



## The Internet Movie Script Database (IMSDb)

### Search IMSDb

 

### Alphabetical

# [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#)  
[I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#)  
[R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

### Genre

[Action](#) [Adventure](#) [Animation](#)  
[Comedy](#) [Crime](#) [Drama](#)  
[Family](#) [Fantasy](#) [Film-Noir](#)  
[Horror](#) [Musical](#) [Mystery](#)  
[Romance](#) [Sci-Fi](#) [Short](#)  
[Thriller](#) [War](#) [Western](#)

### Sponsor

### TV Transcripts

[Futurama](#)  
[Seinfeld](#)  
[South Park](#)  
[Stargate SG-1](#)  
[Lost](#)  
[The 4400](#)

### International

[French scripts](#)

### Latest Comments

[ALL SCRIPTS](#)

### SERENITY

Written by

Joss Whedon

April 18, 2004

### EXT. CLASSROOM – DAY

It's a group of twelve-year-olds, serious and well dressed. They sit on their heels under a sparsely elegant tent, small wooden desks with embedded screens in front of them. The tent is on a lawn surrounded by lush foliage. People walk about and vehicles glide quietly overhead. A utopian vista.

### GIRL

Now that the war's over, our soldiers get to come home, yes?

### TEACHER

Some of them. Some will be stationed on the rim planets as Peace Enforcers.

### BOY

I don't understand. Why were the Independents even fighting us? Why wouldn't they look to be more civilized?

### TEACHER

That's a good question. Does anybody want to open on that?

### GIRL

I hear they're cannibals.

### ANOTHER BOY

That's only Reavers.

### ANOTHER GIRL

Reavers aren't real.

### ANOTHER BOY

Full well they are. They attack settlers from space, they kill them and wear their skins and rape them for hours and hours --

### TEACHER

(in Chinese)

**(CALMER)**

It's true that there are...  
dangers on the outer planets. So  
let's follow up on Borodin's  
question. With all the social and  
medical advancements we can bring  
to the Independents, why would  
they fight so hard against us?

4

3.

**RIVER**

We meddle.

**TEACHER**

River?

RIVER is a dark, intense little girl, writing with one hand  
and "typing" with the other. (Typing consists of holding a  
long wooden stylus and tapping either end down different  
columns of chinese characters on her desktop screen.) She is  
a good two years younger than the other kids.

**RIVER**

People don't like to be meddled  
with. We tell them what to do,  
what to think, don't run don't  
walk we're in their homes and in  
their heads and we haven't the  
right. We're meddlesome.

**TEACHER**

(gently taking her

**STYLUS)**

River, we're not telling people  
what to think. We're just trying  
to show them how.

She violently PLUNGES the stylus into the girl's forehead

**INT. LAB - NIGHT**

And we FLASH CUT to the actual present: a 16 year old RIVER  
sitting in a metal chair, needles stuck in her skull (one  
right where the teacher had stuck her) being adjusted by a  
technician. A second monitors her brain patterns.  
The lab is cold, blue, steel. Insidiously clean.

**2ND TECHNICIAN**

She's dreaming.

**FIRST TECHNICIAN**

Nightmare?

**2ND TECHNICIAN**

Off the charts. Scary monsters.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Let's amp it up. Delcium, eight-drop.

DOCTOR MATHIAS is not instantly likable -- nor gradually, for that matter. A cold man, and more than a little satisfied with himself.

4.

Behind him stands a GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR, observing. And making him a little nervous.

The Inspector is in shadow, but his uniform indicates -- no

substantial rank, as does the eagle-crested baton longer than a ruler -- that he clutches in one gloved hand.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

**(CONTINUING)**

See, most of our best work is done when they're asleep. We can monitor and direct their subconscious, implant suggestions...

River starts convulsing, mewling in misery. The Inspector starts forward, slowly.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

**(CONTINUING)**

It's a little startling to see, but the results are spectacular. Especially in this case. River Tam is our star pupil.

The Inspector steps into the light. He is rigid, cold, staring at the girl with no emotion at all. His name, as we will very soon learn, is SIMON.

**SIMON**

I've heard that.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

She's a genius. Her mental capacity is extraordinary, even with the side-effects.

**SIMON**

Tell me about them.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Well, obviously, she's unstable... the neural stripping gives them heightened cognitive reception, but it also destabilizes their own reality matrix. It manifests as borderline schizophrenia... which at this point is the price for being truly psychic.

**SIMON**

(moves toward her)

What use do we have for a psychic if she's insane?

**J**

**5.**

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

I don't have to tell you the security potential of someone who can read minds. And she has lucid periods -- we hope to improve upon the... I'm sorry, Sir, I have to ask if there's some reason for this inspection.

**SIMON**

**(TURNING)**

Am I making you nervous?

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Key members of Parliament have personally observed this subject. I was told their support for the project was unanimous. The demonstration of her power --

**SIMON**

(turns back to her)  
How is she physically?

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Like nothing we've seen. All our subjects are conditioned for combat, but River... she's a creature of extraordinary grace.

**400**

**SIMON**

Yes. She always did love to dance. He drops to one knee, slamming his baton to the floor.

**ANGLE: THE BATON**

As the top pops off like a bouncing betty (the grenade), flying up over Simon and River's heads and then bursting forth in a flat circle of blue energy that bisects the room, flowing through the staff's heads and knocking them out. Simon rushes to River, gently removes the probes from her head and swabs her, whispering:

**SIMON**

**(CONTINUING)**

River. Wake up. Please, it's Simon. River. It's your brother. Wake up...

She begins to stir as a noise moves him to the door, looking out and removing his uniform to reveal an orderly's tunic beneath.

**IWO**

6.

River is suddenly next to him. He jumps a little.

**RIVER**

Simon.

A beat, as they face each other, Simon fighting emotion.

**RIVER**

**(CONTINUING)**

They know you've come.

**INT. GUARD STATION - CONTINUING**

As a guard looks at a monitor. He mostly resembles a secret service man -- more bureaucrat than thug. A second man rolls into frame on a chair behind him, also watching the screen.

**INT. RESEARCH CENTER CORRIDOR - CONTINUING**

Simon walks River through the corridor. They approach a pair of double doors.

**SIMON**

We can't make it to the surface from inside.

Simon turns suddenly as he hears footsteps, people heading at them from the other side of the doors.

4wo SIMON

**(CONTINUING)**

Find a --

But River has, impossibly, scampered up over some lab equipment to the dark top of the corridor, where she holds herself in a perfect split, feet against the walls and outstretched hand holding the sprinkler for support.

The doors burst open and two doctors pass by, hardly noticing the lone orderly. Passing right under River.

**EXT. VENTILATION SHAFT - MOMENTS LATER**

It's small, 15 feet by 15 feet. Goes a long way up and a long way down. One wide hinged window looks in on the hall inside. Simon and River approach with quiet haste.

They slip through the window. Simon shuts it, wedges his baton into the handle as the SECURITY AGENTS APPROACH. They fire at the glass, but their lasers have no effect.

Wind whips River's hair about as she looks up to see a small patch of daylight visible ten stories up. Sees the sky blotted out by a small ship that hovers above them.

**V0**

7.

ANGLE: THE SHIP is floating over the grass of rolling hills, the city gleaming far beyond. This facility is well hidden. A gurney-sized section of the ship's belly detaches and drops down ten stories, cables spooling it out of the ship. It comes to Simon and River and stops suddenly.

**SIMON**

Get on!

He is standing by the window -- and the Security Agent is right behind him, PUNCHING the window with all his might. Simon helps River onto the gurney, then jumps on himself as the Security Agent cracks the glass. The two are whisked up in the gurney, River on her knees, Simon standing beside her holding one of the cables --

**THE OPERATIVE (O.S.)**

Stop.

The action freezes.

**THE OPERATIVE (O.S.)**

**(CONTINUING)**

Lovely. Lovely. Backtrack.

The action REVERSES, taking us back to the moment of Simon and River on the gurney just before it rises.

f t o

**THE OPERATIVE (O.S.)**

**(CONTINUING)**

Stop.

There is a motionless beat, River frozen in that crouch, and he steps through what we now see is a hologram of the event. The Government's man. We'll just call him THE OPERATIVE. He is thoughtful, a little removed. Wire-rimmed glasses, a suit too nondescript to be a uniform, too neat to be casual wear. He is in:

**INT. INSTITUTE RECORDS ROOM - DAY**

-- which is long and bare but for drawers of holographic records, a set-up for watching recordings (where the image of Simon and River floats), and a table with computer and chair. The Operative crosses to the table, looks over some papers.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Biograph. Simon Tam.

**CLOSE ON: THE OPERATIVE'S GLASSES**

**IWO**

8.

As Simon's history files down in print and pictures -- graduation, security photo from his medical internship -- over one lens of the Operative's glasses.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Remarkable children.

Doctor Mathias storms in, two security men (not the ones from the opening) and a nervous young female intern following. Mathias looks greyer and more gaunt than when we saw him last.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Excuse me! No one is allowed in the records room without my express permission.

**THE OPERATIVE**

(over this, quietly)

Enter the doctor.

(to Mathias)

Forgive me. I prefer to see the event alone, without bias.

Mathias looks at the hologram -- realizes which one it is.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

I need to see your clearance.

**THE OPERATIVE**

You're right to insist. I know you've had security issues here.

He places his hand on a screen as he says it. Mathias looks at the readout, and drops the bluster.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Apologies. An Operative of the Parliament will of course have full cooperation.

(looks at screen)

I'm not sure what... I see no listing of rank, or name.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I have neither. Like this facility, I don't exist. The Parliament calls me in when... when they wish they didn't have to. Let's talk about the Tams.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

I assume you've scanned the status logs...

**VJ**

**9.**

**THE OPERATIVE**

River was your greatest success. A prodigy -- A phenomenon. Until her brother walked in eight months ago and took her from you.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

It's not quite so simple.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I'm very aware of that.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

He came in with full creds. He  
beat the ap-scan, the retinal...  
There was no way I could --

**THE OPERATIVE**

No, no. Of course. The boy spent  
his fortune developing the  
contacts to infiltrate this place.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Gave up a brilliant future in.  
medicine as well, you've probably  
read. Turned his back on his  
whole life. Madness.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Madness, no. Something a good  
deal more dangerous. Have you  
looked at this scan carefully? At  
his face?  
Mathias looks uncertain.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

It's love, in point of fact. He  
loved his sister and he knew she  
was in pain. So he took her  
somewhere safe.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Why are you here?

**THE OPERATIVE**

I'm here because the situation is  
even less simple than you think.  
(eyeing him)  
Do you know what your sin is,  
Doctor?

J

10.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

I. I would be very careful about  
what you --

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(SADLY)**

It's pride.  
He touches the computer screen and the hologramic image jumps  
to the Doctor and Simon in the lab, Mathias repeating:

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Key members of Parliament have  
personally observed this subject.



I was told their support --

**THE OPERATIVE**

(shutting it off)

Key members of Parliament. Key.  
The minds behind every diplomatic,  
military and covert operation in  
the galaxy, and you put them in a  
room with a psychic.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

She was... she read cards, nothing  
more.

**THE OPERATIVE**

It's come to our attention that  
River became much more unstable,  
more... disturbed, after you  
showed her off to Parliament. Did  
she see something very terrible in  
those cards?

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

Whatever... secrets she might have  
accidentally gleaned... it's  
probable she doesn't even know she  
knows them. That they're buried  
beneath --

**THE OPERATIVE**

But they are in her. Her mind is  
unquiet. It's the will of the  
Parliament that I kill her. And  
the brother. Because of your sin.

J

11.

**THE OPERATIVE**

(continuing; moving  
to his briefcase)

You know, in certain older  
civilized cultures, when men  
failed as entirely as you have,  
they would throw themselves on  
their swords.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

(fed up)

Well, unfortunately I forgot to  
bring a sword to --

The air rings crisply as the Operative pulls out his sword.

**THE OPERATIVE**

The Parliament has no further  
interest in psychics. They  
represent a threat to the harmony  
and stability of our Alliance.

**DOCTOR MATHIAS**

I would put that down right now if  
I were you.

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

Would you be killed in your sleep,  
like an ailing pet? Whatever your  
failings, I believe you deserve  
better than that.

The agents move. He slices the throat of the one behind him  
with true grace, thrusting at the second as he's pulling out  
his gun and pinning his hand. A moment, and the dying agent  
reflexively squeezes the trigger, shooting his own arm.  
The Operative pulls out the sword and the agent falls as  
quietly as the first.

Mathias bolts but the Operative pins him to the wall. He  
bunches his fingers and jabs the side of the Doctor's spine.  
Mathias stiffens, suddenly, agonizingly immobile.

The Operative steps back, observes the Doctor's rigid grimace  
for a moment. Almost ceremoniously, he drops to one knee and  
holds the blade out to one side, hilt to the floor and point  
tilted toward the doctor. The Doctor stares at it in horror  
as his paralyzed body begins to tip over toward it.  
The Operative turns toward the terrified intern at the door.

**V0**

**12.**

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

##### **(CONTINUING)**

Young miss, I'll need all the logs--  
on behavioral modification  
triggers. We'll have to reach out  
to River Tam, and help her to come  
back to us. No matter how far out  
Simon has taken her, we can --

He's almost startled when the Doctor's body drops into frame,  
slowed suddenly by the sword. It squeaks down the blade, the  
Doctor unable to cry out, as the Operative whispers to him:

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

##### **(CONTINUING)**

This is a good death. There's no  
shame in this, in a man's death.  
A man who's done fine works.  
We're making a better world. All  
of them, better worlds.

Mathias is dead. The Operative pulls the sword out as the  
body rolls over. As he wipes the sword down:

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

##### **(CONTINUING)**

Young miss, I need you to get to  
work now. I think I may have a  
long way to travel.

**40**

She goes. He approaches River, very close, staring...

## THE OPERATIVE

(CONTINUING)

Where are you hiding,, little girl?

The noise is sucked suddenly out of the room as we black out.

M0

## SERENITY

10

13.

becomes the name painted on the side of a spaceship, with the same in Chinese behind it.

### EXT. SPACE, ORBITING THE MOON "LILAC" - DAY

We move away from the ship. The name is on the nose, under the bridge. It sticks out from the body of the ship like a craning neck. The body is bulbous, with propulsion engines on either side and a giant glowing back. There are two small shuttles tucked in over the 'wings' of the engines. It's not the sleekest ship in the 'verse, to be sure.

As it hits atmo, the propulsion engines take over and she starts to rock a bit, noise filling our ears. Camera comes around the front, at the windows and into the bridge, to see the Captain, MALCOLM 'MAL' REYNOLDS, standing and watching. At that moment, a small piece of the nose breaks off and goes flying past the window.

### INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING

[Note: the following sequence will take us through the ship in one extended STEADICAM shot.]

The bridge is small: two pilot seats on either side, and a tangle of wires and machinery all about.

Mal wears the knee-length brown coat and boots of an old Independent. Gun at his hip. He's not unlike the ship -- he's seen a bit of the world and it left him, emotionally at least, weathered. Right now, though, he's mostly startled.

MAL

What was that?

He's addressing the pilot, WASH. Flight gear and a hawaiian shirt, toy dinosaurs populating his station -- no old soldier, but just as startled.

WASH

Whoah! Did you see that --

The ship bucks --

**MAL**

Was that the primary buffer panel?

**WASH**

It did seem to resemble --

**J**

**14.**

**MAL**

Did the Primary Buffer Panel just  
fall off my gorramn ship for no  
apparent reason?  
Another buck --

**WASH**

Looks like.

**MAL**

I thought Kaylee checked our entry  
couplings! I have a very clear  
memory of it --

**WASH**

Yeah well if she doesn't give us  
some extra flow from the engine  
room to offset the burnthrough  
this landing is gonna get pretty  
interesting.

**MAL**

Define "Interesting".

**WASH**

(calm suggestion:)  
"Oh god, oh god, we're all gonna  
die?"

**J**

**MAL**

(hits the com)  
This is the Captain. There's a  
little problem with our entry  
sequence; we may experience slight  
turbulence and then explode.  
(to Wash, exiting)  
Can you shave the vector --

**WASH**

I'm doing it! It's not enough.  
(hits com)  
Kaylee!

**MAL**

Just get us on the ground!

**WASH**

That part'll happen, pretty  
definitely.

**J**

**15.**

**INT. FOREDECK HALL - CONTINUING**

The camera leads Mal down. On either side of the hall are ladders leading down to crew's personal quarters. The hulking mercenary JAYNE is coming up out of his bunk as Mal passes. He carries a number of rifles and grenades.

**JAYNE**

we're gonna explode? I don't  
wanna explode.

**MAL**

Jayne, how many weapons you plan  
on bringing? You only got the two  
arms...

**JAYNE**

I just get excitable as to choice,  
like to have my options open.

**MAL**

I don't plan on any shooting  
taking place during this job.

**JAYNE**

Well, what you plan and what takes  
place ain't ever exactly been  
similar.

**MAL**

No grenades.

(Jayne groans)

No grenades.

First Mate ZOE enters from the lower level. Her mode of  
dress and military deference mark her as a war buddy of Mal's.

**ZOE**

Are we crashing again?

**MAL**

Talk to your husband. Is the mule  
prepped?

**ZOE**

Good to go, sir. Just loading her  
up.

(to Jayne)

Are those grenades?

**JAYNE**

Cap'n doesn't want 'em.

**J**

**16.**

**ZOE**

We're robbing the place. We're  
not occupying it.

All that plays in the background as we lead Mal into the:

**INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING**

It's the communal space of the ship, homey and messy. There is food left lying on the table. Mal swipes a dumpling from a plate, pops it in his mouth as another jolt rocks him and sends most of the tableware clattering to the floor.

**MAL**

(calling out)

Kaylee!

He enters:

**INT. AFT HALL/ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING**

**MAL**

(still calling)

Kaylee, what in the sphincter of  
hell are you playing at?

The hall leads to the rust-brown chaos that is the engine room. Working around the engine in a forest of wires, sparks and smoke is the sweetly pretty mechanic, KAYLEE. She passes Mal with a slightly impatient smile as he stands in the doorway, raising his voice above the din.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

We got the Primary Buffer

**KAYLEE**

Everything's shiny, Cap'n. Not to  
fret.

**MAL**

You told me --

**(JOLT)**

You told me the entry couplings  
would hold for another week!

