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Firefly

"Out of Gas"

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"Out Of Gas"

TEASER

1 EXT. SPACE

1

Serenity in the Big Black of space. She might seem a bit cock-eyed to us at the moment. No engine movement. She's less floating and more just kind of hanging there. Either near dead -- or hurt real bad. Reserve emergency power gives it just a flicker of life. As we nose closer, we peer into the bridge. No sign of anyone...

2 INT. SERENITY - UPPER DECKS

2

Various shots of the ship. Quietly holding silent images.

The cockpit: empty.

Looking down the body of the upper decks -- no one in sight.

The dining area -- evidence of recent habitation. A dinner party was in progress, but seemingly cut short. The table is askew. Dishes and an uncut cake have all crashed to the floor. But not a soul here.

The engine room. The entrance and walls are scorched. The big turbine sits silent. No movement.

3 INT. SERENITY - BELOW DECKS

3

It looks like a tornado blew through here. In the common area: debris is everywhere, furniture is upturned, caught up against walls. But no sign of anyone anywhere. The ship seems eerily abandoned. Until finally we go to --

4 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

4

More debris. More strewn cargo. And then --

MAL

Falls INTO FRAME, landing hard on the floor of the cargo bay. Sweating, pale, somewhat delirious. And alone.

(We may or may not notice a piece of an engine part lying nearby.)

He struggles to stay conscious; it's a struggle he's not winning at the moment. As we PUSH IN closer to his feverish face, we start to HEAR what HE HEARS... VOICES IN HIS HEAD:

CONTINUED

4 CONTINUED:

4

SALESMAN (V.O.)

Yep. A real beauty, ain't she?
Yessir. A right smart purchase, this vessel. Tell you what, you buy this ship, treat her proper, she'll be with ya for the rest of your life.

Mal smiles weakly at the memory -- or possibly the irony. Now the SOUND of the AIRLOCK DOORS, KER-CHUNK! A sliver of DAYLIGHT hits him in the face. The light UNFOLDS, growing, blinding him. He squints against it, as --

5 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

5

THE AIRLOCK DOORS open, revealing two FIGURES, SILHOUETTED by sunlight, BLUE SKY behind them. (The ramp is down, and it seems we're planetside someplace.)

The figures step onto the ship -- and now we see that it's MAL and ZOE. They enter the cargo bay. They might look slightly different than we're used to, because it's now a few years earlier.

Zoe steps deeper into the ship, takes it all in, as if for the first time. In fact, this is the first time she's set foot on Serenity. Mal watches for her reaction.

They are the only two here. The cargo bay itself is now TOTALLY EMPTY. Big, empty and echo-y. And everything's covered with a thick layer of dust.

MAL

Well?

ZOE

(after a good long
look)

You paid money for this... On purpose?

MAL

Come on, Zoe. Serious. Whaddya think?

ZOE

Honestly, sir. I think you were robbed.

MAL

Robbed? What, no. What do you mean?

CONTINUED

5 CONTINUED:

5

ZOE

Sir, it's a piece of <junk.> [Fei-oo.]

MAL

<Junk?> [Fei-oo?] Okay. So she won't win any beauty contests, that's true enough. But she's solid. Ship like this, be with ya 'til the day you die.

ZOE

Yessir. Because it's a deathtrap.

MAL

That's not... you are very much lacking in imagination.

ZOE

I imagine that's so, sir.

MAL

C'mon. You ain't even seen most of it. I'll show you the rest.

(as they go)

Try to see past what she is, on to what she can be.

ZOE

What's that, sir?

MAL

Freedom, is what.

ZOE

(pointing)

No, I meant -- what's that?

He looks down, sees something we don't need to see, something he was about to step in.

MAL

Oh. Just step around it. I think something must've been living in here.

As they move off:

MAL (cont'd)

I tell ya, Zoe, we find ourselves a mechanic, get her running again. Hire on a good pilot. Maybe even a cook. Live like people. Small crew, them as feel the need to be free.

(more)

CONTINUED

5 CONTINUED: (2)

5

MAL (cont'd)

Take jobs as they come -- and we'll never be under the heel of nobody ever again. No matter how long the arm of the Alliance might get... we'll just get us a little further.

ZOE

Get her running "again?"

MAL

Yeah.

ZOE

Sooo... not running now?

MAL

Not so much.

(then)

But she will.

He moves deeper into the ship, back toward the common area/infirmary. She follows. We don't, we stay in the cargo bay and let them move off.

MAL (cont'd)

I even know what I'm gonna call her.

(they're OFF SCREEN
by now, fainter)

Got a named all picked out...

That last bit trailing off as their footsteps recede. We assume he's telling her the chosen name, but now they're too far away for us to make it out. We do, however, hear a BURST of LAUGHTER from offscreen Zoe.

As the LAUGHTER echoes and fades, CAMERA BOOMS DOWN to a TIGHT FACE in the FOREGROUND...

...Mal, back in the present day, curled up on the cargo bay floor, wincing in his pain... CAMERA MOVES down his body, and now WE SEE the wound... gut-shot. Blood, almost black, bubbles at his abdomen.

A thick drop of Mal's blood drips through the grating on the cargo bay floor...

...and falls into --

BLACKNESS.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

6 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

6

Where Mal's breathing is coming in sharp, painful gasps. He reaches for the fallen engine part that lies nearby. Grabs it and starts dragging himself back toward the infirmary. Above him, echo-y GROUP LAUGHTER from somewhere in the ship.

CAMERA moves off the crawling Mal, RISES, passing through darkness, moving toward the sounds of joviality, the LAUGHTER becoming more present, until we are:

7 INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

7

Mid LAUGHTER BURST from the assembled. A communal dinner. Or what's left of it. Gathered are: Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Kaylee, Simon, Inara and Book. Book has been telling them a story and they're all in stitches.

ZOE

(laughing so hard it hurts)

No, no, no. That is not true.

BOOK

I swear it is!

INARA

(catching her breath)

Surely one of you must have told him!

BOOK

No! There wasn't one among the brethren had the heart to say anything. He was so proud of it!

LAUGHTER. Wash enters from the bridge, the guy who missed the joke. He smiles/laughs clueless along with them.

WASH

What? What was he proud of? Who he?

BOOK

(tears from the laughing)

Looked rather natty, truth be told!

Another explosion of laughter. It's contagious. Even for Wash, who's still anxious to be let in on the joke.

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED:

7

WASH

(as he sits)

I want to hear about the natty thing.

(reaches for serving
bowl)

What was natty?

Book gets his laughter under control, takes a drink, waves Wash away with a "nothing, nothing" gesture.

KAYLEE

Shepherd Book was just tellin' funny stories about his days at the monastery.

WASH

Monastic humor. I miss out on all the fun.

(sees serving bowl is
empty)

And all the food, too, apparently...

ZOE

Now just who do you think you're married to?

Zoe lifts a napkin off a plate piled with food.

WASH

I love my wife.

He kisses her. They sit close, a couple, easy and relaxed. He digs in.

MAL

So we got a course set?

WASH

We do. Took a little creative navigating, but we should make it all the way to Greenleaf without running afoul of any Alliance patrols. Or a single living soul, for that matter.

MAL

Good. Way it should be.

WASH

'course, what should be an 18 hour trip's gonna take the better part of a week by this route.

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

MAL

We're in no rush. I like an easy,
languorous journey.

