

BELICA'S TRADITION

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FADE IN:

INT. UNIT UNITY SPACE STATION - CAPTAIN'S OFFICE

BELICA (30s), female, jovial, in white space marine armor stands casually.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS (40s), female, stern, in blue armor sits at her desk, peering over screens that conceal her custom baby-bump-shaped abdomen armor. In the corner, a stack of different sizes of baby-bump-amor rests.

BELICA
You wanted to see me?

CAPTAIN STEPHENS
Yes. But first explain why I need to tell a five year veteran, a Lieutenant, to address me properly?

Belica snaps to attention and salutes.

BELICA
(unsure if Sir is correct)
You wanted to see me, Sir?

CAPTAIN STEPHENS
It's not "sir," it's... never mind. I got your request. Sorry to hear about your mother.

BELICA
Thanks. She was all I had left.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS
Before I can approve your bereavement leave, we need to fix an error.

BELICA
What error?

Captain Stephens pivots a screen displaying a form to face Belica. Belica is fixated on the now visible baby-bump-amor.

BELICA (CONT'D)
Congratulations!

CAPTAIN STEPHENS
On identifying your error?

BELICA
No your baby. When are you due?

CAPTAIN STEPHENS

I don't like to discuss my personal life... If you must know, I gave birth yesterday and I haven't had a chance to swap my abdomen piece. Now, this error. You wrote that you need three months off.

BELICA

That's not an error.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS

Again, my condolences, but we're in the middle of negotiations.

BELICA

It's for a ceremony, and a journey my people take when they die.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS

You can't take a journey when you're dead, that is the essence of death.

BELICA

The eldest child carries their parents ashes to the top of a mountain by foot. It's a really, really big mountain.

Belica notices the stack of baby-bump-amor in the corner.

BELICA (CONT'D)

(pointing to the bottom of the stack)

Imagine this is a normal mountain.

(pointing to the top)

And this is the mountain I have to climb.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS

Thank you, the diagram helped me visualize that it is indeed big. So this is a religious event I'm legally not allowed to deny?

BELICA

I'm not one for tradition, that's why I left my home. It's different when the tradition is a dying wish.

CAPTAIN STEPHENS

Rules are rules. Your time off is approved. Who am I to say if something is absolute nonsense?

Belica picks up a baby-bump-amor.

BELICA

Can I take one of these? It looks like a good place to store snacks.

A long awkward pause. Belica leaves for the door.

BELICA (CONT'D)

See you in three months, sir.

EXT. SPACE - UNIT UNITY SPACE STATION

A personal, military-grade spacecraft launches from the Unit Unity Space Station and flies off.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

A dark old-growth forest lit by moonlight. CREATURES CALL AND HOWL. Belica's spacecraft lands.

Belica walks into the forest, gun in hand.

EXT. TOWN - GLOWING ROCK - NIGHT

Belica nervously talks. It appears she's talking to someone.

BELICA

Hey Sparrow, sorry to hear about...
I missed you, and I really miss
Mom. Wish I could have... Can we
forget about...

We pull back to reveal Belica is talking to a glowing rock.

BELICA (CONT'D)

you having the same emotional range
as this rock?

(a beat)

Fuck. This is going to suck.

Belica looks up at the starry sky.

BELICA (CONT'D)
Doing this for you.

SPARROW (O.S.)
Belica? What are you... I didn't
know you were coming.

SPARROW (late 20s), female, stoic, traditional, wearing
leather amor approaches Belica.

BELICA
Sorry to hear about Mom.
(a long beat)
It's nice to see you.

Belica goes for a hug. Sparrow steps backward and extends her
arm for a handshake. Belica shakes Sparrow's hand.

SPARROW
Unannounced and late.

BELICA
Couldn't decide what to wear.
(a beat)
See, that's a joke because I only
have one outfit, so it's--

SPARROW
What are you doing here? Really?

BELICA
I promised Mom I'd be her carrier.

SPARROW
(laughs)
This, this is a joke. Being the
carrier takes years of training.

BELICA
Or one gun.

SPARROW
Go home. Haven't you embarrassed us
enough? All mom's friends will be
on the journey to see her off. You
barely know them or the rituals.

Sparrow, annoyed, walks away. Belica jumps in front of her,
blocking her path. They repeat this childish pattern,
slipping back into the same sibling dynamics they had as
kids.

BELICA

I will, by the end of the journey.
You can be the carrier for my
ashes.

SPARROW

And which of your many friends
would accompany me?

BELICA

You're right. I don't wanna be
here. Everyone hates me. Everyone
except Mom. I'm here for her.

SPARROW

Don't pretend like you care about
Mom or her wishes. You left.

BELICA

I'm here now. Some of us express
how we feel with actions. Like
crying, talking, human emotions.

SPARROW

Crying is a luxury. Fine. Go
embarrass us and get killed. Just
try to die on the way back AFTER
you have delivered Mom's ashes.

BELICA

Did I really deserve that?

SPARROW

You know what you did. I think
we're done here.

FADE OUT: