

Firefly - "Buried Treasure"

by

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NOTE: Angle brackets, < like so >, indicate Chinese dialog.

TEASER

INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM

It's empty. Things are put away; cabinets and shelves are taped shut. A few cans and a fork sit on the floor.

Faint, incongruous OUTDOOR NOISES filter in.

The ship makes a whining BUZZ, then a CLUNK.

With the CLUNK, the cabinets rattle and the table scoots a bit.

After a short pause, the NOISE REPEATS.

KAYLEE (O. S.)
< A-ha! >

PRELAP a DOOR OPENING, with the TINKLE OF A BELL.

INT. JUNKYARD OFFICE - DAY

Simple, rustic, and dirty. Through a large window, we see Serenity parked outside.

An old MECHANIC has his feet propped up on a desk. He reads a magazine on a smudged, portable viewscreen.

KAYLEE walks in, and holds up a piece of shorn, twisted-up metal.

KAYLEE
Now I need a grav booster!

The mechanic sighs.

KAYLEE
Aw....

MECHANIC
We're junking a cruiser tomorrow --

KAYLEE
We're leavin' today.

MECHANIC
I could go in and look at it --

KAYLEE
No! Um... no.

INT. SERENITY - SIMON'S ROOM

SIMON has a book in his lap, but looks at RIVER, who glares back at him.

The mechanical NOISE; they both lurch slightly.

SIMON
You want a book?

RIVER
No.

SIMON
Cortex?

River scoffs.

SIMON
A...

He looks about the room for something interesting.

SIMON
... small, amusing rubber ball?

RIVER
"Too much trouble. Send her to her room."

River makes to exit; Simon gets between her and the door.

SIMON
River, it's the edge of Alliance territory.

He grabs a cortex display with information about the planet and shows it to River. It shows a planet on the edge of Alliance territory.

SIMON
See? They'll arrest us and send you to --

River nabs the display out of his hands.

SIMON
Okay.

River stares engrossed at the display, and she abruptly sits down.

SIMON

Right.

Simon sits too.

River watches the screen, which has "Bale" written at the top, and fills with row after row of numbers.

EXT. SERENITY - DAY

Kaylee walks off to the junkyard, wrench in hand.

INT. SERENITY - SIMON'S ROOM (LATER)

River suddenly stands up.

RIVER

I need a Bible.

RIVER gets up and exits; SIMON continues reading.

SIMON

Mm.

(beat)

What?

INT. BAR - DAY

MAL talks to an old MINER. ZOE and JAYNE watch from a distance.

MINER

That much? For a simple delivery?

MAL

I have to fill my boat with things that explode and sneak her past a dozen Alliance cruisers.

JAYNE reacts to this with some alarm.

MAL

You pay extra... for the expertise.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE JUNKYARD - DAY

An ALLIANCE INSPECTOR strides confidently towards the ship; Kaylee catches up with him.

KAYLEE

What are you --

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR
 (flashes some paperwork at
 her)
 Contraband check. If you have
 nothing to hide, you have nothing
 to fear.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Simon, high on a catwalk, looks down at the cargo bay.

River reads Book's bible, her fingers a flurry of activity on the Cortex pad.

The Alliance inspector enters, talking to Kaylee. Kaylee can see River; the Alliance inspector can't.

Simon recoils back out of sight.

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR
 It'll take two minutes.

KAYLEE
 Oh! I didn't know that.

She looks in River's direction.

KAYLEE
 Not a... inconvenience then.

The Alliance inspector looks in that direction.

River is gone.

He looks back at Kaylee; she attempts a nonchalant grin.

EXT. CARGO BAY - DAY

River hides under the cargo ramp, still computing away. She suddenly gasps and looks around, covering her head.

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR (O. S.)
 If I find out you were hiding
 something, I'll -

River runs away, full tilt, kicking up dust behind her.

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR (O. S.)
 What was that?!

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Kaylee and the Alliance inspector face off.

WASH and BOOK enter with heavy bags.

Wash pants with fatigue, Book doesn't.

WASH
What was what? Who are you?

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR
(flashing the papers
again)
Contraband check. It'll --

WASH
(gesturing at bags)
It's food. It's all food. Heavy,
heavy food. < Oh god I'm so very
tired. >

BOOK
(puzzled)
Son, your business is with the
captain.

They have the Alliance inspector surrounded. He's nervous.

INT. BAR - DAY

Zoe and Jayne watch Mal talk with the miner.

Mal and the miner shake hands.

ZOE
(smiling)
We have a deal.

JAYNE
< Goddammit. >

ZOE
Scared of explosives?

Jayne nods towards the entrance.

JAYNE
Company.

River enters through the saloon doors, winded, still holding
the Cortex viewer.

RIVER
(to Mal)
They're hiding.

Mal notices River. Mal is not happy.

MAL
< Could you excuse me for a
minute? >

The miner nods agreeably.

River drops the cortex viewer and walks nervously over to Mal.

Mal takes her by the shoulder and aims her in the opposite direction.

The miner looks a bit askance at this.

MAL
Get back on the ship. Now.

RIVER
He's not right. He's lying. And
he's got friends and it's all
coiled up and --

MAL
'less you can tell me *what* all is
coiled up...

