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FIREFLY - "DEPARTED"

Written by Ross Studtman

TEASER

EXT. DYTON - DAY

Small town, old western-y buildings, not a rich town. CAMERA angles down from crane shot of dirt street, turns, faces a building where we read the sign: "Office of Complaint". We go rat quick through the building, onto the back porch stopping for an instant to take in a well manicured lawn laid out like a miniature football field. Two men standing back to back; we may or may not notice one of the men is MAL.

CAMERA quickly accelerates, goes dime-thin between the two men and comes to a crashing halt on the face of a walrus faced, mustached man as he bellows in a deep voice...

WALRUS

One.

REVERSE ANGLE to show the two men. Mal is one of the men and the other, SHAN, a forty-ish man who reeks of military though dressed casual. Each take steps away from the other. We linger for a moment. Then...

WALRUS (CONT'D)

Two.

Another step for each. The count continues onward. During counts three through six we come to see the tension in Mal's face, solemn. His counterpart, Shan, has stern eyes. His lips are moving as he is saying something but the SOUND of it isn't playing. During one of the counts we focus on each man's boots.

WALRUS (CONT'D)

Six.

ANGLE ON Shan's boots to see him clearly beginning to turn before "Seven" is uttered. Of course we're going slow motion.

ANGLE ON Walrus' face to see him begin to spit out the word "Seven"

WALRUS (CONT'D)

Seven.

Mal spins as a shot rings out, it clearly isn't Mal who has fired. CAMERA follows the bullets path as it blows a button right off Mal's shirt while he is in profile.

CAMERA return to normal speed and Mal's gun is out instantly, pointed with a deadly steady hand, camera focused on the length of the gun, the distance after the barrel is out of focus.

REVERSE CAMERA to Mal's face as he takes a moment.

MAL  
War's over.

We stay on Mal as we hear the gun fire. Mal's expression doesn't change. Where there was only the sound of Walrus we now hear a body hit the ground behind us. There is no joy in this for Mal.

END TEASER

ACT ONE  
hours earlier...

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - DAY

INARA is packing her things.

INARA  
Kaylee, are you ever gonna put that capture down?

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
We gotta have records of everything. A bona fide Companion entertained clients on this very ship! In this very bed!

CAMERA PANS over to the bed - RIVER is bending over and sniffing curiously.

KAYLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
For one sweet second, we was almost classy.

INARA  
You promised to help me pack.

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
Honest, Inara, why do you have to leave?

INARA  
Hera...Companion House...you've heard this before.

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
But we need you. Right, River?

RIVER  
I need a better bed. One that makes  
scents.

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
Captain needs you.

INARA  
Does he?

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
Don't make a lick of sense.  
Everything's so good.

Inara approaches Kaylee, holds the handheld between her hands  
and speaks directly to the camera.

INARA  
I love you. All of you. But a  
Companion's duties to the  
Sisterhood are for life. And I am  
called away. So I go. I expect you  
to visit.

KAYLEE (O.S.)  
This just blows gaskets! Nandi  
left...  
(beat)  
Sorry.

INARA  
It's all right. Truth is, Nandi  
never left the Sisterhood.

RIVER  
Truth is, training house isn't your  
companion. The Rhae of the son will  
appear over Sihnon.

INARA  
River?

RIVER  
Yes, her, too.

River exits leaving Kaylee and Inara to puzzle a moment.

KAYLEE  
See?

INARA

What?

KAYLEE

She don't want you to go, either.

INT. SERENITY MAL'S QUARTERS

Mal is seated before the communication station in his room.

MAL

We'll be there.

He gets up, starts to the stairs, hesitantly comes to a stop, turns back to a cluttered table and grabs a shoe-sized wooden box. He smiles briefly.

WASH (V.O.)

Entering atmo in four.

EXT. HERA - DAY

Serenity flies above, then down into the mountainous country.

INT. SERENITY BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Inara enters. ZOE and WASH are already on the bridge looking out the windows, Wash is flying low, the view is beautiful.

ZOE

This is Hera at her best.

Wash notices Inara, turns to her, one hand on the flight stick.

WASH

Inara.

Wash extends a hand toward Inara, she takes it.

WASH (CONT'D)

Gonna miss you, Inara.

A MOUNTAIN has appeared into view through the windows while Wash was talking.

INARA

(indicating)

Wash?

WASH

I can't get sentimental?

ZOE

Wash!

Turning to look at Zoe:

WASH

What?

ZOE

(indicating)

You want to fly or get sentimental?

Wash turns from Zoe and the mountain now nearly dominates the view.

WASH

woo dei ma! (holy crap)

EXT. HERA - CONTINUING

Serenity banks hard, a silver streak against the snow and evergreen covered mountain.

INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Mal braces himself against Inara's luggage as Serenity moves beneath him. Calm again, Mal pops a luggage container open and inserts the box he's carrying, then closes it.

INT. SERENITY, BRIDGE - CONTINUING

BOOK and KAYLEE enter on the heels of JAYNE.

JAYNE

Nice flying, dumbass.

BOOK

Hera truly is beautiful this time of year. You will have to invite us to guest so we can hike your mountains. Jayne is admiring the view of Inara.

JAYNE

Yeah. I want to hike. Kaylee turns to Jayne as...

JAYNE (CONT'D)

The hills, the valleys. Kaylee punches Jayne in the arm.

JAYNE (CONT'D)

What?

Kaylee gives him a look. Punches him again. Jayne smiles.

KAYLEE

Inara's gonna teach young women the art of love. It's so romantic.

Book is looking out the window as the land opens up into vineyards and a well-manicured estate.

BOOK

In her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed.

KAYLEE

Wow.

INARA

Thank you, Preacher.

EXT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE LANDING PAD - DAY

Serenity lands on a landing pad made from large blocks of stone set into the earth. The grass surrounding is green and well kept.

INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - A BIT LATER

The gang is here, the hugs and farewells are already underway. Mal comes in last, sidles up next to Wash who has just finished hugging Inara.

