INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

MAL
We're dead.

ZOE
I believe we still have a shot, sir.

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

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

MAL
Fair.

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

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
WASH
Somebody cover my wife.

JAYNE
(has appeared at his side)
Everytime you ain't lookin'.

Jayne moves off. Wash to Kaylee:

WASH
He's dampening my team spirit.

Kaylee has noticed --

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

KAYLEE
Gimme the ball.

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

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

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

MAL
There's a point.

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

INARA emerges from her shuttle. Smiles at the camaraderie.

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

KAYLEE
Ah! Jayne!

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

(CONTINUED)
-- Inara is moving along the catwalk, over to:

    SIMON
    Hello.

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

    INARA
    Who's winning?

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

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

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

    INARA (cont'd)
    How is she?

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

    INARA
    Don't we all.

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

    INARA
    Perhaps she's not sure herself.

    SIMON
    She dreams about it. I know that
    much. Nightmares. I can't begin to
    imagine what the government...
    (then)
    You know I supported Unification?
INARA
So did I.

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

INARA
Things are better for a great many.

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

INARA
They're good people.

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

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

SIMON
I "selflessly" turned us both into wanted fugitives.

INARA
(a wistful smile)
Well. We're all running from something, I suppose.

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

The game is halted as everyone reacts to the BEEPING.
ZOE
Proximity alert. Must be comin' up on somethin'...

WASH
Oh, gawd! What could it beee? We're dooomed! Who's flyin' this thing?
(then, deadpan)
Oh. Right. That'd be me. Back to work.

He tosses the ball to the others, heads off.

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

JAYNE
Little Kaylee's always a "man short."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The entire gang, Mal leading, appears.

MAL
Wash, you have a stroke or something?

WASH
Near enough.

ZOE
What happened...?

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

JAYNE
(in Chinese)
Mother of god. [Wuh de ma.]

MAL
Anyone home?

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

MAL
Bring us in a little closer.

WASH
Get you close enough to ring the doorbell.

SIMON
What is it?

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

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

RIVER
Ghosts.

Off that --

BLACK OUT.

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

MAL
So what do we figure? Transport ship?

WASH
(nods)
Converted cargo hauler or short range scow, maybe.

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

SIMON
A short range vessel? This far out into space?

WASH
Retrofitted to carry passengers.

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

BOOK
(realizing)
Settlers.

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

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

WASH
You're a very "up" person.

BOOK
Shouldn't we report this?

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

BOOK
Then we'll have to.

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

KAYLEE
You can't know that for sure.

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

ZOE
(to Mal)
It's true. There's no beacon.

MAL
(taking her meaning)
Which means it's likely nobody's
looking to find 'er.

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

JAYNE
How 'bout you just say a prayer
while we slide on by? That oughta
do it.
Shall I remind you of the story of the Good Samaritan?

Rather you didn't.

But we will check it out.

So we a search and rescue tug now?

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

(hadn't thought of that)

Right. Yeah... No. Someone could be hurt.

(as he goes)

Wash, hook us up.

EXT. SPACE

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

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

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

Where you think you're headed?

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

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

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

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

JAYNE (cont’d)
Somethin' wrong?

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY/AIRLOCK

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

INT. SERENITY - AIRLOCK

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

(CONTINUED)
MAL
Okay, Wash. Ask Serenity to knock for us.

WASH (O.S.)
Just as nice as you please...

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

INT. DERELICT

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

MAL
Emergency power's up. Dashboard light.

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

INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL

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

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

MAL
Whatever happened here happened quick.

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

INT. DERELICT - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

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

(CONTINUED)
ZOE

Everything was left on... Ship powered down on its own.
(continues looking)
No sign of struggle. Just --

MAL

-- gone.

As Zoe moves to the control panels:

ZOE (cont'd)

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

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

INT. SERENITY - RIVER'S QUARTERS

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

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

SIMON

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

RIVER

(shakes her head "no")
No. Can't sleep. Too much screaming.

