quality in people -- Sergeant.

MAL

It's not "sergeant." Not no more. War's over.

HARKEN

For some the war'll never be over. I notice your ship's called "Serenity." You were stationed on Hera at the end of the war.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HARKEN (cont'd)

Battle of Serenity Valley took place there, if I recall.

MAL

(now let me think)

You know, I believe you may be right.

HARKEN

Independents suffered a pretty crushing defeat there. Some say after Serenity, the Brown Coats were through. That the war really ended in that valley.

MAL

Hmmm.

HARKEN

Seems odd you'd name your ship after a battle you were on the wrong side of.

MAL

May have been the losing side. Still not convinced it was the wrong one.

HARKEN

Is that why you attacked that transport?

MAL

What -- ?

HARKEN

You're still fighting the same battle, Sergeant. Only these weren't soldiers you murdered. They were civilians. Families. Citizens loyal to the Alliance, trying to make a new life for themselves. And you just can't stand that, can you?

MAL

So we attacked that ship then brought the only living witness back to our infirmary? That what we did?

HARKEN

I'd ask him... but I imagine he'll have some trouble speaking with his tongue split down the middle.

(CONTINUED)



MAL

(realizing)

Dear god in heaven. [Wuh de tyen,  
ah.]

HARKEN

I haven't seen that kind of  
torture since... well, since the  
war.

Mal's stunned into silence for a beat, going internal as the  
full weight of his realization hits him.

MAL

(to himself)

Shoulda known... shoulda seen this  
comin'...

HARKEN

You and your crew will be bound by  
law. Formal charges will be  
transmitted to central authority --

MAL

Commander, I am not what you need  
to be concerning yourself with  
right now. Things go the way they  
are -- there's gonna be blood.

Off that --

Again, we're only seeing bits and pieces of what's become of  
the survivor. Think Hannibal Lector being worked on in the  
ambulance. His body lurches and convulses. Team of Alliance  
medics working to save him.

So involved in their good work are they, that they don't see  
his hand slip off the side of the operating table, dangling  
there, clutching the sharp, shining surgical tool that comes  
up now -- slashing.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

79 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 79

Harken stares at Mal. Harken's unimpressed as he says:

HARKEN  
Reavers?

MAL  
That's what I said.

HARKEN  
Can't imagine how many times men  
in my position hear that excuse.  
"Reavers did it."

MAL  
It's the truth.

HARKEN  
You saw them, did you?

MAL  
Wouldn't be sitting here talking  
to you if I had.

HARKEN  
No. Of course not.

MAL  
But I'll tell you who did -- that  
poor bastard you took off my ship.  
He looked right into the face of  
it. Was made to stare.

HARKEN  
"It?"

MAL  
The darkness. Kinda darkness you  
can't even imagine. Blacker than  
the space it moves in.

HARKEN  
Very poetic.

MAL  
They made him watch. He probably  
tried to turn away -- they  
wouldn't let him. You call him a  
"survivor?" He's not.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAL (cont'd)

A man comes up against that kind of will, only way to deal with it, I suspect... is to become it. He's following the only course that's left to him. First he'll try to make himself look like one... cut on himself, desecrate his own flesh... then he'll start acting like one.

Harken seems to be considering that for a moment, hits a button on the table. The door opens and a SOLDIER appears.

HARKEN

Let's have two M.P.s up here to escort Sergeant Reynolds to the brig.

MAL

Lock me up. I'll thank you for it. But me and my crew're gonna be the only ones on this ship that's safe you don't move to act.

HARKEN

And let's not put him in with his compatriots. In fact, let's see to it they're all separated.

Off Mal's frustration...

A HATCH OPENS and SIMON, still in his spacesuit, climbs down a ladder. He rips off his helmet as River descends down the ladder. He helps her off with her helmet.

RIVER

Let's go again.

SIMON

Later. Maybe. Captain said once the coast was clear we should lay low in the shuttle.

RIVER

(sensing something)  
He's coming back.

SIMON

Yes. Yes, of course he is. They all are. Captain Reynolds is used to these sorts of situations. We just have to be patient. Come on.

(CONTINUED)

They move off. Simon never saw the BLOODY FOOTPRINT nearby. They're not alone.

81 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM 81

The interrogation is over. Harken is off to the side with an M.P. Two more M.P.s are pulling Mal out of his chair, cuffing his hands behind his back.

HARKEN

Your ship and its contents will be auctioned. The proceeds of the sale will be applied to the cost of your defense.

The Ensign now enters, looking a little pale. He moves close to Harken, whispers his report. Harken reacts. We can guess what's being reported to Harken. So can Mal.

HARKEN (cont'd)

(re: Mal)

Get him out of here.

(to Ensign)

Go to full lock down. I want guards on the nursery --

As Mal's hustled toward the door:

MAL

It won't matter. You won't find him.

Harken meets Mal's gaze, a little lost.

MAL (cont'd)

But I know where he'll go.

CUT TO:

82 INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS - CONTINUOUS 82

Simon tries to steer River into the dining room/kitchen area. She whimpers. Will go no further.

