

INT. INARA'S SHUTTLE - FLASHBACK

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

MAL

Well, here she is.

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

MAL

Nice, ain't she?

INARA

Smallish.

MAL

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

She ignores that. She moves into the cockpit. Blue sky outside the windows. Mal follows.

MAL

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

INARA

What's her range?

MAL

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

She's space worthy. Like the rest of Serenity is.

INARA

No need to sound so defensive, Captain.
(moving past him)
I prefer something with a few miles on it.

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

INARA

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

MAL

You'd get your privacy.

INARA

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

MAL

I'll post a sign.

INARA

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

MAL

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

INARA

As I stated, I just want to be clear.

MAL

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

INARA

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

MAL

Am I?

INARA

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

MAL

That a fact?

INARA

It is.

MAL

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

INARA

You want me. You want me on your ship.

MAL

Do I?

INARA

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

MAL

Respecta --

INARA

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

MAL

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

INARA

I'm not running from anything.

He doesn't believe her.

MAL

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

INARA

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

MAL

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

She looks at him. Smiles.

INARA

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

She walks past him.

MAL

Absolutely. Never again.