MAL

We got business. Hands Wash a folded paper.

MAL (CONT'D)

Landing authorization. It's a "hurry up" so as soon as...you know, we're done here... we're off. Wash acknowledges this.

Mal walks passed the group surrounding Inara, uses the controls to open the cargo bay door.

Meanwhile, Kaylee is standing a pace or two back from SIMON, RIVER, Book, Jayne, and Zoe when Inara turns to her, extends her hands out for a hug. We see the plaster calm on Kaylee's face begin to rapidly crack and dissolve away. Kaylee's rooted in place.

KAYLEE  
I know. I promised.

Inara quickly closes the space between them and embraces her tightly.

INARA  
(hushed, for Kaylee only)  
Shh. You need to be strong. Please.

KAYLEE  
(Nodding, tears freely  
flowing)

INARA  
(hushed)  
You wanted "class", Sweetie, but  
you already have it. And I admire  
it. You are braver and stronger  
than I. Inara kisses Kaylee on the  
cheek.

The cargo bay ramp hits the stone of the landing pad. Beyond  
a semi-circle of women stand in scarlet and maroon saris; one  
aged, in the middle; to either side of her three young women.

Inara walks to the ramp, meets up with Mal.

INARA (CONT'D)  
I -

MAL  
- I want to tell you...

INARA  
...yes?

MAL  
You're part of my crew.

INARA  
(beat)  
Thank you.

He reaches out for her hand, a bit formal and quick, he  
smiles. She takes it, placing her hand in his. They hold for  
a beat longer than necessary. Then they walk together down  
the ramp.

Zoe follows in the rover that carries Inara's belongings.



MAL  
 (Mal squinting in the sun)  
 It's a bright, beautiful place.  
 This'll do alright.

A few paces past the ramp Mal pulls up short bringing Inara to a halt. They face each other.

MAL (CONT'D)  
 Inara, I...

Inara moves in closer; did Mal pull her or did she slide in, can't tell.

MAL (CONT'D)  
 ...I, I want...I think you'll do well here.

INARA  
 There is no greater guilt than discontentment. There is no greater disaster than greed. Should that I wish I could play with greed and be guiltless.

MAL  
 Greedy? Did you just Buddha me?

INARA  
 I did.

MAL  
 And?

INARA  
 I'll miss Serenity.

MAL  
 Me too.  
 (beat)  
 Er, that's if I were staying...of course, I'm not. Not that I wouldn't want to...I mean if I were...training...the women...then, I'd miss -- Zoe pulls alongside.

ZOE  
 -- Sir?

MAL  
 (silently)  
 Yeah.  
 (MORE)

MAL (CONT'D)  
 (Too loud)  
 Yeah?

ZOE  
 (indicating the women)  
 They're waiting.

Mal snaps to. He lets go of Inara's hand.

MAL  
 Yeah. Zoe, take the Ambassador's  
 luggage wherever they need it, then  
 hurry back. We've got *greedy* to  
 attend to.  
 (Mal bows ornately)  
 Ambassador.

With that Mal turns and returns to Serenity. We follow Inara as she introduces herself to the middle woman, SHEYDRA, an older companion; and note the excited reverence from the younger ladies that flank her.

INARA  
 Sheydra.

SHEYDRA  
 (loud)  
 Inara. We are humbled that you have  
 volunteered -

Off the word "volunteered" Inara looks at Zoe who has overheard. Inara and Zoe share a knowing look as Sheydra continues...

SHEYDRA (O.S. CONT'D) (CONT'D)

--to aid our training.

INARA  
 My pleasure.  
 (to the young women)  
 Which of you would like to show Zoe  
 where to take my belongings?

Six hands jump into the air like eager fish.

INARA (CONT'D)  
 Gracious. Good. You can all go.  
 Feel free to run, Zoe has urgent  
 obligations elsewhere.

The young women bolt and Zoe follows.

INARA (CONT'D)  
Acolytes. Any attained level two?

SHEYDRA  
Just one. She is undergoing her  
Test.

INARA  
Oh, good.

SHEYDRA  
Perhaps not.

INARA  
Oh?

SHEYDRA  
She may have failed.

INT. SERENITY DINING HALL - LATER

Mal, Zoe, Jayne, Kaylee, Simon, River, and Book are here.

MAL  
(to Simon)  
We're to pick up passengers so I  
want you and your sister in Inara's  
shuttle; double time.

SIMON  
For how long?

MAL  
It's a short hop, shouldn't be in  
the shuttle more'n a couple of  
days.

SIMON  
Couple days?

MAL  
Have River count the seconds, it'll  
be fun.

RIVER  
Couple: two. One hundred seventy-  
two thousand eight hundred seconds.

MAL  
See. Fun.

SIMON  
(can't wait)  
Yes.

MAL  
Can't have the cargo looky-looing  
our fugitives.  
(to Jayne)  
Jayne, help move their stuff.

JAYNE  
No problem. One heap of crazy and  
some drugs. Shouldn't take long.

MAL  
Good.

KAYLEE  
Cap'n, these people we're fix'n to  
pick up, somethin' wrong with 'em?

MAL  
Yep.  
(beat)  
They just got married.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SERENITY BRIDGE - A BIT LATER

MAL  
Code work?

WASH  
(but)  
Yeah...

MAL  
What?

WASH  
We got redirected.

MAL  
Where to?

ANGLE ON display of city grid map, Wash points to it.

WASH (V.O.)  
Here. Edge of the city, warehouse  
district.

MAL  
Anything else?

WASH  
A bit of chatter on the wave.

MAL  
Uglies?

WASH  
'Fraid so.

MAL  
<dirty pig shit> fung de lei ma

WASH  
Mmhmm. But we're still on.

MAL  
Yeah?

WASH  
Yeah.

MAL  
Good. A little bank this trip,  
oughta settle just right. Keep a  
low profile.

EXT. HERA CITY - DAY

Serenity lands at the warehouse district.