Kaylee rises, picks up some plates.

KAYLEE

What would that be like, I wonder?

SIMON

(moves to assist)

Let me help you with that --

KAYLEE

Not a bit. In fact, it's your turn.

SIMON

(clueless)

My turn...?

KAYLEE

Shepherd told a funny story 'bout
bein' a preacher. Now you tell a
funny story about being a doctor.

SIMON

Funny story...

JAYNE

Yeah, 'cos sick people are high-
larious.

SIMON

Well, they can be...

(chuckles)

In fact, I remember there was this
one time I was working the E.R. and
this fellow, very upright sort of
citizen, comes in complaining of...

JAYNE

(interrupts)

Now Inara -- she's gotta have some
real funny whorin' stories, I'd wager.

INARA

Oh! Do I ever! Funny and sexy! You
have no idea!

(then, deadpanny)

And you never will.

Zoe SNORTS with laughter. She likes the dissing of Jayne.

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED: (3)

7

INARA (cont'd)
I don't discuss my clients.

JAYNE
Aww, come on 'nara. Who'd know?

INARA
You.
(then)
Anyway, A Companion doesn't kiss and tell.

MAL
So there is kissing?

She shoots him a look -- and a half smile. He smiles back.

ZOE
Hey, doc?

He looks at her. She's nestled nice and close to her hubby.

ZOE (cont'd)
(nods behind Simon toward:)
I think maybe our Kaylee could use your help after all --

He turns and is surprised to see her carrying aloft a sweetly pathetic ship-made birthday cake with miss-matched candles ablaze.

KAYLEE
Care to make the first incision, Doctor Tam?
(then)
Happy birthday, Simon.

EVERYONE
(variously)
Happy birthday! Yeah, many more.
Happy Birthday, son.

Simon reacts, taken aback. It's clear they all knew.

SIMON
Well this is... I didn't... How did you know?
(glances to:)
River, did you -- ?

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED: (4)

7

RIVER

"Day" is a vestigial mode of time measurement. Based on solar cycles. Not applicable.

(then)

I didn't get you anything.

WASH

I'm afraid it was me who ratted you out, Doctor.

SIMON

You?

MAL

Seems a fresh warrant for your arrest come up on the cortex. Had your birth date attached right to it.

SIMON

Oh. I see. Well. That's...

(worried)

Really?

KAYLEE

(re: the cake)

Hope you like it. Couldn't get a hold of no flour, so it's mostly protein. In fact, it's pretty much what we just had for supper. But I tried to make the frosting as chocolatey tasting as possible.

He looks at Kaylee. It's very warm and wonderful.

SIMON

Thank you. I'm really very deeply moved.

Kaylee beams her Kaylee-ness right back at him.

JAYNE

Well deeply move yourself over there and blow out them candles so we can try a slice.

SIMON

Right...

KAYLEE

Come on, Doc. Give a good blow.

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED: (5)

7

He does a slight take. She's sort of poker-faced. He smiles, nods, leans forward, is about to blow out the candles, when... something makes a ghastly noise deep inside the ship. A GRINDING back near the engine. The power DIMS and FLICKERS, the engine stops...

A beat. They all pause at this pregnant moment. Then the familiar HUM of the engines again.

JAYNE

What the hell was that?

KAYLEE

Maybe just a hiccup. I'll check it out.

She sets down the cake on the counter. Starts to move off.

WASH

(rising)

I'll take a look at the helm.

Now he heads off toward the bridge. River is staring at the cake.

RIVER

Fire...

Simon glances at her, then back to the cake. The candles.

SIMON

Right. Okay, okay...

He leans in to blow out the candles and --

Kaylee is stepping up to the door that leads to the aftdeck hall --

BOOOOM! A horrific EXPLOSION from the back of the ship, at the engine room.

Zoe is on her feet in an instant. She lunges for Kaylee as --

-- a giant BALL OF FIRE roils from the back of the ship, filling the aft corridor. Zoe shoves Kaylee clear of the doorway, but the big ass FIREBALL bursts at the doorway. Zoe is knocked back hard by the concussion of the blast, her body glancing off the dinner table, then hitting a wall -- goddamn hard. Wash comes running back from the foredeck hall --

WASH

Zoe!

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED: (6)

7

Everyone's a bit disoriented. Wash flies to his wife's side. Inara and Book move to Kaylee, who was shoved out of the way pretty damn hard.

Mal has run over to the aftdeck doorway. Feels another ERUPTION coming --

-- ANOTHER FIRE BALL growing down there, exploding toward us Mal forces the big metal door shut, latches it just before it hits. He's knocked back by the blast that impacts on the other side of the closed door.

RIVER

Fire... fire...

Mal turns, sees that Simon is already with Wash at the downed Zoe.

WASH

Zoe, honey, talk to me -- you gotta talk to me, baby...

Mal passes Jayne as he hoofs it toward the bridge, pausing only long enough to say:

MAL

Seal off everything that leads below decks. Do it now.

Jayne moves to do that. Mal runs to the bridge --

8 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

8

Mal works some controls on the console --

9 EXT. SPACE

9

As the ramp lowers into space, while --

10 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

10

The fire rages --

11 INT. SERENITY - DINING AREA

11

Wash is beside himself, has his wife's limp hand pressed between his. Simon's feeling for a pulse.

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED:

11

WASH

She gonna be okay?

SIMON

I need my med kit.

Simon rises, turns toward the aftdeck, sees that the door is shut.

KAYLEE

(shakes her head)

We got fire.

He turns, moves to the foredeck, steps up to --

FOREDECK DOOR

Jayne is just coming up from around the corner where he's sealed off that exit.

JAYNE

Where you think you're going?

SIMON

Zoe's badly hurt. I need my medical supplies.

JAYNE

Sorry, Doc. Nobody leaves.

SIMON

If you don't let me through, she could die.

JAYNE

I let you through -- and we all die.

Off this stand off --

12 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

12

Mal continues to work the ship's controls, as --

13 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

13

The AIRLOCK DOORS open, revealing the black of space and now --

14 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM/AFTDECK/STAIRS 14

The fire becomes a SNAKE as it is sucked down toward the lower deck, toward the vacuum of space, making sharp, violent turns --

15 INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA/INFIRMARY 15

As the SNAKE OF FIRE races down the stairs, whips past the infirmary, furniture and not-nailed-down items getting sucked along with it, and into --

16 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 16

The pillar of fire goes ROARING through the cargo bay and, along with some loose cargo, is spit out into space --

17 EXT. SPACE 17

As the snake of fire shoots out of the cargo bay, dissipating in cold space.

18 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE 18

Mal watches through the bridge window as the fire shoots out, extinguishing itself in the void. He sighs.

19 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY 19

As the ramp closes and the air lock doors close. The storm is over.

CUT TO:

A20 INT. SERENITY A20 *

Mal ENTERS from the cargo bay, staggering down the steps, every step more laborious than the last. CAMERA LEADS HIM as he reaches the bottom of the steps, turns towards the infirmary. *

CAMERA ANGLES DOWN past Mal's face, down his chest to his midsection, where his bloody hand clutches at his stomach wound. Blood seeps through his fingers. He holds the catalyzer in his other hand. *

CONTINUED

A20 CONTINUED:

A20

He struggles to make it to the closed infirmary doors. He reaches to open the doors, and as they start to slide open --

*

*

CUT TO:

*

20 INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA/INFIRMARY

20

BAM! The infirmary door is shoved open and Mal, Wash and Jayne carry in the unconscious Zoe, place her on the examination table. Simon gets right to work.