**KAYLEE**

**(WORKING)**

That was six months ago, cap'n.

**MAL**

My ship don't crash. If she  
crashes, you crashed her.

17.

Steam and electricity shoot at him, backing him up. He turns to see Simon behind him. Simon is more seasoned than before, but still contrasts the Captain entirely in dress and manner. He is implacably proper. Also pissed.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Doctor. Guess I need to get innocked 'fore we hit planetside. Simon nods, the ship jolting again.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Bit of a rockety ride. Nothing to worry about.

**SIMON**

I'm not worried.

**MAL**

Fear is nothing to be ashamed of, Doc.

**SIMON**

This isn't fear. This is anger.

**MAL**

**4 (LAUGHS)**

Well, it's kinda hard to tell the one from t'other, face like yours.

**SIMON**

I imagine if it were fear, my eyes would be wider.

**MAL**

I'll look for that next time.

**SIMON**

You're not taking her.

**MAL**

(brushing past him)

No no, that's not a thing I'm interested in talking over with --

**SIMON**

She's not going with you. That's final.

4

18.

**MAL**

(turning back)  
I hear the words "that's final"  
come out of your mouth ever again,  
they truly will be.  
(turning away again)  
This is my boat. Y'all are guests  
on it.  
He heads down a side corridor that has steps leading down to:

**INT. PASSENGER DORM - CONTINUING**

Simon is right on his heels as we lead them down the stairs.

**SIMON**  
Guests? I earn my passage,  
Captain --

**MAL**  
And it's time your little sister  
learned from your fine example.

**SIMON**  
I've earned my passage treating  
bullet holes, knife wounds, laser  
burns...

**MAL**  
Some of our jobs are trickier than  
others --

**SIMON**  
And you want to put my sister in  
the middle of that.

**MAL**  
Didn't say 'want'. Said 'will'.  
It's one job, Doc. She'll be fine.  
The passenger dorm has a time-worn warmth that most of the  
ship shares. Except, of course, for the sterile blue of:

**INT. INFIRMARY - CONTINUING**

Into which the two men step.

**SIMON**  
She's a seventeen year old girl.  
A mentally traumatized sevendec--

**J**

**19.**

**MAL**  
She's a reader. Sees into the  
truth of things; might see trouble  
before it's coming. Which is of  
use to me.

**SIMON**  
And that's your guiding star,  
isn't it? What's of use.



**MAL**

**(LAUGHS)**

Honestly, doctor, I think we may really crash this time anyway. Simon jabs the inoculation needle into Mal's arm.

**SIMON**

Do you understand what I've gone through to keep River away from the Alliance?

**MAL**

I do, and it's a fact me and mine have been courteous enough to keep to our own selves.

**SIMON**

Are you threatening to --

**MAL**

I got one purpose here: keep this boat in the air. I take the jobs I get -- which is less and less, case you ain't been keeping track. He starts away, Simon still keeping pace.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Every year since the war the Alliance pushes just a little further out towards the rim. Makes it a chore for naughty men like us to slip about -- and keeping you two on board means working twice as hard to avoid the law. Means turning down a score of honest jobs.

**J**

**20.**

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

They enter the biggest space on the ship. Giant doors sit at the front, which will open upon landing to reveal a lowering ramp. Catwalks surround the space, leading up at the front to the foredeck hall. We've come all the way through Serenity.

**MAL**

So here is us, on the raggedy edge. Don't push me and I won't push you. Simon starts up the stairs as Mal calls to him:

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Things get gritty I will keep her from the fray, but she's coming. Best you get her ready. As Mal walks on, we tilt up to see the Mule, a four-man hovercraft hanging from chains near the ceiling. Jayne and Zoe are tossing duffle bags into it.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Zoe, is Wash gonna straighten this boat out before we get flattened?

**ZOE**

Like a downy feather, sir. Nobody flies like my mister. The camera picks up Simon's feet as they enter foreground on the catwalk, and track with them to find:

**SIMON**

River... She's lying on her side, looking straight at us. A loose summer dress draped over her small frame.

**RIVER**

I know. We're going for a ride.

**EXT. LILAC -- DESERT GULCH - DAY**

Serenity settles gently down as the cargo bay door opens.

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

The chains are hoisted back up into the ceiling of the ship. The mule floats just above the floor, Jayne piling in next to River in the back:

**21.**

**SIMON**

Now, River, you stay behind the others. If there's fighting you drop to the floor or run away. It's okay to leave them to die. River puts on a huge pair of goggles, looks at her brother.

**RIVER**

I'm the brains of the operation.

**ZOE**

We should hit town right during Sunday worship. Won't be any crowds.

**MAL**

If Fanty and Mingo are right about the payroll, this could look to be a sunny day for us.

**SIMON**

**(APPROACHING)**

Captain, I'll ask you one last time...

**MAL**

Doctor, I'm taking your sister under my protection here. If anything happens to her, anything at all, I swear to you I will get very choked up. Honestly. There could be tears.

He peels out, leaves Simon fuming. Kaylee sidles up to him...

**KAYLEE**

Don't mind the Captain none, Simon. I know he'll look out for her.

**SIMON**

It's amazing. I bring River all the way out to the raggedy edge of the 'verse so she can hide from the Alliance by robbing banks.

**KAYLEE**

It's just a little Trading Station. They'll be back 'fore you can spit.  
(as he stalks off)  
Not that you spit...

**22.**

Kaylee watches him go, a tad forlorn.

**EXT. LILAC - DAY**

We see the town sprawled before us, as the mule heads in. The town embodies the lives of folk out here: adobe and wood mix with metal and plastic -- whatever's on hand to build with. Right now the streets are mainly empty.

**EXT. TRADING STATION - CONTINUING**

The mule pulls up, Zoe hitching it as they speak:

**JAYNE**

What are we hoping to find here that equals the worth of a turd?

**MAL**

Alliance payroll. There's peace enforcing squads stationed all about this quadrant. Can't use credits out here -- they got to pay their boys in cashy money. Which once a month rests here.

**ZOE**

Something about stealing from the Alliance just warms a body like whiskey in winter.

**JAYNE**

(cocks his gun)  
Shiny. Let's be badguys.  
Mal turns back to River.

**MAL**

You ready to go to work, darlin'?

**RIVER**

There's no pattern to the pebbles  
here, they're completely random.  
I tried to count them but you  
drove too fast. Hummingbird.

**MAL**

(never mind)  
Right. Great. Let's go.

**INT. TRADING STATION - DAY**

We are in a camera's eye view, right above the door.

**J**

**23.**

The door slams open, Mal and Jayne stride in, Zoe following and whipping her hogleg right at camera without looking. Reverse to see the camera is also a small screen with "Welcome to Lilac" on it for the millisecond before it's blown to bits.

There's maybe fifteen people in the place: store workers, farm-folk and a couple dirt-poor kids. It's a combination post-office, general store, bank, and most other things.

**MAL**

Hands and knees and heads bowed  
down! Everybody, now!

Two men who appear to be farm folk rush Mal and the others. Mal draws on the elder one and he stops dead in his tracks. Mal's gun is long, not unlike Civil War era issue, but very much new in design.

The other tries to tackle Jayne, which is not necessarily a great idea. Jayne clotheslines him so hard he spins right upside-down -- and Jayne grabs him by the legs and CRACK! -- bounces his head right off the floor, knocking him out cold.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Y'all wanna be looking very  
intently at your own belly  
buttons. I see a head start to  
rise, violence is gonna ensue.  
The guy who rushed Mal complies along with everyone else.  
Jayne dumps his catch on the floor and rips open his dirty  
shirt to reveal the purple of an Alliance uniform.

**JAYNE**

Looks like this is the place.  
He looks up at Mal, who motions for Zoe to open the front

door. She does, and River steps in.

ANGLE: RIVER'S BARE FEET -- walking slowly among the hunched-over customers as Mal addresses them.

**MAL**

You've probably guessed we mean to be thieving here, but what we are after is not yours. So let's have no undue fussing.

As he is speaking, Jayne is scrambling to the back office, finding the small vault locked.

**1410**

**24.**

**JAYNE**

She's locked up.

River suddenly looks around, perturbed.

CLOSE ON: a young tough.

River looks up at Zoe, alarmed, and silently points to the young man. He is slowly reaching for the weapon in his belt. He finds Zoe's sawed-off nuzzling his cheek.

**ZOE**

You know what the definition of a hero is? It's someone who gets other people killed. You can look it up later.

He drops his weapon, slides it across the floor.

Mal moves to the Trade Agent. Hauls him up, tosses him toward the vault. Zoe and Jayne follow.

**TRADE AGENT**

This is just a crop moon, don't think you'll find what you --

**MAL**

(in Chinese)

**140**

The old man punches in the code. What opens is a tiny wall safe. Bundles of bills, some scattered coin. Unimpressive. Jayne and Zoe are behind the captain, peering in.

**ZOE**

At last. We can retire and give up this life of crime.

Mal reaches in, pulls a lever and the floor opens, a six foot hole appearing, stairs leading to a corridor, all gleaming metal and blue light. Zoe smiles. Jayne peers down as Mal addresses the Trade Agent.

**MAL**

Is there a fed down there? Be truthful.

**TRADE AGENT**

**(NODDING)**

Y'all are Browncoats, hey? Fought for independence?

VJ

25.

**MAL**

War's long done. We're all just  
folk now.

(calls down)

Listen up! We are coming down to  
empty that vault!

The voice of a young Alliance GUARD comes up from below.

**GUARD (O.S.)**

You have to give me your  
authorization password!

Jayne impatiently fires a burst of machine-gun fire down into  
the hole. A beat...

**GUARD (O . S . )**

**(CONTINUING)**

Okay...

Mal looks at Zoe and they head down into:

**INT. VAULT - CONTINUING**

Which is as modern as something off the Central Planets. A  
short corridor leads to a real vault door, that the guard is  
already opening. Behind that door, a few bags of the real  
deal: neatly stacked cash, waiting to be robbed.

**INT. TRADING STATION - CONTINUING**

We move in on River as something crosses her face. Worry.

**EXT. TOWN - DAY**

A WOMAN carrying a bucket and her nine year old SON are  
looking at the trading station a few buildings away.

**SON**

Repeater.

**WOMAN**

Did sound summat like gunblast...

Maybe you aught run tell Lawman...

She turns and right by her, in the shadows, is a man.

Mostly. He is hideously disfigured, a combination of self-  
mutilation and the bubbling red of radiation poisoning. His  
clothes are rags, his eyes pinpoints of glazed madness.

A blade blurs through frame...

26.

**INT. TRADING STATION - CONTINUING**

River SCREAMS and flops onto her back, pinned by revelation. Others look at her, concerned, as Jayne makes his way to her.

**JAYNE**

What the hell is up? You all right? What's goin' on?  
He holds her, as she whispers, wide-eyed...

**RIVER**

Reavers.

**INT. VAULT - MOMENTS LATER**

Zoe is hauling out the last of five bags as Mal talks to the guard, holding his gun at him:

**MAL**

Leg's good, it'll bleed plenty and we avoid any necessary organs...

**GUARD**

I was thinking more of a graze..

**MAL**

Well you don't want it to look like you just gave up...

**JAYNE (O.S.)**

**MAL!**

**MAL**

(to himself)  
Every heist, he's gotta start yelling my name --

**JAYNE**

(barreling in)  
Mal! Reavers! The girl's pitchin' a fit. They're here or they're comin' soon.  
He is already loading up with bags as Mal thinks quickly.

**MAL**

(to Zoe and Jayne)  
Get on the mule.  
(to the guard,  
pointing to the

**VAULT)**

Does that open from the inside?

**J**

27.

**GUARD**

Whah -ah- yes...

**MAL**

You get everyone upstairs in there and you seal it. Long as you got air you don't open up, you understand?

**GUARD**

I -- Buh I --

Mal is in his face, dark and huge:

**MAL**

**GET THEM INSIDE THE VAULT.**

**EXT. TRADING STATION - DAY**

The doors burst open, Jayne and Zoe coming out first, Mal behind with River in hand. She is freaked, in her own space. Jayne and Zoe throw the bags on --

**MAL**

Zoe take the wheel --

**JAYNE**

You see 'em? Anybody see 'em?

1J -- and jump on themselves, Mal scanning the area as he hands River up to Jayne's care. As the craft powers up, slowly moving, the young man Zoe kept from trying to pull his weapon bursts out of the station, grabbing the back of the mule.

**YOUNG MAN**

Take me with you!

**MAL**

Get in the vault with the others --

**YOUNG MAN**

I can't stay here! Please!

**MAL**

It's too many. Drive, Zoe.

A Reaver craft ROARS over their heads. It's nearly the size of Serenity. Torn apart, belching smoke -- a welded conglomeration of ruined ships, painted for war. Predator, pure. It disappears over the rooftops.

**YOUNG MAN**

**PLEASE!**

**28.**

**MAL**

Drive!

Zoe's face is set with unhappy determination as she floors it, shooting out and leaving the young man in the dust. As they move from him, four Reavers jump out of the shadows and grab the young man. Mal unhesitatingly draws his gun. He nudges a lever with his thumb and a cartridge pops back.



Mal fires twice. The young man takes both bullets in the chest, slumps down dead.

**ANGLE: THE EDGE OF TOWN**

As the mule shoots past the last building, we see a skiff shoot out from behind the buildings of the adjacent street, right abreast of our gang.

**ANGLE: THE CENTER OF TOWN**

We see the church as the first ship and an even larger one come to hover over it, Reavers dropping down on cable lines to swarm into it.

**EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING**

The mule and the skiff are booking through the rocky terrain. The skiff swings closer, but Jayne peppers it with automatic fire and it swings away. There is sporadic return fire.

**JAYNE**

How come they ain't blowing us out of the air?

**MAL**

They wanna run us down. The up-close kill. River is squashed down on her back, being very small.

**RIVER**

They want us alive when they eat us.

**JAYNE**

Boy, sure would be nice if we had some grenades, don'tcha think? Mal says nothing, keeps firing.

**ZOE**

Wash, baby can you hear me?

**VO**

29.

**INT. SERENITY: BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Wash is in a frenzy of switchflipping, prepping for take-off.

**WASH**

We're moments from air. You got somebody behind you? We intercut Wash and Zoe at this point:

**EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING**

**ZOE**

Reavers.

**WASH**

**(BLANCHING)**

**ZOE**

We're not gonna reach you in time.

**WASH**

Just keep moving, honey. We're coming to you.

**EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING**

As she lifts off and starts heading toward the others.

**EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING**

Zoe gets the mule in front but a harpoon thwinnngs through the air from the skiff and S} NK! Goes through Jayne's leg.. The harpoon grips the leg and pulls -- Jayne goes flying off the back of the Mule, Mal just grabbing him as the harpoon line reels slowly tighter --

**MAL**

Grab on!

Jayne grabs the Mule, legs dangling, pulled out between the two vessels as Mal slams a new cartridge into his pistol.

**JAYNE**

I won't get et! You shoot me if they take me!

Mal steadies himself and takes aim, seemingly at Jayne --

**JAYNE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Well don't shoot me first!

**J**

**30.**

Mal fires. Again. Steadies himself for one more...

The line holding the harpoon is split by Mal's third shot.

**VØV**

The mule surges forward as Jayne drags on the ground. Mal hauls him in as River bounds into the front to make room.

**JAYNE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Rutting pigs! Where's --

And River is holding out his weapon before he can ask for it.

**EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE DESERT - CONTINUING**

Serenity rushes across the desert floor, not much higher off it than the smaller crafts.

**WASH**

(to Zoe)

Get some distance on 'em. You come

to the flats, I want you to swing round. Gonna try a Barn Swallow.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Wash hits the com.

**WASH**

J Simon! Open the loading dock!

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

Simon moves next to the huge sliding doors at the front, hits a couple of buttons. The doors pull open, as the huge ramp beyond them opens down, letting in a rush of wind and light.

**EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING**

The mule reaches the flats, away from the rocks.

**WASH (O.S.)**

(in Zoe's ear)

Okay, baby, we've talked this through...

**ZOE**

Talkin' ain't doin'.

She throws the wheel and the mule comes hard about, fishtailing slightly as it faces the oncoming skiff.

**WASH (O.S.)**

Don't slow down!

31.

**ANGLE: THE SKIFF**

As it heads for the mule --

**ANGLE: THE MULE**

As it heads for the skiff -- and Serenity swoops down out of the sky, bay doors open, and comes right up behind it -- The Mule swallowed by the bigger ship --

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

And only its forward momentum keeps it from being squashed as it flies backwards into the bay, narrowly missing Simon and smashing back into the staircase, sparks and people flying --

**EXT. DESERT - CONTINUING**

Serenity tries to get altitude -- but slams right into the oncoming skiff, tearing it apart --

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

A flaming portion of the top flies in, skids to the floor as small fires erupt from the mule as well -- Simon pulls a lever and jets of CO2 shoot out of the floor. Simon hits the button to start the outer ramp closing, then runs to the mule. The CO2 stops and he finds River sitting

in her seat, completely unharmed. Zoe is climbing painfully out of the other seat, Mal and Jayne both having been thrown.

**SIMON**  
River?

**RIVER**  
I swallowed a bug.  
Kaylee runs in to see how everyone is. She goes to Simon.

**KAYLEE**  
Are you okay?

**MAL**  
Is he okay?  
A bloodied Reaver POPS into frame from under the skiff-top.  
He lunges for Mal, baring sharpened teeth --  
Mal spins and draws, fires into his belly as Jayne and Zoe both fire at the same time. The freak takes too long to go down, but down he goes. Dies sitting against the s i op.  
4 Everybody takes a moment to look at each other.

32.

**WASH (O.S.)**  
We all here? What's going on?  
Hello?  
r./ ZOE  
(moves to the com)  
No casualties. Anybody following?

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

**WASH**  
Nice flying, baby, and that's a negative. Clean getaway -- Out of atmo in six minutes.

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

**MAL**  
Set course for Beaumonde.  
(to the others)  
First thing, I want these bod --  
Simon suddenly punches him in the face, causing Mal to stumble back, and Simon to shake his hand in pain.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

**SIMON**  
You stupid, selfish, son of a whore ---

**MAL**  
I'm a hair's breadth from riddling you with holes, Doctor --

**SIMON**

"One simple job! She'll be fine!"