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

SIMON

River. There is no screaming.

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

RIVER

There was.

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

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

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

SIMON
They've found survivors?

JAYNE
(shrugs)
Didn't say.

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

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

And he exits. Off Simon --

INT. DERELICT

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

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

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

INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL

As Simon continues his tense passage.

INT. DERELICT - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

MAL
What are you doing here?
(also)
And what's with the suit?

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

SIMON
(glaring at Jayne)
Oh, you're hilarious. Sadist.

MAL
(forces back his own smile)
Alright. That's enough. We ain't got time for games.
(to Simon)
Long as you're here, you might as well lend a hand. You can run with Kaylee.

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

MAL (cont’d)
Let's do this quick, people. Coupla loads each. No need to be greedy.

SIMON
Where are all the people?

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

They head off. As they go:

KAYLEE
(re: helmet)
You had this on wrong.

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

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

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

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS
Up on the screen, ship schematics. Wash scrolls through.

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

MAL (O.S.)
Good work. Keep the motor running. Won't be long.

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

BOOK
Can't say I much care for this business.

WASH
It's abandoned, Shepherd.

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

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

Book smiles unhappily at the attitude.
Inara approaches River's quarters with a tray of food. Knocks. No answer.

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

She pushes the door open...

**INARA (cont’d)**
I brought you a little...

Inara reacts. The room is empty.

**INARA (cont’d)**
River?

Off the empty room --

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

Mal and Zoe arrive at a storage door.

**MAL**
This'd be it.

**ZOE**
(tries it)
Locked.

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

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

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

*(CONTINUED)*
SIMON
Aren't you the least bit curious?

KAYLEE
'bout what?

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

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

SIMON
What?

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

SIMON
Well, that makes it even more...

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

She starts tossing pieces in, as --

INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL

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

INT. DERELICT - PASSAGEWAYS

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

INT. DERELICT - STORAGE ROOM


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

MAL
Here --

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

MAL (cont’d)
Gen-seed, protein, crop supplements. Everything a growing family needs for a fresh start on a new world.

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

MAL
...about a fortune.
(rising)
We forget the rest and just take this stuff. We'll need a hand hauling it out of here.

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

MAL
(looking past her)
No one escaped...

ZOE
Sir?

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

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

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

THE BODIES

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

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

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

River starts to wander in.

MAL (cont’d)
(re: River)
Keep her out of here.

Zoe moves to do that, as --

MAL (cont’d)
(into transmitter)
Jayne --

INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL
Jayne gorges and gathers -- Mal's voice from his transmitter.

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

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

MAL (O.S.)(cont’d)
Jayne? Jayne, do you read? Jayne?!

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

26 EXT. SPACE
Serenity still attached to the rotating derelict, as --

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

WASH
Captain? Captain?
(then)
Zoe?

More GUNFIRE.

28 INT. DERELICT - PASSAGEWAYS
Mal and Zoe, who is steering River by the shoulders, emerge. Mal has his gun out. So does Zoe.

ZOE
Came from above, Sir.

MAL
Galley --

They start to move but nearly collide with --

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

KAYLEE
We heard shootin' --

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

RIVER
I followed the voices.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. DERELICT - MESS HALL

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

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

MAL
What'd you see?

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

Simon has entered with Kaylee and River.

SIMON
You did...

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

WALL GRATE
Mal's face appears. He squints at --

A YOUNG MAN

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

SURVIVOR
(muttering)
Mercy... mercy... no. Mercy.

MAL
Easy, now. Nobody's gonna hurt you.
(noticing gunshot wound in arm)
Anymore than we already did...

SURVIVOR
No mercy...

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

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

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

SIMON
(to Jayne)
Oh, yes. He's a real beast. It's a wonder you're still alive.

JAYNE
(confounded)
Looked bigger when I couldn't see him.

MAL
(grim)
Let's get him out of here.

