

INT. SPACESHIP - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Simon slides back the door of River's room.

SIMON
River?

River's bed is empty. Simon turns looks around the empty hallway.

EARLY attacks from above, wrapping his legs around Simon's neck. Simon fights back, but Early throws him to the ground.

Early jumps down from his perch. Simon lunges toward him, but Early draws his gun, and they both freeze.

EARLY
Dr. Tam... why don't you sit yourself down?

SIMON
Rather die standing.

EARLY
The intention is not for you to die. The warrant doesn't specify any particular need for you to be *alive*, but...

Early motions with his gun. Simon sits.

EARLY (cont'd)
Where's your sister?

SIMON
Are you Alliance?

EARLY
Am I a lion?

SIMON
What?

EARLY
I don't think of myself as a lion.
(tickled)
You might as well, though. I have a mighty roar.

SIMON
I said *Alliance*.

EARLY
Oh. I thought...

SIMON

No, I was...

EARLY

That's weird.

(beat)

Where's your sister?

SIMON

I don't know. Who do you work for?

EARLY

This is her room.

SIMON

Yes.

EARLY

It's empty.

SIMON

I know.

EARLY

So is it still her room when it's empty?

Does the room, the thing, have purpose?

Or do we -- what's the word?

SIMON

(baffled)

I really can't help you.

EARLY

The plan is to take your sister. Get

the reward, which is substantial.

(beat)

"Imbue." That's the word.

SIMON

So you're a bounty hunter.

EARLY

No. That ain't it at all.

SIMON

Then what are you?

EARLY

I'm a bounty hunter. I'm named Early.

I'm known to some. Been tracking you
since the Feds were tipped off on Ariel.

(beat)

She sleep with anybody?

SIMON

River?

EARLY

Yeah. She grapple with any of the crew? Might be in their quarters?

SIMON

(vehement)

No.

EARLY

Maybe she does and you don't know about it.

SIMON

This is insane. I'm not going to help you find her, in any case.

Simon rests his arms on his knees and looks determined. Early sighs and approaches, squatting down and brandishing his gun.

EARLY

I think this is very pretty. I like the weight of it.

SIMON

I thought the intention was *not* to kill me.

EARLY

No. You're missing the point. The design of the thing is functional. The plan is not to shoot you. The plan is to get the girl. If there's no girl, then the plan, well, is like the room. You are gonna help me look for her.

SIMON

I don't think my last act in this 'verse is gonna be betraying my sister.

EARLY

You're gonna help me. 'Cause every second you're with me is the chance to turn the tables. Get the better of me. Maybe you'll find your moment. Maybe I'll slip. Or, you refuse to help me, I shoot your brain out, then I go upstairs and spend some time violatin' the little mechanic I got trussed-up in the engine room. I take no pleasure in the thought, but she will die weeping if you cross me.

SIMON

You're out of your mind.

EARLY

That's between me and my mind.
Let's start with these rooms.