**MAL**

She IS fine! Except for bein' still crazy, she's the picture of health!

**ZOE**

Wasn't for River, we'd probably be left there. She felt 'em coming.

**SIMON**

Never again. You understand me?

**J**

**33.**

**MAL**

Seems I remember a talk about you giving orders on my boat.

**SIMON**

Well sleep easy 'cause we're off your boat. Just as soon as River gets her share of the "bounty".

**KAYLEE**

Well let's not do anything hasty...

**MAL**

No, shiny! I'm sick a' carrying tourists anyhow. We'll be on Beaumonde in ten hours time, you can pick up your earnings and be on your merry. Meantime you do your job. Patch up my crew. A beat.

**RIVER**

He didn't lie down. They never lie down.  
She is looking at the Reaver. Everyone does, for a moment.

**INT. FOREDECK HALL - MOMENTS LATER**

Mal and Zoe enter from below.

**ZOE**

No, I think things'll glide a deal smoother for us without River and Simon on board... but how long do you think they'll last?

**MAL**

Doc made his call. They's as babes in a basket when we took 'em in; we sheltered 'em plenty. Man has to cut loose, learn to stand

on his own.

**ZOE**

Like that man back in town?  
They stop by Mal Is room.

**MAL**

I had to shoot him. What the  
Reavers woulda done to him before  
they killed him...

**J**

**34.**

**ZOE**

I know. That was a piece a'  
mercy. But before that, him  
begging us to bring him along...  
vo,

**MAL**

We couldn't take the weight.  
Woulda slowed us down.

**ZOE**

You know that for certain

**MAL**

Mule won't run with five. I  
shoulda dumped the girl? Or you?  
Or Jayne?

**(CONSIDERING)**

Well, Jayne...

**ZOE**

Coulda tossed the payload.

**MAL**

And go to Fanty and Mingo with air  
in our mitts, tell 'em "here's  
your share"? They'd set the dogs  
on us in the space of a twitch,  
and there we are back in mortal  
peril. We get a job, we gotta  
vo make good.  
Washenters from the bridge.

**ZOE**

Sir, I don't disagree on any  
particular point, it's just... in  
the time of war, we woulda never  
left a man stranded.

**MAL**

Maybe that's why we lost.  
She's not happy with the reply. Mal climbs down to his room  
as Wash reaches Zoe, slides his arms around her.

**INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING**

Once alone, Mal lets his own disappointment show. He pulls off his holster and drops it over a chair. Kicks the toilet closed and sits on his bunk.  
The place resembles a submarine cabin, with charts and clutter, ancient maps on the walls.

**J**

**35.**  
Mal moves a bunch of papers off his bunk and a picture slides out. Hits the floor and starts moving: it's a snapshot-movie

**OF:**

**VW - DAY**

**INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE**

We're close on a beautiful woman who looks at us with amused exasperation. Behind her is an opulently dressed little shuttle.

**INARA**

Kaylee, are you ever gonna put that capture down?

**KAYLEE (0.5.)**

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

The picture pans over to the bed -- which River is bending over and sniffing curiously. Inara is packing things up.

**KAYLEE (0.S.)**

**(CONTINUING)**

For one sweet second, we was almost classy.

**INARA**

4 You promised to help me pack.

**KAYLEE (0.S.)**

Honest, Inara, why do you have to leave?

Inara shoots an uncertain look at the camera -- and the picture freezes, goes back to the beginning. During all this, Mal has picked it up. He looks at it a moment, tosses it aside. Looks around at nothing much.

**JAYNE (V.0.)**

I do not get it. How's a guy get so wrong?

**INT. CARGO BAY - LATER**

We see the doors in the floor slide open, a second set below. Pan to see, for a moment, the dead Reaver's face. Kaylee is opening the doors with a keypad on a cable. Jayne

drags the corpse closer to the doors as he continues:

**R**

**36.**

**JAYNE**

Ain't logical. Cuttin' on his own face, rapin' and murdering -- I mean, I'll kill a man in a fair fight... or if I think he's gonna start a fair fight, or if he bothers me, or if there's a woman, or I'm gettin' paid -- mostly only when I'm gettin' paid. But these Reavers... last ten years they just show up like the boogeyman from stories. Eating people alive? Where does that get fun? He dumps the body in, she starts the doors closing.

**KAYLEE**

Shepherd Book said they was men that reached the edge of space., saw a vasty nothingness and just went bibbledy over it.

**JAYNE**

Hell, I been to the edge. Just looked like more space.

**KAYLEE**

I don't know. People get awful lonely in the black. Like to get addlepated ourselves, we stay on this boat much longer. Captain'll drive us all off, one by one.

**JAYNE**

You're just in a whinge cuz that prissy doc is finally disembarking. Me I says good riddance. He never belonged here, and his sister's no saner than one of them Reavers.

**KAYLEE**

That ain't even so! River's a dear heart and a boon to this crew! You just don't like her 'cause she can read your mind and everything you think is mean.

**JAYNE**

Well, there is that.

**J**



37.

**KAYLEE**

Her and Simon could have a place here. Now they're leaving us. Just like Shepherd Book. She looks up toward one of the shuttles.

**KAYLEE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Just like Inara...

**INT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE - DAY**

And here she is, moving back and down into frame, her eyes half closed in passion. She settles on a cluster of brocaded pillows, and we see another head lowering in for a kiss... Come around to see it's another lovely young woman -- and that there is a group of ten others watching intently, all in saris, on their knees. Two handsome young men with shaved heads in the back, also on their knees. Inara stops before the kiss, smiling and coming back up. She speaks to the girls (We hear only soft music) as she repositions the one she's with, lowering again; showing her the motion of surrender as if it were a dance step.

**A WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)**

They love you.

410

**EXT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE - DUSK**

Inara looks out at the mountains. The space she's in resembles a Tibetan monastery, if slightly more opulent. Widen to see she is with SHEYDRA, a somewhat older Companion, the woman whose voice we heard. She hands Inara a drink.

**SHEYDRA**

The girls. They've learned more from you these last months than the rest of us could show them in two years.

**INARA**

They're very sweet. But they're not Companions.

**SHEYDRA**

**(WRYLY)**

You've no hope for them? Junk the lot, start anew?

J

38.

**INARA**

On Sihnon we started training at twelve. Years of discipline and preparation before the physical act of pleasure was even mentioned. Most of these girls --

**SHEYDRA**

They're all of good family, the highest academic standards --

**INARA**

Control. Was the first lesson. And the last and these worlds are not like the Central Planets. There is barbarism dressed up in the most civil weeds. Men of the highest rank who don't know the difference between a Companion and a common whore. It's unsafe.

**SHEYDRA**

All the more reason the girls look to you. You came out here alone, before the Alliance ever thought to establish a House this remote. You've seen so much. You're a figure of great romance to them.

4d INARA

Great romance has nothing to do with being a Companion, Sheydra. You should know better.

**SHEYDRA**

I'm not the one who had a torrid affair with a pirate. Inara nearly spills her drink.

**INARA**

A who? With a what?

**SHEYDRA**

**(SMILING)**

It's the talk of the House. The girls all trade stories in the dorms at night.

**INARA**

I didn't... have a pirate...

J

39.

**SHEYDRA**

In one of the stories you make love in a burning temple. I think

that's my favorite.

**INARA**

**(SITTING)**

This is unbearable. Captain Reynolds is no pirate; he's a petty thief. And he never laid a finger on me. All he ever did was rent me a shuttle and be very annoying.  
(mutters in Chinese)

**SHEYDRA**

A year on his shuttle and he never laid a finger on you. No wonder you left.

**INARA**

**(BRIDLING)**

I left because -- go away. We're no longer friends. You're a stranger to me now.

**SHEYDRA**

104 I do love to watch you boil. Don't worry. The stories will fade. And your Captain Reynolds has probably gotten himself blown up by this time.

**INARA**

(looking away again)  
Yes. That would be just like him.

**EXT. BEAUMONDE: ATOLL PLAZA - EVENING**

Serenity touches down on the crowded atoll amidst a number of other, equally disreputable ships. The place is filled with every kind of immigrant culture and shop imaginable.

**EXT./INT. SERENITY - EVENING**

The ramp is open and everyone is filing out, ready to hit the town. Kaylee is talking to Simon, who has River in hand.

**KAYLEE**

Don't talk to the barkers -- only the captains.

**(MORE)**

**40.**

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
You look the captain in the eye, know who you're dealing with.

**40 SIMON**

• I wish there was...

Since he doesn't know what to say, she rattles on:

**KAYLEE**

You shouldn't aughta be so clean.  
It's a dead giveaway you don't  
belong, you always gotta be tidy.  
Don't pay anybody in advance. And  
don't ride in anything with a  
Capissen 38 engine, they fall  
right out of the sky.

**SIMON**

Kaylee.  
She turns and heads off. Simon starts in the other  
direction, but River looks after her and the others.

**SIMON**

**(CONTINUING)**

River... do you want to stay with  
them?

**4 RIVER**

It's not safe.

**SIMON**

No, I fear it's not safe anymore.  
He's heading off and doesn't hear:

**RIVER**

For them.

**INT. THE MAIDENHEAD - CONTINUING**

We start on a CorVue screen, showing a news report. On the  
screen is a shot of the town our gang robbed, now half of it  
a smoking ruin.

**NEWSPERSON (V.O.)**

that it was a band of Reavers  
remains unconfirmed. The only  
survivors of the massacre  
apparently locked themselves in  
the Trade Station vault until --

**40**

**41.**

During this we come around to see that the screen has a  
blinking light behind it, come THROUGH the wiring of the back  
to look out at the bar, with the word "recording" in the  
corner. Every screen is a camera, even down here.

**40**

We pick up Mal and Kaylee heading down into the bar. Cutting  
away from the camera's view, we can look two stories  
straight down as they go, to a close group of dark tables and  
booths and a second screen playing in the corner.

**MAL**

It's not my fault the Doc's got no

stomach for Rim living --

**KAYLEE**

It is entirely and for all your fault! If you'd given Simon a moment, just a moment where he didn't think you were gonna throw them off or turn them in, he might've --

**MAL**

What? Swept you into his cleanly arms? Made tidy love to you? They have reached the guncheck, where Jayne and Wash have already checked their guns. It works like a lunch automat: Mal sticks his gun in a drawer, pulls out a chit -- the q0 drawer closes and rotates, revealing another empty one. A large bouncer with a shockrod watches impassively.

**KAYLEE**

(as they continue

**DOWN)**

Don't you dare joke! You know how much I pined on Simon. And him fair sweet on me, I well believe, but he's so worried about being found out --

**ZOE**

Captain didn't make 'em fugitives.

**KAYLEE**

But he coulda made 'em family! Steada driving them off. Steada keeping Simon from seein' I was there, when I carried such a torch and we coulda -- goin' on a year now I ain't had nothin' twixt my nethers weren't run on batteries!

**40**

**42.**

**MAL**

Oh god! I can't know that!

**JAYNE**

40 I could stand to hear a little more...

**KAYLEE**

If you had a care for anybody's heart you woulda --

**MAL**

**(ENOUGH)**

You knew he was gonna leave. We never been but a way station to

those two. And how do you know what he feels? He's got River to worry on but he still coulda shown you... if I truly wanted someone bad enough, wouldn't be a thing in the 'verse could stop me from going to her.

**KAYLEE**

Tell that to Inara.

For a moment, Mal is too shocked to react. Kaylee storms out.

**MINGO**

4 Domestic troubles?

MINGO is young, tough -- somewhere between a gangster and a fur-trader. Sounds lower-class British, or something like it.

**FANTY**

Domestic troubles?

FANTY moves out from behind Mingo to reveal that he is Mingo's identical twin. Apart from slight differences in dress, they are indistinguishable.

**MINGO**

'Cause we don't wanna interrupt.

**FANTY**

A man should keep his house in order.

**MAL**

(greet's them each)

Mingo. Fany.

**14**

**43.**

**MINGO**

(pointing at his

**BROTHER)**

He's Mingo.

,do

**MAL**

He's Fany. You're Mingo.

**MINGO**

Ghahh! How is it you always know?

**MAL**

Fany's prettier.

(pulling out a chair)

Feel to do some business?

**MINGO**

(re: Mal Is gang)

Bit crowded, isn't it? As you see, we come unencumbered by thugs.

**MAL**

Which means at least four of the  
guys already in here are yours.  
All's one. I'll just keep Jayne  
with me.

**ZOE**

Sir, are you sure you don't --

**4**

**MAL**

Go. Go get yourselves a nice  
romantic meal.

**WASH**

Those are my two favorite words!  
(to Zoe)  
Honey... "Meal..."

**MAL**

(to Zoe)

It's business. We're fine.

They leave and the four remaining men sit. Fanty tosses a  
few coins to a saloon-girl, who does a little fan-dance...

ANGLE: THE CORVUE CAMERA'S POV of the men is conveniently  
blocked by her little dance.

Mal's foot nudges a duffel bag of money to Mingo's foot.

**MINGO**

Quite a crew you've got.

**4**

**44.**

**MAL**

Yeah, they're a fine bunch of  
ruebens.

**MINGO**

How you keep them on that crap  
boat is the subject of much musing  
tween me and Fanty.

**FANTY**

We go on and on.

**MAL**

So I'm noticing. Is there a  
problem I don't know of? You got  
25% of a sweet take kissing your  
foot, how come we're not  
dispersing?

**FANTY**

Our end is forty, precious.

**JAYNE**

My muscular buttocks it's forty --

**MINGO**

It is as of now. Find anyone  
around going cheaper.

**J FANTY**

Find anyone around going near a  
sorry lot like you in the first  
instance.

ANGLE: RIVER has entered, is looking about.

Jayne sees her, nudges Mal, who looks and turns back to  
business. We stay on her as she wanders around the perimeter  
of the bar, vaguely listening in on Mal's deal.

**FANTY**

**(CONTINUING)**

You're unlikable, Mal. You got no  
respect for us above you, you got  
enemies in every quadrant, and  
your ship's older than the  
starting point of time. You's  
charity cases to such as us.

45.

**MAL**

Well here's a foul thought. I  
conjured you two were incompetent;  
sent us out not knowing there were  
V0 Reavers about. Now I'm thinking  
you picked us out because you did.

**MINGO**

That were a sign of faith, boy.  
And it doesn't affect our forty  
per. Danger is, after all, your  
business.

**JAYNE**

Reavers ain't business, double  
dickless.

This is all background noise to River, who has moved to the  
CV screen, on which is a commercial. It's animated, goofy,  
cartoon animals and anime-style Asian girls all transforming  
to insane fantasy figures as they sing about:

**COMMERCIAL**

**FRUITY OATY BARS, POW! HEY! FRUITY**

**BARs, MAKE A MAN OF A MOUSE, MAKE**

**YOU BUST OUT YOUR BLOUSE, EAT THEM**

**NOW, BANG! PING! ZOW! -- TRY**

**FRUITY, OATY BARS.**

We push in, the light from the CV on River's face, pushing to  
EXTREME CLOSE UP, all noise but the jingle fading out,  
finally that as well, just the hum in River's ears.  
And she whispers:



**RIVER**

Miranda.

She turns and looks back at the crowd.

What happens next happens very fast.

She strides silently to the first table -- two men drinking quietly -- and she slams her foot into one's face, then whips it back into the other's, knocking them both unconscious as -- people are turning, just registering that this girl -- kicks the table into a card player even as she sweeps a bottle off it behind her -- the bottle hits a man behind her square in the face, a man she never even looked at -- people are rising, fleeing or pushing forward --

**V0**

**46.**

**MAL**

River...

**JAYNE**

V0 Whuhuh?

She's taking out a group of four, high kicks and perfect precision -- Two men come from either side, one whipping out a knife -- she does a perfect split, grabs his wrist above her head, using his momentum to stab the other one --

Mal fights to get back to the gunrack. The bouncer reaches her and she wrests his shockrod from him, uses it on him, on Fanty and Mingo -- the fan-dancer is bolting and River hurls the rod at her head, knocks her cold...

She's everywhere. On tables, chairs, under your legs, using the room itself to take out every single person there. One man hides behind a wall -- impossibly, she swings her leg around the corner and nails his face.

Jayne grabs her from behind --

**JAYNE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Gorrammit, girl, it's me!

She grabs his crotch and squeezes -- his grip loosens and she spins, facing him, and flat-heels his nose with her palm, V0 twirling into a gut kick that doubles him over, dispatching of another while she cracks Jayne's head with a small table --

Somebody pulls a gun and she snaps his elbow, causing him to scream out even before he shoots himself in the gut --

Mal frantically wrests a gun from the vending locker as River knocks the other guy's gun in the air, kicks someone else and then catches it, whips it around just as Mal comes up with his, they are pointed right at each other --

**SIMON**

Eta Kooram Nah Smech!

And River drops to the ground, fast asleep.

There is a beat. Mal looks around the bar. He and Simon, who has run up to the entrance, are the only ones standing. He looks down at River. She lies unconscious, helpless.

**MAL**

I think maybe we ought to leave.

47.

**EXT. SPACE - NIGHT**

We see two sleek warships glide silently into frame, followed by a third, bigger ship. This is the operative's vessel, and it is everything Serenity is not: sleek, predatory, icy cool.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

The operative is looking at the Maidenhead security feed -- and River is staring right at him.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CAPTIVATED)**

Hello again. Yes, it's me. I'm glad you've finally asked for me. An Ensign is revealed looking at a separate monitor:

**ENSIGN**

We got a pos on a retinal -- man carrying her out is Malcolm Reynolds, captains a Firefly-class transport ship, "Serenity". Bound by law five times, smuggling, tariff dodge... not convicted. Nothing here that would --

**THE OPERATIVE**

The ship. The name of the ship.

**10 (SOFTLY)**

Crossref. Malcolm Reynolds. Serenity.

He looks over at the Ensign with a small, strange smile on his lips -- as his glasses are covered by text.

**ENSIGN**

Sir?

**THE OPERATIVE**

Serenity Valley. Bloodiest battle of the entire war. The Independents held the valley for seven weeks, two of them after their high command had surrendered. 68% casualty rate.

**ENSIGN**

Of course, Sir, I just didn't --

**THE OPERATIVE**

There.

48.

His glasses stop scrolling and Mal's military file opens, a picture of Mal in one lens.