Everyone else is close at hand, variously in the infirmary and lingering outside in the common area.

SIMON

No sign of burning. Must be internal. I'll have to do a scan.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED:

20

He starts hooking her up to his equipment. Wash at his side, concern etched on his face. Mal fades back, away from the activity there, to...

COMMON AREA

Kaylee is hovering just outside the door of the infirmary in the common area. Mal approaches her.

MAL
Kaylee. Kaylee.

She's in shock. Staring.

MAL (cont'd)
Look at me.

She does.

MAL (cont'd)
I need you up in the engine room,
figuring out what caused this.

KAYLEE
(feeling it)
She ain't movin' --

Mal glances from spacey Kaylee to Zoe through the glass. His attention is drawn back to Kaylee by:

KAYLEE (cont'd)
Serenity's not movin'.

Mal realizes she meant the ship, not Zoe. Nods, keeping cool.

MAL
I know it. Which is why we gotta
suss out what it was happened so we
can get her going again, right?

She nods. Tries not to cry.

MAL (cont'd)
Think you can do that?

KAYLEE
Yes, Cap'n.

MAL
That's a good girl.

Kaylee gathers herself, heads off. Mal turns his attention back to:

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

INFIRMARY

Simon works on Zoe. Wash is at his wife's side, inches from out-of-his mind with distress.

WASH

Come on, baby. Stay with me. You're strong. Strongest person I've ever met. You can do this.

JAYNE

She gonna make it?

SIMON

Please. I need to work.

Mal appears at the door.

MAL

Wash.

Wash won't look away from his wife.

MAL (cont'd)

Wash, I need you on the bridge.

WASH

Zoe's hurt.

MAL

And the doctor's gonna do everything he can. Meantime, I gotta have you on that bridge. We need to know how bad it is.

Wash laughs grimly to himself, under his breath.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED: (3)

20

WASH

(turning on him)

How bad? It's bad, okay, "sir?" My wife may be dying, here. So my feeling is it's pretty damn bad.

MAL

Wash...

WASH

I'm not leaving her, Mal. Don't ask me again.

MAL

(no joy in this)

I wasn't askin'. I was tellin'.

WASH

(without looking back)

<Screw you.> [Chur ni-duh.]

Mal sighs. Reaches in, grabs Wash by the shirt, swings him around, shoves him up against a wall. For all the physicality of that, Mal is calm, cool.

MAL

You're gonna get to the bridge and get us on our feet, because if we can't do for Zoe here, you're gonna have to be the one that saves her.

Well, yeah there's tension right about now. Simon continues to minister to Zoe. No one else says a word. Mal eases off. Wash's back is now to the infirmary door. A beat.

He goes, just totally fucking torn up inside. Mal looks back to the faces looking back at him, then he exits, too.

21 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

21

We're looking at Wash's pilot's chair. Empty at the moment. CAMERA moves off that to find... Wash on his back, examining the cockpit innards. His face is somewhat obscured from us.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED:

21

He's speaking to someone who is o.s., also he seems much calmer than he did moments before.

WASH

Oh, yeah. This is all very do-able.

Wash slides out -- and the first thing we notice is the big, bushy moustache. He stands and now WE SEE, outside the cockpit windows, BLUE SKY. We're parked someplace in the day again.

WASH (cont'd)

Shouldn't be a problem at all. A few modifications, get some real maneuverability out of this boat. You'd be surprised.

Mal and Zoe stand at the cockpit door as Wash looks the vessel over.

MAL

So you'll take the job, then?

As Wash sits into the pilot's chair, gives it a little swivel.

WASH

Might do, might do. Think I'm startin' to get a feel here.

MAL

Good. Well, take all the time you need. Make yourself to home. Fiddle with them dials. We'll be nearby.

Wash swivels away from them. Fiddles with dials.

MAL AND ZOE

Moving away from the cockpit, down the foredeck, toward the dining area as they confer --

MAL (cont'd)

He's great, ain't he?

ZOE

I don't like him.

MAL

(taken aback)

What?

ZOE

Something about him bothers me.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED: (2)

21

MAL

(losing patience)

What? What about him bothers you?

ZOE

Not sure. Just... something.

MAL

Well, your "somethin'" comes up against a list of recommendations long as my leg. Tanaka raved about the guy. Renshaw's been trying to get him on his crew for a month. And we need us a pilot.

ZOE

I understand, sir. He bothers me.

MAL

Look, we finally got ourselves a genius mechanic, now it's about time we hired someone to fly the damn thing.

A BUFFED, SURFER-ISH DUDE, BESTER, passes through frame.

BESTER

(nodding "excellent!")

"Genius." No one's ever called me that before. Shiny.

Zoe doesn't even register that Bester passed by. She's musing on Wash in the distance.

ZOE

(musing on Wash)

Just bothers me.

22 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY - HEART MONITOR

22

Starts to BEEP AN ALERT. Zoe's hooked up to the equipment now. Simon reacts.

SIMON

Her heart's stopped...

INARA, BOOK AND JAYNE

Looking on, helpless. Nervous.

BOOK

Maybe someone should get her husband down here...

MAL

No.

They see Mal has appeared. He moves into the infirmary. Simon's racing around the infirmary, grabbing things.

MAL (cont'd)

What do you need, doc?

As Simon chooses a vial of something from several --

SIMON

(pointing)

Top cabinet --

Mal pulls it open. Sees a large hypo. Big needle.

SIMON (cont'd)

That's the one.

He hands it to Simon who doses it up.

INARA

What is it?

SIMON

Pure adrenaline --

Simon readies himself, poises the needle right over Zoe's heart. Ready for the Pulp Fiction moment? 'cause that's always funny.

Inara turns away.

Simon plunges the needle in. Zoe's body JOLTS and we

HARD CUT TO:

23 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

23

MAL HOWLS in pain. He's alone in the infirmary, sitting on the edge of the examination table, wrapping a bandage around his midsection, it's quickly filling with blood. He breathes hard, then tries to rise. He nearly passes out merely from that.

He manages to steady himself, moves to the counter, rummages around in some of Simon's supplies -- comes up with the big ass needle that we saw Simon shoot up Zoe with. He injects himself. Has violent reaction.

CLOSE - MAL

His eyes wide, wide awake. He blinks, fueled with the stuff. Now he moves to the engine part that we saw him dragging. It's near the door. He picks it up, but looks toward the infirmary door, as:

KAYLEE (O.S.)

Cap?

24 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

24

-- earlier that day. Mal turns away from the table where Zoe lies. Now the medical monitor beeps a constant, steady rhythm. The crisis seems past. Mal moves to Kaylee at the infirmary door. She looks pale, worried. Bad news a'comin'. They step into --

COMMON AREA

KAYLEE

Zoe gonna be okay?

MAL

You let the doctor worry about Zoe.
Tell me what you know.

KAYLEE

Catalyzer on the port compression
coil blew. That's where the trouble
started.

MAL

I need that in Captain Dummy talk,
Kaylee.

KAYLEE

We're dead in the water.

CONTINUED

24 CONTINUED:

24

MAL

Can you fix it?