Back at the entrance, a grizzled Prospector picks up the Cortex viewer that River dropped.

He looks at it with some interest.

MAL
Go sit with Zoe and Jayne. This
does not happen again.

RIVER
There were too many of them!

Mal is about to respond but is cut off by...

KAYLEE (O. S., FILTERED)
Captain?

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Same as before. Everyone waits. Kaylee talks into a walkie-talkie.

KAYLEE
 We got ourselves an Alliance
 inspector here doing a "contraband
 check."

INT. BAR - DAY

Mal frowns and looks at River -- was *this* what she was
 talking about?

KAYLEE (O. S., FILTERED)
 We're figurin' you'd get back and
 square things away.

MAL
 < Uh-oh. >

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - DAY

Same as before.

MAL (O. S., FILTERED)
 Get him out of there, or stall him
 a few minutes.

Everybody in the cargo bay hears it. Kaylee smiles
 nervously.

KAYLEE
 Okay!

INT. BAR - DAY

Mal approaches Zoe and Jayne.

MAL
 Back to the ship - we've got a <
 dangerous con man > on board.

The PROSPECTORS -- mean-looking men -- are looking at the
 Cortex display that River dropped.

PROSPECTOR #1
 She broke the code.

Prospector #2 jabs a finger at the Cortex.

PROSPECTOR #2
 That's where Bale's gold is.

PROSPECTOR #1
 We go after it?

PROSPECTOR #3

Hmm.

Prospector #3 Looks over at Mal, Jayne, Zoe, and River, who are making for the exit. He draws a six-shooter.

PROSPECTOR #3

First we kill the girl.

Off of prospector #3 playfully aiming the gun --

BLACK OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. BAR - DAY

Right where we left off.

Prospector #3 cocks the gun. The other two prospectors stand close by.

Zoe, Jayne, and Mal head out the door, with River trailing behind them.

Prospector #3 aims the gun at River.

River stops, waits a short beat, and then dives, grabs a barstool, and hurls it towards the Prospector.

It hits prospector #3, who misfires into the foot a BYSTANDER.

As this is happening, Mal, Zoe, and (off their lead) Jayne drop to the floor.

The bystander and his BUDDIES are now picking a fight with the prospectors.

Mal and Jayne exit the bar; Zoe grabs River and yanks her out after them.

EXT./EXT. BAR/STREET - DAY

The dusty old saloon faces the dusty old street. Inside, a good ol' fashioned bar fight begins.

Mal, Jayne, Zoe, and River pile out through the swinging doors, then get up and walk down the street.

Jayne makes to run; Mal pulls him back by his shoulder.

MAL

Don't run.

Jayne walks normally. SEVERAL PEOPLE run away out through the saloon doors.

Mal and Zoe react to it; Jayne keeps walking forward.

MAL

Don't ignore the fight.

Jayne attempts a delayed reaction.

ZOE
(sarcastic)
Perfect.

JAYNE
'Crazy girl' here is startin'
fights now.

ZOE
Didn't you hear the gunshot?

MAL
Somebody had the drop on us. River
noticed. We didn't.

JAYNE
She's ruined a perfectly good job.

Some ALLIANCE MEN troop past them. River keeps her eyes on
the ground ahead of her.

MAL
She might have delayed it a while.

They keep walking; in the background we see the Alliance men
approach the bar.

ALLIANCE MAN
Cease your disturbance. This
territory is now under Alliance
control...

EXT. CARGO BAY - DAY

Wash, Book, and Kaylee stand and wait.

Mal approaches (no sign of Jayne, Zoe, and River just yet).

The Alliance inspector meets him outside.

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR
Are you the captain?

Mal immediately -- but subtly -- grabs the Alliance inspector
and leads him out of sight of the folks in the ship.

MAL
(quietly)
I know you're not Alliance. I know
you're a con man. I know you have
four men stationed in that junkyard
and I know I've got two guns
trained on those four men.

Our "Alliance inspector" looks scared; he Alliance inspector turns around and addresses the crew.

ALLIANCE INSPECTOR
(brightly)
Everything here is in order! I'll
just... go... now.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity floats in orbit.

JAYNE
(O. S.)
Why're we in space?

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE

Wash sits back, relaxed.

Mal leans against the bulkhead, relaxed.

Jayne stands and stares angrily at Wash.

WASH
We're not in space, we're in orbit.

JAYNE
Why're we in orbit?

MAL
Our contact says we stay out of the
way 'til he gets the shipment
together.

ZOE
(entering)
... which won't happen until he
gets out of jail tomorrow.

JAYNE
(exiting)
< destructive > moon-eyed girl is
just no damn use.

INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM

Kaylee looks wonderingly at a Cortex display; it lists text directions and coordinates in one column, and a gibberish list of numbers in another.

River eats a bowl of protein mush.

Book clears the table. Simon sits to the side, clearly proud of River.

KAYLEE

A coded treasure map. You're amazin'.

River grins and nods.

SIMON

Nobody could break this for seven years.

RIVER

A pad cipher requires the appropriate keyTEXT. Previous attempts at decryption were... stupid.

KAYLEE

Book, what would you do with a big bag of gold?