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

#### **140 (CONTINUING)**

If the feds ever bothered to crossref justice files with war records... Yes. Our Mr. Reynolds was a sergeant, 57th Overlanders. Volunteer. Fought at Serenity till the very last. This man is an issue. This man hates us.

#### **ENSIGN**

First Mate Zoe Washburn, formerly Corporal Zoe Alleyne, also in the 57th. Career army, looks like.

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

She's followed him far... Give me the crew, registered passengers -- Our Captain is a passionate man, no room there for subtlety. He's bound to have some very obvious...  
CLOSE ON: THE LENS of his glasses. On it is a slowly moving picture of INARA.

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

-40 (continuing)  
.weakness...

#### **INT. STORAGE LOCKER - NIGHT**

River is still asleep, Mal finishing chaining her wrists. She lies on her side, breathing evenly. Mal stares at her a moment, then:

#### **INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING**

He exits to find the whole group waiting for him, sans Wash.

#### **SIMON**

May I see her?

#### **MAL**

She's still napping just now. And I believe you've got some storytelling to do.

4

49.

**WASH**

**(ENTERING)**

We're out of atmo, plotted for Haven. No one following as of yet.

**KAYLEE**

Haven? We're gonna see Shepherd Book?

**MAL**

**(NODDING)**

We got to lay low. And I could fair use some spiritual guidance right about now.

(to Simon)

I am a lost lamb; what in hell happened back there?

**WASH**

Start with the part where Jayne gets knocked out by a ninety pound girl. 'Cause I don't think that's ever getting old.

**ZOE**

Do we know if anyone was killed?

**MAL**

It's likely. I know she meant to Ad kill me 'fore the Doc put her to sleep, which how exactly does that work anyhow?

**SIMON**

Safeword.

**(BEAT)**

The people who helped me break River out -- they had intel that River and the other subjects were being embedded with behavioral conditioning. They taught me a safeword, in case... something happened.

**KAYLEE**

Not sure I get it.

**SIMON**

A phrase that's encoded in her brain, that makes her fall asleep. If I speak the words, "Eta --

**4**

**50.**

**JAYNE**

(jumping back)  
Well don't say it!  
moo ZOE  
It only works on her, Jayne.

**JAYNE**  
Oh. Well, now I know that.

**MAL**  
"In case something happened."

**SIMON**  
What?

**MAL**  
You feel to elaborate on what that something might be? I mean they taught you that fancy safeword, they must've figured she was gonna, what -- start uncontrollably crocheting?

**SIMON**  
They never said what --

**MAL**  
And you never did ask.  
Mal grabs him and throws him against the wall, in his face.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**  
Eight months. Eight months you had her on my boat knowing full well she might go monkeyshit at the wrong word and you never said a thing --

**SIMON**  
I brought her out here so they couldn't get to her, I don't even know how they --

**MAL**  
My ship. My crew! You had a gorramn timebomb living with us!

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - CONTINUING**

River's eyes open.

**V0**

**51.**

**INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING**

**MAL**  
What if she went off in the middle woo of dinner, or in bunk with Kaylee,

did that give you a moment's pause?  
Simon looks at Kaylee, the truth of Mal's words hitting him.

**SIMON**

I thought she was getting better.

**JAYNE**

And I thought they was gettin' off!  
(off looks)  
Didn't we have a intricate plan  
how they was gonna be not here  
anymore?

**KAYLEE**

We couldn't leave them now...

**JAYNE**

No, now that she's a... killer  
woman we ought be bringin' 'em tea  
and dumplings!  
(to Mal)  
In earnest, Mal: why'd you bring  
her back on?

**4**

Mal looks at Jayne, at all of them. Doesn't have an answer.

**SIMON**

May I see her.  
Mal steps aside. Simon enters the locker.

**JAYNE**

She goes woolly again, we're gonna  
have to put a bullet to her.

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - CONTINUING**

River mouths the next words right along with Mal:

**INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING**

**MAL**

It's crossed my mind.

**WASH**

Can I make a suggestion that  
doesn't involve violence, or is  
this the wrong crowd?

**J**

**52.**

**ZOE**

Honey...

**WASH**

V0 Fanty and Mingo might be coming  
hard down on us, or the laws... or  
maybe nobody could be bunged about

a little social brawl. We need to get our bearings. I think we need to talk to Mr. Universe.

**EXT. SPACE - NIGHT**

The camera swoops in at a sparking ion cloud, then through the cloud at a barren, metallic satellite moon. Then further in to reveal a sprawling -- and completely empty -- communications complex. Giant satellite dishes everywhere.

**INT. MR UNIVERSE'S HQ - CONTINUING**

Inside, we find an unkempt young man. Also sleep-deprived, over-caffeinated and kinda sweet. This is MR UNIVERSE. He is alone but for his mannikin-like Love-bot, Lenore. He's surrounded by screens, computers, feeds -- machinery that looks both ultra-modern and long neglected. All the screens play different images -- it's a mediaverse.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

**A0**

As he watches the security feed of River's fight his image becomes a vidscreen. He's addressing Wash, Mal and Zoe. We intercut between the two spaces:

**MR UNIVERSE**

Oh, this is good. This is...

**(GIGGLES)**

.she's beating up all the burly men and I'm having a catharsis, it's happening right now, you guys always bring me the very best violence. You think you're in a hot place?

**WASH**

That's what we're looking to learn. Is there any follow up, a newswave...

**4**

**53.**

**MR UNIVERSE**

There is no "news", there's the truth of the signal, what I see, and there's the puppet theatre the V0 Parliament's jesters foist on the somnambulant public. Monkey taught to say the word "monkey" -- lead story on 32 planets. But the slum riots on Hera, not a --

**MAL**

What about this? Did this make the... puppet theatre?

**MR UNIVERSE**

No sir. And no lawforce flags,  
either -- I hadda go into the  
security feed direct...

**MAL**

You can do that?

**MR UNIVERSE**

Can't stop the signal, Mal.  
Everything goes somewhere and I go  
everywhere. Security feeds are a  
traipse to access -- and I wasn't  
the first one in, this has prints  
on it -- oh! Look at her go!  
A0 Everyone is getting bruises and  
contusions. Contooooosions.

**ZOE**

(to Mal, over that)  
So somebody else has been fed  
this. That doesn't like me too  
well.

**MR UNIVERSE**

Zoe, you sultry minx, stop falling  
in love with me. You're just  
gonna embarrass yourself. I have  
a commitment to my Lovebot, it was  
a very beautiful ceremony, Lenore  
wrote her own vows, I cried like  
a baby, a hungry, angry baby.  
(re: screen)  
And she falls asleep. Which, she  
would be sleepy.

**J**

**54.**

**MAL**

Can you go back? See if anybody  
spoke with her 'fore she acted up,  
-40 made any kind of contact with  
her...

Mr Universe works the screen. The image rewinds and stops on  
River coming up to it, looking at it. She whispers the word,  
"Miranda", and starts to move away.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Miranda...? Go back further.

**MR UNIVERSE**

No..  
He pulls another screen close, starts working that one.  
Matching timecodes, he pulls up the commercial.

**MAL**



Um... please?

Mr Universe has a third screen showing the commercial as

**(NON-MATRIX)**

well -- and it starts breaking down, bursts of code showing through. As he does so:

**MR UNIVERSE**

Friends and potential lovers, I

**4DO**

have good news and I have the other kind. Good is you're very smart. Someone is talking to her.

**WASH**

The oaty bar?

**MAL**

Subliminal. It's a subliminal message broadwaved to trigger her.

**MR UNIVERSE**

**(NODDING)**

I been seeing this code pop up all over, last few weeks. And I cannot crack it. It's Alliance and it's high military, so here then is the bad. Someone has gone to enormous trouble to find your little friend. And found her they have. Mal, Zoe and Wash look at each other.

**40**

**55.**

**MR UNIVERSE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Do you all know what it is you're carrying?

**W**

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - NIGHT**

River stares at us, impassive, as the camera pulls away from her to reveal Simon, who is cleaning blood off her face.

**RIVER**

They're afraid of me.

**SIMON**

I'm sorry...

**RIVER**

They should be. What I will show them... Oh God...

She starts tearing up, breathing faster... Simon runs his hands through her hair.

**SIMON**

It's okay, it's okay...

**RIVER**

(somewhere else)

Show me off like a dog, old men covered in blood, it never touched them but they're drowning in it... so much loss... I don't know what I'm saying. I never know what I'm saying...

**SIMON**

You said something. When you were triggered, do you remember? The Captain saw you say something on the feed...

**RIVER**

Miranda.

**SIMON**

Miranda.

**RIVER**

(laughs bitterly)

Ask her. She'll show you all.

**40**

**56.**

**SIMON**

Show us what? Who is Miranda?

**(BEAT)**

Am I... talking to Miranda now?

Nw

She shoots him a look.

**RIVER**

I'm not a multiple, dumbo.

**SIMON**

No. Right. But I think somehow when they triggered you it brought this up, this memory --

**RIVER**

It isn't mine. The memory. I didn't bring it and I shouldn't have to carry it, it isn't mine.

**(URGENTLY:)**

Don't make me sleep again.

**SIMON**

I won't.

**RIVER**

Put a bullet to me. Bullet in the  
brain pan, squish.

**SIMON**

Don't say that. Not ever. We'll  
get through this.  
She reaches out and touches his face, affectionately.

**RIVER**

Things are going to get much much  
worse.

**SIMON**

Well, the Captain hasn't tossed us  
in the airlock, so I'd say we're --

**RIVER**

He has to see. More than  
anyone... he has to see what he  
doesn't want to.

**SIMON**

River. What will Miranda show us.  
She thinks.

**VD**

**57.**

**RIVER**

Death.

**SIMON**

Whose death?  
And she starts laughing. Quietly at first, then louder, then  
almost uncontrollably, screaming in his face:

**RIVER**

**EVERYBODY'S!!!**

**SMASH CUT TO:**

Black Silence.

**INT. CAVE - DAY**

It's pitch black here, til Serenity's lights throw a hard  
relief on the rocky wall. She flies in after, slow and  
steady, revealing herself to be in a huge mineshaft.

**BOOK (O.S.)**

Lord, I am walking your way.

ANGLE: THE RAMP lowers to reveal Shepherd BOOK, a working-  
class preacher and former crew member. He smiles as they  
come out to meet him:

**N00 BOOK (O.S.)**

**(CONTINUING)**

Let me in, for my feet are sore,  
my clothes are ragged.

**EXT. MINING CAMP – DAY**

We see the camp: a few shacks and a working mine, as our group come down to it, greeted by a few miners, including an eight year old boy that rushes to Kaylee...

ANGLE ON: A CANNON mounted at the edge of town. The guy manning it sees them arrive, also goes to greet them.

**INT. COMMUNITY KITCHEN – NIGHT**

We see the gang sitting and eating. Comfortable, even laughing a bit. Jayne presents Book with a couple of cigars. Kaylee hoists the boy on her lap.

**BOOK (O.S. )**

Look in my eyes, Lord, and my sins  
will play out on them as on a  
screen. Read them all.

4

58.

**EXT. MINING CAMP – NIGHT**

Mal approaches Book on the edge of a rise overlooking the town. Mal has a bowl and chopsticks. Book is finishing:

**VØ**

**BOOK**

Forgive what you can, and send me  
on my path. I will walk on, until  
you bid me rest.

**MAL**

Hope that ain't for me, Shepherd.

**BOOK**

(lighting a cigar)  
It's prayer for the dead.

**MAL**

Then I really hope it ain't for me.

**BOOK**

It's for the men River might have  
killed in that bar.

**MAL**

Weren't River that did it, you  
know that. Somebody decided her  
brain was just another piece of  
property to take, fenced it right  
Vd up.

**BOOK**

You got a plan?

**MAL**

Hiding ain't a plan?

**BOOK**

It'll do you for a spell, and the folks here'll be glad of the extra coin...

**MAL**

.but they'll be coming.  
Alliance is after this girl with a powerful will. I look to hear the tromp of their boots any moment.

**VØ**

**59.**

**BOOK**

You won't.  
(off Mal's look)  
This isn't a palms-up military MW run, Mal. No reports broadwaved, no warrants... much as they want her, they want her hid. That means Closed File. Means an Operative, which is trouble you've not known.

**MAL**

I coulda left her there.

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - NIGHT**

As he continues, we see an image of him watching over the sleeping girl, his mind, racing.

**MAL (O.S.)**

I had an out -- hell, I had every reason in the 'verse to leave her lay and haul anchor.

**EXT. MINING CAMP - CONTINUING**

**BOOK**

Not your way, Mal.

**VØ MAL**

I have a way?

**(THINKS)**

Is that better than a plan?

**BOOK**

You can play the thug all you want, but there's more to you than you're ever like to 'fess.

**MAL**

You just think that 'cause my eyes  
is all sorrowful and pretty.

**BOOK**

Only one thing is gonna walk you  
through this, Mal. Belief.

**MAL**

Sermons make me sleepy, Shepherd.  
I ain't looking for help from on  
high. That's a long wait for a  
train don't come.

**1490**

**60.**

**BOOK**

When I talk about belief, why do  
you always assume I'm talking  
about God?

W (Mal has no response)

They'll come at you sideways.

As he continues, we see:

**EXT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE – DAY**

Inara stands waiting, her back to us, in front of the very  
vista we first saw her before.

The operative comes slowly up the staircase, stands before  
her.

**BOOK W. (V.O.)**

It's how they think: sideways.

It's how they move. Sidle up and  
smile, hit you where you're weak.

**EXT. MINING CAMP – CONTINUING**

**BOOK**

Sorta man they're like to send  
believes hard. Kills and never  
asks why.

**MAL**

It's of interest to me how much  
you seem to know about that world.

**BOOK**

I wasn't born a Shepherd, Mal.

**MAL**

Have to tell me about that some  
time.

**BOOK**

(looking out)

No I don't.

He walks away, offering this:

**BOOK**

**(CONTINUING)**

Sideways.

Mal watches him go, thinking.

**40**

**61.**

**EXT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

The Teacher from the very beginning is standing in front of River, whose desktop screen depicts a single, dark planet.

**TEACHER**

River?

Eight-year-old River is working away, not paying attention.

**TEACHER**

**(CONTINUING)**

River, you look tired. I think everybody's a little tired by now; why don't we all lie down.

River looks up, scared. All the other children wordlessly get up from their seats and lie on the floor next to them.

**TEACHER**

**(CONTINUING)**

A little peace and quiet will make everything better.

She starts to lie down herself, right on the grass.

**RIVER**

No...

Vao TEACHER

River. Do as you're told. It's going to be fine. Lie down.

**RIVER**

**NO!**

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - NIGHT**

River starts awake.

**INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING**

Mal does too, shirtless on his bunk.

**MAL**

Whuh huh nuhwhat?

**WASH (O.S.)**

(for the third time)

Mal! You up? Got a wave. I'm a bounce it down to you.

He pops up, turns to the screen as the white noise becomes:

**1400**

**62.**

**MAL**

Inara.

REVERSE ON: Inara on Mal's screen. We see her from about chest level up. She, presumably, sees the same.

**INARA**

?

Mal. I uh, is this a bad time

**MAL**

Good as any.

**INARA**

Please tell me you're wearing pants.

**MAL**

(slight grin)

Naked as the day I come cryin'.

How's your world?

**INARA**

Cold. It's autumn here.

**MAL**

Still at the Training House?

**INARA**

Right where you left me.

**MAL**

I remember it as nice enough.  
picturesque.

**INARA**

It is that. What about you?

**MAL**

**ONS**

Still flying. So what occasi  
the wave? Not that to see you  
ain't... well you look very

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

watching both Mal and Inara on two  
Zoe and Wash are secretly at their formal shyness.  
different screens, smiling  
Jayne enters, wondering what's up...



63.

**INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING**

**INARA**

Oh. Thank you, I... I guess we have something of a problem here. With the locals, I thought maybe...

**MAL**

You could use a gun hand?

**INARA**

I'm hoping not. But if you were close at all, you -- the crew -- could take your ease here a while... and there'd be payment...

**MAL**

Payment is never not a factor. I could sound out the crew... This pot like to boil over soon?

**INARA**

Soon. Not right away.

**MAL**

Well, it would be, I mean I would like to... Kaylee's been missing you something fierce --

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

There is a general groan among the audience, which now includes Kaylee as well...

**KAYLEE**

Oh they're so pathetic!

**INT. MAL'S ROOM - CONTINUING**

**INARA**

I miss her too. I even miss my shuttle, occasionally.

**MAL**

Yeah, you left a... got some of your stuff in a trunk, never did get a chance to drop it off.

**INARA**

Oh.

**MAL**

I didn't look through the... stuff... just sundries I expect.

64

Inara smiles blandly, nods. An awkward beat.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Well, it's kind of late where I'm at. I'll send a wave as soon as I can.

**INARA**

Thank you.

She disappears. Mal thinks a moment.

**INT. BRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER**

Mal comes up in, buttoning his shirt.

**WASH**

Inara. Nice to see her again.

**ZOE**

So, trap?

**MAL**

Trap.

**ZOE**

We goin' in?

moo MAL

It ain't but a few hours out...

**WASH**

Yeah, but, remember the part where it's a trap?

**MAL**

If that's the case, then Inara's already caught in it. She wouldn't set us up willing. Might be we got a shot at seeing who's turning these wheels. We go in.

**KAYLEE**

How can you be sure Inara don't just wanna see you? Sometimes people have feelings -- I'm referring here to people...

**MAL**

Y'all were watching, I take it. Guilty glances.

4

65

**KAYLEE**

Yes.

**MAL**

140 You see us fight?

**KAYLEE**

No.

**MAL**

Trap.

**EXT. SERENITY – DAY**

The ship moves gracefully over the mountains.

**INT. BRIDGE – CONTINUING**

**WASH**

We're about seventy miles from the Training house. And nobody on radar... if the Alliance is about, they're laying low.

**MAL**

They're about. Find us a home.  
I'll take the shuttle in closer.  
Zoe, ship is yours.  
4d0 He starts out, turns back to Zoe.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Remember: if anything happens to me, or you don't hear from me within the hour... you take this ship and you come and rescue me.

**ZOE**

What? And risk my ship?

**MAL**

**(EXITING)**

I mean it. It's cold out there.  
I don't wanna get left.