KAYLEE

I could try...

MAL

Just get us to limp'n'. That's all I need.

She looks at him. Nearly staring. Nods. He senses more...

MAL (cont'd)

What? What is it?

KAYLEE

Well. It's worse'n just the coil.

MAL

How can it be worse?

KAYLEE

Main life-support's down on account of the engine being dead.

MAL

Right. But we got auxiliary --

KAYLEE

No. We don't. It ain't even on. Explosion musta knocked it out.

MAL

So what are we breathin'?

KAYLEE

Whatever got pumped into the atmo before the explosion shut it all down.

Jayne has overheard part of this, joins them.

JAYNE

Mosta that oxygen got ate up by the fire when it went out the door.

KAYLEE

Whatever's left is what we got.

Mal takes a beat, weighing his very slim options --

MAL

How long?

CONTINUED

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

KAYLEE

Couplea hours, maybe.

Now Simon appears, emerging from the infirmary.

SIMON

She's stabilized. I think she's out
of the woods.

Off Mal, Kaylee and Jayne, not quite ready to celebrate --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

25 INT. SERENITY - AFTDECK/ENGINE ROOM

25

Stillness for a beat, then... the ENGINE PART (which we will soon come to know as the catalyzer) is slammed down before Mal.

He's forcing himself up the stairs and around the corner into the aftdeck corridor.

INJURED MAL moves into the engine room, PAST LENS. We HOLD FRAME, looking (from the engine room POV) down the empty aftdeck. A beat, then...

...MAL APPEARS advancing from the dining area, coming down the aftdeck toward the engine room. He's uninjured Mal.

MAL

Bester!

And WE ARE:

26 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

26

-- in a different time. Mal's looking for his mechanic (the handsome mechanic we saw earlier.)

MAL

What's this I been hearin' 'bout yet another delay?

As Mal moves closer to the engine room, we can make out BESTER'S ARMY BOOTS sticking out from under the engine. Presumably doing his grease monkey thing.

MAL (cont'd)

You were supposed to have that engine fixed and us up and...

(as he sees:)

What in the name of <all that's proper..?> [suo-yo duh doh shr-dang]

Bester's shorts are... well, down around his army boots. He's having the sex with an unseen FEMALE. There is energetic humpage. Mal's a bit scandalized. Casts his glance away from the action. Might clear his throat.

MAL (cont'd)

Bester.

Much with the dirty humping. Mal gives it a beat.

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED:

26

MAL (cont'd)

Bester.

They seem to be, uh, finishing.

MAL (cont'd)

BESTER!

Bester climbs out, mostly still naked, yanking up his shorts.

BESTER

What?

Bester just looks to Mal. Innocently inquisitive. There is some dead pan staring on Mal's part. Oh, yes there is. Then:

MAL

You do realize we been parked on this rock near a week longer'n we planned?

BESTER

Yeah, but... there's stuff to do.

MAL

As for example that job we got waitin' for us on Paquin. When we landed here you said you just needed a few days before we were space worthy again and is there somethin' wrong with your bunk?

BESTER

What?

More impatient staring, then Bester gets it finally: right. The naked girl behind the engine. Bester laughs.

BESTER (cont'd)

Oh! No. Cap!

(leans forward

"confidentially")

She like engines. They make her hot.

MAL

Bester. Get your prairie harpy off my boat and put us back in the air.

BESTER

'kay. But... can't.

MAL

Whaddya mean "can't."

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (2)

26

BESTER

No can do, cap. Secondary grav
boot's shot.

KAYLEE (O.S.)

No it ain't.

Kaylee pops up, getting dressed. The men look at her.

KAYLEE

Ain't nothing wrong with your grav
boot. Grav boot's just fine.

(to Mal)

Hello.

She drops down again, out of view. Mal glances at Bester.
Bester's a bit flustered.

BESTER

(to Mal)

She don't... that's not...

(to Kaylee)

No it ain't!

KAYLEE

(reappearing)

Sure it is. Grav boot ain't your
trouble. I seen the trouble plain as
day when I's down there on my back.
Your reg couple's bad.

BESTER

(clueless)

The... the what?

KAYLEE

Reg couple. Right here. See?

BESTER

No.

KAYLEE

This.

(Bester is still of
the blank expression)

I'm pointin' right at it.

She rolls her eyes, sighs, reaches in, breaks off a part of
the engine.

BESTER

Hey!

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (3)

26

KAYLEE

Here.

She plunks the part in Bester's hand. She reaches back in, tinkers.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Don't really serve much of a purpose, anyway. Just tends to gum up the works when it gets tacked.

(re: a nearby wrench)

Hand me that, will ya?

(he does)

So I figure, why even have it? Better to just plug your g-line straight into the port-pin-lock and that should...

She's done. WHIRRR the turbine starts to turn.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

There.

She shoves it in Bester's hand. Fiddles with the engine.

BESTER

What'd you do?

MAL

She fixed it.

KAYLEE

Well, it wasn't really broke.

Bester looks at the part in his hand.

MAL

Where'd you learn to do that, miss?

KAYLEE

(shrugs)

Just do it, that's all. My daddy says I got a natural talent.

MAL

I'd say you do at that.

BESTER

(re: the part)

We don't need this?

KAYLEE

Not 'specially.

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (4)

26

MAL

You work for your daddy, do you?

KAYLEE

When he's got work. Which lately ain't been too often.

MAL

And have you had much experience on a vessel like this?

KAYLEE

Never even been up in one before.

MAL

You never been... how'd you like to?

KAYLEE

(points skyward)

You mean...?

MAL

Sure.

KAYLEE

For how long?

MAL

Long as you like. Long as you can keep her in the sky.

KAYLEE

(getting it now)

You offering me a job?

BESTER

What?

MAL

Believe I just did.

KAYLEE

Just gotta ask my folks!

She pulls her hastily assembled wardrobe about her, pushes past Mal and a stunned Bester.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Don't leave without me!

Mal watches Kaylee go, tickled. Bester just blinks, stunned.

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED: (5)

26

BESTER

Mal. Whaddya need two mechanics for?

MAL

I really don't. Pack your things.

(then)

She got a name?

27 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

27

MAL

Kaylee!

Mal has entered the engine room. He looks off screen, a little annoyed to see --

-- Kaylee is just sitting there. Forlorn. She's holding the same piece of equipment that Mal was dragging in here. But the one she's got is twisted and melted and screwed up. She stares at it.

MAL (cont'd)

Kaylee, what are you doing?

KAYLEE

I'm sorry, Captain. I'm real sorry.
I shoulda kept better care of her.

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED:

27

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Usually she lets me know when something's wrong. Maybe she did and I wasn't paying attention.

MAL

(patiently)

I cannot be having this from you right now. We got work to do.
<Understand?> [Dong-ma?]

KAYLEE

(re: the warped engine part)

Catalyzer's broke. Gonna need a new one.

MAL

There is no new one. You gotta make do with what you got.

KAYLEE

It's broke.

She just sits there. He gently makes her stand up.

MAL

Come on. This the part?
(she nods)

Well that don't hardly seem like nothing at all. Where does it go?

She shows him the spot in the engine.

KAYLEE

Here. But it won't fit no more.

He tries to install it, no go.

MAL

Then you gotta figure a way to make it fit.

KAYLEE

Tried. Sometimes a thing gets broke, can't be fixed.