Book puts down a dish, and thinks only for a moment.

BOOK

Reckon I'd return it to the rightful owner.

SIMON

Dead.

BOOK

Or his folks.

SIMON

Dead.

BOOK

Or his friends.

SIMON

Also dead.

Book resumes dish-cleaning.

BOOK

Lucky guy.
(to KAYLEE)
What would you do?

KAYLEE

I'd have a house. A big, fancy, shiny mansion on the most beautiful planet in the 'verse. There'd be a porch, and a porch swing, and a rocking chair, and screens to keep the mosquitoes out. And a great big yard, for workin' on engines. Or, I could buy a whole little moon. And it would be called "Kayleeworld."

Mechanical whining. Lurch.

A spoon skitters across the floor.

SIMON

What, and leave all this?

KAYLEE

Hey, I'm workin' on the gravity leveller!

SIMON

Oh -- no. I didn't mean you were incompetent because of the gravity problem.

Kaylee glares at him.

SIMON

That didn't help.

RIVER

(sotto voce)

Dig, dig, dig.

BOOK

I think Simon meant that, when you bought your own planet, you wouldn't see any of us any more.

KAYLEE

Y'all could visit. I'd insist on it.

SIMON

(indicating himself and River)

We couldn't. Not if you were in Alliance territory, and that expands every year.

KAYLEE
I would build you a special,
Alliance-proof shuttle. You two
could visit whenever you wanted.

RIVER
No.
(glares at them)
I get my own shuttle to
Kayleeworld.

Simon looks pityingly at River.

SIMON
Mei mei, Kayleeworld isn't real.

River gives him a look that says, "I know that, you idiot."

EXT. SPACE

Serenity orbits the planet.

MAL (O. S.)
We're not wasting our time with it.

INT. SERENITY - DINING ROOM

The evening meal. Everyone (except Inara) sits around the
table. Mal looks stern.

KAYLEE
It might be fun.

MAL
We ain't in the fun business.
We're just orbiting for the day.

SIMON
Oberon is only a few hours away.

Mal makes to reply, but there is the by-now-familiar WHIRRING
NOISE.

Everyone holds down the tableware.

A lurch.

SIMON
Not to say we should do it.

JAYNE

Yeah. If there's one thing I hate,
it's free gold.

MAL

If it's still there, if it was ever
there in the first place, and if in
a few minutes, your sister...

Mal gestures at River, who obliviously makes a little Devil's
Mountain out of protein mush.

MAL

... managed to break a code that
the whole Alliance hasn't cracked
for seven years.

SIMON

She found the right keytext - the
last bit of James 5:3.

BOOK

"Ye have heaped treasure together
for the last days."

KAYLEE

How can you say no to a treasure
hunt?

MAL

This isn't a debate, little Kaylee.
This is me telling you why we're
staying right here.

INARA enters.

INARA

He's right. It's too risky.

MAL

See? Inara agrees with me.

Mal mentally replays what he just said to himself, and shows
a moment of self-doubt.

INARA

Oberon is a nature preserve. Our
ship won't be allowed there.

MAL

"Nature preserve."

SIMON

Hmm?

ZOE

Oberon is where the Alliance got whupped but good.

MAL

Now they don't want settlements there. Think it might attract an unsavory element.

Inara doesn't agree with Mal, but civilly lets it slide.

INARA

And besides, gold is price-controlled.

MAL

"Price-controlled."

KAYLEE

What's that mean?

SIMON

It means the Alliance sets the prices.

MAL

It means the Alliance don't want anybody but themselves to have decent circuit boards, so it means they keep gold to themselves and their cronies...

(MAL grins.)

... when they can.

Inara reads the grin, rolls her eyes, leaves in a huff.

MAL

What?

After a short beat, Mal sets down his utensils and follows her out.

MAL

(as he exits)

< A woman's will is as crazy and strong as the wind. >

ZOE

Damn right.

A short pause.

WASH
I like this. It's like dinner...
and a show.

Zoe shoots Wash a look.

WASH
What?

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE (ENTRANCE)

The door is closed. Mal knocks on it. Inara opens the door.

INARA
Thank you for knocking.

MAL
The door was locked.

INT. SERENITY - INARA'S SHUTTLE (INTERIOR)

Mal enters. Inara is irritated.

MAL
Inara, just 'cos I don't agree with
you don't mean you have to be all
uncivilized.

INARA
You changed your mind.

MAL
All of a sudden picking up the gold
sounds like fun.

INARA
Fun?

MAL
All these Alliance guys trying to
break that code, and failing? and
then we take the whole thing out
from off-limits territory, right
under their noses? *That* is fun.

INARA
That is still petty theft.

MAL

Theft is when you go in someplace all sneaky-like, and then you hit somebody on the head, and then you take his stuff.

INARA

No, that's trespassing, and assault, and theft. You're taking what's not yours.

MAL

Well... it's... not petty.

INARA

Just go ahead and do it. You've wanted to all along.

MAL

What? I haven't even decided --

INARA

You've wanted to all along, but you wanted to make it look like you were all business and you were only changing your mind because you're fighting with me.

MAL

How could I know I was going to fight with you about it?