SIMON

River. It's okay. They've gone. Come on.

But she won't.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON (cont'd)

We don't know how long it's going to be. Once we're settled, I don't think we should move around much. I'll just grab some some food and...

He tries to disengage from her, she's holding him back. He lists away, toward the dining room... CAMERA PULLS back...

...past scattered KITCHEN CUTLERY...

...finally REVEALING the FIGURE just two feet from the oblivious Simon who's trying to back yet closer, as...

A DEAD GUARD marks the way of the killer. Mal is there with Harken and armed M.P.s

HARKEN

Why would he come back here?

MAL

Looking for familiar ground. He's on the hunt.

HARKEN

Alright.

Harken nods to his men. They ready themselves to enter. Before they can:

HARKEN (cont'd)

(to an M.P.)

Get him to the brig.

MAL

You should let me go with you.

HARKEN

Out of the question.

MAL

How many more men you feel like losing today, Commander? Nobody knows Serenity like I do. I can help you.

Harken considers that for a beat, then --

HARKEN

We'll let him go first.

(CONTINUED)

MAL  
(oh, good)  
Great.

Harken is getting set again, Mal makes him pause with:

MAL (cont'd)  
Uh -- ?

Mal indicates his hands still cuffed behind his back. Harken takes the key from one of his men, undoes the cuffs himself -- but just as quick pulls Mal's hands around front, recuffs him with his hands now in front of him.

MAL (cont'd)  
Thanks. Now I'll really have the  
advantage.

HARKEN  
(to his men)  
Open it.

As his men move to do that --

84 INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS - CONTINUOUS 84

SIMON AND RIVER

She tries to hold him back as he backs close to the unseen (to him) Killer. He absently reaches behind himself, sets his helmet on the dining room table, as --

Simon stops suddenly at the SOUND of the AIRLOCK OPENING in the distance.

SIMON  
Someone's coming...

The Killer also hears the approach of footsteps... feints out of frame...

85 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS 85

Mal leads Harken and his men into the cargo bay.

HARKEN  
(hushed)  
We'll split up --

(CONTINUED)

MAL

Best if we stick together. Unless you're in the mood to get picked off.

Harken considers, nods. Sighs. Fine.

HARKEN

(to his men)

Keene, Escobar, you two stay here. Watch the door. Don't need this thing back on my ship.

Harken indicates for Mal to lead on. He does.

86 INT. SERENITY - OUTSIDE INFIRMARY 86

MOVING WITH MAL

Schmuck bait as he leads the team past the wrecked infirmary. Through the common area, coming up to the steep stairs which lead to the upper levels.

87 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM 87

Mal leads Harken and his men through the engine room, down into the dining area. Mal notes a space suit helmet sitting on the table. Knows what that means. He steels himself. Mashes on.

Mal sees the spilled cutlery. He and Harken share a look.

They continue on...

Mal steps up into the foredeck hall. Tries not to react as he comes nearly face-to-face with --

SIMON AND RIVER

Pressed tight up against a wall just around the corner, hidden by the lip of the passageway.

Harken's right on Mal's ass now, a step down in the dining room. Mal turns to him as --

THE KILLER

Leaps from out of frame, attacking one of the men just behind Harken. Harken turns. THE KILLER slashes Harken's man. There is blood, splashing across Harken's surprised face.

(CONTINUED)

Harken fumbles for his gun, the Killer knocks it away, lunges at Harken, as --

Mal leaps at the guy's back, brings his cuffed hands over his head and around his throat --

HARKEN'S POV

Of the HIDEOUS MUTILATED FACE, flesh peeled back, mouth pinned into a grimace by bits of metal. It SNARLS and SNAPS at Harken, trying to get at him. Right the fuck up in his face. Being held at bay only by Mal's strength. It is terrifying. Mal pulls hard. There is a crack.

Mal lets the body drop at their feet.

ANGLE: THE SURVIVOR

Mal uses the tip of his boot to turn the dead man's head slightly... Mutilated flesh. The skin of his mouth remains pulled back and pinned into that hideous grimace. Scarcely human.

MAL AND HARKEN

As they share a look. Harken's face sullied with blood. A baptism of sorts. There are no words. Off this --

88 EXT. SPACE 88

Serenity detaches from the Alliance Cruiser, floats down.

89 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE 89

Mal, Wash, Zoe and Jayne. They watch as the big ship gets smaller.

JAYNE

You save his gorram life. And he still takes the cargo. Jerk.  
[Hwoon dahn.]

MAL

Had to. Couldn't let us profit.

Mal doesn't stick around. He turns for the door.

MAL (cont'd)

Wouldn't be civilized.

Through the cockpit window, WE SEE the Alliance Ship send out what look like torpedoes.

(CONTINUED)



They connect with the spinning Derelict, sending a series of SOUNDLESS EXPLOSIONS through its hull. As the Derelict caves in on itself, glows to embers...

BLACK OUT.

END OF SHOW