MAL

Engine don't turn without this?

She shakes her head "no."

CONTINUED

27 CONTINUED: (2)

27

MAL (cont'd)

Engine don't turn, life support won't function, we don't breathe. You want to keep breathin', don't you?

She nods.

MAL (cont'd)

So do I.

(then)

Will you try again?

She looks at him. Doesn't want to disappoint. Nods. He smiles. Puts his hand on the back of her neck. Off this moment --

28 INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA/INFIRMARY

28

Simon checks the still unconscious Zoe's vitals. Inara appears at the infirmary door.

INARA

How is she?

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED:

28

SIMON

Still unconscious. But her vitals are strong. She won't know it, but as long as her condition remains like this... she'll outlive us all.

(then)

She's using less oxygen.

He moves into the common area. Sits. She joins him.

SIMON (cont'd)

I always thought the name "Serenity" had a vaguely funereal sound to it.

INARA

I love this ship. I have from the first moment I saw it.

SIMON

I just don't want to die on it.

INARA

I don't want to die at all.

SIMON

Suffocation's not exactly the most dignified way to go. The human body will involuntarily --

INARA

Please, I don't really require a clinical description right now.

SIMON

I'm sorry. I just..
(after a beat)
It was my birthday.

He smiles wistfully. She smiles back. Puts her hand over his. Off this moment...

29 INT. SERENITY - BOOK'S QUARTERS

29

Book sits at his little table. We can see he's scared. Reading from the Psalms. Trying to find comfort in those ancient words.

RIVER (O.S.)

Don't be afraid.

He looks up, a bit startled to see River haunting his doorway.

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED:

29

RIVER
(re: his Bible)
That's what it says. Don't be afraid.

BOOK
Yes.

RIVER
But you are afraid.

BOOK
Yes.

RIVER
You're afraid we're going to run out
of air. That we'll die gasping.
(then)
But we won't. That's not going to
happen.

He looks at her. Taken by her utter certainty. He finds a
kind of comfort there. Well, that is until:

RIVER (cont'd)
(flatly)
We'll freeze to death first.

CUT TO:

30 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

30

Wash is at the helm. He's torn up with worry and anger.
He's seething a bit. Mal enters. Wash doesn't even turn.

MAL
You get that beacon sent?

WASH
(much with the
resentment)
Yeah, it's sent.

MAL
Good.

WASH
(under his breath)
Pointless.

MAL
What was that?

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED:

30

WASH

Nothing, sir. It's a brilliant plan, I'm sure we'll all be saved.

MAL

Getting a little weary of this attitude, Wash.

WASH

Are you? Well I'm very sorry about that, sir. I guess the news that we're all gonna be purple and bloated and fetal in a few hours has made me little snippy.

MAL

It's possible someone might pick up the signal.

WASH

(pissed)

No, Mal. It's not possible. Nobody's gonna pick up the damn signal. You wanted us "flying under the radar," remember? Well, that's where we are: out of range of anyone or anything.

MAL

Then make it go further.

WASH

What?

MAL

Make the signal go further.

WASH

Can't make it go further.

MAL

Not if all you're gonna do is sit here and whine about it, no.

WASH

What do you expect me to do, Mal?

MAL

(building)

Whatever you have to. And if you can't do it from here, then you put on a suit and get out on the side of the boat and...

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED: (2)

30

WASH

(voice rising)

And what? Wave my arms around?

MAL

Wave your arms around, jump up and down. Divert the nav sats to the transmitter. Whatever.

WASH

Divert the...? Right. Because teenage pranks are fun when you're about to die!

MAL

Give the beacon a boost, wouldn't it?

WASH

Yes, Mal. It'd boost the signal, but even if some passerby did happen to receive, all it'd do is muck up their navigation!

MAL

Could be that's true.

WASH

Damn right it's true! They'd be forced to stop and dig out our signal before they could go anyplace!

A beat as Wash let's what he just said sink in. He snaps:

WASH (cont'd)

Well, maybe I should do that, then!

MAL

(snapping back)

Maybe you should!

WASH

Okay!

MAL

Good!

WASH

Fine!

JAYNE

HEY!

Jayne has appeared, forces himself between the two of them.

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED: (3)

30

JAYNE (cont'd)
What the <hell> [guay] do you two
think you're doing?! Fightin' at a
time like this.

A moral lecture from Jayne. They both ease off. Cool down.

JAYNE (cont'd)
(as he turns and goes)
You'll use up all the air!

WAAA! WAAA! WAAA! A KLAXON SOUNDS and WE ARE:

31 INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

31

Where the ALARM originated. Mal, gut-shot, listens to the
ship warning him that:

SERENITY (V.O.)
Life support failure. Check oxygen
levels at once.

Then the same ALERT repeats IN CHINESE.

SERENITY (cont'd; V.O.)
<Life support failure. Check oxygen
levels at once.> [Jeo-shung yong-jur
goo-jang. Jien-cha yong-chi gong
yin.]

Mal's bleary-eyed, fumbling with the ship part, trying to
install the catalyzer into the failed compression coil. But
he's having a fuck of a time.

He wipes sweat from his brow with the back of his hand --
leaving an ugly smear of blood. He blinks it back. It's in
his eyes. Shit.

The KLAXON continues to sound. The ship's message repeats in
English again.

Mal nearly has the part installed... but it slips from his
bloody fingers and drops into the engine. Lost to him.

He can't believe that just happened. And the alert continues
to sound --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

32 EXT. SPACE

32

Dead Serenity just hanging there.

33 INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA/INFIRMARY

33

Everyone sits huddled together. They're wearing coats and blankets. It's cold. Mal stands before the assembled, grim. He's a bit distracted, tries to keep focused. A combination of the situation and the thinning of the air.

MAL

Well. As you're all keenly aware... seems we, uh, run into a... bit of a situation. Engine's down. Life support's on the fritz. And I got nine people here all wanting to breathe.

(tries to be light)

Could take turns, I suppose.

(thud)

But that doesn't really appear to be an option. Truth is... ain't got a whole lot of options at this juncture.

A beat. They all look back at him. Watch him as he casts a glance up at Serenity. Runs his hand along a bulkhead or wall. Then gives it an affectionate pat. Continues --

MAL (cont'd)

So now instead of focusing on what we don't got -- time to talk about what it is we do. And what we got are two shuttles. Short range. Won't go far. But they each got heat, and they each got air. Last longer than what's left in Serenity.

SIMON

Long enough to reach someplace?

MAL

No.

BOOK

So... where will we go, then?

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED:

33

MAL

Far as you can get. We send both shuttles off in exact opposite directions -- betters the chance of somebody being seen, maybe getting picked up.

(then)

Shepherd Book, Kaylee and Jayne'll ride with Inara in her shuttle. Doc, you and your sister will go with Wash and Zoe -- seein' as Zoe still needs some doctorin'.

KAYLEE

What about you?

MAL

Four people to a shuttle. That's the arrangement. Even's the odds.

(then)

I'm staying with Serenity.

KAYLEE

Cap'n --

MAL

We sent out a beacon. Even managed to boost it a little. Now, if by some chance we do get a response, there's gotta be someone here to answer.

That hangs there for a moment. Nobody believes that's going to happen.

MAL (cont'd)

Let's get those shuttles prepped.