Inara gives Mal a look that says "You're kidding, right?"

INARA

I'm going back to the surface. I can do business there.

MAL

Of course.

Mal heads out.

MAL

If you have your 'ethical' work to attend to --

The door SLAMS SHUT behind him. Mal frowns and exits.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity enters orbit near the dark side of Oberon, which is all deep greens and blues.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash fights the controls quite a bit, with his usual unsettling calm.

Mal looks over Wash's shoulder, anxious.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Serenity lands in a clearing with the forest on one side and a steep cliff on the other. The sky is dark except for the stars and the huge planet peeping over the horizon.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash takes a deep breath. Mal looks at the display.

MAL
This spot is wrong.

WASH
What?

MAL
We're a mile off of the place River told us about.

WASH
Of course we are! You remember the rocks? And the trees? And the crosswinds, trying to smash us into the rocks and the trees?

MAL
("Don't be snippy with me.")
This is as close as we get?

WASH
This was the spot I was aiming for.

Wash looks out the window as Mal exits.

WASH
It's very peaceful.
(contemplative)
We should rob nature preserves more often.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - NIGHT

Zoe re-checks coordinates on a Cortex viewer.

Jayne paces.

Mal enters, wearing gloves and carrying a crowbar and a grubby-looking shovel.

MAL

Okay, let's get this wild goose chase over with and get out before we all get arrested.

JAYNE

The gold'll be there.

ZOE

(doubtful)

Hmm.

Zoe opens the cargo exit ramp. CRICKETS CHIRP. There's a rush of air; everyone reacts to the cold.

JAYNE

I can feel it.

MAL

Jayne, we are going by the word of a girl who has conversations with the can opener.

They exit to the surface.

JAYNE

So long as she finds us gold, she can < fuck > the pots and pans.

Mal and Zoe share a perturbed look.

INT. SERENITY - COMMON AREA

A couple of candles illuminate the room. Wash sits on the couch, holding a cup of coffee. He takes a sip.

A DOOR CREAKS; Simon enters from the infirmary, sits.

SIMON

You can't sleep either?

WASH

(shrugs)

Zoe's on a job.

It takes a moment for Simon to understand, but then he nods.

SIMON
Possibly a very remunerative one.

WASH
I can't wrap my head around --
(a moment's thought)
hitting the jackpot and saying:
"Hey! Now we can quit!"

SIMON
You thought you'd do this forever?

Wash looks puzzled -- he doesn't know and the question hadn't occurred to him.

Kaylee enters.

KAYLEE
(to SIMON)
Hi.

SIMON
Hi.

Simon smiles at Kaylee. Kaylee smiles back.

WASH
(to no one in particular)
I should be at the bridge. They
might call in.

Wash exits.

Kaylee watches Simon for a second.

SIMON
What?

KAYLEE
(hesitantly)
What's it like being rich?

SIMON
Convenient. Calm.
(after a moment's thought)
Dull.

KAYLEE
Hmm.

SIMON
Still planning Kayleeworld?

KAYLEE

I figured I'd work forever, like my
daddy. I just hadn't ever thought
to dream about something like this.

Book enters.

BOOK

Everything okay? I heard voices.

KAYLEE

Hey Shepherd. We're talkin' about
what we'll do with our shares of
the gold.

BOOK

Ah, none for me, thanks.

KAYLEE

No share? Why?

Book smiles to himself.

BOOK

You know that Bible verse River
quoted? The rest of it goes like
this: "Your gold and silver is
cankered...."

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne walk in the dim planet-light.

BOOK (O. S.)

"... and the rust of them shall be
a witness against you, and shall
eat your flesh as it were fire."

Jayne turns on a flashlight and aims it at a rusted metal
plate set in the ground.

Jayne looks over to Mal, who nods and takes out a small jerry-
rigged metal box with a button on it.

Mal presses the button.

The metal plate opens inwards with a CLUNK.

Jayne hurries up to the spot and aims the flashlight in.

JAYNE

< Well, *shit*. >

Zoe and Mal catch up with him.

The three of them peer down into the compartment.

A corpse lies sprawled on the floor. It's prospector #1.

MAL
(to ZOE)
Call Wash. Tell him we've got
trouble.

Off of Mal's alarm, Zoe's alarm, and Jayne's disappointment --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Serenity is parked.

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
Hi there, sleepyheads.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash sits in his seat.

WASH
Um, they didn't find any gold...

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- * Book, in his quarters, sets down his Bible.
- * Simon, in his quarters, sits up in bed.
- * River, in her quarters, wakes up.
- * Kaylee backs away from the cargo bay exit, which closes.

WASH (O.S.)
But they did find a, uh, dead body.
Actually. And, apparently, there
might be a crazy killer-person in
the woods. So. If anyone, say,
stabs you -- be sure to holler.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne crouch behind a big rock near the metal door. They whisper.

JAYNE
Hidin' is stupid.

MAL
We ain't hidin'.

JAYNE
(louder)
You got a better name for crouchin'
behind a big rock and whisperin'?

ZOE
Shh.

MAL
(to ZOE)
He can't have been dead more than a
few hours.

ZOE
They got there ahead of us, got the
gold...