**EXT. SERENITY – DAY**

She is nestled in a gorge, overhanging rocks all but burying her from view. The shuttle on the right lifts off from the side of the ship and glides off, keeping low.

4

66.

**EXT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE – DAY**

A line of young trainees files by in robes and red shawls pulled over their heads — one trainee a good deal larger

than the others.

**INT. INARA'S ROOM - LATER**

She is kneeling in front of a statue of Buddha, lighting a few incense sticks.  
The room is sparsely lush -- not as opulent as the shuttle where she entertained men, but still beautifully furnished and draped. A lace curtain hangs in front of the light, casting its pattern in shadow over everything. Including the rather large figure in a red shawl who kneels beside Inara.

**MAL**

Dear Buddha, please send me a pony, and a plastic rocket, and --

**I NAR.A**

Mal! What are you doing here?

**MAL**

You invited me.

**INARA**

I never thought for a second you'd be stupid enough to come!

**MAL**

Well that makes you kind of a tease, doesn't it?

**INARA**

You knew my invitation wasn't on the level --

**MAL**

Which led me to the conclusion that you must be in some trouble.

**INARA**

I'm fine! I'm. giddy.

**MAL**

For a woman schooled in telling men what they wanna hear, you ain't much of a liar.

**INARA**

Mal, you cannot handle this man.

**-40**

**67.**

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(ENTERING)**

I have to say, I'm impressed that you would come for her yourself.  
lw0 And that you would make it this far in that outfit.

**MAL**

**(STANDING)**

I can be very graceful when I need to.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I've no doubt.

Mal sheds his shawl and robe. Inara kneels at the altar, picks out another incense stick.

**MAL**

What are you doing?

**INARA**

I'm praying for you, Mal.

**THE OPERATIVE**

That's very thoughtful. But I mean it when I say you're not in any danger.

**MAL**

Speak your piece.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I think you're beginning to understand how dangerous River Tam is.

**MAL**

She is a mite unpredictable. Mood swings, of a sort.

**THE OPERATIVE**

It's worse than you know.

**MAL**

It usually is.

**THE OPERATIVE**

That girl will rain destruction down on you and your ship. She's an albatross, Captain.

**4**

**68.**

**MAL**

Way I remember it, albatross was a ship's good luck... til some idiot killed it.

(to Inara)

Yes, I've read a poem. Try not to faint.

The Operative moves further into the room. Whenever he moves, Mal counters.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I've seen your war record. I know

how you must feel about the Alliance.

**MAL**

You really don't.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Fair to say. But I have to hope you understand you can't beat us.

**MAL**

I got no need to beat you. I just wanna go my way.

**THE OPERATIVE**

And you can do that, once you let me take the girl back home. Give me the opportunity to help you.

**MAL**

All I gotta do is let you take one more thing away from me. I've had a lot of things taken in my time. And it may just be that this is one too many.

**THE OPERATIVE**

This psychotic, potentially murderous girl who can't have the slightest awareness of your protection. This is where you "draw the line".

**MAL**

Well I'm a whimsical soul.

**THE OPERATIVE**

There's a number of lives that hang in the balance here. Lives under your care. Are they as whimsical as yourself?

**69.**

**MAL**

I got no notion that I'm being heroical at all. Any more than I think you're really just a harmless bureaucrat come to help me out. You move like a killer. The Operative is stopped by this. Unhappily, he continues:

**THE OPERATIVE**

I have a warship in deep orbit, Captain. We locked on to Serenity's pulse beacon the moment you hit atmo. I can speak a word and send a missile to that exact location inside of three minutes. Mal pulls a small device, clipped wires sticking out all around it, and tosses it to the Operative.

**MAL**

You do that, best make peace with  
your dear and fluffy lord.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Pulse beacon.

**MAL**

Advice from an old tracker: you  
J wanna find someone, use your eyes.

**THE OPERATIVE**

How long do you think you can  
really run from us?

**MAL**

Oh, a jack-rabbit, me. 'Sides, I  
never credited the Alliance with  
an over-abundance of brains. And  
if you're the best they got...

**THE OPERATIVE**

Captain Reynolds, I should tell  
you so that you don't waste your  
time: You can't make me angry.

**INARA**

Oh please. Spend an hour with him.  
Mal smiles -- then glares at Inara, mouthing "Hey!"

**70.**

**THE OPERATIVE**

I need her, Captain. River is...  
my purpose and I will gather her  
to me. The brother as well.  
Whatever else happens is  
incidental. In the greater scheme.

**MAL**

Why is it that the greater scheme  
always makes everything not that  
great?

**THE OPERATIVE**

I want to resolve this like  
civilized men. I'm not  
threatening you. I'm unarmed.

**MAL**

Great!  
He draws and shoots the Operative in the chest. The  
Operative goes down as Mal grabs Inara, moves for the-doorway.  
The Operative is on him in a second, choke-hold from behind.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I am of course wearing full body  
armor. I'm not a moron.  
He tosses Mal hard against a wall, spinning and blocking a  
blow from Inara -- she is clearly trained in martial arts,

but he flat-heels her to the ground within seconds. Mal is going for his gun again, turning, and the Operative kicks him in the face, sends him back, gun flying. Mal gets to his feet and they square off. Mal breathing hard, nose dripping blood. The Operative perfectly poised, waiting.

**MAL**

No back up? We're making an awful ruckus...

**THE OPERATIVE**

They'll come when they're needed.

**MAL**

I'd start whistling.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Captain, what do you think is going to happen here?

They come at each other. The Operative is the much better trained -- he's fluid, his blows sparse and deadly.

**40**

**71.**

Mal is more bluster and determination, and the operative's precision is wearing Mal down.

Mal punches wild -- the Operative counters with a spin-kick V0 to the head that sends Mal to the ground not far from Inara, breathing hard. He tries to rise again, painfully, but Inara places her hand on his arm.

The Operative goes to his briefcase by the door, pulls out his sword. His face has taken on that remote kind of fascination as he looks at it.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Nothing here is what it seems.

**INARA**

I know.

**THE OPERATIVE**

He's not the plucky hero. The Alliance isn't some evil empire. This isn't the grand arena.

**INARA**

And that's not incense.

He turns to look: the incense stick burns away -- rather like a fuse -- and FLASHES in an explosion of light and sound.

**40**

It's a flash-bomb: The Operative sails back as everything goes smoky white and the sound dies to a tiny buzz.

The Operative tries to get his bearings -- and four armored soldiers are in his face, asking him for orders... Mal and Inara are gone. He motions for the men to follow them.

**THE OPERATIVE**



Just a flash bomb. Go! Go!

**INT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE - CONTINUING**

Inara leads Mal (who is reholstering his gun) down some steps and along a corridor. The sound is still tinny and weird.

**MAL**

.I had him...

**INARA**

What?

**MAL**

(deafly loud)

I think that I was winning!

**4**

**72.**

**EXT. SIDE OF MOUNTAIN, BY MAL'S SHUTTLE - DAY**

Mal and Inara move quickly down the mountain. They look to see that Mal's shuttle has four Alliance guards waiting by V0 it. Mal ducks back out of sight, pulls a fancy-looking grenade out of his pocket. Pops the top and hurls it over at the foursome.

CLOSE ON: THE GRENADE, as a series of bars of light go out one by one, counting down --

**ALLIANCE SOLDIER**

Grenade!

Everybody dives for cover. The moment they do, Mal and Inara race into the shuttle, Mal sweeping up the grenade just as the last light goes out and nothing happens.

One soldier turns to look and Mal shoots him back down as the door shuts on him and Inara.

**INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUING**

Inara pushes into the pilot's seat.

**INARA**

Hang on to something.

**MAL**

4 You sure you remember how it --  
He nearly falls over as:

**EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - CONTINUING**

The shuttle shoots straight up, spinning and heading out.

**INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUING**

Inara stares straight ahead, relaxing her grip on the controls. Mal is gone.

**INARA**

I told you to hang on.

**MAL (O.S. )**  
(in great pain)  
I'm fine...

**EXT. SPACE – LATER**

We are below Serenity as her bay doors are closing, six little objects floating out of her belly like roe.

4

73.

These objects are roughly the size of pony-kegs, and clearly home-made, parts welded together almost haphazardly. They all spark silently to life -- and shoot off in six different directions, as Serenity herself fires up her Firefly effect and burns away from us.

**INT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE – DAY**

The Operative sips tea and rubs his temple.

**THE OPERATIVE**

(into a com)  
Forget the pulse beacon, there has to be another way to track the ship -- get a read on the nav sat. It's a registered transport, you must be able to locate --

**ENSIGN (O.S.)**

Sir?

**THE OPERATIVE**

Have you found a nav sat trajectory?

**ENSIGN (O.S.)**

Sir... we've found seven.  
The Operative looks more unhappy than angry.

**THE OPERATIVE**

(to himself)  
Does he think this is a game?

**EXT. CLASSROOM – DAY**

The teacher and students sleep as River -- as we saw her in the institute, older, with blood seeping from the needle-holes in her head -- makes her way through them. Slowly she walks to the floating lecture screen. On it is the solar system, glowing lines connecting all the stars and planets. She becomes wide-eyed, breathing hard as it pushes in to one system, one planet... She looks over to one side of the tent, and we see:

**INT. LAB – CONTINUING**

Her POV is of the lab. There stand some five older men in formal dress. They stare at her, impassive.

We see flashes of corpses, lying in houses, in city streets -- and a Reaver's screaming face --

.00

74.

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - DAY**

And River awakens. A moment to get her bearings, then her eyes narrow with intent.

**INARA (V.O.)**

We have every reason to be afraid.

**INT. PASSENGER DORM - CONTINUING**

**JAYNE**

Why, 'cause this guy beat up Mal?  
That ain't so hard --

**MAL**

He didn't beat me up --

**INARA**

Because he's a believer.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP, A DARK CABIN**

As Inara continues, we see: Fanty and Mingo, tied to chairs. Light spills onto their bruised faces as the Operative enters.

**INARA (V.O.)**

He's intelligent, methodical and devout in his belief that killing River is the right thing to do.

**INT. PASSENGER DORM - CONTINUING**

**INARA**

I honestly think the only reason we haven't been blown out of the air is that he needs to see her.

**SIMON**

Needs to see her why?

**INARA**

I'm uncertain. I would say to be sure of the kill, but... I just know he'll kill us all to get to her.

**JAYNE**

So no hope of a reward, huh?

**ZOE**

Did he mention a deal of any kind?

**75.**

**MAL**

(looking at Simon)

Give the two of them up. Go my way.

**JAYNE**

Which you was all ready to do not a day ago. What went sour?

**MAL**

Cutting them loose ain't the same as handing them over.

**JAYNE**

That so? 'Cause the corpse I'm about to become is having trouble telling the difference.

**SIMON**

(to Inara)

Did he say anything about a "Miranda"?

**INARA**

What is that?

**MAL**

Don't know who or what, but it's on River's mind. Conjure it might be the reason he's after her.

**INARA**

You think maybe it poses some kind of threat to the Alliance?

**WASH**

Do we care? Are we caring about that?

**JAYNE**

You dumbass hogs, the only people she's a threat to is us on this boat!

**INT. STORAGE LOCKER - CONTINUING**

River is near the ceiling, keeping herself up in a split again, feet against the walls. There is a wire mesh cover to the light, and she has bent part of it out, is working it inside the lock of her shackles.

76.

**INT. PASSENGER DORM - MOMENTS LATER**

**MAL**

Look, we get back to Haven in a  
'r/ few hours time --

**JAYNE**

Hiding under the Shepherd's  
skirts, that's a manful scheme --

**MAL**

You wanna run this ship?

**JAYNE**

Yes!

**MAL**

(small beat)  
Well you can't!

**JAYNE**

Do a damn sight better job'n you.  
Getting us lashed over a couple of  
strays...

(to Simon)

No offense, Doc, I think it's  
noble as a grape the way you look  
to River, but she ain't my sister  
(to Mal)

and she ain't your crew. Oh, and  
neither is she exactly helpless!  
So where's it writ we gotta lay  
down our lives for her, which is  
what you've steered us toward.

**MAL**

I didn't start this.

**JAYNE**

No, the Alliance starts the war --  
and then you volunteer. Battle of  
Serenity, Mal: besides Zoe here,  
how many --

(Mal turns away)

-- I'm talkin' at you -- how many  
men in your platoon came out of  
there alive?

Mal stares at him.

**ZOE**

(dead cold)  
You wanna leave this room.

77

**JAYNE**

You're damn right I do.  
He stalks upstairs. There's a quiet moment.

**INARA**  
This isn't the war, Mal.  
Mal turns, eyeing her.

**MAL**  
Are you telling me that because  
you think I don't know --

**INARA**  
You came to the training house  
looking for a fight.

**MAL**  
I came looking for you.

**INARA**  
I just want to know who I'm  
dealing with. I've seen too many  
versions of you to be sure.

**MAL**  
I start fighting a war I guarantee  
you'll see something new.

**TO**  
Mal walks out into the cargo bay, Inara following, over:

**SIMON**  
We'll get off. River and I'll get  
off at Haven and find some --

**KAYLEE**  
Nobody's saying that.

**WASH**  
Nobody besides Jayne is saying  
that.

#### **INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

Inara tries to catch up to --

**INARA**  
Mal.

**10**

**78.**

**MAL**

**(TURNING)**  
I got no answers for you, Inara.  
I got no rudder. Wind blows  
40 northerly, I go north. That's who  
I am. Maybe that ain't a man to  
lead but they have to follow so  
you wanna tear me down do it

inside your own mind.

**0**

**INARA**

I'm not trying to tear you down --

**D**

**MAL**

But you fog things up. You always have -- you spin me about. I wish like hell you was elsewhere.

**INARA**

I was.

**INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUING**

Jayne is looking at the storage locker door. A beat.

**JAYNE**

He moves to the aft hall, shuts and locks the door. Goes  
40 back to the locker and starts to unlock it, pulling his gun.

**JAYNE**

**(CONTINUING)**

No trouble now, little crazy  
person... we're going for a nice

**I**

shuttle ride --

He opens the door and she is on him in an instant, whip blow  
to the throat, the nose -- he fires wildly as she jumps on  
him, wraps her arms around his neck and topples him back --

**INT. AFT HALL - MOMENTS LATER**

The crew enters, drawn by the shots. Mal is first -- can't  
open the door. Looks in to see an unconscious Jayne...

**MAL**

The other way! Find her and--do  
not engage!

Everyone piles out the other way. Simon remains, to look in  
the window.

**10**

**79.**

ANGLE: SIMON'S POV: There is Jayne, not moving -- and River  
pops up right in front of us.  
He starts, then waits as she opens the door.

**NO**

**SIMON**

It's gonna be oka --

She elbows his throat viciously. He drops to his knees,

shocked and gasping, as she spin-kicks him to the ground. He doesn't move. She looks at him a moment, then takes off.

**INT. CARGO BAY – MOMENTS LATER**

Mal is throwing his shoulder against the bolted door to the upstairs. He gives up, looking around.

**ZOE**

She's sealed off the bridge. I do not like her there.

**KAYLEE**

Cap'n!

She tosses him a bolt remover. He starts pulling a bolt out of a panel on the wall, tells Zoe:

**MAL**

Check the shuttles. She coulda 40 snuck in.

He pops the panel off and starts wriggling in among the wires.

**INT. FOREDECK HALL/BRIDGE – LATER**

A floor panel hinges open, Mal pulling himself up. He moves quietly to the bridge, gun drawn.

He enters to find River frantically punching up coordinates on a big Cortex screen she's pulled out by the copilot's seat. She whips Jayne's gun at his face, never looking at him. A moment, and Mal lowers his own gun.

**MAL**

The government's man, he says  
you're a danger to us. Not worth  
helping. Is he right? Are you  
anything but a weapon? I've  
staked my crew's life on the  
a – person--,-- –  
actual and whole, and if I'm wrong  
you'd best shoot me now.  
(she cocks the gun)  
Or we could talk more...

**40**

**80.**

**RIVER**

(pointing to screen)

Miranda.

WIt's a planet. Matches the one from her dream.

**INT. BRIDGE – LATER**

Everyone has gathered. Wash is piloting now, as they are in atmosphere. River is by Simon. She moves restlessly, upset.

**KAYLEE**

How can it be there's a whole  
planet called Miranda and none of  
us knowed that?



**MAL**

Because there isn't one. It's a  
blackrock. Uninhabitable.  
Terraforming didn't hold, or  
somesuch. Few settlers died.

**RIVER**

(to Simon)  
I had to show them. I didn't know  
if you were going to make me sleep.

**SIMON**

(hoarse whisper)  
You could've asked...

**10**

**KAYLEE**

(re: planet)  
Wait a tick, yeah! Some ten years  
back, before the war. There was  
call for workers to settle on  
Miranda, my daddy talked about  
going. I should've recalled...

**WASH**

But there's nothing about it on  
the Cortex -- History,  
Astronomy... it's not in there.

**MAL**

Half of writing history is hiding  
the truth. There's something on  
this rock the Alliance doesn't  
want known.

**INARA**

That's right at the edge of the  
Burnham Quadrant, right?

**(MORE)**

**10**

**81.**

INARA (cont'd)  
Furthest planet out.  
(Mal nods)  
It's not that far from here...

**W**

**WASH**

Whoah, no, no --

**ZOE**

(moving to the screen)  
That's a bad notion --

**WASH**

Honey...

**ZOE**

I got it, baby.

**WASH**

Show them the bad...

She hits some commands on the screen, pulls back to reveal a couple of other planets near Miranda.

**ZOE**

This is us, see? And here's Miranda. All along here, this dead space in between, that's Reaver territory.

**WASH**

They just float out there, sending out raiding parties --

**ZOE**

Maybe a hundred ships. And more every year. You go through that you're signing up to be a banquet.

**WASH**

I'm on board with the run and hide scenario -- and we are just about...

He looks at his monitors, looks ahead...

**WASH**

**(CONTINUING)**

**WAIT**

**EXT. MINING CAMP - DAY**

The ship swings around a mountain to come into view of the camp.

I s

**82.**

It is a world of fire.

Every building burns, some blown right apart. Bodies litter the scene, not one of them moving. There's a grounded Alliance ship not far from the cannon that shot it down.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

We see Mal's face as the sight hits him like a gut-punch.

