

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

Blackness, peppered with distant stars. Earth. Grey and dead. Surrounded by rings of space junk and debris. Just beyond the space junk, several space stations orbit. We move in on STATION XJ-14.

INT. CORRIDOR, OUTSIDE SUPPORT RESIDENCES, STATION XJ-14

Detective VANESSA GRANT (33) storms up the tight corridor. She wears black pants, a shirt and tie, and a trench coat. Her long hair pulled back into a pony tail. She is hungover.

As she approaches the entrance to the Support Crew Residence Area, she bites off the end of a cigar and lights it. Waiting for her is BRANDON THOMPCKINS (27), sharply dressed in a suit, hair perfectly coifed. He's nervous.

GRANT

You my new partner? Thompkins?

Thompkins nods eagerly. They shake hands.

THOMPCKINS

That's right. Uh actually it's pronounced Thompkins with the t-h sound.

Grant nods.

GRANT

Vanessa Grant.

After a long beat, Thompkins still hasn't let go of her hand. She pulls it away. She gestures toward the hatch.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Shall we?

Thompkins nods as Grant pulls the lever and the hatch to the Support Residence Area begins grinding open.

INT. BATHROOM

Grant surveys the scene, still chomping that cigar. She notes the positions of the bodies, the plasma burns, the bruises, the broken mirror, an open drawer, and the scattered toiletries.

Thompkins scratches his neck, waiting for Grant to speak. She continues her survey. He starts and stops speaking several times before:

THOMPKINS

No plasma chargers. Must have been a third man.

(a few beats)

I mean, these guys didn't grease each other. Right? Because then where are their plasma chargers?

Grant smiles, taking a long puff on her cigar.

GRANT

That's what we're meant to think.

Thompkins is confused. He's about to speak before Grant throws her finger up; he clams it. Grant takes the cigar out of her mouth and takes a deep breath. She smells the scene. Soaks in it.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Someone staged the scene. These two were in a knock-down-drag-out. Number one pulls a charger from that drawer, he must have stashed it there. Number two had one in his waistband. They snuffed each other. That brings us to number three. Number three is either watching this go down, or comes along, whatever, moves the bodies around to make it look like they've been executed, makes off with the chargers.

THOMPKINS

How do you know-

GRANT

We got to talk to the kid that pulled the alarm.

INT. LOUNGE

JIMMY (8) sits in a chair much too large for him, sipping from a juice cup. His MOTHER leans on the wall behind him, two UNIFORMED OFFICERS stand by the hatch. Jimmy jumps when the hatch mechanisms start their grinding, spilling his juice on the floor.

Grant and Thompkins enter through the hatch. Grant is surprised to see how young and frail the boy is. She hands her cigar to Thompkins and crouches down to Jimmy so she's eye level.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make a mess.

Grant is unsure what he means until she follows his eyes down to the juice on the grey floor.

GRANT

Oh, that's nothing to worry about.

Grant produces a handkerchief from her trench coat and wipes up the mess. She hands the rag to Thompkins without looking back at him.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Don't let that go out.

Now she turns toward him. Thompkins grimaces and puts the wet chewed up end of the cigar in his mouth and takes a puff.

GRANT (CONT'D)

So, Jimmy. Tell me what you saw.

Jimmy looks down at his feet dangling from the chair.

GRANT (CONT'D)

It's okay, you can tell me. You're not in any kind of trouble.

Jimmy continues looking down. He takes a big gulp from his juice cup. He looks back at his mother briefly.

JIMMY

My mom sent me to the market to get some milk. But, but, but... I bought candy with the credits she gave me.

Grant takes a look at the mother who is clearly upset about this news.

GRANT

Okay, I'll talk to your mother about that, it'll be okay.

Grant looks back at the kid as he snuffles and wipes away a tear.

JIMMY

I was heading to my secret place to
hide my candy when...

Jimmy lets out a sad whimper. Grant gives him a pat on the
shoulder.

GRANT

What did you see?

JIMMY

Two men were lying there... smoke was
coming off of them.

Jimmy is really crying now. Grant gives him a few moments.

GRANT

Jimmy, I need you to think really
hard about this: did they, the men,
did they have plasma chargers with
them when you saw them?

Jimmy wipes his nose on his sleeve.

JIMMY

I thought they were asleep at
first.

GRANT

Jimmy, did the men have plasma
chargers?

Jimmy nods. Grant stands.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Thank you, Jimmy, you've been a
great help.

