

ARES ASCENDING
Episode 02 "A CIVIL ACTION"

by
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FADE IN

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A PROFESSOR, a man in his mid-fifties, sits behind a desk. He leans forward slightly as he speaks emphatically.

PROFESSOR

With every attack comes a suspension of civil rights until those rights are completely whittled away. In the end, perhaps 200 determined men have managed to cripple nations, leaving the values that the democratic free world deems so vital, as nothing more than a distant memory. What have we left? A militarized life? The illusion of safety? Of freedom? 'Free' nations trapped under the stranglehold of locked borders, special travel documents, security checkpoints at every other block, permanent, visible National Guard and Police units in our cities, multiple cameras on every street corner, civil curfews, warrantless wiretapping, government email filtering and tracing, cars that report where they are to a central command as to direction, speed, weight of cargo - human or otherwise, cell phone position triangulation, accurate location algorithms to predict where any given person will be based on their spending habits through the use of credit and debit cards. Why?... A difference of opinion? A difference of faith? Money? Control over oil or natural resources? In the end, when everything that you hold dear is finally stripped away, does it matter? In the end, humanity may learn the simple truth about 'freedom'... that is to say, the paradox of freedom is that the cost is freedom itself. That path can only be changed from within a society... A civil action.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (1) - NIGHT

BLACKNESS. The sound of a walkie-talkie radio SQUELCHES loudly, two times overtop of the background static. Someone turns the volume knob down slightly.

JACOB

You can take the hoods off now.

As the camera turns on, two hoods are thrown from OFF CAMERA onto the coffee table in front of us. The small room was obviously a staff lunchroom in a previous life. JACOB (CAUCASIAN, MALE, 32) sits on an old couch facing the camera. He collects the black hoods and stows them in his gear. Next to him is LAREINA "LARS" (CAUCASIAN, FEMALE 28). MASHEFF (ARABIC, MALE 29) stands watching out of the dirty office window. All are armed with automatic weapons. Lareina has a short range, shoulder fired rocket launcher slung over her shoulder. Masheff's chest bares six high-yield grenades. Though it is tucked into the collar of his well worn fatigues, a strip of his crimson red scarf is visible.

INTERVIEWER

How long have you been part of the resistance?

JACOB

I've been at it for about two years now.

LAREINA

I've been working with them for eight months. Masheff has been with them since the beginning.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Do you feel that you're making a difference?

LAREINA

Most of the time, yes... But lately, it's been getting more difficult. The people of this city are getting worn down and many of them are closing their doors to us. People who we used to rely on for support have begun to fade away... Even though life hasn't changed for the better.

JACOB

Our objectives have yet to be reached. It's disappointing to watch as people, some of them good friends simply roll over and give up. Ten months ago, my brother severed all direct connection to me for the safety of his family and still he gets hounded by the Internal Security Service on an almost weekly basis.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

How do you know if there is no way for you to talk to him safely?

JACOB

Well, just because I can't speak to him directly doesn't mean I don't have people close to him that keep me updated. We need to be updated for both the protection of him and his family, as well as those in the Resistance that he knows through me.

(beat)

Lareina, Masheff... Both of them have had security forces place family members in the internment camps outside of the city. Branded as Social Delinquents, they have no rights... None of them will get access to a lawyer, all of them will be held for as long as the I.S.S. sees fit.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

What are we doing here?

JACOB

We're waiting for a signal.

LAREINA

This room was prepped earlier today by another cell. We're safe here.

INTERVIEWER (O.C.)

Prepped? What do you mean?

LAREINA

See the ceiling?

The camera tilts up to show pipes completely wrapped in copper wiring running the full length of the room, then returns to the woman.

LAREINA (CONT'D)

The pipes are filled with coolant to cover our heat signatures so that the thermal cameras can't see us... The copper wiring wrapped around it disrupts any electronic surveillance. To the thermal cameras, it basically looks like an empty room.

Jacob's radio SQUELCHES one time.

Masheff raises his hand toward the group without looking back from the window. Lareina puts her finger to her mouth like a mother trying to quiet an infant.

The WHINE of turbine engines. A blinding light streaks across the window as slowly the craft outside passes. Jacob counts with his fingers while staring at his watch. The WHINE and light moves off down the street.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten... The WHINE returns as does the blinding searchlight. This time it holds a bit longer on the window. Lareina looks at Jacob with concern. His expression of high alert doesn't give her any confidence. The WHINE of the turbines SPOOLS UP as the craft and its intense spotlight fade into the night. Lareina rubs her eyes to adjust them to the low levels of the room.

The silence of the room is broken by Jacob's walkie-talkie as it SQUELCHES two times. He holds it in his hands, waiting. Again, the AUDIO STATIC blips through his radio, this time as a trio.

Instantly, we see the team relax in posture and demeanor.

MASHEFF

We're clear.

JACOB

The security aircraft are always a concern... We've had to get creative to get around unnoticed.

He leads his team outside of the office, into the open space of the abandoned warehouse. Lareina takes point with Masheff bringing up the rear.