**EXT. MINING CAMP - MOMENTS LATER**

The crew pours out even as the ramp lowers, going off in all directions, calling out to people... Kaylee heads for the burning church.

**KAYLEE**

Shepherd? Shepherd Book!

She stops, looking at the ground by the steeple. There is the body on the ground, face down. The child she played with at dinner. Kaylee stares, at first uncomprehending.  
ANGLE: MAL, moving in the other direction, approaches the cannon, Jayne behind him. He stops and sees:  
Book, lying by the cannon, torn up badly from the waist down.

**4 MAL**

(to Jayne)  
Get the Doc.  
He moves to the Shepherd, grabs his searching hand.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Shepherd... Don't move.

**BOOK**

Won't go far...

**MAL**

Shouldn't've been you. I'm so sorry, it was... they should've hit us. They should've hit me.

**BOOK**

That crossed my mind.

**(ROUGHES)**

I shot him down --

**MAL**

I seen.

**83.**

**BOOK**

I killed the ship... that killed us. Not... very Christian of me.

**MAL**

You did what's right.

**BOOK**

(not unkindly)  
Coming from you, that means... almost nothing... HNAAH! Ah, I'm long gone...

**MAL**

Doc'll bring you round. I look to be bored by many more sermons 'fore you slip -- don't move --

**BOOK**

Can't... order me around, boy. I'm not one of your crew.

**MAL**

Yes you are.  
Book coughs up blood, grabbing Mal. Urgent, almost angry.

**BOOK**

You... it's on you now... all this death, this shit... you have to find a course. This can't mean nothing. River... you have to...

**MAL**

Come on, keep it up --  
Book grabs Mal's face, talks as though replying to something:

**BOOK**

I don't care what you believe!  
Just... believe it. Whatever you have to...  
His breathing becomes laboured. Hitched.  
Stopped. His hand slips away, his blood leaving a distinct print on Mal's face.  
Jayne and Simon run up, Simon slowing down -- going to the e he's-dead.----Zne --„a r.7-1, ;,,,r  
them as Jayne looks around him, Mal still fixed on Book.

**AD**

84.

**JAYNE**

How come they ain't waiting? They know'd we was coming, how come they only sent one?

**MO**

Zoe realizes the answer, turns to Wash.

**ZOE**

Get on the Cortex. Wave the Sanchez brothers, Li Shen -- anyone whose ever sheltered us after a heist. Tell them to get out. Get out now.

**SMASH CUT TO:**

**INT. BRIDGE - LATER**

Silence.  
Every Cortex screen is on, each looking at a different place. Every one shows fire, destruction or the snow of an interrupted signal.  
Mal stands alone amidst the screens, saying nothing. After a long moment, all of the screens hitch, the images replaced by identical images of the Operative. He looks solemn.

**THE OPERATIVE**

V0 I'm sorry. But I cannot let you hide and I cannot let you run. Things become... extreme. And we wish for another way.

**MAL**

Don't talk at me like a righteous

man. You are a killer of children.

**THE OPERATIVE**

When God wanted Pharaoh to release His people from bondage -- you know the story? He didn't ask. He sent his plagues down upon Egypt. That's me, Captain. The path to peace is paved with corpses. It's always been so.

**MAL**

So me and mine got to lie down and

**R--BETTER--**  
world?

85.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I'm not going to live there. How could you think -- there's no place for me there, any more than 40 there is for you. Malcolm, I'm a monster. What I do is evil, I've no illusions about it. But it must be done.

**MAL**

Why? Do you know why?

**THE OPERATIVE**

It's not my place to ask.

**MAL**

You will never see River Tam. I'm telling you this.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Maybe not. But you'll keep her close now, and when I blow Serenity out of the air, this will be ended. You're so terribly out of your depth, Captain. Your old boat can't take the pressure.

**MAL**

She ain't buckled yet. And the 40 only reason you're talking such a lot is you can't get a fix on us.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Yes, your scrambler's code is too old for our seekers. You love that, yes? The small triumph over modernity. You really are the noble savage.

**MAL**

Nobody -- ever -- calls me noble.

**THE OPERATIVE**

But that's what's going to kill you, Malcolm. Nobility. It confuses your text, which is self-interest. And sin.

**MAL**

Only- many-I-know-who still --bel i-eved- in sin just died by your hand.

**THE OPERATIVE**

What do you believe in?

**40**

**86.**

**MAL**

Not a solitary thing.

**THE OPERATIVE**

If that were true, you'd be nothing more than a Reaver. Something changes in Mal's expression.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

But then, maybe you're not that far from --  
Mal flicks a switch and every screen goes dark.

**EXT. MINING CAMP - MOMENTS LATER**

Mal comes striding out, where the crew have been gathering bodies, laying blankets over them.

**MAL**

Get these bodies together.

**ZOE**

We got time for gravedigging?

**MAL**

Zoe, you and Simon are gonna rope V0 'em together. Five or six of 'em. I want them laid out on the nose of our ship.

**SIMON**

Are you insane?

**KAYLEE**

What do you mean, the bodies...

**MAL**

Kaylee, I need you to muck the reactor core, just enough to leave a trail and make it read like we're flying without containment, not enough to fry us.

**KAYLEE**

These people are our friends --

**MAL**

Kaylee, you got a day's work to do  
and two hours to do it.

**(MORE)**

**14**

**87.**

**MAL** (cont'd)

(turns from her)

Jayne, you and Wash hoist up that  
cannon mount. Goes right on top.

**MOO**

Piece or two of the other ship,  
stick it on. Any place you can  
tear hull without inner breach, do  
that too.

(looking around)

And we're gonna need paint. We're  
gonna need red paint.

**INARA**

(getting it)

**ZOE**

Sir. Do you really mean to turn  
our home into an abomination so we  
can make a suicidal attempt at  
passing through Reaver space?

**MAL**

I mean to live. I mean for us to  
live. The Alliance won't have  
that, so we go where they won't  
follow.

**JAYNE**

V0 God's balls, there's no way we're  
going out there!

And everybody (save River) is talking at once:

**SIMON**

What's the point of living if you  
sink to the level of a savage --

**WASH**

**INARA**

Please, we should talk this over --

**JAYNE**

I ain't takin' orders from a man  
has lost his brainstem --

, -Mal pule-s-his-  
in his face, steps back, hand on his.

**V0**

**88.**

**MAL**

This is how it works. Anybody  
doesn't wanna fly with me anymore,  
this is your port of harbour.  
There's a lot of fine ways to die.  
I'm not waiting for the Alliance  
to choose mine.

He walks through the group, toward the smashed cockpit of the  
Alliance fighter. Struggling to get out is the badly wounded  
pilot. He sees Mal coming and raises his hands in surrender.  
Mal shoots him in the head, turns back.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

I mean to confound those killers,  
and take my shot at getting to  
Miranda, maybe finding out what  
all I'm dying for. That's my  
theme now. So I hear a word out  
of any of you that ain't helping  
me out or taking your leave I will  
fucking shoot you.

He grabs a body -- drops it at Zoe's feet as he heads toward  
the ship.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Get to work.

**EXT. SPACE - NIGHT**

CLOSE ON THE BODIES as they BURN, flames passing over them  
and suddenly flickering out as dark falls. They are patches  
of leathery flesh stretched over bone -- monsters, screaming  
soundlessly in the nothing of space.

We arm past them to the windows of the bridge, looking in at  
Mal, watching, with Zoe behind and Wash at the helm.

And we pull back out to see the whole of Serenity for the  
first time: It is hardly recognizable. Charred corpses on  
the nose, Cannon atop with a space-suited corpse draped  
within, long scars, welded-on parts and war paint... the  
trail of green light burns out with sporadic bursts of vapor.  
It looks, for all the world, like a Reaver ship.

**INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUING**

Mal comes down the stairs to the catwalk. He hesitates, then  
steps into the shuttle.

QMo



89.

**INT. SHUTTLE - CONTINUING**

It's dark in here. Mal stands with his back to the door, no light on his face, shaking. Not crying, but overcome.

**LOW**

**INARA**

Mal.

He looks up: she's in the corner looking through that trunk of hers, hands on a long oilcloth wrapped around something.

**MAL**

Didn't see you.

**I NARA**

I figured that.

**MAL**

Anything of use in there?

**INARA**

Maybe.

She puts it down and crosses to the bed. He sits by her.

**MAL**

You don't have to stay in the shuttle, you know. There's empty rooms, if you wanna sleep awhile.

**INARA**

You think anyone's set to sleep? Simon's portioning out overdoses of morphine, just in case.

**MAL**

Cheerful fellow.

(looking around)

Did you really miss this place?

**INARA**

(rueful smile)

Sometimes... Not so much right now.

A beat. He doesn't look at her when he asks:

**MAL**

Why did you leave?

Site does lo9}E-at-- t -m-

**INARA**

Why didn't you ask me not to?

90.

Dissatisfied, Mal rises.

**MAL**

I, uh, I'd better go check on the  
VW crew. See how the inevitable  
mutiny is coming along.  
They both want to say more. They don't. He goes.

**EXT. SPACE - NIGHT**

Serenity flies, silent.

**INT. FOREDECK HALL/BRIDGE - NIGHT**

The group make their way toward the bridge. Those close  
enough to get a view out the window are looking freaked --  
those already on the bridge are stock still. Pressed up  
against the glass of the window is River, just staring.

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

Reverse to see: an armada.  
The black sky is filled with what must be ninety ships in a  
vague cluster, as Serenity breaks frame headed toward them.  
Most of them hang still in the air. Some move swimmingly  
about. Some turn in gentle drifts, as though looking around.  
Vd INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING  
They all wait, tensed up, as they approach the armada...

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

And arrive, moving slowly through the ranks of ships.  
Serenity passes a large, bizarrely shaped ship. It turns, as  
though watching her. But lets her pass.  
Another minute, and Serenity is through the Armada, headed  
for the small planet just beyond.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - BRIDGE - LATER**

The Operative stares blankly at the Ensign.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Define "disappeared".  
The Ensign just looks uncomfortable.

**4**

**91.**

**INT. SERENITY: BRIDGE - LATER**

Kaylee, Simon and River have left the bridge. The clouds fog  
the windows, so nothing below is visible.

**ZOE**

Every reading I'm getting says  
normal. Oceans, land masses... no  
tectonic instability or radiation.

**WASH**

Yeah, but no power, either.

**MAL**  
Nothing at all?

**WASH**  
Wait. Something. Might be a  
beacon, but it's awful weak.

**MAL**  
Find it.

**EXT. SERENITY - DAY**

As she touches down, filling the frame. After a moment Mal,  
Zoe and Jayne emerge from the airlock in full suits, armed.  
Zoe reads a handheld scanner...

**V0 MAL**  
Gravity's Earthnorm.

**ZOE**  
02 levels check, pressure... if  
there's anything wrong the scanner  
isn't reading it.  
Mal pulls off his helmet. Breathes, looking around him.

**MAL**  
Well something sure as hell ain't  
right...  
WIDER ANGLE: They're in a CITY. Gleaming metal, spread out  
for miles in every direction. Portions decimated by fires  
long since cold, others overgrown with weeds, but mostly  
intact. But silent, as if trapped in amber.

**JAYNE**  
--ai-n-lt the settlement--

**10**

**92.**

**ZOE**  
We flew over at least a dozen  
cities just as big. Why didn't we  
hear about this?

**A0**

**MAL**  
Beacon's up ahead.

**EXT. CITY - DAY**

Out of their suits now, Mal, Zoe and Jayne take point as the  
entire crew walks along the street, looking about them.

**ZOE**  
Ho.  
She moves rapidly, gun out, to:

**ANGLE: A SKELETON**

Face-down on the ground, clothes tattered. She examines it as Mal approaches, waving the others back.

**ZOE**

**(CONTINUING)**

No entry wound, fractures...

**MAL**

Poison?

**A0**

**JAYNE (O . S . )**

Got another one!

ANGLE: JAYNE is by a downed hovercraft. Inside are three skeletons: two grown-ups and a small child. Clothes in better condition, and again no sign of violence.

**JAYNE**

They's all just sittin'. Didn't crash...

ANGLE: RIVER is quietly becoming more and more upset.

CLOSE ON: KAYLEE walks in front of an office building, staying away from the cars as she hears:

**JAYNE (O.S.)**

Couple more here...

0 0 orpse \_of\_aman is

pressed up against the glass wall right behind her. Mouth open, skin dead blue, terribly skinny... a thing to haunt.

**14**

**93.**

**SIMON**

(seeing it)

Kaylee... Come this way. Come here. Don't --

But she looks --

**KAYLEE**

GAAAAaaoh God --

-- and steps back, horrified, as the others approach.

It's an office. About half the employees are there, in chairs or on the ground, all in the same state as the first fellow. We see ANGLES of the corpses as the gang evaluates...

**JAYNE**

How come they're preserved?

**MAL**

Place must've gone hermetic when the power blew. Sealed 'em.

**KAYLEE**

(very upset)

What're they doing? What's everybody doing?

**SIMON**

There's no discoloration, nobody's doubled over or showing signs of pain...

**MAL**

There's gasses that kill painless, right?

**INARA**

But they didn't fall down. None of them. They just lay down.

**SIMON**

More than anything, it looks like starvation.

**MAL**

Anybody want to bet there's plenty of food around?

**INARA**

They just lay down...

They notice River now, in the middle of the street, keening. She drops to her knees, clutching her head.

**94.**

As she speaks we see, as she sees, FLASHES: bodies. In homes, in piles: an entire world, gently dead.

**RIVER**

, make them stop, they're everywhere, every city every house every room, they're all inside me, I can hear them all and they're saying nothing! GET UP! PLEASE, GET THEM UP! , please God make me a stone...

**JAYNE**

**(UPSET)**

She's starting to damage my calm.

**ZOE**

Jayne --

**JAYNE**

She's right! Everybody's dead! This whole world is dead for no reason!

**WASH**

Let's get to the beacon.

**EXT. LANDING STRIP - DAY**

It's small -- landing is easier in cities with flying vehicles. At the end of a short runway, tipped and damaged, is an Alliance Research Vessel. The gang makes its way towards it.

**INT. RESEARCH VESSEL – DAY**

It's a mess, doors pried open, signs of violence but no bodies. The gang walks through it, looking around. River pulls away from Simon, suddenly determined. She approaches a console, and a small cylindrical object. She turns it slightly --

A hologram squawks to life amidst them all. First we see images that resemble the flashes from River's mind: Corpses, everywhere. We hear and then see DOCTOR CARON standing exactly where she was when she recorded this message... (As she speaks, we see angles of everyone watching, taking it in.. River silently mouths every word.)  
,two

**95.**

**CARON**

-- just a few of the images we've recorded, and you can see it isn't.. it isn't what we thought. There's been no war here, and no terraforming event. The environment is stable. It's the Pax, the G-32 Paxilon Hydrochlorate that we added to the air processors. It's...

(tearing up)

.well it works... it was supposed to calm the population, weed out aggression. Make a peaceful... it worked. The people here stopped fighting. And then they stopped everything else. They stopped going to work, stopped breeding... talking... eating...

(trying for control)

There's thirty million people here and they all just let themselves die. They didn't even kill themselves. They just... most starved. When they stopped working the power grids, there were overloads, fires -- people burned to death sitting in their V0 chairs. Just sitting.

There is a loud bang somewhere behind her -- she starts, gathers herself.

**CARON**

**(CONTINUING)**

I have to be quick. There was no one working the receptors when we landed, so we hit pretty hard. We can't leave. We can't take any of the local transports because... The bang again.

**CARON**

**(CONTINUING)**

There are people... they're not people... about a tenth of a percent of the population had the opposite reaction to the Pax. Their aggressor response increased... beyond madness. They've become...

**(MORE)**

**VJ**

**96.**

CARON (cont'd)  
they've killed most of us... not just killed, they've done... things.

**V0**

**WASH**

**(QUIETLY)**

Reavers... they made them...

**CARON**

I won't live to report this, and we haven't got power to... people have to know...  
(loses it here)

We meant it for the best... to make people safer... to... God!

She whirls, grabs a gun and fires -- then aims the gun at her own head -- but a Reaver is on her, knocks the gun away and bites her face --

She screams continuously as the Reaver tops her, biting at her and tearing at her clothes, at her skin.

**JAYNE**

**(QUIETLY)**

Turn it off.

Wash does, nobody saying anything.

**10**

Mal walks outside.

**EXT. RESEARCH VESSEL - CONTINUING**

He takes a few unsteady steps away from the vessel. Inara appears behind him, follows -- he holds a hand out behind him, seemingly to make her stop, but then he grabs her shoulder, holds her for support. She puts her hand over his.

**MAL**

I seen so much death... I been on fields carpeted with bodies, friends and enemies -- I seen men

and women blown to messes no  
further from me than you.

**INARA**

Mal...

**MAL**

But every single one of those  
people died on their feet.  
Fighting.

**(MORE)**

**VØ**

**97.**

**MAL** (cont'd)

Or, hell, running away -- doing  
summat to get through. This is...

**40**

**INARA**

Mal, I need your help with this.  
I need you to help me, because I  
can't --

He looks at her, folds her into his arms. Brings her face to  
his, not kissing but touching, pressing into each other with  
the urgency of pulsing, necessary life.

**INT. RESEARCH VESSEL - CONTINUING**

River falls to her knees, vomiting. Simon goes to her, puts  
his hand on her back, lets her ride it out.

**SIMON**

River...

**RIVER**

I'm all right.  
She looks at him, wet eyes full of clarity.

**RIVER**

**(CONTINUING)**

I'm all right.

**VØ**

Wash pulls the recording cylinder out of the console.

**INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

The cylinder is on the table. Mal stands at the head,  
looking at his crew.

**MAL**

This report is maybe twelve years  
old. Parliament buried it, and it  
stayed buried til River dug it up.  
This is what they feared she knew.  
And they were right to fear,



'cause there's a universe of folk  
that are gonna know it too.  
(touches the cylinder)  
They're gonna see it. Somebody  
has to speak for these people.  
He pauses. Everyone waits.

**V0**

**98.**

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

You all got on this boat for  
different reasons, but you all  
V0 come to the same place. So now  
I'm asking more of you than I have  
before. Maybe all. 'Cause as  
sure as I know anything I know  
this: They will try again. Maybe  
on another world, maybe on this  
very ground, swept clean. A year  
from now, ten, they'll swing back  
to the belief that they can make  
people... better. And I do not  
hold to that. So no more running.  
I aim to misbehave.  
There is a beat as he eyes them all.