CUT TO:

Serenity cargo ramp dropping down. Mal, Zoe, and Jayne walk down to the bottom of the ramp and look about. Nothing appears to catch their eye.

ZOE  
Well?

MAL  
I don't--

JAYNE  
(--lets out a long, loud  
piercing whistle)

MAL  
Jayne. Really...

A large truck comes into frame, crosses in front of our gang, and nearly exits the frame on the far side.

JAYNE

Seen it in a movie.

The back of the truck opens and a forklift appears, angles the forks into the back of the truck, lifts, and backs up carrying a large crate. Mal, Zoe, and Jayne move to one side of the ramp. The forklift and crate zoom up next to ramp.

FORK LIFT GUY

Captain Reynolds?

MAL

Reynolds?

FORKLIFT GUY

Style delivery.

MAL

Oh, "Reynolds". Yeah.

Forklift Guy drives into Serenity, down goes the crate. FLG backs up and out of Serenity. Mal and gang are still standing at the foot of the loading bay ramp, clearly waiting for the driver to disembark. The forklift exits frame leaving our gang standing alone.

CAMERA REVERSE to show forklift zooming into the distance across the tarmac of the warehouse district as..

MAL (O.S.)

Zoe, get Jayne to see if that crate is ticking.

ZOE

Jayne, check the crate.

JAYNE

Last I looked, gett'n blown up, not in my contract.

MAL

Fine print, Zoe?

ZOE

Fine print, Sir.

INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

The cargo bay closes. Mal uses comm. station by cargo bay ramp.

MAL  
Wash, we're in, hit sky.

WASH (V.O.)  
Roger that.

EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING

Ship's thrusters angle down, power up, Serenity lifts off.

INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Mal, Jayne and Zoe approach the large crate with apprehension. They hear moaning from within.

JAYNE  
(knocking)  
Married people?

INT. INARA'S OLD SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Simon is chatting away, not noticing River has come to a stop in the middle of the shuttle, her head tilted, listening to something only she can hear.

Simon pulls on a ring, set into the shuttle wall, and a bed comes clanking down. This ain't the bed Inara used.

SIMON  
You can have the bed, mei-mei.  
(eww)  
Such that it is.  
(turns to River)  
(beat)  
...River?

RIVER  
Shh.

River walks slowly toward the shuttle door, her hands raised before her like she's feeling the air with each step.

SIMON  
River?

INT. SERENITY CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Mal, Jayne, and Zoe; and crate.

Jayne catches a crowbar Mal tosses to him. Jayne and Mal jam their crowbars into the crate edges.

JAYNE  
Probably a bunch of Reavers piled  
up like clowns.

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S OLD SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

River has crossed the shuttle and lightly rests her fingertips against the shuttle door. She's obviously present to something, something Simon isn't.

SIMON  
River, we need to stay here, in the  
shuttle.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Book arrives with Kaylee in tow.

CAMERA up and back so we see Mal and Jayne with their crowbars jammed into the sides of the crate, Zoe stands next to Mal. Book and Kaylee stand behind them.

Mal and Jayne give the crate face a heave-ho with their crowbars and it comes crashing to the floor.

CAMERA angle inside crate, there is a woman, slumped on the floor next to a man, she is pressing her white dress into a very bloody leg wound of the man lying there. Meet our new husband, SHAN, and his bride, PEYTON. Shan is a forty-ish man, fit, (and shot). Peyton, if we squint, passingly reminds us of Inara.

JAYNE (O.S.)  
Why, they ain't Reavers.

PEYTON  
(sobbing)  
Help us.

CAMERA on Mal.

MAL  
(check it out)  
Zoe.

CAMERA stays on Mal a moment as the blur of Zoe crosses in front of camera at which point we pull back a bit to see Kaylee and Book angle around Mal for a better view inside.



CAMERA changes POV to either Mal, Kaylee, or Book, not sure, they all have the same angle. We see Zoe bent over, back to us, Peyton next to her. The man's face is obscured.

PEYTON

His leg...

Shhh, Shanny, Shhh

help's here.

ZOE

Thigh. Couple holes. Might be an artery.

MAL

Gorramn it!

ZOE

He'll live. Got to patch him up.  
Jayne.

Jayne joins Zoe, they move to either side of Shan, pick him up between them.

CAMERA angle on Mal, Book, Kaylee.

MAL

Nobody dying on my boat.

CAMERA angle into crate, Shan lifts his head, our first good glimpse. His eyes lock just off camera.

CAMERA angle to Book's face, we see a brief moment of recognition.

SMASH CUT:

EXT. SOME PLANET - TWILIGHT

War time. Bodies are everywhere, farmer types. Gun fire. Lots of yelling and screaming. Jump cuts showing various war scenes. Alliance soldiers putting the hurt on the Independence soldiers with civilian-farmer-types blended in. A group of Alliance soldiers comes barreling over a ridge, there's a knot of Independents folk that see and bolt like scared rabbits. The Alliance soldiers hit the dust on their bellies and gun down the fleeing. Jump cut to a medium sized town, zoom camera in on a woman rushing her three children into a house. Cut sound. Pull camera way, way back, take in the whole town.

Moment later, brilliant flash of light, then huge fucking fiery explosion lights up the whole town. Gigantic fireball.

SMASH CUT:

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S OLD SHUTTLE

CAMERA tight on River's face. She screams and is jettisoned away from the door, bowling into Simon and they both go down. River is screaming from the horrors she has just witnessed; and wildly backing up, putting distance between herself and her vision.

JUMP CUT:

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

Zoe and Jayne carry Shan to the infirmary.

BOOK

Lot of blood.

MAL

(to Book, derisive)

Is that your professional opinion?

BOOK

The woman was pressing on the inner thigh, might be the femoral artery has been compromised, that much blood.

(beat)

We're going to need the Doc on this.

MAL

No. Zoe can handle fieldwork.

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S OLD SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

RIVER

Too much! Fall from grace. Save him. Simon, he's dying, bleeding to death, you've got to save him.

SIMON

The Capta--

RIVER

--Simon! You have to, you're the only one. Must go!