INT. SERENITY - OUTSIDE INFIRMARY
In the common area are Inara, Kaylee, Jayne, Zoe, Wash. Book is there, too, sitting, clutching his Bible. Kaylee and Inara are watching as inside the infirmary Simon can be seen tending to the Survivor, Mal over his shoulder.
INARA
I wonder how long he'd been living like that?

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

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

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

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

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

SURVIVOR
Weak. They were all weak.

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

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

SURVIVOR
Cattle. Cattle for the slaughter.

MAL
Dope him.

(CONTINUED)
SIMON
I don't think that's --

MAL
Just do it.

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

SURVIVOR
No mercy... No resistance...

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

SURVIVOR (cont’d)
Open up. See what's inside.

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

MAL
Let's chat.

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

OUTSIDE INFIRMARY DOOR

As Simon appears here, he looks to Inara.

SIMON
River?

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

SIMON
Thank you.

KAYLEE
So? How's our patient?

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

BOOK
(some relief)
So he'll live, then?

(CONTINUED)
SIMON
Yes.

MAL
Which, to my mind, is unfortunate.

The others react, surprised.

BOOK
Not a very charitable attitude, Captain.

MAL
Charity'd be putting a bullet in his brainpan.

INARA
Mal!

MAL
Only save him the suffering.

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

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

SIMON
What do you mean?

MAL
That ship was hit by Reavers.

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

JAYNE
(fear)
Reavers...

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

WASH
Crap. [Tzao gao.]

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

INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

(CONTINUED)
INARA
Mal, how can you know?

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

Mal sips his coffee. Whatever you say.

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

KAYLEE
A second ago you were saying --

JAYNE
Don't matter what I said.

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

WASH
He was the lucky one?

MAL
Luckier'n the rest.

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

MAL
Strictly speaking -- wouldn't say they did.

BOOK
What are you suggesting?

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

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

(CONTINUED)
JAYNE
Reavers ain't men.

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

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

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

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

WASH
Have to say I was kinda wondering that myself.

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

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

ZOE
(stop your blubbering)
Jayne. You'll scare the women.

SIMON
I'll go.

They all look at him.

SIMON (cont’d)
I've dealt with bodies. They don't worry me.

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

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

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

MAL
(considers)
Alright. You go say your words. (then)
Jayne, you'll help the doctor and Shepherd Book cut down those people. Then you'll load up the cargo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
KAYLEE
That was real pretty, Captain.
What you said.

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

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

ZOE
Sir?

CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

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

MAL
It's a real burden being right so
often.

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

WASH
What is it?

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

WASH
And when we detach --

MAL
-- it blows.

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

ZOE
What? Reavers come back?
Kaylee's been studying the image on the vid screen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE
River, who is sleeping in Inara's bed. Her sleep becomes more and more fitful. Nearby, Inara reads a book, not yet noticing River's sleep become more and agitated, as...
INT. SERENITY - INNARDS

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

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

INT. DERELICT - STORAGE

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

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

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE

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

INT. SERENITY - INFIRMARY

The patient's eyes SNAP OPEN.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Kaylee working on the booby trap.

-- Wash handing her down more tools.

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

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

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE

River's really thrashing now. Inara goes to her, gathers her in her arms, holds her close, tries to soothe her. River starts to clam, but GASPS with a START as...
A drawer of SURGICAL TOOLS hits the floor, and with it returns the SYNCH SOUND. A HAND reaches in, picks up one of the more evocative and lethal looking surgical tools.

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

JAYNE
What's going on?

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

She nods her little greased smudged face.

KAYLEE
Not a gorram thing.


JAYNE
Looks like a thing to me.

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

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

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

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

We HEAR the start of the detaching process.
As the two ships come apart, harmless remnants of the booby trap tearing away.

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

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

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

MAL
(already on the move)
Get that stuff stored.

JAYNE
Like it's gonna matter.

MAL
Just do it!

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

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

MAL
Reavers?