**JAYNE**

My grandma always told me: if you  
can't do something smart, do  
something right.  
By way of emphasis he loudly cocks his big-ass rifle. Mal  
takes in the fact that Jayne has spoken for them all.

**MAL**

That the same grandma told you  
4 there was an evil dwarf spirit  
living in your well?

**JAYNE**

**(NODDING)**

She was a fun grandma.

**SIMON**

Do we have a plan?

**MAL**

Mr Universe. We haven't the  
equipment to broadcast this code,  
but he can put it on every screen  
for thirty worlds. He's pretty  
damn close, too.

**RIVER**

Based on our orbital trajectories,  
he reached optimum proximity just  
before our sunset. If we make a

direct run within the hour we're  
only 67,332 miles out. At full  
burn we'd reach him inside of  
three- hours .

**4**

**99.**

She doesn't notice the reactions to her sudden clarity --  
she's still somewhat in her own world.

**WASH**

Still got the Reavers, and  
probably the Alliance between us  
and him.

**ZOE**

It's a fair bet the Alliance knows  
about Mr Universe. They're gonna  
see this coming.

**MAL**

No.

He takes a long moment, his jaw tightening imperceptibly.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

They're not gonna see this coming.

CLOSE ON: One of Serenity's jet engines, as it FIRES up.

**EXT. CITY - AFTERNOON**

Serenity is taking off, leaving the dead place behind.

**INT. MR UNIVERSE'S HQ - CONTINUING**

He's talking with Mal and Wash again, very animated.

**MR UNIVERSE**

It's no problem! Bring it on  
bring it on bring it on! From  
here to the eyes and ears of the  
'verse, that's my motto, or it  
might be if I start having a motto.

**MAL (ON SCREEN)**

We won't be long.

**MR UNIVERSE**

You're gonna get caught in the ion  
cloud, it'll play merry hob with  
your radar, but pretty pretty  
lights and a few miles after  
you'll be right in my orbit.

**MAL (ON SCREEN)**

You'll let us know if anyone else  
comes at you?

**100.**

DROP BACK WIDE to see: The Operative and ten soldiers are in the room, visible to Mr Universe but not to the screen.

**MR UNIVERSE**

You'll be the first.

CLOSE ON: the Operative's sword, as he unsheathes it.

**EXT. SPACE - NIGHT**

We are amongst the Reaver armada. Serenity slices quietly through the ships, as we come around and see Miranda receding in the distance.

Serenity drifts through the armada -- and suddenly another ship fires up, running next to her...

The two ships pace each other, another vessel coming about as though staring at Serenity, who comes closer and closer to frame, till we see the suited corpse draped on the cannon.

It suddenly moves: it's Mal.

He swings the cannon round and fires at the ship pacing them.

It BLOWS, fragmenting into burning bits that spiral into other ships, causing two smaller ones to blow as well.

Mal swings around and fires at another ship.

**EXT. SATELLITE - NIGHT**

In close orbit waits the Alliance force, at least fifty strong, and clearly with high tech firepower. We move in on the Operative's ship, in the middle of the cluster.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

As the Operative waits with the others.

**HELMSMAN**

I'm reading activity in the cloud.

**THE OPERATIVE**

(into com)

Lock and fire on my command.

(to himself)

You should have let me see her.

We should have done this as men.

Not with fire...

**HELMSMAN**

Sir!

,Wd

**101.**

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

It's the Operative's POV: the swirling Ion cloud as Serenity

breaks through and heads at us, fully Reavered out.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

He looks confused, then smiles at the ruse. Hits the com:

**THE OPERATIVE**

Vessel in range, lock on...

**(ADMIRINGLY)**

Bastard's not even changing  
course...

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

As Serenity get a bit closer, FIFTY REAVER SHIPS suddenly  
burst from the cloud, also heading straight at us.

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

The Operative -- and everyone around him -- goes big-eyed.

**THE OPERATIVE**

That's not good...

**HELMSMAN**

**(FREAKING)**

Sir?

**THE OPERATIVE**

Target the Reavers!

(into com)

Target the Reavers! Target  
everyone! Somebody FIRE!

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

Serenity suddenly lists hard to port -- until she's almost  
upside down -- the Alliance ships FIRE, missing Serenity but  
tagging a few Reaver ships, none of whom have slowed down --

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Mal is back on the bridge as we look out at the upside down  
Alliance fleet, missiles just passing us --

**MAL**

We're too close for them to arm --

**ZOE**

This is gonna be very tight --

4

102.

**JAYNE**

**(ENTERING)**

Hey look, we're upside down.

V0 Zoe and Mal shoot a look at Jayne.

**WASH**

(to himself)

I am a leaf on the wind, watch how  
I soar.

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

Serenity slips right under the Operative's ship and ducks and weaves between dozens more. The Reaver force hits the Alliance head on -- and several ships do just that, smashing into bigger ships kamikaze-style, everything exploding -- The fleet mobilizes, blasting Reaver ships, circling around, and an air war begins, a frenzied, balletic ecstasy of destruction that the camera hurtles through as ships and parts of ships fly at and past it.

**ANGLE: SERENITY**

She nearly makes it all the way through the alliance fleet before a barrelling chunk of debris -- which is twice their size -- forces them to come hard about and remain in the fray.

**J INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Mal looks out at the chaos...

**MAL**

Chickens come home to roost...

They are suddenly JOLTED by a glancing blow from another ship -- Wash struggles to control her --

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

The hell --

**WASH**

**(PANICKY)**

It's okay! I am a leaf on the  
wind!

**MAL**

(also panicky)

What does that mean?

**4**

**103.**

**EXT. SPACE - CONTINUING**

Serenity makes her way past the carnage and heads down toward the tiny satellite moon.

**40**

**INT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - CORRIDOR - CONTINUING**

As the vessel shakes, clearly breached, The Operative moves

to a door marked: DART. He puts his thumb to a panel and the door slides up to reveal a standing, almost formfitting one-man cockpit.

**EXT. THE OPERATIVE'S SHIP - CONTINUING**

The Dart disengages and bullets down towards the surface. As it moves from the Operative's ship, we see that a Reaver vessel has smashed into the main viewshield, and the ship is spinning, explosions popping silently all over it.

**EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING**

She continues down, the metallic expanse of Mr Universe's little moon complex sprawling below them. A moment after Serenity blows through frame, so does a Reaver ship. It fires an electronic pulse at Serenity and sparks fly.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

**4 WASH**

We're fried! I got no control!

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUING**

Sparks -- and arcs of electricity -- are everywhere here. Kaylee jumps back as she is electrocuted -- Simon runs in and pulls her out, slams the door shut on the erupting fires.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

**MAL**

Where's the back up? Where's the back up?

He and Wash are frantically flipping buttons -- the ship whirs to a semblance of life --

**ZOE**

Back up reads at 20%..

(to Wash)-

Can you get us down?

**WASH**

I'm gonna have to glide her in!

**40**

**104.**

**ZOE**

Will that work?

**WASH**

140 Long as that landing strip is made of fluffy pillows...

**MAL**

(on the com)

Everybody to the upper decks!

Strap yourselves to something!

**EXT. LANDING STRIP - CONTINUING**

We can see it, a long strip, which halfway along becomes a kind of hanger. Serenity arcs at it uncomfortably fast.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Wash is fighting the stick with extreme concentration as Zoe pulls out a seat as well, straps in.

**INT. AFT HALL - CONTINUING**

Jayne, Simon and Inara pull harnesses not unlike "Batman the Ride" seats from the ceiling, help the others in.

**EXT./INT. LANDING STRIP/HANGER - CONTINUING**

-40 And Serenity HITS the ground -- the landing gear folds and snaps under the weight -- the ship keeps going, now inside the hanger, heading towards the entrance to the facility, slowing, fishtailing and coming about a full one eighty -- it goes beyond the strip and crashes down into the pedestrian area, so that the nose is sticking back out at the runway but the body of the ship is hidden from it.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

There is a moment of quiet.

**WASH**

I am a leaf on the wind. Watch --

A massive harpoon CRASHES through the windshield and impales him to his chair. It's as thick around as a telephone pole. Wash has time to open his mouth in surprise before he is dead.

**WASH!**

She moves to him --

**40**

**105.**

**ZOE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Wash baby baby no, come on, you  
gotta move you gotta move baby  
VW please --

Mal rips her away and to the floor as another projectile slams through the window into the wall above them.

**EXT. LANDING STRIP - CONTINUING**

We see the ship that has fired the harpoons as Reavers start out of it. A second Reaver vessel enters frame from above, about to land next to it.

**EXT. SERENITY - MOMENTS LATER**

The cargo bay door opens -- just the little door housed inside the ramp -- and Jayne comes out with his biggest gun. He looks up, toward the edge of the runway, but no Reavers have arrived yet.

**JAYNE**

Go!

The entire crew piles out, all heavily bedecked with weapons.

**MAL**

Head inside!

**V0**

**INT. BLACK ROOM/INNER HALL - MOMENTS LATER**

A small double-sized doorway leads to the "Black Room", which is the entrance proper to the facility.

Mal hits a button and huge, thick, blast doors open from the sides AND the top and bottom, creating the effect of a square hole getting bigger. The hall itself is smaller than the black room, but still has the arrows on the ceiling, that point to an elevator some fifty feet away.

**MAL**

Come on. Jayne, rearguard.

Zoe slows, looking around her.

**ZOE**

Sir.

(he turns to her)

This is a good hold point\_

**MAL**

We all stay together --

**44**

**106**

**ZOE**

No. They have to come through here; they'll bottleneck and we can thin 'em out. We get pushed ,o0  
back there's the blast doors.

**KAYLEE**

I can rig 'em so they won't re-open once they close.

**MAL**

Then shut 'em and hide til --

**ZOE**

We need to draw them til it's done. This is the place. We'll buy you the time.

**JAYNE**

(to the others)



Move those crates back there for cover -- and make sure they ain't filled with anything goes boom.

**KAYLEE**

Wait, Wash -- where's Wash?  
Nobody (but River) realized he wasn't there. Zoe is dead calm.  
,No ZOE  
He ain't comin'.  
Everybody takes that in, Kaylee's eyes welling up.

**JAYNE**

Move the gorram crates! Come on!  
We hear savage SCREAMS from the hanger -- they're approaching. Mal moves to the door, Jayne beside him.

**ANGLE: HIS POV**

Reavers rush toward them.  
He turns to Jayne.

**MAL**

Tell me you brought 'em this time...  
Jayne smiles grimly, tosses Mal a grenade as he pops his own and fastballs it at the Reavers.

**J**

**107.**

It explodes in their midst, smoke and man-parts flying about. Mal rolls his a shorter distance, then slams the door shut.

**ANGLE: THE GRENADE**

**40**

Explodes, raining a bunch of equipment -- and part of a catwalk -- right in front of the door.  
In the black room, the door nearly buckles from the explosion. Everyone takes positions behind the crates. Zoe stands calmly, her back to the door, loading her sawed-off.

**MAL**

(continuing; moving back to Zoe)  
Zoe... are you here?  
She looks up at him.

**ZOE**

Do the job, sir.

**MAL**

You hold. Hold till I'm back.  
He takes off -- passes Inara, the two of them holding a look for as long as they can. Then he's in the elevator and gone. Jayne moves over to Zoe.

**10**

**JAYNE**

Captain's right. Can't be thinking on revenge if we're gonna

get through this.

**ZOE**

You really think any of us are  
gonna get through this?

He looks back at their army: A companion, a doctor, a  
mechanic and a more-than-usually out of it River. A beat,  
and he looks back at Zoe with forlorn hope:

**JAYNE**

I might...

**INT. MR UNIVERSE'S HQ - MOMENTS LATER**

The elevator stops and Mal makes his way to the island of  
screens and machines in the center of the space.  
The first thing he takes in is that every broadwave port has  
been destroyed. The second:

**1**

**108.**

ANGLE: MR UNIVERSE is lying dead, eyes open, half draped on  
his equally still lovebot. A trail of blood shows he crawled  
from his chair.

**V0**

Mal comes close. Nothing. He starts to move away again and  
the lovebot turns her head, her eyes focusing with an audible  
whir. She speaks with surprisingly realistic expressiveness,  
and a warped, computery version of Mr Universe's voice.

**LOVEBOT**

Mal.

Mal stops.

**LOVEBOT**

**(CONTINUING)**

Guy killed me, Mal. He killed me  
with a sword. How weird is that?  
I got... a short span here... they  
destroyed my equipment but I have  
a back-up unit... bottom of the  
complex, right over the generator.  
Hard to get to. I know they  
missed it. They can't stop the  
signal, Mal. They can never stop  
the signal.

**(BEAT)**

Okay this is painful. On many  
levels. I'm not --

**A0**

She turns back, powering down. Recording over.  
A beat, and Mal takes off.

**INT. BLACK ROOM - CONTINUING**

Inara is on her knees, unwrapping the oilcloth we saw in her

shuttle. River is in the corner, clutching her head.

**RIVER**

I can't shut them up...

**SIMON**

It's okay... -

**RIVER**

They're all made up of rage. I  
can't...

A BANG as a body slams against the door.

**SIMON**

Just stay low. I'm right here.

**4**

**109.**

Jayne moves past them to Zoe, takes position by her.

**JAYNE**

She picked a sweet bung of a time  
to go helpless on us.

**ZOE**

(calls out)

Jayne and I take the first wave.

Nobody shoots less they get past  
our fire.

Simon moves to Kaylee, who is shaky as hell. The bangs on  
the door continue.

**KAYLEE**

Oh, I didn't plan on going out  
like this. I think we did right,  
but...

**SIMON**

I never planned... anything. I  
just wanted to keep River safe.  
Spent so much time on Serenity  
trying to find us a home I never  
realized I already had.  
She looks at him with soft surprise.

**140**

**SIMON**

**(CONTINUING)**

My one true regret in all this is  
never being with you.

**KAYLEE**

With me? You mean to say, as, sex?

**SIMON**

**(SMILES)**

I mean to say.

Kaylee snaps her cartridge home with way more precision than we might expect from her, takes steady aim at the door.

**KAYLEE**

Hell with this. I'm gonna live.

Simon looks at her a moment, then turns his attention to the door.

Inara come up into frame with the contents of the oilcloth: a bow and arrow, which she pulls back with focused grace.

ANGLE: THE DOOR starts to come off its hinges.

4

110.

**INT. MR UNIVERSE'S HQ - CONTINUING**

A panel is kicked in from the ceiling and the Operative drops down, having clearly entered from a different location. He looks around, carrying a laser-pistol. He moves past Mr Universe and Lenore --

**LOVEBOT**

**MAL**

(The Operative turns)

Guy killed me, Mal.

**INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - CONTINUING**

Mal has reached it and surveys the situation.

Before him is a railing, and he can look down on the generator shaft. It's miles deep, with machines rotating and grinding, and arcs of electricity ricocheting around it. On the other side is a platform, with the broadwave console sitting behind a clear plastic partition. Cables and chains run along the ceiling, around a series of ladder rungs.

**MAL**

Hard to get to. That's a fact.

**INT. BLACK ROOM - CONTINUING**

lw

The door is pried partially open -- enough for one Reaver to squeeze through and charge.

Zoe stands up and shoots him in the head. He arcs back hard as the second comes, Zoe shoots him, calmly walking toward the door --

**JAYNE**

Zoe... Gorramnit...

But she is in a trance, and we see beneath the calm, to the bubbling magma of rage that keeps her firing, single shots, each one a kill, till five men down and she's out of ammo. The sixth comes at her swinging a blade and she blocks, the precision of military training still in her as she flips him, wresting the blade free and swinging it down out of frame, bringing it up bloody, swinging again as the door bursts open and she's rushed from behind ---

But Jayne totes an automatic, sprays killing fire on the lot,

moving forward himself --

**J**

**JAYNE**

**(CONTINUING)**

ZOE! Get yer ass back in the line!

vo She looks up, almost confused -- and one of Jayne's targets comes back off the ground and slices at her back with a blade, she screams as he cuts deep -- and an arrow lodges in his neck.

Inara pulls up a fresh arrow, shaking only slightly.

**INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - LATER**

Mal is on the railing, reaching for the 'rungs' on the ceiling just above him. He can almost get them -- one wrong move and he pitches into the jaws of death...

A laser shot nails him in the lower back -- he arches, legs sliding off the rail -- he falls and hits the rail with the backs of his legs, flipping painfully onto his face as he falls, mercifully, back onto the platform.

The Operative comes around some equipment for a closer shot as Mal gets shakily up.

**MAL**

(in pain)

Shot me in the back. I haven't...

made you angry, have I?

I s

**THE OPERATIVE**

There's a lot of innocent people in the air being killed right now.

**MAL**

You have no idea how true that is.

There's no wise-ass attitude in him now. They stand, facing off at ten paces.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

I know the secret now. The truth that burned up River Tam's brain and set you after her. And the rest of the 'verse is gonna know it too. 'Cause they need to.

**THE OPERATIVE**

You really believe that?

**MAL**

I do.

**4**

112.

**THE OPERATIVE**

You willing to die for that belief?

**MAL**

**VØ**

I am.

The Operative raises his gun -- but Mal is the quickdraw master, shoots the gun out of the Operative's hand and gets two hits to the chest (armored) before he makes it to cover.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Of course, that ain't exactly plan

**A..**

He drops out his cartridge and slams another in. The Operative hides behind some machinery. Tries to peek out at Mal -- and more shots send him scrambling back to cover. Mal holsters his gun and jumps for the rung above him, starts going hand over hand to the island, moving as fast as he can. The Operative sees his moment, dives for his gun -- but it's been ruined by Mal's shot. He looks over at Mal with death in his eyes. He runs at the railing, vaults off it, and grabs a chain -- it snaps and he swings, grabbing another. He reaches Mal and double kicks him from behind -- Mal flies 4 off the rung but grabs a chain -- he tries to kick at the Operative, but the guy is frikkin' Tarzan, he climbs up and pulls a lever releasing one end of Mal's chain -- Mal goes swinging, smacks into the wall six feet below the platform. He scrambles up just as the Operative swings himself toward the platform from above.