(beat)

Simon!

SIMON  
Okay, mei mei.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - CONTINUING

BOOK  
About three choices here, Captain.  
Repair that damaged artery. Or,  
remove his leg. Or, let him die.  
And two of them you're going to  
need the Doctor for. A moment.

KAYLEE  
(we ain't gonna let him  
die)  
Captain?

MAL  
I'm thinking

KAYLEE  
What's there to think about?

MAL  
You two forgetting the Doctor is  
kinda wanted for something?

BOOK  
I think that's a choice the doctor  
should make.

MAL  
Choice four: we put em back in the  
crate, turn this boat around, dump  
'em off where they can find..

MAL notices Simon charging down the catwalk from Inara's  
shuttle, heading for the stairs.

MAL  
(to himself)  
...them.

Was a simple order: "stay put."

Mal, followed by Book and Kaylee, moves to intercept Simon.

MAL  
(to Simon's back)  
Hey! I told you to keep to the  
shuttle.

SIMON  
River told me - Mal grabs Simon and  
jerks him around.

MAL  
-River ain't captain.

SIMON  
-a man will die without my help.

MAL  
He ain't gonna die! Zoe can handle  
this.

SIMON  
And Zoe's good at repairing  
arterial rupture?

MAL  
I got a crew of amnesiacs.  
Fugitive, remember?

SIMON  
Oh, I forgot.

MAL  
What you forgot is your decisions  
affect my crew. And on this boat,  
that makes them my decisions.

SIMON  
He'll die without my help. And if  
he dies, that's your decision.

MAL  
He aint gonna die!

SIMON  
If he does, you killed him.

MAL  
I didn't shoot the man!

SIMON  
He dies, may as well have.

MAL  
Shepard, you willing to risk your  
life on Ms. Clairvoyant's call?

BOOK  
No. (beat)

I am willing to do what is  
necessary to save this man's life  
(half beat)  
even if it isn't convenient.

KAYLEE

Cap--

MAL

(alright already)

--Kaylee.

(to Simon)

This turns sour, you prepared to  
live with it. You and your sister?

SIMON

I am.

Mal gives a slight nod of affirmation.

Simon turns and hustles to the infirmary.

BOOK

This is the right call.

MAL

Fore ordained, was it?

BOOK

We always have choice.

MAL

Lets see where this one takes us.

Mal moves to comm. station as Book passes him by headed  
toward infirmary.

MAL

Wash?

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

Wash talks via the comm.

WASH

Pints and Quarts.

MAL (V.O.)  
Pints and Quarts. We're strapped  
with trouble so nothing fancy, nice  
and slow. Wash flips the comm.  
switch off.

WASH  
Slow can be fancy.

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

Shan is on the table, Zoe is cutting his trousers with  
scissors; Jayne is at the head of the table lightly holding  
his shoulders. When Shan reflexively reaches for Zoe, Jayne  
forcibly anchors him in place.

Simon enters, all business, this is his domain. He goes  
straight for the cabinets and drawers and starts pulling gear  
and placing it on a cart.

SIMON  
What do we have?

ZOE  
Three entry, looks like two exit.

SIMON  
You know how to prep cellular  
adhesive?

ZOE  
Yes.

SIMON  
Good. Jayne, grab the oronasal  
systemic anesthetic behind you.  
Jayne gives him the "you're a  
dumbass" look.

SIMON (CONTINUING)  
Shiny bottle, behind you, looks  
like a little fire extinguisher.  
(to Shan)  
Your name?

SHAN  
Sh-ahmf-argggg

PEYTON  
(answering)  
Shan.

Simon prepares to affix the anesthetic nose-mouth piece to Shan.

SIMON  
Shan, breathe as calmly as you can.

Simon places the anesthetic piece to Shan's face. Shan turns his face to gaze at Simon.

Book grabs the non-injured foot of Shan, gives it a little "attention down here" wiggle. Shan turns his attention to Book.

BOOK  
(to Shan)  
You're in good hands.

SHAN  
(mumbles something into  
the plastic)  
SIMON (continuing)  
(to Zoe)  
How's that coming?

Zoe is squeezing shiny packets into a bowl and mixing them together.

ZOE  
About done.

SIMON  
Shepard, vasoconstriction spray,  
left cabinet. Book moves to grab  
it.

SIMON  
(to Book)  
Escort the lady out.

PEYTON  
I'll stay, thank you.

BOOK  
Miss, might be best to let the  
doctor concentrate. (Indicating  
Shan) He's in good hands. Come -

PEYTON  
- I'm not leaving.

MAL  
Yes, you are. Let the doctor do his  
thing.

Mal steps aside to let Book escort Peyton out. Peyton is half turned as she leaves, looking back at Shan, concern etches her face. Kaylee joins the Book and Peyton outside, she gives Peyton a warm touch.

KAYLEE  
He'll be okay.

SIMON (O.S.)  
Everyone out. Zoe, I'll need your help with retraction. Camera back inside, we see what Peyton sees.

ZOE  
(nod)  
Mal uses a dimmer switch on the infirmary windows and they become impenetrable to prying eyes.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

Mal and Jayne exit the infirmary.

MAL  
I don't want the wife coming through here while Simon's in there. Been enough exposure here. Sending Kaylee down with ears. Make sure Doc knows he's to be gone before that man wakes up, dong ma?

JAYNE  
Yep.

INT./EXT. GUEST QUARTERS - CONTINUING

Book and Kaylee are quietly consoling Peyton when Mal, just outside the open door, leans in.

MAL  
Kaylee, need you in the engine room.

KAYLEE  
Everythings purring up- Mal's look brings that sentence up short.



KAYLEE  
(to Peyton)  
Try not to worry. Simon will fix  
him up shiny, you'll see.

EXT. GUEST QUARTERS HALLWAY - CONTINUING

MAL  
(quiet)  
Get with Wash, I want ears in the  
infirmary.

KAYLEE  
Everything okay?