MAL
... and left one of their friends.

ZOE
Back to the ship?

Mal thinks for a second, and turns on his space-age walkie-talkie.

MAL
Wash -- you see any ships around
here?

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
Eh, the radar is < confused >

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash checks out the console.

WASH
Must be the terrain.

Something on the panel BEEPS.

WASH
Hang on, there's a signal.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE -- NIGHT

Mal looks a bit concerned.

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
It's weak, but it's nearby.

MAL
Okay. Keep your eyes open.

Mal heads off, continuing in the same direction they came.

Jayne points the opposite way.

JAYNE
Ship's that-a-way, bossman.

MAL
We're taking the scenic route.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROPPING - NIGHT

Zoe clambers up and looks around with binoculars; Jayne and Mal follow.

ZOE
If they're out there, I don't see
'em.

Mal flips a switch on the walkie-talkie, points it in various direction. It produces SOFT WHITE NOISE.

JAYNE
Now can we go?

MAL
Yeah.

A faint alarm BEEPS in the white noise.

Mal concentrates, aiming the device a little more precisely. Zoe looks in that direction.

ZOE
There. It's not far.

JAYNE
Don't it make more sense to go
back?

MAL
I wanna know what's out there.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kaylee and Wash listen to a faint, faint DISTRESS SIGNAL -- indistinguishable words in a sea of static.

WASH
He sure is talkin' a while.

KAYLEE
It's repeating.

WASH
It's recorded?

KAYLEE
... and looped.

Simon enters, with his medical bag.

SIMON
I need to know where that distress
call's coming from.

KAYLEE
Huh?

SIMON
They might need help.

Wash nods and flips some switches.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne approach a battered, lifeless ship. The
DISTRESS CALL is still kind of garbled, with occasional
CLANGING SOUNDS.

Jayne looks into a window, and sees a silhouette: the pilot
(prospector #2), hunched forward, very much not moving.

JAYNE
This ain't a good trend.

ZOE
Why didn't he get out of the
cruiser?

Mal gestures towards some marks on the ship.

MAL
Somebody else was trying to get in.
(to JAYNE)
Open it.

Jayne applies some space-age caulk (from the pilot episode);
it burns a hole into the side of the ship.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Kaylee paces. Book enters.

Outside, an owl hoots.

KAYLEE
That's an owl, right?

BOOK
Sounds like it.

There's a clang outside.

They look at each other.

KAYLEE
That wasn't us.

BOOK
I'll stand watch.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

The metal square clatters out of the side of the cruiser.
Jayne sneaks in and immediately laughs.

JAYNE
Gold!

Jayne emerges with a burlap sack whose contents he dumps triumphantly.

MAL
That lost us some time.
(to ZOE)
Check the pilot.

Zoe nods and goes into the ship.

INT. CRUISER - NIGHT

It's dark and cramped, with stuff scattered everywhere.

The DISTRESS CALL plays and replays on a small, tinny speaker.

Zoe gets in the hold and clears a path through to the pilot's seat.

Zoe checks for a pulse and then notices a knife in the man's back.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Mal and Jayne put the gold back into the bag.

Zoe comes back.

ZOE
We got ourselves two dead bodies.

She gestures at propsector #2.

ZOE
I've seen this one somewhere.

JAYNE
His bad luck.

MAL
This gold has plenty of bad luck to go with it.

JAYNE
Ain't nothin' to be scared of.

MAL
(into walkie-talkie)
Wash, can you get a shuttle out here? We got a delivery to make.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY - NIGHT

Wash makes his way across the cargo bay catwalk. Simon stops him.

SIMON
Did they track down the distress call?

WASH
(moving on)
Yes.

SIMON
(stopping him)
Are there wounded?

WASH
No. A dead guy, but no call for a doctor.

SIMON
Another dead body?

WASH
Yes, which makes me a little impatient to get my wife, my captain, and my... Jayne, back on the ship...

Wash continues on to the shuttle.

WASH
 ... so we can all go back to the
 safe, reasonable business of
 shipping explosives.

INT. SERENITY - SHUTTLE #2 - NIGHT

Wash takes a seat and flips a few switches. He's about to flip another one, when he notices a small, blinking red light. He flips another switch and there's LOUD STATIC. Wash adjusts a knob and a voice comes in.

ALLIANCE CAPTAIN (O. S., FILTERED)
 The wrecked ship is now in visual.
 Oberon coordinates fifteen fifty-
 two by twenty seventy-five.
 Landing shortly.

WASH
 (overlapping)
 < Ugly, diseased pig rectum! >

Wash flips a switch.

WASH
 Captain!

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne sit and wait with the bag.

MAL
 Ten minutes. Still no shuttle.
 You always keep your wife waiting
 up like this?

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
 You've got company.

MAL
 (suddenly serious)
 Friends of theirs?

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
 Oh, god, Mal, it's --

A loud WHIRRING NOISE.

Suddenly a spotlight illuminates Mal, Zoe, and Jayne

MAL
 Don't worry, Wash.

An Alliance cruiser settles down for a landing, its spotlight lit.

MAL

We can see it from here.

ALLIANCE CAPTAIN (O. S., LOUDSPEAKER)

You are under arrest. Don't move
and put your hands up.