**INT. BLACK ROOM/INNER CORRIDOR - CONTINUING**

Jayne is still firing continuously as he drags Zoe back to the barricades. Simon moves to help -- Kaylee firing now, squinting with effort -- and pulls open the cut back of Zoe's shirt, checks the wound.

**SIMON**

Spine's intact --

**ZOE**

Just gimme a bandage.

Simon pulls a spraycan from his bag, sprays the wound with a foam that hardens instantly into an elastic covering.

40

113.

There are a few gun shots (as well as nail-balls and blades) from the Reavers. Jayne switches weapons, tossing another to

Zoe and opening fire --

**A0**

**JAYNE**

Oh, now you're likin' guns, huh?

Cheaters!

He takes a hit in the shoulder, grimaces and keeps firing. River watches, the gun limp in her hand. Kaylee grabs it and starts another round -- but she's peppered with dart-like projectiles. She screams and drops the weapon, pulling the projectiles from her -- Inara helps her up, pulls her back as Zoe shouts:

**ZOE**

Everybody fall back! Fall back!

Everyone stumbles or is dragged into the inner corridor.

Inara hits the controls and the doors start to close, from each side and above and below. Then, when the hole is maybe four by four, they stop.

**ZOE**

**(CONTINUING)**

Jayne! Grenade!

**JAYNE**

Very last one...

He tosses it through the hole. Zoe doesn't even flinch from the blast as she thinks.

**ZOE**

They're gonna get in --

**KAYLEE**

Can close it... from outside...

**ZOE**

No one's coming back from that...

She tries to stand, fails.

**ZOE**

**(CONTINUING)**

How much ammo do we have?

**JAYNE**

We got three full cartridges and

my swingin' cod. That's all.

Inara is by the elevator, pounding for it to come.---

**40**

**114.**

**INARA**

Lift isn't moving...

**ZOE**

When they come, try to plug the hole with 'em...

Kaylee cries out and Simon moves to her.

**KAYLEE**

I'm starting to lose some feeling here... I think there's something in them darts they throw'd at me.

**SIMON**

Lie still. I'm gonna give you something to counteract the -- He stands, looking around him. His bag is over by Zoe.

**SIMON**

**(CONTINUING)**

My bag.  
and SHKOWW!, the bullet takes him in the belly -- everything suddenly moving very slowly as he spins slightly, one foot lifted, a confused expression on his face -- then speeding right back up as he slams down on his back, gasping for air. River's mouth opens in a scream she doesn't make. Blood spreads from Simon's belly. Inara rushes to him, grabs cloth and puts pressure on the wound, puts Simon's hand on it.

**INARA**

Keep pressure here...

**SIMON**

My bag. Need... adrenaline... and a shot of calaphar for Kaylee... I can't... River...?  
She is by his side, takes his hand. She has a kind of serenity to her, like she understands something now.

**SIMON**

**(CONTINUING)**

River... I'm sorry...

**RIVER**

No. No.  
The lights go out. Everyone looks about them. Jayne fires again, but all the sound has bled out save these two.

4

115.

**SIMON**

I hate to... leave...

**RIVER**

You won't. You take care of me, Simon. You've always taken care of me.  
She stands as the emergency lights come on, giving her face an unearthly glow as she looks down at him.

**RIVER**

**(CONTINUING)**



My turn.

She's running so fast, nobody has time to react til she DIVES through the hole in the doors, then Simon SCREAMS her name, the scream following us back into the Black Room where River lands in a perfect roll, comes up in a room full of Reavers. Without a moment's hesitation she makes it to the panel, gets the doors closing. She dodges a blade, but a blow to the back of the head shakes her. She weaves around a couple of Reavers to get to the closing doors, but at the last second her ankle is grabbed and pulled out from under her. The last thing we see is her being dragged back as they swarm over her.

ANGLE: THE BLAST DOORS, as they shut with a shuddering RLUNG.

#### **INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - CONTINUING**

Mal gets up the chain to the platform. The Operative is on Mal before he gets his footing, tackles him as Mal's gun goes skittering over the edge into oblivion. There is a railing here or Mal would go over as well -- but he comes back with a couple of hammer blows, gets the Operative off him. They square off, Mal stumbling back into a tool chest, knocking over tools and computer parts.

The Operative reaches behind him and pulls his sword gracefully from the holster under his jacket.

Mal produces his weapon: a tiny screwdriver.

He hurls a toolbox at the Operative and rushes him, gets inside sword range and tries for the neck with the screwdriver -- the Operative blocks it and works the sword point against the edge of Mal's stomach. Starts pushing slowly, despite Mal's resistance, and breaks skin.

**MO**

**116.**

Mal looks at the Operative a moment -- and the sword slides all the way through Mal's belly. Mal's eyes go wide.

#### **THE OPERATIVE**

You know what your sin is, Malcolm?

**MAL**

(shaky smile)

Aw hell, I'm a fan of all seven.

He headbutts the Operative viciously, then punches him so hard he staggers back, losing his grip on the sword. The Operative responds with a spin kick -- Mal holds up the screwdriver and the Operative swings his foot right into it, gasping as Mal pulls the screwdriver -- and leg it's stuck in -- back as he rockets his fist into the Operative's chin. The Operative goes down hard, dazed, as Mal grabs the sword still in his belly.

**MAL**

#### **(CONTINUING)**

But right now...

He pulls the sword out, grimacing. Holds it over the Operative. The smile gone.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

vao I'm gonna have to go with Wrath.  
He stabs down at his foe's face -- but the Operative rolls out of the way, kicks Mal from the ground and is up in a second, grabbing Mal's sword hand -- the sword drops -- and punching him repeatedly in his stomach wound.

**INT. INNER HALL - CONTINUING**

The gang is subdued -- because they are all of them injured and Simon is slipping away. Jayne looks at Zoe.

**JAYNE**

You suppose he got through? Think  
Mal got the word out?

**ZOE**

(almost convincingly)  
He got through. I know he got  
through.

**VO**

**117.**

**INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - CONTINUING**

Mal goes down hard, spitting up blood. He sees the sword, moves -- but the Operative kicks him in the face. Picks him  
lod up, Mal too tired to throw a decent punch.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I'm sorry.

The Operative spins him and DIGS his bunched fingers right into the same nerve cluster that he paralyzed Doctor Mathias with. Mal goes rigid, his face a rictus of pain.  
The Operative goes near the railing and retrieves his sword.  
Mal trembles, trying to move -- but nothing happens.

**THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

You should know there's no shame  
in this. You've done remarkable  
things. But you're fighting a war  
you've already lost.

He lunges -- and Mal twists gracefully out of the way, grabbing the Operative's swordhand and pulling it forward -- while driving his elbow into the Operative's neck with staggering force.

**MAL**

Iwo Well, I'm known for that.

The Operative drops the blade, mouth open, stumbling back, unable to make a sound.

Mal spins him, grabbing both his arms and working his own through them in a twisted full nelson -- then bringing his arms up suddenly, the Operative's mouth going wider as we hear his arms crack.

Mal drops him sitting against the railing, picks up his

sword, saying:

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Piece a shrapnel tore up that  
nerve cluster my first tour. Had  
it moved.  
He squats down, looks the Operative in the face.

**V0**

**118.**

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Sorry 'bout the throat. Expect  
you'd wanna say your famous last  
MW words now. Just one trouble.  
He reaches over the railing, pulls the back of the  
Operative's jacket through and shoves the sword through the  
fabric, pinning the Operative in his sitting position.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

I ain't gonna kill you.  
He moves to the console, starts prepping it.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

Hell, I'm gonna grant your  
greatest wish.  
He inserts the cylinder, turns it slightly. It hums to life.

**MAL**

**(CONTINUING)**

I'm gonna show you a world without  
sin.  
He hits "send all". The cylinder lights up and the broadcast  
V0 begins. Here it is projected as a two-dimensional image on  
the clear plastic partition, right in front of the Operative.  
There are images first of the city -- of bodies, on the  
street, in homes and offices... image after image, just as  
we saw on the research vessel -- and in River's mind.

**CARON (V.0.)**

These are some of the first sites  
we scouted on Miranda. There is  
no one living on this planet.  
There is no one...  
Mal hits the controls and a ramp extends towards the other  
side. He begins to cross. Never even looks back.  
On the Operative, trapped, watching in growing horror...

**INT. BLACK ROOM - CONTINUING**

CLOSE ON: A Reaver in EXTREME SLOW MOTION. Face full of

fury, he is swinging his blade in a frenzy of hate.  
And a small hand smashes that face so hard that teeth fly --  
the Reaver clearing frame to reveal:

4

**119.**

River.

She is bloodied, but not killed. She's as she was in the bar -- moving faster and more efficiently than anyone can, ducking and weaving and gutting and kicking and there are piles of Reavers already, she never breaks concentration as she uses their own blades against them, throws them, does everything in her power to stay one step ahead of -- or above -- the mob.

She slams backwards into a wall opposite the blast doors -- and a grappling hook punches through it, just missing her.

**INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - CONTINUING**

The Operative watches the end of the broadcast. We are on his face through the clear plastic, so the images projected on it blur right before him: the Reaver, Dr. Caron -- and her screaming doesn't stop til something is shoved in her mouth.

**INT. INNER HALL - CONTINUING**

The gang is still trying to patch themselves together when the elevator doors open. Mal staggers out, holding his bleeding side.

**ZOE**

Sir?

**140 MAL**

It's done. Report?

Zoe looks at the badly wounded Simon, is about to give a report -- and the doors start to open behind her.

Everyone turns to look, those who can feebly raising weapons, as the square iris of the opening blast doors widens to reveal River, standing alone. She is holding two Reaver blades, is bloody but unbowed. And the only one alive. We hold on her a moment, then the wall behind her is ripped completely away.

Behind it, grappling hooks chained to a huge tractor pull the wall away as through the smoke come some fifteen Alliance soldiers, who line up, rifles trained on our gang...

**SOLDIER**

Drop your weapons! Drop 'em now!

**ANOTHER SOLDIER**

Do we engage? Do we engage?

4

**120.**

Mal and the others tense up. River turns slowly to face the soldiers, blades still gripped... A soldier levels his gun at her, sweaty and frantic... others still shouting...  
vp INT. BASEMENT, OVER THE GENERATOR - CONTINUING  
The Operative sits in silence, the voices coming over his com:

**SOLDIER (O.S.)**

Targets are acquired! Do we have  
a kill order? Do we have an order?

**INT. BLACK ROOM - CONTINUING**

**CLOSE ON: THE SOLDIER'S FINGER, SQUEEZING THE TRIGGER...**

**BLACK OUT.**

**EXT. DESERT PLANET - SUNSET**

We are close on a gravestone. It is rounded, looks more like a bell than a headstone. It is topped by a jar built into the stone. The jar is weathered tin at top and bottom, but glass in the middle. Inside the glass we can see one of those slightly moving photos. It is of Mr Universe and his lovebot, and the name Mr Universe is carved roughly in the stone beneath.

The camera moves to the right and we see another such stone, 40 this one bearing the image and inscription: Shepherd Derrial Book.

The third is Hoban Washburne. Wash.

The camera continues moving right, but the next stone houses a small home-made rocket with pieces of paper taped to it instead of a picture-jar. And fixing another slip of paper to it is River.

She moves away from the stone as Mal does likewise. They're flanked by the crew: Jayne, Inara (to whom Mal moves), Simon, who stands holding River before him and hand in hand with Kaylee. He has a crutch supporting his other side. There is a moment, then they all move aside, saying nothing. Between them walks Zoe, in a simple white funeral gown, holding a burning taper.

She stands at the stones a moment, then holds the taper to the rocket fuse. Stands back with the others.

The rocket shoots up into the darkening sky. They all watch its sputtering tail a moment, then it it explodes in a series of fireworks.

**40**

**121.**

WIDE ON the group, as the fireworks go off over their heads. We are close on another explosion when it becomes:  
CLOSE ON: A BLOWTORCH spitting sparks. Widen to see:

**EXT. REPAIR YARD/SERENITY - DAY**

Zoe is harnessed to the nose of the ship, welding on a

replacement for the very window the harpoon that impaled Wash came through.

**INT. DUCT INSIDE SERENITY - DAY**

We are close on River as she works inside a crawlspace just above the engine room, replacing wires. Some of them run to a computer screen that she checks and adjusts.

**EXT. REPAIR YARD/TOP OF SERENITY - DAY**

Mal and Jayne hold onto the cannon as a crane is lifting it off the top of the ship.  
Close on Mal as he watches it go...

**WIDER ANGLE:**

**EXT. REPAIR YARD - CONTINUING**

t f o And here we see the whole ship for the first time, harnessed by the wings above the ground so she can be worked on all over. The cannon is being hoisted away from her as a crew of repairmen wheel new landing gear under her belly.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - DAY**

Kaylee, deeply greasy, tweaks a part on the engine and crosses to the back where Simon, shirtless and not entirely ungreasy himself, is wrenching a bolt into place above his head. A moment looking at him and she can't help herself - she slides her arms around his chest...

**EXT. SERENITY - DAY**

On a scaffold, Inara repaints the name on the nose with elegant precision.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - DAY**

Kaylee and Simon are just making out like fiends, work completely forgotten. With nothing resembling elegant precision, they sink out of frame to the floor.

**V0**

**122.**

A beat, and River's head appears from the crawlspace above, looking down at them with detached curiosity.

**EXT. REPAIR YARD/SERENITY - DAY**

It's raining as Mal is hauling in the last of the repair equipment. The camera moves around him, skirting the ground of the junkyard, till it lands on a figure in foreground, standing watching him from some twenty feet away.  
Mal stops, doesn't turn. Hand near his gun.

**MAL**

If you're here to tell me we ain't finished... then we will be real quick.

The Operative stands just under the canopy of the nose of the ship, framed by the rain behind.

**THE OPERATIVE**

Do you know what an uproar you've caused? Protests, riots -- cries for a recall of the entire Parliament.

**MAL**

**(TURNING)**

We've seen the broadwaves.

**THE OPERATIVE**

You must be pleased.

**MAL**

'Verse wakes up a spell. Won't be long 'fore she rolls right over and falls back asleep. Taint my worry.

**THE OPERATIVE**

I can't guarantee they won't come after you. The Parliament. They have a hundred men like me and they are not forgiving.

**MAL**

That don't bode especially well for you... giving the order to let us go, patching up our hurt...

**THE OPERATIVE**

I told them the Tams were no longer a threat -- damage done.

**(MORE)**

**VO**

**123.**

**THE OPERATIVE (cont'd)**

They might listen, but... I think they know I'm no longer their man.

**W MAL**

They take you down, I don't expect to grieve overmuch. Like to kill you myself, I see you again.

**THE OPERATIVE**

You won't. There is...

(small, grim smile)

.nothing left to see.

Mal looks at him a moment, then picks up his gear to head inside. The Operative starts away into the rain, then stops to look up at the nose of the ship.

**ANGLE:** the newly painted Serenity, standing tall in the rain.

## **THE OPERATIVE**

**(CONTINUING)**

"Serenity". You lost everything in that battle. Everything you had, everything you were... how did you go on?

Mal hits the button to close the inner doors, steps inside as they slide together. Glances at the Operative, unimpressed.

**VAO**

**MAL**

You still standing there when the engine starts, you never will figure it out.

The Operative watches the door shut. A moment, and he goes.

## **INT. CARGO BAY – CONTINUING**

Mal stows the gear as Zoe approaches.

**MAL**

(to himself)  
What a whiner...

**ZOE**

Sir, we have a green light. Inspection's pos and we're clear for upthrust.

**MAL**

Think she'll hold together?

**J**

**124.**

**ZOE**

She's tore up plenty. But she'll fly true.

**VW**

A beat between them before:

**MAL**

Make sure everything's secure. Could be bumpy.

**ZOE**

Always is.  
She takes off and Mal heads up the stairs.

## **INT. FOREDECK HALL – CONTINUING**

Mal comes in and runs into Inara. Jayne passes through as they talk, heading down into his bunk. Pays them no mind. Neither do Simon and Kaylee, in the dining room stowing supplies.

**MAL**



We're taking her out. Should be about a day's ride to get you back to your girls.

**INARA**  
Right.

**VW**

**MAL**  
(moving past her)  
You ready to get off this heap and back to a civilized life?

**INARA**  
I, uh...  
(he stops)  
I don't know.  
He looks at her, a smile in his eyes.

**MAL**  
Good answer.  
He turns and heads into the bridge.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Mal eases himself into his seat. Takes a moment to adjust one of Wash's dashboard dinosaurs, then looks to his left.

**4**

**125.**

**MAL**  
You gonna ride shotgun, help me fly?  
V0 River is in the copilot's seat, looking intently at the screens and buttons.

**RIVER**  
That's the plan.

**MAL**  
Think you can work out how to get her in the --  
She is flipping switches without even looking, as the ship hums to life.

**EXT. SERENITY - CONTINUING**

Her engines fire up and tilt. She lifts gently off the ground.

**INT. BRIDGE - CONTINUING**

Mal looks slightly, only slightly nonplussed.

**MAL**  
Okay, clearly some aptitude for the... but it ain't all buttons A0 and charts, .

You know what the first rule of flying is? Well, I suppose you do, since you already know what I'm about to say.

**RIVER**

I do. But I like to hear you say it.

He looks out at the rain on his windows, at his screens, taking her up as he says:

**MAL**

Love. You can learn all the math in the 'verse, but you take a boat in the air you don't love, she'll shake you off just as sure as the turning of worlds. Love keeps her in the air when she oughta fall down, tells you she's hurting 'fore she keens. Makes her a home. River also looks out at the sky.

126.

**RIVER**

Storm's getting worse.

**MAL**

We'll pass through it soon enough.

**EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUING**

As we shoot up with her through sheeting rain, towards the top of the sky.

**EXT. SPACE – MOMENTS LATER**

We are looking down on the stormclouds as Serenity bursts out of them, comes at us, flared by the sun behind the planet as she passes us, her Firefly effect lighting up, about to shoot off into the heavens —

There is a spark and a piece of paneling pops off, whips at camera, blacking out the frame.

**MAL (O. S. )**

What was that?

**THE END**



**Serenity**

Writers : [Joss Whedon](#)

Genres : [Action](#) [Adventure](#) [Sci-Fi](#) [Thriller](#)

[User Comments](#)



[Index](#) | [Submit](#) | [Link to IMSDb](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Contact](#)