Wash stands, starts moving to the stairs near the infirmary.

MAL (cont'd)

Wash -- shuttles are that way.

WASH

I know. But like you said -- someone might answer the beacon. And when they do, I want to make sure you're able to call us all back. Won't take me a minute.

Mal nods. Wash moves off.

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED: (2)

33

MAL
Jayne, get shuttle two ready. I'll
see to Inara's.
(more)

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED: (3)

33

MAL (cont'd)
(to everyone else)
Let's get moving.
(as he goes)
Take only what you need.

Mal moves off. Everyone's a bit stunned. Inara moves to follow Mal.

34 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY/CATWALKS

34

Mal heads up the catwalks, moving toward Inara's shuttle. She appears, following.

INARA

Mal...

MAL

You fly smart, don't push too hard, shuttle life support should last you a good long while.

INARA

Mal, this isn't the ancient sea. You don't have to go down with your ship.

MAL

She ain't going down. She ain't going anywhere.

(then)

Jayne'll be worth something if you run into trouble. But don't trust him, and don't let him take over. You're paid up through the month. It's still your ship.

INARA

Mal...

MAL

But so far as your security deposit goes... that I think I might have to owe you.

He enters her shuttle. She follows --

35 INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE

35

Inara steps through first. She's wearing different clothing. Mal steps in behind her. The shuttle is either empty or dressed differently. Mal's showing her the "property."

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED:

35

MAL

Well, here she is.

She glides in, takes in the space for the first time.

MAL (cont'd)

Nice, ain't she?

INARA

Smallish...

MAL

Not overly. How much space you really need for what you do, anyway?

She ignores that, still considering the shuttle. She moves into the cockpit. Blue sky outside the windows. Mal follows.

MAL (cont'd)

Got a surveyor and his wife interested in renting it. They're just waiting to hear back.

INARA

What's her range?

MAL

Standard short. She'll break atmo from a wide orbit. Get you where you need to go, bring you back home again.

INARA

This shuttle -- it seems newer than the rest of the ship.

MAL

My understanding is this airlock was added some years back. Certain modifications and improvements been made over the course of the years.

INARA

Mmmm.

MAL

But she's space worthy. Like the rest of Serenity.

INARA

No need to sound so defensive, Captain.

(more)

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (2)

35

INARA (cont'd)
(sliding past him)
I prefer something with a few miles
on it.

He watches her as she moves into the main chamber, looking it
over. Looking her over...

INARA (cont'd)
Were we to enter into this
arrangement, Captain Reynolds, there
are a few things I would require from
you. The foremost being complete
autonomy. This shuttle would be my
home. No crew member, including
yourself, would be allowed entrance
without my express invitation.

MAL
You'd get your privacy.

INARA
Good. And just so we're clear, under
no circumstances will I be servicing
you or anyone who is under your
employ.

MAL
I'll post a sign.

INARA
That won't be necessary. The other
thing I would insist upon is some
measure of assurance that when I make
an appointment with a client I'm in
a position to keep that appointment.
So far as such assurances are
possible on a vessel of this type.

Mal blinks at all that for a beat, letting it register, then:

MAL
That's an awful lot of caveats and
addendums there, miss.

INARA
As I stated, I just want to be clear.

MAL
Well. I'll be sure and take all of
that into consideration when I review
the applications.

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

INARA

Don't be ridiculous. You're going to rent this shuttle to me.

MAL

Am I?

INARA

Yes. And for one quarter less than your asking price.

MAL

(like hell)

That a fact?

INARA

It is.

MAL

And you figure you'll be getting this discount... why exactly?

INARA

You want me. You want me on your ship.

MAL

Do I?

INARA

Yes. Because I can bring something that your "surveyor" or any of the other fish you might have on line can't -- a certain respectability.

MAL

Respecta --

INARA

And based on what little I've seen of your... operation... I suspect that's something you could use.

MAL

Fine. Let me ask you this: if you're so "respectable," why are you even here? I mean, I heard tell of fancy ladies such as yourself shipping out with the big luxury liners and the like. But a registered Companion on a boat like this? What are you running from?

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED: (4)

35

INARA

I'm not "running" from anything.

He looks at her. Doesn't believe her.

MAL

If it's Alliance trouble you got, you might want to consider another ship. Some on board here fought for the Independents.

INARA

The Alliance has no quarrel with me. In fact I supported Unification.

MAL

Didja? Well, I don't suppose you're the only whore that did.

She looks at him. Smiles, won't let this guy rankle her.

INARA

Oh -- one further addendum. That's the last time you get to call me a "whore."

She walks past him.

MAL

Absolutely. Never again.

36 INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE

36

Mal moves about the cockpit, checking gages, dials, etc.

MAL

Keep everything set as low as possible. Don't waste what you got.

She pushes him out of the way, takes over.

INARA

Let me do that. You never could operate this thing.

He lets her take over. Gazes down at her. Now she looks at him. So much to say. He sees that. Feels similarly.

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED:

36

MAL

And try not to talk. Talkin' uses up air. There ain't no need for it.

INARA

Mal... come with us.

MAL

Can't. Four to a shuttle, Inara. Four.

INARA

One more person. You know it can't make a difference. Not now.

MAL

I'm not leaving Serenity.

INARA

Mal -- you don't have to die alone.

MAL

Everybody dies alone.

WE hold on their look to each other, we PRE-LAP the horrible SOUND of the KLAXON SOUNDING --

CUT TO:

37 INT. SERENITY - AFTDECK/ENGINE ROOM

37

Gut-shot Mal fishes out the part to the compression coil. Works to fit it into the damaged engine. It takes some work, but he does it.

He fires it all up - the turbines start to spin. It works. The BLARING ALERT stops. Power restored. Life support functioning again. He starts dragging himself toward the bridge --

38 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

38

We're in Mal's POV, moving toward the seemingly empty bridge -- but Wash appears in the doorway.

WASH

Everything's set and ready.

REVEAL - MAL (uninjured-Mal) moving toward the bridge.

CONTINUED

38 CONTINUED:

38

MAL

Good.

WASH

I linked the nav systems of both shuttles into the helm, here.

Wash points out a LARGE, DISTINCTIVE BUTTON on the navigation control panels.

WASH (cont'd)

When your miracle gets here, you just pound this button once. It'll call back both shuttles.

Mal nods. Wash wants to say something. Everything's all fucked up. He's about to speak, but before he can:

MAL

Go see to your wife.

Wash takes a beat. Then exits.

39 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

39

Mal walks with Jayne. Jayne has a duffel and some guns slung over his shoulder.

JAYNE

I went ahead and closed off all below deck vents. Diverted what there is to the bridge. It ain't much. So my advice, seal off everything tight behind you when you go back up. Might buy you some time.

Mal nods. He's looking up to --

MAL'S POV

Of the upper catwalks. To the left, Wash and Simon carry a stretcher with unconscious Zoe into the second shuttle. River follows.

Mal looks to his right --

-- Book and Kaylee enter Inara's shuttle. Inara stands at the doorway, looking down at him.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED:

39

JAYNE (cont'd)
And I prepped a suit for you. It's
hanging in the foredeck. When the
time comes, you can just...

MAL
(cuts him off, though
not angrily)
I won't be needing it, but thanks.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

JAYNE
Okay. Well.

Jayne takes a beat. Then he moves off, heading up the catwalk stairs.