MAL  
Should be all right. Just  
precaution. Kaylee ascends the  
stairwell. Mal goes back toward the  
guest quarters.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS - CONTINUING

Mal enters. Peyton is sitting in the middle of the futon;  
Book is seated next to her.

MAL  
Peyton, is it?

PEYTON  
(nod)

MAL  
How'd this happen? Peyton shakes  
her head.

MAL  
What kind of trouble we looking at  
here?

PEYTON  
(distant)  
Happened so quickly. They were  
there, waiting for us.

MAL  
"They"?

PEYTON  
Alliance.

MAL  
Didn't approve of your marriage?

PEYTON

They came out of the shops,  
everywhere, we ran...Shan pulling  
me...yelling at me to run faster.

Book kneels down next to her, takes her hand, she looks into  
his eyes while hers are near to brimming with tears.

BOOK

Why were they chasing you?

PEYTON

I don't know.

BOOK

(warmly)

You do.

Peyton takes a moment.

PEYTON

Shan isn't allowed to leave Hera.

BOOK

(knowing)

And why is that? Peyton appears  
nervous.

MAL

What ever it is, going on here,  
we're in it up to our eyeballs,  
you, me, Shepard, your husband...all  
of us, together.

PEYTON

Shan's an Alliance officer.

MAL

Monkey hell!

(beat)

Alliance shooting Alliance?

PEYTON

They shouldn't have been there...  
...shouldn't have been waiting for  
us.

MAL

Why's that?

PEYTON

I made the arrangements so we could  
get away clean, start fresh.

MAL  
Clean has a way of getting dirty.

PEYTON  
We shouldn't be followed.

MAL  
Oh?

PEYTON  
I made sure.

MAL  
You did?

PEYTON  
My father taught me to have backup plans.

MAL  
Annnd are we in your plan now?  
(beat)  
'Cause if we are I'll just go nod off in my cabin.

BOOK  
No reason to be rude, Captain.

MAL  
No, I would like to know how the Blushing (bride) has contacts enough to even attempt getting herself smuggled off planet.

PEYTON  
(prideful)  
I'm a Companion.

MAL  
Did you just...  
(to Book)  
...did she--

PEYTON  
--"Companion," yes.

MAL  
You folks got a real reputation for marriage.

PEYTON  
It's complicated.

MAL  
Always is.

PEYTON  
We won't be followed. I made sure.

MAL  
And your husband won't get shot.

INT. SERENITY - HALLWAY LEADING TO DINING ROOM - MOMENTS  
LATER

Mal and Book are talking and walking, Mal leads.

BOOK  
There's more going on here than  
meets the eye.

MAL  
Yeah, an Alliance officer - well,  
former, anyway - They enter the  
dining area.

BOOK  
-mmm. Don't think so.

MAL  
Not Alliance?

BOOK  
Not "former." Mal stops by the  
dining table, turns to face Book.

MAL  
Come again?

BOOK  
Peyton said Shan was an officer.  
Only the highest ranking officers  
aren't allowed to marry. And they  
have training, special training, to  
avoid dividing loyalties.

MAL  
"Special" training?

BOOK  
They don't marry, Captain.

MAL  
Is that so?

BOOK

It is.

MAL

She's lying?

BOOK

I don't believe she is, far as she knows.

MAL

He's not Alliance?

BOOK

She has the resources to discover that lie easily enough. No, I think he's an Alliance officer.

MAL

If he's Alliance then who shot him?

BOOK

I think Peyton has secrets of her own.

MAL

More secrets and intangibles aboard my ship. It's a nest. Why does an Alliance officer fake a marriage?

BOOK

Why were you tricked into marriage?

MAL

Wine.

(changing gears)

She's being swindled. Got something the Alliance wants.

BOOK

If so, I imagine the Alliance would simply take it. And, in a manner of speaking, I'm suggesting that's exactly what they did. Or tried to do.

MAL

What'd they try to take?

BOOK

Her.

MEANWHILE:

INT./EXT. SHUTTLE

River exits the shuttle with careful steps, goes to the catwalk railing.

CAMERA ZOOMS through catwalk railing into the sitting area outside the infirmary where we see

EXT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

Jayne is tossing a coin, catching it.

JAYNE

Heads.

Removes his hand to reveal coin.

JAYNE

Gorram it.

PULL CAMERA out through cargo bay/infirmary sitting area doorway.

River waits just outside the doorway leading to the infirmary, she appears to be concealing herself from Jayne's view.

INT. BRIDGE - A TOUCH LATER

Mal enters.

MAL

Anybody hail us?

WASH

The toughest thing about running away is making sure you don't go too fast. Fast brings attention, then little blue men with funny hats, sirens, lights. It's a whole show.

MAL

We're in the clear?

WASH

For now. Wave scanner is wee hot.

MAL

No mention of us?

WASH  
None. What kind of trouble we  
ferrying?

MAL  
Companion and Alliance officer.

WASH  
A Companion and Alliance  
Officer...married?

MAL  
That's the tale. Hubby got himself  
shot.

WASH  
He going to live?

MAL  
Doc and Zoe are patching him up.

WASH  
You want to stay the course?

MAL  
I'm thinking "no."

WASH  
Where to?

MAL  
Dyton.

EXT. INFIRMARY - BIT LATER

Jayne is there, delicately placing the coin on his thumb that's ready for flipping, then he carefully moves his hand behind his back. Once he's prepared he flips the coin and it arches over his head. He quickly takes his hand from behind his back and holds it outstretched before him waiting for the coin to land in it.

The coin is about 2 feet too far in front his hand. It hits the ground and rolls under the couch. He goes to fetch it.

River slides past the sprawled Jayne. Jayne's none the wiser.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS - CONTINUING

Peyton is here attempting to be calm when River enters.

PEYTON  
Can I help you?

RIVER

Yes.

(beat)

Tell your husband, who is not your husband, that you know he is not your husband.

PEYTON

Wha...who are you?

RIVER

River. You're a companion, rank two, and your test was love. You failed.

PEYTON

Test?

RIVER

Failed.

