

SCENE 10

*Glaciers and wind.
A whale is beached on the ice.
HERMAN and TAY in full polar gear.
HERMAN stares out through binoculars.
TAY installs an auger into the ice.*

Herman? TAY

Yeah. HERMAN

Will you tell me something? TAY

Yeah. HERMAN

Why did you come here if you knew you can't save them? TAY
(re: Glaciers)

I just want to watch. HERMAN

To watch. TAY

Just to watch them.
To be here.
Maybe by being here
Something will happen. HERMAN

Nothing happens by sitting still. TAY

Things happen. HERMAN

What happens. TAY

HERMAN
Ice melts.

TAY
Something happens to make that happen.

HERMAN
Ice turns to water if the air is warm.
The particles gather heat energy from the air.
The ice particles have enough energy to break apart.

TAY
Into what.

HERMAN
Into what.

TAY
Into something smaller.

HERMAN
I'm not doing anything to make it smaller.

TAY
You're here.
You're making the air warm.

HERMAN
I'm a glacier scientist.
Tell me something I don't know.

TAY.
Right.

HERMAN lowers his binoculars.

HERMAN
When are you going to say something to Terra?

TAY
About what?

HERMAN
About not being a 'she'

TAY
I don't know.

HERMAN

I think she just forgot.

TAY

It didn't seem like the right moment.
She was going on about -
She really needs me to be on her team.

HERMAN

Okay.

TAY

I mean, she thinks she's doing something important.
And it is important -
But if I bring it up when she's all -
It's just bad timing.

HERMAN

Okay.

TAY

You know she's not doing it on purpose -
She's not *not* doing it -
Not actively *not* saying it.

HERMAN

Okay.

TAY

But I can't just
Bring it up.
Not just, whenever.
It'll be an ordeal.
“Hey, by the way? I'm a ‘they’”
She'll get upset.
Shut herself up in the light bed.

HERMAN

If you keep not bringing it up,
Won't it get worse the longer you let it go on?

TAY

It doesn't matter.
It does. I mean.
It does but it doesn't.

HERMAN

Listen.
When we got here
We were doing introductions
With one of the station engineers
A lot of people were getting off the boat
The wind is ripping past
We're all wrapped head to toe
Ear to ear
In goose down and thermal scarves
And the station engineer yells in my direction
"HEY WHAT'S YOUR NAME."
And I yell back and he yells
"NICE TO MEET YOU VERNON"

TAY

What?

HERMAN

Vernon.

TAY

"Vernon."

HERMAN

Yeah.
"Vernon,"
"Herman,"
"Vernon."

TAY

"Vernon."

HERMAN

"Herman." "Vernon."

TAY

I mean I get it.
Phonetically.

HERMAN

And that's not my name

TAY

Right.

HERMAN

But I'm not going to yell at him
From behind my balaclava

TAY

Right.

HERMAN

Through his balaclava and parka, and the wind
That it's HERMAN not VERNON.
I'm not going to stand there in the Antarctic wind yelling that.

TAY

Right.

HERMAN

Ridiculous, right?

TAY

The wind.

HERMAN

So anyway I don't correct him.
But then I just keep not correcting him.
Out on the ice – "Hey Vernon!"
In line at the canteen – "Hey, Vernon?"
In gear storage – "Hey Vernon."
Doesn't change the nature of our relationship
It doesn't matter –
I mean, it does –
But it doesn't.
To me. I'm still me
I'm still Herman
Toward the end of his assignment
We were cleaning harpoons
After a mass beaching
And I slip on the oil
I slice open my side, my stomach
Pretty bad gash
So Medical has to come
But I'm getting stitched up and my hands are all covered in oil and blood
The station engineer, this guy, has to do the paperwork
He starts to fill out my information
And I have to tell him
My name.

He looks at me
Like he has never met me
Never seen me before
Not just that
Like I have taken Vernon's body hostage
Like he has lost Vernon and will never get him back
That's how important my name was to this guy.

So you should tell Terra before she doesn't know you.

TAY

Right.
But.
She doesn't know me.

HERMAN

That's not what -

TAY

I don't need Terra to know me.
She thinks she knows me.
And that's what she needs.

I don't need that.

HERMAN

That engineer was on his last season.
I knew him six months
I realized later I never got his name.

And then he left.

TAY

Phytoplankton are autotrophic.
You know what that means?
That means they self-feed.
They don't need anyone else.