Off of Mal's wry reaction to the contradictory demands --

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Right where we left off. The cruiser lands.

ZOE

Small crew. We can fire a few shots and take cover.

MAL

Not if we don't have to. No use needlessly antagonizing them.

Zoe shoots him an "Oh, really?" look.

MAL

Not tonight, anyway.

The ALLIANCE CAPTAIN, flanked by two ALLIANCE OFFICERS, approach Mal, Zoe, and Jayne.

The captain is young, and the officers are even younger -- the sort of green, nervous crew that patrols a giant nature reserve in the middle of nowhere.

ALLIANCE CAPTAIN

You people are trespassing on Alliance pro --

BAM! A GUNSHOT rings out, and the Alliance captain drops to the ground, dead.

Everybody runs for cover. (The Alliance officers are a bit less competent at this than our heroes.)

Another GUNSHOT, but it doesn't hit anybody.

Zoe draws her gun and aims confidently into the darkness.

Jayne makes sure the bag is okay.

ALLIANCE OFFICER #1

(shouting to Mal)

Tell your friend to stand the hell down!

A shot misses Mal's head. Jayne fires back blindly.

~~MAL~~ (MORE)

(shouting back)

My friends don't shoot at me!

MAL(cont'd)
(an afterthought,
delivered with the same
gusto)
Usually!

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kaylee sits in a chair. Simon enters.

KAYLEE
Simon!

Simon sits.

SIMON
Wash went out to the shuttle. They
found another... it sounds like
they got the gold.

KAYLEE
I'll sit tight and enjoy the view.

She realizes she's watching Simon, and turns to look out the window.

SIMON
The stars are beautiful.

KAYLEE
Oh. Those ain't stars! Those are
ships!

SIMON
Oh?

KAYLEE
(points)
They're moving. You can see the
landin' light blinking on that one.

Suddenly, they both look concerned.

SIMON
I thought this moon was off-limits.

KAYLEE
Oh no!

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

The Alliance officers hide behind their ship.

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne hide in the rocks and brush.

ALLIANCE OFFICER #2
Why did he stop shooting?

ALLIANCE OFFICER #1
Maybe he's out of bullets.

MAL
More'n likely he's finding a better
spot to shoot from.

ALLIANCE OFFICER #1
That's it. You people are under
arrest for trespassing and
trafficking in a controlled
substance, and maybe murder as well
--

JAYNE
Y'all know about the gold?

Zoe winces at Jayne's accidental revelation.

ALLIANCE OFFICER #1
It was on the distress signal. We
know about the gold, our superiors
know about the gold -- everybody
knows about the gold, okay?

Mal and Zoe share a worried look.

MAL
You didn't call this in on an open
channel, did you?

The Alliance officers look puzzled.

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

Kaylee switches things off. Every time she does, the NOISE
IN THE ROOM DECREASES.

Simon enters.

SIMON
What's happening?

KAYLEE
We got ships comin' in all over.
If I can get the systems on
standby, folks're less likely to
notice us.

Book enters.

BOOK
The lights just went out in the
cargo --

Wash enters.

KAYLEE
I'm shutting some things down.

WASH
Kaylee -- an Alliance cruiser just
caught them red-handed.

Kaylee stops what she's doing.

KAYLEE
Them?

WASH
The captain, Jayne... Zoe.

KAYLEE
Are they all right?

WASH
I don't know.

BOOK
Have they been arrested?

WASH
I don't know.

BOOK
We should listen in on the Alliance
frequencies.

KAYLEE
... and keep an eye out in case
any of those ships get too curious.

BOOK
It might be they aren't in any
trouble at all.

EXT. RAVINE - NIGHT

Everybody has guns drawn on each other.

MAL
 I'm losin' my patience for this --
 there's three of us and two of you,
 and we've got the guns with real
 bullets in'em.

Zoe notices the ships in the sky.

ZOE
 < Things just got worse. >

MAL
 (to the Alliance officers)
 You should look behind you.

The Alliance officers almost sneer. Then the SOUND OF AN
 INCOMING SHIP becomes unmistakable.

MAL
 How about we go our way, you go
 your way, and none of us get shot
 at by our new friends?

Alliance officer #1 nods dumbly.

Alliance officer #2 gets his attention and they gather up
 their fallen comrade and get in the ship.

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne dart away into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne trudge through the woods. Jayne carries
 the bag.

Somewhere behind them, the ALLIANCE CRUISER POWERS UP; a BOMB
 WHISTLES through the air; something EXPLODES.

MAL
 (into walkie talkie)
 Cacnel the shuttle. We're
 hightailin' it back on foot.

KAYLEE
 (O. S., filtered)
 I'll tell Wash.

MAL
 And Kaylee, shut down what you can
 shut down -- keep it quiet as you
 can.

KAYLEE
(O. S., filtered)
Already done.

MAL
Good work.

ZOE
Captain, we should dump the gold.

JAYNE
What?!

ZOE
It's making us a walking target for
everybody on this moon.

JAYNE
I reckon just walkin' is making us
a walking target.

Mal doesn't even break stride; Jayne and Zoe hustle to keep
up.