WASH

At the door to shuttle two. He slides the door shut.

JAYNE

Reaches the top of the catwalk. Motions for Inara to go inside. A beat. He eyes on Mal. Then she disappears inside. Jayne follows, shuts the door. Mal stands alone in the big, empty cargo bay, as...

40 EXT. SPACE

40

The two shuttles detach from Serenity, go their separate ways, off into space.

41 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

41

Mal moves through the door leading to the infirmary, shuts up the door behind him.

42 INT. SERENITY - UPPER DECK

42

Mal closes off the door to the aftdeck. Moves through the dining area, moves into the foredeck, slides that door shut behind him.

43 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

43

Mal closes off the bridge. He sits into the pilot's seat. Sighs. And WE SEE his FROZEN BREATH misting. He sits alone. Staring out into the empty vastness of space.

The air is thin and he starts to get drowsy. Each breath is COLD MIST. The MIST getting thinner and thinner. He shivers. His eyes start to close --

44 EXT. SPACE

44

Serenity. Silent. Alone. Not moving.

45 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

45

Some time has passed. Mal looking half frozen and unconscious in the pilot's chair. He doesn't react to the SOUND of a SIGNAL as it starts come through on the console...

CLOSE - MONITOR (INSERT)

THE SIGNAL on the console. A FUZZY IMAGE. A MAN'S FACE through the mostly STATIC. Barely discernible.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
(filtered)
Firefly Serenity... This is the
private salvage S.S. Walden.
Receiving your distress beacon, do
you read?

We're only getting about a third of that as it's trying to break in on Serenity's wounded half-powered system. It continues to repeat and CRACKLE.

Mal sits motionless. Not hearing it. Maybe dead.

More STACY SIGNAL. More CRACKLING. But now Mal starts stir slightly. A few more WORDS of the DISTRESS REPLY crackle through...

Mal forces his heavy-lidded eyes open just as... The transmission ends. No more signal.

Mal tries to orient himself. Did he hear something? His head lolls as he looks to the now silent monitors. Could have been a dream. His bleary eyes shift up to the window --

ANOTHER SHIP

TWICE THE SIZE OF SERENITY Rises up there, right the fuck in front of the window. Which is as good a place as any for --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

46 EXT. SPACE

46

The S.S. Walden nose-to-nose with the smaller Serenity.

47 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

47

Mal on the bridge. WE SEE the IMAGE of the CAPTAIN of the Walden on the vid monitor. A serious sort; Mal without the funny. Mal does his best to keep up, but lack of oxygen and the extreme cold aren't helping.

CAPTAIN

I'm sorry for your troubles, Captain. They sound many. But you do understand I can't invite you on board my vessel. I got folks here to consider. They depend on me to make the right choices. And I don't know you.

MAL

I'd do the same myself, were the situation reversed. 'course, one of my idiot crew'd probably talk me into changing my mind... you got idiots?

CAPTAIN

No.

MAL

Well I'm not looking for a ride, Captain. Just a little push is all.

CAPTAIN

Right. Your mechanical trouble. Compression coil, you say?

MAL

It was the catalyzer.

CAPTAIN

Not even the coil? Catalyzer's a nothing part, Captain.

MAL

It's nothing 'til you don't got one. Then it appears to be everything.

CONTINUED

47 CONTINUED:

47

CAPTAIN

It is possible we might have something that'd do you. We just come from a big salvage job off Ita Moon. Picked the bones'a half a dozen junk heaps not unlike the one you're sittin' in.

MAL

Mmmm.

CAPTAIN

I suppose we could dock, take a look around, see if there ain't some way we might come to terms. That's if we have the part --

Captain looks off screen, presumably at some unseen person speaking to him.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

I'm told we do.

MAL

I would appreciate it.

CAPTAIN

Trouble is... how can I know for certain your story's true? Ambush could be waiting for me and my people on the other side.

MAL

You can plainly see both my shuttles been launched, just like I said. And I'm sure by now you scanned me. You know I got no life support.

CAPTAIN

(muses, then)

I don't expect to see any weapons when we board.

MAL

And I do expect to see that engine part before I open the door.

CAPTAIN

(smiles)

I feel like maybe we can do business.

FZZZT. The Captain's face disappears from the monitor.

48 EXT. SPACE

48

As the S.S. Walden's airlock attaches to that of Serenity...

49 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

49

Mal, breathing very shallow, waits near the standing airlock door controls.

The Captain appears at the airlock doors. He holds up the catalyzer at the window. Mal activates the airlocks doors.

As the doors open, there is a tremendous RUSH OF AIR from other side -- blessed oxygen. Mal nearly passes out from the drinking in of it. He closes his eyes for a beat, just sucking down as much as he can. When he opens his eyes again --

-- The Captain and his FOUR PEEPS have their guns raised and aimed at him. Mal's hands go up instinctively.

CAPTAIN

Check him.

One of Captain's crew moves in, frisks Mal as --

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

(to another flunky)

Search the ship. Start in the cockpit, work your way down.

MAL

This what you meant by "ambush?"

CAPTAIN

(smiles)

We're just verifying your story.

(to flunkies)

You find anyone on board not supposed to be -- you shoot 'em.

The Captain was hoping that last bit would elicit a reaction from Mal. It doesn't. As the lackeys go --

MAL

Thought we were gonna be reasonable about this?

MARCO

Reason?

No, that wasn't a typo, because suddenly we are:

50 EXT. SERENITY - RAMP/CARGO BAY - DAY

50

On the open ramp of Serenity and it's Mal and Zoe in an armed stand off another gang -- THREE PRICKLY BANDITOS, a grizzly fellow called MARCO their leader.

MARCO

(to his partner)

He's gonna talk to us about "reason," now.

JAYNE

Yeah. That's a joke.

Oh, yeah -- Jayne's one of the members of the rival gang.

MAL AND ZOE -- a brief, sotto exchange:

MAL

Which one you figure tracked us?

ZOE

The ugly one, sir.

MAL

(long beat)

Could you be more specific?

THE OTHER GANG

MARCO

Do we look "reasonable" to you?

MAL

Well. Looks can be deceiving.

JAYNE

Not as deceiving as a low down dirty... deceiver!

MAL

Well said. Wasn't that well said, Zoe?

ZOE

Had a kind poetry to it, sir.

JAYNE

You want I should shoot 'em now, Marco?

MARCO

Wait until they tell us where they put the stuff.

CONTINUED

50 CONTINUED:

50

JAYNE

That's a good idea. A good idea.
Tell us where the stuff's at so I can
shoot ya.

MAL

Point of interest? Offering to shoot
us, don't work so well as an
incentive as you might imagine.
Anyway, we've hidden it. So if you
kill us, you'll never find it.

JAYNE

Found you easy enough.

MAL

Yeah. Yeah you did, actually.
(then)
How much they paying you?

JAYNE

Wubba -- huh?

MAL

I mean, let's say you did kill us.
Or didn't. There could be torture.
Whatever. But somehow you found the
goods. What would your cut be?

JAYNE

Seven per cent, straight off the top.

MAL

Seven? Huh.

Mal makes a "wow, that's pathetic" grimace. Jayne squints.

JAYNE

What?

MAL

Mmm? Nothing. Not a thing. Just...
(to Zoe)
That seem low to you?

ZOE

It does, sir.