PEYTON

How do you know my rank? Did the sisters send you?

RIVER

They were sent for.

PEYTON

"They," who they?

RIVER

--you already know that.

PEYTON

I really don't.

RIVER

Gave up Companion for love, for free, no charge, no fee.

PEYTON

You should go.

RIVER

Father didn't want you to go, wanted you to stay. That sure changes Peyton's demeanor.

PEYTON

Did he send you?



River edges closer to the door, feeling the wood of the door, caressing it.

RIVER  
He wants you back. Safe. With that  
River exits.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMON AREA OUTSIDE INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

We see River coming down the hall toward the common area. She passes Book who is coming down the stairs.

Book watches River pass by.

Jayne tosses his coin, catches it, slams it to the back of his other hand, waiting to call it. Jayne sees River.

JAYNE  
Where'd you come from?

RIVER  
Heads.

River passes Jayne.

JAYNE  
Loo on the shuttle broke? He gets  
no answer.

JAYNE (CONTINUING)  
Crazy people.  
(re: coin)  
Tails.

Jayne removes his hand covering the coin.

JAYNE  
(wrong again)  
Unluckiest coin ever!

Kaylee comes down the stairs, prompting Book to move, she moves around Jayne, to infirmary.

INT./EXT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING

Kaylee opens the doors and enters. Book and Jayne stand outside. Simon is stitching up Shan's leg.

KAYLEE  
How's the patient?

SIMON  
Repaired the femoral artery, sewed  
up the vastus medialis, gracilis,  
adductor magnus, the semi mem.. it  
went well.

KAYLEE  
Sounds like!

Kaylee squats next to Zoe on the left side of the table,  
Simon is on the right.

ZOE  
Be luckier if he didn't get shot.

SIMON  
(to Kaylee)  
What are you doing?

KAYLEE  
Looking for a place to put a bug.

SIMON  
Bug?

Kaylee comes up beaming her smile.

KAYLEE  
Not a "bug" bug, this.  
(re: device)  
See?

SIMON  
And that is for?

ZOE  
Insurance.

Jayne is at the door.

JAYNE  
Insured you don't get made and get  
yourself turned into the Feds.

SIMON  
Good thing I have friends like you.

JAYNE  
Yeah.

SIMON  
Zoe can wake him after I'm  
finished.

INT. BRIDGE - LATER

Wash, Mal, and Kaylee. Wash flips a switch and over the comm. comes the activity of the infirmary.

SIMON (V.O. FROM COMM.)  
Put some of this in here and he'll  
wake shortly after.

ZOE (V.O. FROM COMM.)  
Okay.

MAL  
Kaylee, see to it the doctor makes  
it back to his shuttle.

SIMON (V.O. FROM COMM.)  
What, does he think I can't find  
the way?

Mal looks to Wash, give the "Why am I transmitting?" look.

WASH  
Oops.

MAL  
Can we fix that? Wash moves to flip  
a switch.

MAL  
Ain't always about you, doc.

KAYLEE  
What am I 'posta do?

MAL  
Keep him busy.

KAYLEE  
How?

MAL  
I don't know. Fawn, try that.

INT./EXT. GUEST QUARTERS - A BIT LATER

Book and Peyton are inside. Zoe slides the door open.

ZOE  
He'll be awake shortly. Everything  
went well. Probably be walking  
about in a few hours' time, most  
like.

PEYTON  
Can I see him?

ZOE  
He'll be a bit groggy at first but  
he'll snap to short order.

BOOK  
Thank you, Zoe.

PEYTON  
I'd like to thank the doctor.

ZOE  
He's turned in. Fatigue. Maybe  
tomorrow.

PEYTON  
Oh.

INT./EXT INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

Book slides the door open.

BOOK  
I'll leave you two alone.

Peyton walks in and Book slides the door closed after her.

PEYTON  
Shan? Sweetie?

He's obviously still out. Peyton grabs his hand and stands  
next to him.

INT./EXT SHUTTLE - CONTINUING

Kaylee and Simon arrive, continuing a conversation we catch  
in the mid.

SIMON  
More like feeling "alive," you  
know? I bet you feel the same way  
when fix Serenity. They stop at the  
shuttle entrance.

KAYLEE  
Keep'n Serenity purring...when she's  
happy, I'm happy.

SIMON  
You're happy all the time.

KAYLEE  
I am?

SIMON  
Yeah

KAYLEE  
Well, not "all the time."

SIMON  
Seems like.

KAYLEE  
I could be happier. They enter the shuttle.

SIMON  
Oh?

KAYLEE  
We both like fix'n stuff...

SIMON  
No more broken people.

KAYLEE  
How d'ya know if'n you don't test the parts. Simon slows, looking about while commenting:

SIMON  
Normally broken people have a way of letting on they're broken.

KAYLEE  
Ow?

SIMON  
Where?

Kaylee raises a wicked eyebrow.

SIMON  
Where's River?

KAYLEE  
Huh?

SIMON  
(searching)  
River?

INT. DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

River is off in the side sitting area, curled in a chair.

RIVER  
He's awake.

INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Mal, Zoe, Wash, Jayne, and Book; all arranged around a speaker Wash is holding.

SHAN (V.O.)  
Come close.

MAL  
Turn it up.

Wash turns a knob.

The voice over the receiver dies down considerably, is more intimate.

SHAN (V.O.)  
Did you catch the doctor's name?

PEYTON (V.O.)  
You can thank him later.

SHAN  
Did you see a girl?

PEYTON  
a girl?

SHAN  
Yes.

MAL  
<Chinese curse>

PEYTON  
That's odd, a girl did come to me.

MAL  
Who?

SHAN  
Her name?

PEYTON  
River.

MAL  
<Chinese curse>

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. DINING HALL - LATER

The whole gang is around the diner table, including River and Simon and Peyton.

MAL  
How do you know it was Alliance  
that intercepted you two on Hera?

PEYTON  
Uniforms are kind of distinctive.

MAL  
They really are. Odd they'd be so  
obvious.