(to the mother)

You can take him home now. Let him
slide on the candy, alright.

Mother nods and takes Jimmy's hand. Grant takes her cigar
back from Thompkins as they exit the lounge.

INT. CORRIDOR

Grant makes her way through the cramped corridor, Thompkins
in tow. She stops at a viewport and Thompkins walks into her.

THOMPKINS

Sorry.

She glares at him and then looks out the viewport down at the barren rock of a planet beneath her.

GRANT

Your parents ever tell you stories about what it was like?

THOMPKINS

Um, Earth?

She nods.

THOMPKINS (CONT'D)

My parents both died when I was very young.

Grant looks at Thompkins, almost realizing that he's a person for the first time. She looks back at Earth before speaking.

GRANT

I'm sorry to hear that.

THOMPKINS

Granny Thompkins used to talk about it all the time though.

GRANT

When my parents talked about it, they made it sound like some kind of utopia. Paradise.

THOMPKINS

Granny too. Yeah she was very fond of Earth. Never liked it up here.

GRANT

They made it sound like murder, and stealing, and rape, and bigotry, and every other evil only started once we got up here.

THOMPKINS

Maybe it did? I can see how living here could change us.

GRANT

If mankind were so perfect back then, how'd we end up destroying the planet?

Thompkins is unsure what to say.

GRANT (CONT'D)

As long as there are humans, there
is evil.

THOMPKINS

And good.

Grant smiles sadly, nodding.

GRANT

And good.

Grant stubs out her cigar and continues down the corridor,
Thompkins follows.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Kid saw the bodies with chargers.
So we've definitely got a third
man. We've got a hot one here.

THOMPKINS

A hot one?

INT. BULLPEN, POLICE PRECINCT, HOMICIDE DIVISION

Grant and Thompkins descend the ladder into the precinct. The
place is mostly empty, a few detectives at their desks typing
reports. Grant points to a mostly empty desk next to a
cluttered one with "GRANT" on the nameplate.

GRANT

That's your desk, start on the
report, I'm gonna go talk to the
Major.

Thompkins sits and begins typing the report as Grant heads
for the Major's office.

INT. HARDACRE'S OFFICE

Major JACK HARDACRE (52) sits at his desk. He's fat, bald,
unshaven, wears a stained shirt, a plaid tie, suspenders and
tan pants.

He looks up, unhappy at the sight of Grant.

HARDACRE

What is it, Grant?

GRANT

Two guys get in a fight and kill
each other.

HARDACRE

Okay.

GRANT

Someone takes their chargers and moves the bodies to look like they were executed. Why?

Hardacre runs a frustrated hand through what hair he has left.

HARDACRE

Maybe because they were executed, Grant.

GRANT

I don't think so, Major. We got a hot one here.

Hardacre stands and leans forward on his desk.

HARDACRE

No, no, no! No hot ones. Just find the simplest explanation and close the case.

GRANT

So you are in on it?

HARDACRE

Hey, screw you.

GRANT

In your dreams, Major.

Hardacre grimaces as Grant walks back into the bullpen.

INT. BULLPEN

Grant sits down across from Thompkins at her desk as he pecks away at the report. She searches for something amidst the clutter of her desk. Finally she finds a rubber band ball and starts passing it between her hands.

GRANT

Why would you want it to look like there was a third person at all?

Thompkins stops typing and looks up.

THOMPKINS

Hmm?

GRANT

Two guys kill each other, fine.
What do you gain from making it
looks like they were murdered by a
third man?

THOMPKINS

Maybe there is someone they want
blamed for it.

GRANT

Exactly, a frame job.

Thompkins smiles at his being clever.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Those chargers will turn up soon,
and hopefully from there we'll be
able to follow them back and find
out what's going on.

THOMPKINS

What do you think is going on?

GRANT

I don't know. Once we find out who
it's getting pinned on, the fog
should start to clear.

Grant puts down the ball and sticks a fresh cigar in her
mouth, biting off the end.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Yup, we got a hot one.

Grant lights the cigar and takes a long puff.

THOMPKINS

What is that? 'A hot one?' I heard
you saying it to the Major too.

Grant smiles.

GRANT

A hot one, a hot case. It means
there's more here than meets the
eye. Someone's trying to get
something over on us, bigger than
the case itself. A detective earns
her stripes with the hot ones. Or
his stripes, as the case may be.

Thompkins nods.