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

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

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Firefly class transport, you are ordered to release control of your helm. Prepare to dock and be boarded.

(CONTINUED)
MAL
Looks like civilization's finally
captured us...

EXT. SPACE
Serenity dwarfed by the looming Alliance Cruiser.
And coming off the Alliance ship: several smaller GUNSHIPS,
swarming around Serenity --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER

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

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

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

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

A RADIO OPERATOR sits at a communications station speaks:

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

HARKEN
Check.

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

HARKEN
What are they wanted for?

RADIO OPERATOR
Not available. It's classified.

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

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

JAYNE
What was it? Was it Reavers?

MAL
Open the stash, pull out the goods.

JAYNE
What? Just got done putting it all in --

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

JAYNE
Why for?

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

SIMON
No...

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

INARA
What's happening?

KAYLEE
Alliance. We're being boarded.

INARA
Oh, no.

Zoe and Wash help Book and Jayne with the goods. Simon's in a bit of shock.
SIMON
We've gotta run...

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

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

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

WASH
Or the right one.

MAL
That, too.
(turns to Simon)
Now run fetch your sister.

A beat. Simon suddenly becomes suspicious.

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

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

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

JAYNE
I knew there was a reason!

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

BOOK
(steps forward)
Don't be a fool, son. Do as the man says.
As Serenity attaches to the bottom of the Alliance Cruiser, just a little bump now on the big ship.

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

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

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

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

HARKEN
Is this your vessel?

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

HARKEN
And is this everyone, captain?

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

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

MAL (cont’d)
(calling back)
Straight back, next to the common area.

HARKEN
(re: the goods)
And these items -- I take it you "rescued" them as well?
The two Alliance Soldiers force open the infirmary door. The operating table is empty. The place is a wreck. They look over, see something that WE DON'T. One of them turns away, loses his lunch right there. The other one reacts with similar, though less colorful, disgust. Off that --

Harken eyes the "line up."

HARKEN
Looks to me like an illegal salvage operation.

MAL
Does it? That's discouraging.

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

MAL
No children on this boat.

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

MAL
I misunderstood.

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

MAL
Do they?

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

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

HARKEN (cont’d)
We'll continue this conversation in a more official capacity.

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

HARKEN (cont’d)
Every inch of this junker gets tossed.

KAYLEE
(as they go)
Junker?!

MAL
Settle down, Kaylee.

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

MAL
Shut up.

INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS/VARIOUS

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

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

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE

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

HARKEN (O.S.)
You're a Companion.

(CONTINUED)
INARA (O.S.)
Yes.

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

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

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

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

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

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

HARKEN
And do you love him?

TIME CUT TO:

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

Zoe sitting rigidly in the interrogation room.

ZOE
I don't see how that's relevant.

(CONTINUED)
HARKEN
Well, he is your husband.

ZOE
Yes.

INT. SERENITY - ZOE AND WASH'S ROOM
SOLDIERS moving in here, examining the evidence of Wash and Zoe's private life together...

HARKEN (V.O.)
You two met through Captain Reynolds?

ZOE (V.O.)
Captain was looking for a pilot, I found a husband. Seemed to work out.

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM
HARKEN
You fought with Captain Reynolds in the war.

ZOE
Fought with a lot of people in the war.

HARKEN
And your husband?

ZOE
Fight with him sometimes, too.

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

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

TIME CUT TO:
INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

Wash looking much more relaxed in the interrogation.

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

INT. SERENITY - VARIOUS

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

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

Still indignant.

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

TIME CUT TO:

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

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

INT. SERENITY - JAYNE'S ROOM

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

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

70 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

KAYLEE
She ain't "junk."

71 INT. SERENITY - BOOK'S ROOM

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

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

72 INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

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

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

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

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

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

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

BOOK
That's true.

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

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

BOOK (V.O.)
That a fact?

HARKEN (V.O.)
They also left port aboard a Firefly class transport. Just about the time you shipped out with Serenity.