PEYTON  
Why so?

MAL  
Because they already had what they  
wanted.

PEYTON  
Not following you.

BOOK  
Your husband is not allowed to  
marry.

PEYTON  
That's why we had to leave.

BOOK  
That's what they want you to  
believe.

PEYTON  
No, it's true, high-ranking  
officers aren't allowed to marry, I  
was skeptical, too, at first. Then  
I checked and it's true.

MAL  
Why would the Alliance go through  
all this trouble to kidnap a  
Companion?

PEYTON  
Kidnap? I think you're--

MAL  
--you're something more than you  
seem.

PEYTON  
I'm a Companion, sir.

MAL  
And that ain't enough to get you  
stolen.

BOOK  
Any idea why the Alliance would  
want you?

PEYTON  
This is lunacy.

RIVER  
Moon madness.

JAYNE  
Maybe something you got.  
(hopeful)  
Like a treasure map to a secret  
fortune?

PEYTON  
No treasure.

JAYNE  
Maybe you do and you don't know it.  
Ever think of that?

RIVER  
Father's a treasure. Simon reaches  
for his sister's hand.

SIMON  
(soft and gentle)  
Mei Mei.



MAL

Who's your father? Peyton looks down at her half eaten plate of food.

PEYTON

Alex D'est Scorpio

BOOK

Sting?

Slow nod from Peyton.

BOOK

This complicates matters.

MAL

It does?

BOOK

And makes things more clear. Sting is a very well connected figure on Hera. He is a man of knowledge and considerable power.

JAYNE

Might be he's got a treasure map.

BOOK

Might be the Alliance is looking to gain some leverage against the man using the daughter.

PEYTON

Shan wouldn't.

MAL

I'm fair certain you're convinced of that. One of the reasons I asked River and Simon to dine with us this evening. Put our cards in the open, show you we ain't hiding anything.

PEYTON

I didn't...think you were.

MAL

Sure you did. Shan recognized Simon and asked you about River.

PEYTON

How do you-

MAL

--And I believe he intends to keep his Alliance colors. But how does a fugitive turn in a fugitive without getting themselves snagged?

PEYTON

Shan's a war hero. Might have connections.

WASH

Conversation's taking an uncomfortable turn.

ZOE

A war hero?

PEYTON

He might use those connections.

RIVER

Vermin Brigade; General Shan Lycan Mal and Zoe go very cold at that.

ZOE

River, you mind repeating that?  
River shrugs.

RIVER

Vermin Brigade; General Shan Lycan

MAL

(to Peyton)

You be mighty clear on this particular.

(to River)

River, tell me if she's lying.

KAYLEE

Hey, Cap--

MAL

(very terse)

--Kaylee.

SIMON

She's not your gorram lie detector.

MAL

She is now.

SIMON

Come on, River, we're--

RIVER  
(to Simon)  
No.

MAL  
(to Peyton)  
What do you know of the Vermin  
Brigade?

PEYTON  
Why?

MAL  
Answer the question.

PEYTON  
Just bits. At the end of the War  
some Independents held out on Hera  
for weeks afterward. Shan led the  
fighting against the insurg.. them.

MAL  
River?

RIVER  
Squeaky clean.

ZOE  
That man, a guest in my home, is a  
butcher.

PEYTON  
Shan's not a butcher!

BOOK  
Men can change.

ZOE  
Not this one, Sheppard.

BOOK  
Even Alliance men, yes.

MAL  
Turned from butcher'n to  
kidnapping.

PEYTON  
I'm not being kidnapped.

BOOK  
All men deserve a second chance.

MAL

And he had 'em. Each new day he slaughtered POW's after the war was over. Each day a chance to change. He didn't.

MAL

You are being kidnapped. You don't have to trust me, I'll prove it.

PEYTON

How?

MAL

I'm going to let you two go.

EXT. DYTON - DAY

SERENITY LANDS in a field outside of a small town. Mal talks with Shan and Peyton just outside the open cargo ramp that is down.

MAL

Sorry couldn't get you to where you were originally intending to go. But you got shot and whoever did the shooting might be waiting for you.

SHAN

Probably a good idea.

MAL

If'n Dyton doesn't suit you there a fellow in town who runs a communication shop. Name's...uh, Zoe?

ZOE

No recollection, Sir.

MAL

No matter. Would like to take you the rest of the way ourselves but Alliance likely tagged us on our way out so you don't want to be moving about on a boat like this anyway.

SHAN

You are right, of course. Dyton just might be a great place for Pey and I to begin our lives together. Peyton smiles at Shan.

MAL

Zoe, have Wash and Kaylee see if this town's got a supply store and that replacement part for the engine. Might be just the time to spend a few hours fix'n what needs be fixed. We can stay low a bit here.

ZOE

(to Shan)

Would you like a ride to town?

SHAN

No thank you. The exercise will do my leg some good.

MAL

Well, take care then. Bye. Shan and Peyton head off toward town.

ZOE

"Take care then. Bye."?

MAL

Fake?

ZOE

Just ugly, sir.

MAL

Been living with ugly for a long time.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - LATER

Light pours through the windows, past the curtains. Peyton is looking over some dresses while Shan smiles.

PEYTON

(re: dresses)

A bit simple.

SHAN

We're not staying.

PEYTON

We're not?

SHAN

No. I didn't leave everything to bring you to Dyton. I'll find the communication depot.

(MORE)

SHAN (CONT'D)

I'll get us somewhere more appropriate for you. We could do well on Persephone, at the least.

PEYTON

I'll go with you.

SHAN

Sweetie, no, you stay, look around, explore a bit. I'll make arrangements.

PEYTON

Are you sure?

SHAN

Yes. Relax. I'll make everything right.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS HOUSE - BIT LATER

A large man with ill-fitting clothes leans heavily on the counter.

BIG MAN

Seventy-five.

SHAN

Done.

The Big Man invites Shan to follow him around the desk and through to the back room.

SHAN

Privacy.