MAL
We've got good cover, and it's not
a long way.

Zoe looks alarmed.

ZOE
Captain, you do realize you're
agreeing with Jayne?

MAL
And I'm certainly not proud of it,
Zoe.

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

Kaylee and Simon sit near a candle.

KAYLEE
When I give the word, you flip that
breaker there.

SIMON
(pointing)
That one?

KAYLEE
 (nodding)
 It'll get atmo pumping while I fire
 up the engine.

SIMON
 So that... we can lift off faster?

KAYLEE
 Yup!

SIMON
 Not that we'll be in any trouble.
 Right?

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash watches the sky.

WASH
 Oh no. No no no. Don't come this
 way. We're just a rock. We're
 just a very big, funny-shaped rock.
 Nothing to see here. Good.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne; trudge, trudge, trudge.

Jayne looks happy.

The SOUNDS OF SHIPS fill the air.

Serenity sits, just barely visible, beyond the edge of the
 woods.

JAYNE
 How does it feel bein' rich?

MAL
 We ain't rich yet, Jayne.

ZOE
 (nodding towards Serenity)
 There she is.

MAL
 Good to see her.

Jayne looks up to see 'her,' and trips.

Some of the gold spills out. Jayne clutches his ankle.

JAYNE

< The devil, and all of his evil
minions! >

MAL

Zoe, go to the ship, get her ready
to take off. I'll clean up here.

Zoe nods curtly and heads out. Mal and Jayne put gold back
in the bag.

Jayne tries putting weight on his foot.

JAYNE

< Dammit! >

MAL

All the ships in the 'verse comin'
down on us, and you get taken out
by a vicious dead tree.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Zoe emerges from the clearing.

She stops short.

A gun COCKS.

Prospector #3 emerges from the darkness, gun drawn. He looks
like he's been in a bad fight, and that fight had knives
involved. He looks unsteady, both physically and mentally.

PROSPECTOR #3

Looks like y'all stole something
off me that I rightfully stole off
of you.

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT THREE.

ACT FOUR

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Yet again, right where we left off: prospector #3 holds Zoe at gunpoint.

ZOE
Shoot me, and you're a dead man.

PROSPECTOR #3
My chances of livin' ain't much
anyhow.

ZOE
You kill me, you don't get the
gold. You get the gold, you don't
get off this moon alive.

PROSPECTOR #3
I survived so far. I like my odds.

ZOE
Killing your two buddies -- did
that give you better odds?

Zoe realizes she's made a stupid mistake even before she sees Prospector #3 get riled up. Prospector #3 raises the gun.

PROSPECTOR #3
It was complicated.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Mal and Jayne walk. Jayne uses a big branch as a crutch, and carries the gold with his other arm.

Jayne makes slow, painful progress. Mal keeps his eyes open in all directions.

JAYNE
We let the crazy girl plan
somethin'; this is what happens.

MAL
Says the man carrying a small
fortune in gold.

JAYNE
Heh. Yeah.

MAL
If I carry it, we go faster.

JAYNE
Just... just lemme take it the
last few feet.

Mal offers his arm to Jayne, knowing that it will only irritate him -- Mal's way of getting Jayne to keep going.

MAL
Just hold my arm.

Jayne grunts, presumably meaning "No."

The voice of prospector #3 is just barely audible.

Mal stops, looks around, holds up his hand in a silent "stop" gesture.

Jayne blunders out into the open.

MAL
(sharp whisper)
Jayne!

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Prospector #3, wild-eyed and desperate now, **still** has Zoe at gunpoint.

PROSPECTOR #3
You'll tell me, or I'll --

ZOE
I don't care what you do -- you
will never, NEVER find out where
that gold is.

Behind Prospector #3, Jayne blunders silently into the clearing. He is carrying the big bag of gold.

Zoe notices Jayne, but tries not to let on.

ZOE
(loudly, to get Jayne's
attention)
Yup. Never never never.

Prospector #3 looks puzzled.

Jayne realizes what's going on, drops the crutch, and reaches for his gun.

Prospector #3 whirls on him with **his** gun, and there is a GUNSHOT.

Jayne checks himself for holes. He finds none.

Prospector #3 drops out of frame, dead, revealing Zoe behind him, gun drawn, barrel smoking.

Zoe holsters her gun.

Jayne gives her a curt nod of uncomfortable gratitude.

Mal rushes into the clearing, and repeats the "stop" gesture.

MAL
I said stop!

JAYNE
I didn't hear nothin'.

Mal considers explaining, decides not to.

Mal gestures at the body.

MAL
The third guy from the saloon?

ZOE
Sure is.

A pause.

MAL
Let's get us off of this rock.
(into walkie-talkie)
Wash? Kaylee? Start'er up.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash flips a few switches.

WASH
Got it, captain, we're a well-oiled machine.

As he says this, Wash flips a switch, does a double-take on that section of the panel, and jiggles the same switch back and forth until a little light next to the switch turns on.
]

Suddenly, bright lights sweep across the windows, with the loud sound of an engine.

WASH
< What the hell? Oh, no. >

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Serenity sits in the clearing. The lights of a few dozen ships criss-cross the sky.