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

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

BOOK
Well, Persephone's a big place.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGAUTION ROOM

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

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

HARKEN
Yes. Terrible thing.

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

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

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

Harken finally looks at Mal.

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

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

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

(MORE)
HARKEN (cont'd)
Battle of Serenity Valley took place there, if I recall.

MAL
(now let me think)
You know, I believe you may be right.

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

MAL
Hmmm.

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

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

HARKEN
Is that why you attacked that transport?

MAL
What -- ?

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

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

HARKEN
I'd ask him... but I imagine he'll have some trouble speaking with his tongue split down the middle.
MAL
(realizing)
Dear god in heaven. [Wuh de tyen, ah.]

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

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

MAL
(to himself)
Shoulda known... shoulda seen this comin'...

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

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

Off that --

INT. ALLIANCE SHIP - INIRMARY

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

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

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
Harken stares at Mal. Harken's unimpressed as he says:

HARKEN
Reavers?

MAL
That's what I said.

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

MAL
It's the truth.

HARKEN
You saw them, did you?

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

HARKEN
No. Of course not.

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

HARKEN
"It?"

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

HARKEN
Very poetic.

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

(MORE)

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

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

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

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

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

Off Mal's frustration...

INT. SERENITY - FOREDECK HALL

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

RIVER
Let's go again.

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

RIVER
(sensing something)
He's coming back.

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

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

INT. ALLIANCE CRUISER - INTERROGATION ROOM

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

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

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

HARKEN (cont’d)
(re: Mal)
Get him out of here.
(to Ensign)
Go to full lock down. I want
guards on the nursery --

As Mal's hustled toward the door:

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

Harken meets Mal's gaze, a little lost.

MAL (cont’d)
But I know where he'll go.

CUT TO:

INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS - CONTINUOUS

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

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

But she won't.
SIMON (cont’d)
We don’t know how long it’s going to be. Once we’re settled, I don’t think we should move around much. I’ll just grab some some food and...

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

...past scattered KITCHEN CUTLERY...

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

83 INT. ALLIANCE SHIP - AIRLOCK/DOOR TO SERENITY
A DEAD GUARD marks the way of the killer. Mal is there with Harken and armed M.P.s

HARKEN
Why would he come back here?

MAL
Looking for familiar ground. He’s on the hunt.

HARKEN
Alright.

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

HARKEN (cont’d)
(to an M.P.)
Get him to the brig.

MAL
You should let me go with you.

HARKEN
Out of the question.

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

Harken considers that for a beat, then --

HARKEN
We’ll let him go first.

(CONTINUED)
(oh, good)
Great.

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

MAL (cont’d)
Uh -- ?

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

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

HARKEN
(to his men)
Open it.

As his men move to do that --

INT. SERENITY - PASSAGEWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Simulation and River

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

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

SIMON
Someone's coming...

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

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

Mal leads Harken and his men into the cargo bay.

HARKEN
(hushed)
We'll split up --

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


HARKEN
(to his men)
Keene, Escobar, you two stay here. Watch the door. Don't need this thing back on my ship.

Harken indicates for Mal to lead on. He does.

INT. SERENITY - OUTSIDE INFIRMARY

MOVING WITH MAL

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

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

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

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

They continue on...

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

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

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

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

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

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

HARKEN'S POV

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

Mal lets the body drop at their feet.

ANGLE: THE SURVIVOR

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

MAL AND HARKEN

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

EXT. SPACE

Serenity detaches from the Alliance Cruiser, floats down.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

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

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

MAL
Had to. Couldn't let us profit.

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

MAL (cont’d)
Wouldn't be civilized.

Through the cockpit window, WE SEE the Alliance Ship send out what look like torpedoes.
They connect with the spinning Derelict, sending a series of SOUNDLESS EXPLOSIONS through its hull. As the Derelict caves in on itself, glows to embers...

BLACK OUT.

END OF SHOW