Big Man nods and leaves closing the door behind him. Shan reaches into a pocket in his jacket and pulls out an Ident Card, slides it into a slot. The screen flickers but the visual doesn't come to life, there's only audio.

SHAN

Six five four three dash seven two  
three six nine dash three seven.

A moment passes. The radio beeps and a confirmation number is read back to Shan.

SHAN

Immediate extraction. New alpha:  
TAM. Beta: Peyton.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Shan exits the communications room and is making his way passed the front desk when the Big Man moves out of his way - but when he moves he reveals Peyton who was essentially hiding in the shadow of Big Man.

PEYTON

Why?

SHAN

Finished looking around?

PEYTON

Why?

SHAN

"Why" what?

The Big Man holds up a walkie-talky thingy and presses play. We hear Shan's voice "New Alpha: TAM. Beta: Peyton."

Shan's walking and talking, moving toward Peyton.

SHAN

There's a misunderstanding, Pey.  
Easily explain- From a side table:

MAL

-you'll want to stop walking about.  
Mal has a GUN trained on Shan. Shan stops.

PEYTON

What is this, Shan?

SHAN

Pey, I'm trying to make a good life for us.

PEYTON

Beta?

SHAN

Not as it sounds.

MAL

No? Sounds a lot like she was alpha, that is until you recognized the doc.

SHAN

I had to double cross the Alliance,  
they think I'm still working for  
them.

MAL

You're not, working for them?

SHAN

Noooo.

MAL

That is good. Sting will likely be  
happy to hear that when he arrives.  
Shan looks to Peyton.

PEYTON

I never told you who my father was,  
I didn't want to run you off.

SHAN

Mm.

MAL

Mm, yeah. I'm thinking Sting will  
be very interested in you, seeings  
how you tried to use his daughter  
as leverage against him.

SHAN

Lies.

MAL

Sadly, no. You duped this woman.  
You've been playing the duping game  
for a long while now, haven't you?

SHAN

Sorry?

MAL

Serenity Valley.

SHAN

What of it?

MAL

Never thought I'd get to meet the  
Vermin Brigade leader himself.

SHAN

You fought in the war?



MAL  
War plus two. A new realization  
crosses Shan's face.

SHAN  
Should have cleaned the whole lot  
of you.

MAL  
Shadow remembers.

SHAN  
Shadow was a sad and broken man. He  
justly died for his war crimes.

MAL  
Don't feel particularly dead.

SHAN  
You...?

EXT. DYTON - MID DAY

Mal, with his back against Shan, stands upon the grass of the  
pistol dueling range out back of the Office of Complaint.

SHAN  
You were lucky we were called away.  
I would have flayed you and your  
clucking chickens.

WALRUS  
One.

Mal doesn't say a peep. Each man takes a step.

SHAN (CONTINUING)  
Your lot barely knew how to fire a  
weapon. You will die here, today.

WALRUS  
Two.

Mal sturdy and hard, not a peep. Each man takes a step.

SHAN  
Finally going to drill a hole into  
you, Shadow.

WALRUS  
Three.

Each man takes a step.

SHAN  
Hoped all my life for this moment.

WALRUS  
Four.

Each man takes a step.

SHAN  
I ought to thank you. Really.

WALRUS  
Five.

Each man takes a step.

SHAN (CONTINUED)  
You'll be dead soon.

WALRUS  
Six.

Each man takes a step.

SHAN  
Don't breathe too quickly, slows  
the reflexes.

WALRUS  
Seven.

Walrus ends his count, they turn, fire, Mal guns Shan down.

MAL  
War's over.

EXT. DYTON - EVENING

Serenity lifts off.

Book and Peyton sit with one another in her quarters.

Jayne and Simon pass by River who is sitting on the catwalk,  
they are carrying stuff from the shuttle back to Simon and  
River's dorms. We are in River's POV

JAYNE  
I expect tips.

SIMON  
I have needles.

River sees Mal coming up the stairs. She gets up and moves off at a fast walk in the opposite direction down the catwalk.

MAL

River.

River reaches the end of the catwalk, hesitates at the stairway leading down, she grabs the railing in a death grip.

MAL

We need words.

RIVER

(child-like)

Noo.

MAL

Yes.

(beat)

River hasn't turned to face Mal yet.

RIVER

He did not repent his crimes. River turns, head downcast.

RIVER (CONT'D)

Blood on his hands.

MAL

That he did.

River stands stick still.

RIVER

(tiny)

Bad man.

MAL

No denying, what he did to me and mine...it was wrong. What came to him - was owed.

RIVER

Sorry.

MAL

Don't go seeding conversations hoping to stack response in your favor. I do that, not you. Understand?

RIVER

Yes.

MAL

You helped protect this crew.  
More'n once. You have strength and  
we need that. But you get a notion  
you want somebody killed you ask  
me, like a normal person. Don't  
manipulate me again. We clear?

RIVER

Clear.

MAL

No go help your brother.

River scampers off. Mal walks into Inara's shuttle. It is bare, cold, and lonely. Mal walks numbly through the empty shuttle. He slides the curtain back that divides cockpit from the rest of the shuttle. There's a box sitting in the seat. He opens it and on top is a picture (video capture) of Inara. He removes it, holds it and it plays with sound:

CAMERA ANGLE ON moving picture.

INARA

Kaylee, are you ever gonna put that  
capture down?

KAYLEE (O.S.)

We gotta have records of  
everything. A bona fide Companion  
entertained clients on this very  
ship! In this very bed!

CAMERA focuses on Mal's face, he is looking longingly at the video capture.

KAYLEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

For one sweet second, we was almost  
classy.

INARA (O.S.)

You promised to help me pack.

KAYLEE (O.S.)

Honest, Inara, why do you have to  
leave? Mal smiles.

MAL

I'm coming back for it.

INT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE - INARA'S ROOM

Inara is unpacking. She picks up a wooden, shoe-sized box. She opens it. Inside is an ancient laser pistol, the Lassiter.

We close on Inara's tear filled smile.

END OF SHOW