JAYNE

It ain't low...

CONTINUED

50 CONTINUED: (2)

50

MARCO

Stop it.

JAYNE

Seven per cent, that's standard.

MAL

Who told you that?

(re: Marco)

Him?

(then)

Okay. Zoe, I'm paying you too much.

JAYNE

Why? What does she get?

MARCO

Knock it off.

MAL

Look, forget I said anything. I'm
sure you're treated very well. You
get the perks. Got your own room...

(off Jayne's reaction)

No? You share a bunk?

JAYNE

(re: the other guy)

With that one.

MAL

Really.

MARCO

Jayne, this ain't funny.

JAYNE

Yeah, I ain't laughin'.

MAL

You move on over to this side, we'll
not only show you where the stuff's
at -- we'll see you get the share you
deserve. Not no sad "seven."

JAYNE

Private room?

MARCO

Jayne!

CONTINUED

50 CONTINUED: (3)

50

MAL

Your own room. Full run of the
kitchen. Whole shot.

MARCO

Jayne. I ain't askin --

POW! Jayne shoots Marco in the leg and instantly drops the
other bandito (who was just barely starting to turn on Jayne)
without really looking.

JAYNE

Shut up.
(to Mal)
How big a room?

Off that --

51 INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

51

The Captain with his gun trained on Mal. Now the others
start to return to the cargo bay.

LACKEY #1

Ship's clear, Captain.

CAPTAIN

You check the engine room?

LACKEY #1

(nods)

It's like he said. Catalyzer's
blown. That's all he needs.

MAL

Now anything that's worth anything's
really right here in this cargo bay.
You take a look around, decide what
you think's fair.

CAPTAIN

Already decided.

BOOM. The Captain shoots Mal in the gut. It happens
suddenly and without passion.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

We're taking your ship.

Mal's eyes go wide and he sinks to his knees. Topples onto
his back. The Captain coolly instructs his crew. Tosses the
catalyzer to one of his men.

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED:

51

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

Billy, get this plugged in. Jesse, call Stern over here. You and him'll pilot this pile of <crap> [go se] out of here.

MAL'S POV

Looking up under Jayne's work out bench where there is a gun tapped to the underbelly.

RESUME

CAPTAIN (cont'd)

We'll get it as far as --

He stops short as he hears the sound of a GUN being COCKED --

CAPTAIN'S POV

Looking down the barrel of Mal's gun.

MAL

(eyes on Captain)

Jesse, don't call Stern. Billy, leave the catalyzer.

CAPTAIN

(nervous, nods)

Do as he says.

The lackey with the catalyzer sets it on the cargo bay floor.

MAL

(to Captain)

Take your people and go.

CAPTAIN

You would have done the same.

MAL

We can already see I haven't.

(then)

Now get the hell off my ship.

And now the Captain and all his men back away to the air lock doors. Mal, through sheer force of will, rises to his feet, keeping the gun on them, moves to the air lock door controls. Closes hits the button as they step through. The doors shut.

And Mal collapses on the cargo bay floor. Exactly where we first found him.

52 EXT. SPACE 52

As the larger salvage ship detaches from Serenity and heads off.

53 INT. SERENITY - VARIOUS 53

The cargo bay floor, blood there.

The common area, infirmary, and the trail of blood left behind by the wounded Mal.

The Engine room, the turbines turning with the restored part.

The aft and fore deck corridors, the trappings of the interrupted party... and the tell-tale trail of blood.

54 INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE 54

We find Mal. He's dragging himself to the bridge. He reaches for the button to call back the shuttles. But before he can touch it... he passes out.

BLACKNESS.

UP FROM BLACKNESS

VOICES. Familiar voices. Growing more present as Mal wakes in --

55 INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY 55

Mal blinks as he sees --

-- Simon, Book, Inara, Jayne... then River, then Wash, and finally even Zoe, who's sitting up nearby. No one (save maybe Zoe) is directly facing him. Various backs to him. They're in conversation, though since we're in Mal's POV we can't quite make out what they're saying. Zoe's the first to notice that Mal's come into consciousness.

ZOE

Welcome back, sir.

The others follow her look, see he's waking up.

MAL

(disoriented)

I go someplace?

BOOK

Very nearly.

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED:

55

INARA

We thought we'd lost you.

MAL

(disconnected)

Been right here.

Mal notes Wash hooked up to an IV -- he's giving Mal a transfusion. Mal, in his out-of-it-ness doesn't quite understand that.

MAL (cont'd)

Wash, you okay?

WASH

(amused)

Yeah, Mal. I'm fine.

MAL

Got a thing in ya.

WASH

Yeah.

SIMON

(to Mal)

Try not to speak. You're heavily medicated and you've lost a lot of blood.

MAL

Oh.

(then, realizing)

Thought I ordered ya'll off the ship?

The others exchange looks. Jayne glares at Inara.

JAYNE

(under his breath,
accusatory)

Told ya.

(points to Wash)

It was them! They come back first!
Their shuttle was already here when
we docked.

MAL

(to Wash, trying to
remember)

I call you back?

WASH

No, Mal. You didn't.

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED: (2)

55

ZOE

I take full responsibility, captain.

SIMON

That decision saved your life.

ZOE

It'll never happen again, sir.

MAL

(to Zoe)

Good. And thank you. I'm grateful.

JAYNE

(huh?)

You are?

Zoe smiles, nods.

ZOE

My pleasure, sir.

They hold the look between them. The original two. A special connection. Jayne observes that exchange.

JAYNE

Hey! That ain't... We'da been here first! But there's something wrong with 'nara's shuttle! She done somethin' to it, Mal. Smells funny.

INARA

(heard this all day)

I've told you -- that's incense.

JAYNE

Whatever.

Kaylee enters. See's Mal's awake.

KAYLEE

(brightly)

Captain! You fixed the ship!

(then, a serious professional assessment)

Good work.

MAL

Thanks.

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED: (3)

55

SIMON

Alright. I have to insist. The captain needs to rest.

MAL

(nodding off)

Yeah. I think maybe doc's not wrong about that. Just for a few...

(forces himself not to drift)

You're all gonna be here when I wake up?

BOOK

We'll be here.

Mal allows himself to close his eyes.

MAL

(eyes closed, smiles)

Good. That's good...

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED: (4)

55

As we PUSH IN closer to his face, which, if I can say, exhibits a kind of serenity, we start to HEAR what HE HEARS... VOICES IN HIS HEAD:

CONTINUED

55 CONTINUED: (5)

55

SALESMAN (V.O.)

Yep. A real beauty, ain't she?
Yessir. A right smart purchase, this
vessel.

56 EXT. USED SPACE SHIP LOT - DAY

56

SALESMAN

Tell you what, you buy this ship,
treat her proper, she'll be with ya
for the rest of your life.

The Used Ship SALESMAN giving Mal the hard sell.

Now WE SEE that they're standing in front of a totally
different ship. Not Serenity at all.

SALESMAN (cont'd)

Son? Hey, son?

The Salesman notices that Mal doesn't seem to be paying a bit
of attention.

SALESMAN (cont'd)

You hear a word I been sayin'?

He hasn't, really. Because he's looking across the lot at
something else...

MAL'S POV

Across the lot sits Serenity, dirty, a bit broken down... and
silently speaking to Mal. Off that --

BLACK OUT.

THE END