Jayne limps along (still holding on to the bag) next to the cliff, and Mal and Zoe jog ahead.

Suddenly, a small gunship (the same ship that bombed the ravine) catches Jayne in a spotlight. It kicks up the dirt in the clearing.

Mal and Zoe shoot at it, with no effect.

A laser sight sweeps through the dust-filled air and stops on Jayne's chest.

Jayne tosses the bag towards the ship, into the air.

A GUNSHOT hits the bag (and not Jayne).

The bag comes apart.

Bars of gold fly in all directions, glittering in the spotlight.

The bars of gold drop down, beyond the edge of the cliff. The ship dives down after them. Mal heaves a sigh of relief.

Jayne limps away, back the way he came.

ZOE

The ship's *this* way, Jayne!

JAYNE

We gotta pick up that gold!

There is another sound: an OMINOUS, LOW THRUM that must be from a very, very large ship.

Mal and Zoe look up at the sky. Jayne follows suit.

MAL

Nobody's gettin' that gold.

ZOE

The Alliance brought backup.

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)

Where the hell are you people?!

MAL
 (dryly)
 Open the door, Wash.

A moment later, the cargo-bay door opens.

WASH (O. S., FILTERED)
 Sorry.

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne step on the ramp.

JAYNE
 I reckon *somebody's* gettin' that
 gold.

Mal shakes his head.

MAL
 If the Alliance can't have it,
 nobody can.

Mal presses a button and the cargo-bay door shuts.

ZOE
 (into intercom)
 We're home, baby.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

As Wash flips a few switches, Kaylee and Simon enter.

SIMON
 The engine's... um... 'on.'

KAYLEE
 He did good.

Wash works with controls.

WASH
 Great. Now *maybe* we won't get
 shot at, or run into, or blown up.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

A massive Alliance ship looms larger and larger in the sky,
 blotting out the distant lights of other ships.

Serenity takes off.

INT. SERENITY - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

We follow Mal from the front hall into...

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

... the bridge, where Wash pilots the ship up into the atmosphere. He manipulates all the controls at once, very quickly. Wash has that creepy, in-the-zone calm.

Mal looks on.

MAL
We're gettin' the hell out of here,
now.

WASH
You might want to sit down.

MAL
What?

The ship suddenly lurches to the left; Mal catches himself short of faceplanting into the wall.

Mal sits.

WASH
The wind, she is playful today.

Mal looks on with slight alarm. Wash suddenly lurches the ship to the left as something zips past the windows.

Alarms go off, and then go silent.

WASH
Hmm. Did the Alliance just shoot a
rocket at us?

MAL
(looking at the radar)
They ain't shootin' at us.
(nodding)
They're shootin' the gold.
(into intercom)
Kaylee, cut the atmo intakes, *now*.

INT. SERENITY - ENGINE ROOM

Kaylee strides from one end of the room to the other. She turns a bolt with a wrench; there is a 'psssht' sound of gas escaping.

KAYLEE
Got it. What's goin' --

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION shakes the ship.

A LITTLE ALARM goes off.

KAYLEE

< Holy cow >, did somebody just
lose containment down there?

MAL (O. S., FILTERED)

Just keep the intakes shut.

INT. SERENITY - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Wash pilots, Mal watches out the windows.

One last lurch, and the ship settles down to a steady rattle.

MAL

(into intercom)

You know radioactivity don't agree
with my delicate complexion.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity leaves orbit.

INT. SERENITY - CARGO BAY

Jayne does reps. Book spots him.

JAYNE

They... bombed... my... gold.

BOOK

At least you know where it is.
Maybe in another hundred years it
won't be riddled with enough
radioactivity to kill a man.

Jayne grunts.

BOOK

You could leave a coded message
about where it is.

Jayne grunts, finishes his reps.

MECHANICAL WHINE. Lurch. Jayne watches the bar, and makes
sure it stays in place.

Simon enters.

SIMON
I should put a cast on that ankle.

JAYNE
(lost in his thoughts)
I had it in my hands. Enough gold
to... do anything.

SIMON
(trying to be helpful)
It's only money.

Jayne suddenly notices Simon, and glares at him.

Book looks at Simon with pity.

INT. SERENITY - KITCHEN

Mal sits at the table, relaxed and relieved.

Zoe enters.

ZOE
Our contact is out of jail. We
pick up the detonators in an hour.

MAL
Back to work.

ZOE
No pot of gold for us.

MAL
Yeah, we can chalk that trip up as
a complete and total waste.

As Mal delivers that line, he extracts a single piece of gold
from his sleeve. Zoe looks at it.

ZOE
You swiped one of them?

MAL
When Jayne wasn't looking.

ZOE
(off the gold)
That's worth a decent price. What
was the deal?

MAL
First we fix the ship, then we
split the rest.

MECHANICAL WHINE.

Lurch.

The gold skitters off the table. Zoe and Mal look where it went.

Mal chuckles; it builds to a laugh.

Zoe resists, but starts laughing too.

Wash enters.

WASH

We should be in atmo in -- ooh, fun story?

Mal and Zoe laugh helplessly.

BLACK OUT.

MAL

Where did it go?

ZOE

I have no idea.

WASH

What?

END OF SHOW