JACOB (CONT'D, TO INTERVIEWER)
 Stay close... We wouldn't wanna
 lose you two.

Lareina reaches the far end of the warehouse and with her weapon raised, she slowly opens the door just enough to see down the street. Jacob, the Interviewer, her Cameraman, and Masheff flatten themselves to the wall behind her. She raises her free hand with a 'thumbs up' to the team without taking her eyes off of the street. Jacob, looks to Masheff who signals that he is ready. Jacob pats Lareina on the shoulder to let her know that they are good to go.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Lareina bursts into the open, streaks across the street to the opposite building. Jacob and the rest of the group are right behind her as she angles for the next door and at full stride plants her heel just below the doorknob. The frame gives and the door swings open.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (2) - NIGHT

Lareina and Jacob take two steps into the room, each sweeping opposite directions with their automatic weapons.

Masheff stands at the door, keeping his eyes on the street. They hold for a moment.

LAREINA
 Clear.

JACOB
 Clear.

MASHEFF
 All clear.

JACOB
 Move.

Lareina immediately heads further into the building, another abandoned warehouse. They continue with weapons raised.

JACOB (WHISPERING TO INTERVIEWER)
 Our target building is across the
 street in that corner.

He motions his hand to the left.

JACOB (WHISPERING TO INTERVIEWER,
CONT'D)

But this street has a lot of
surveillance cameras, so we're
going underground.

Lareina opens a small office door and pulls back a section of the tattered, weathered carpet. She smiles at the rest of her team.

LAREINA

Bingo.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

She flips the trap door open and leans her upper body inside, weapon first. Determining that it is safe, she lowers herself all of the way in, turning on her weapon-mounted flashlight to illuminate the dark, wet tunnel before her.

Jacob follows, dropping down to the subterranean passageway.

JACOB

Watch yourself here.

He helps the Interviewer jump down, followed by the Cameraman, who spins around to catch Masheff pull a small cord dragging the carpet and trap door closed behind them.

He catches Masheff's cold, determined stare in the camera light.

They are on the move again, heading quickly to the other end of the tunnel. Lareina and Jacob stop and look up at the hatch above them. Without hesitation or words, Lareina slings her weapon and kneels down with her hands clasped for Jacob to climb up.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Jacob breeches the hatch with the muzzle of his weapon first. Scanning the room, he pulls himself through the opening, and with his free hand reaches down to haul Lareina up to the ground floor of a dilapidated office building. Immediately on planting her feet firmly on the ground, Lareina raises her weapon to provide cover for the remaining members of the group as Masheff and Jacob help the two non-combatants out of the tunnel exit.

Hugging the walls, the group is lead by Lareina up a set stairs to the roof access door.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING, STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lareina is about the use the butt end of her rifle when Jacob's radio SQUELCHES one, two... three times. She freezes. Jacob glances at the bare ceiling.

JACOB

It's coming back... We're exposed.

Masheff scans the area, finding a CO2 fire extinguisher. He slings his weapon and rips it off of the wall, tossing it up the few steps to Jacob. He bolts down the flight of stairs to the next level and, with some difficulty pulls the second one for himself.

Jacob's radio SQUELCHES again, this time, twice. Masheff rejoins the group.

MASHEFF

A low continual spray... Anything more with appear as less than room temperature and we'll be detected as a cold spot worth investigating... You take the first pass.. I'll save this one for the second.

Jacob nods in agreement. His radio SQUELCHES one time and the WHINE of the turbines can be heard approaching.

JACOB (WHISPERING)

Everyone be quiet.

He pulls the pin guarding the extinguishers trigger. Slowly he squeezes the level in his hand. A puff of white smoke from the extinguisher becomes a steadily streaming cloud. There is a subtle but noticeable drop in temperature in the small space. Breath starts to hang in the air.

Masheff waves his hand in front of his neck, using sign language to 'kill the extinguisher' and Jacob lets go of the lever.

They wait.

The WHINE from the turbines is very loud. The I.S.S. craft is MUCH closer than before. The intense light from the craft falls on the outside of the door to the roof, beside Lareina. Its edges begin to glow as the searchlight holds on the door, light streaming between the door and its frame.

The light dissipates and the telltale WHINE heads into the distance.

The MUTED SQUELCH from Jacob's radio sounds off twice. They hold their position for a moment longer. Then four SQUELCHES sound off. As before, the team relaxes turning back to their mission.

INTERVIEWER

If three radio squelches means the I.S.S. search craft is close, two means very close and one means it is right above us, what does four mean?

MASHEFF

It means that the craft is gone and is flying a different route back... Our spotter is telling us that it won't be making a second pass over our location.

INTERVIEWER

You put a lot of faith in your spotter.

MASHEFF

He is a good man and a good friend...

Masheff continues with a coy smile.

MASHEFF (CONT'D)

Besides, he knows that if he screws up, his life will be in our hands when one of us spots for his team.

Lareina cracks the lock with her weapon and the group makes their way onto the roof of the building.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

The morning light is turning the city's skyline into silhouettes.

Staying low as they move, the group drops down below the edge of the raised roof line to keep out of sight from those on the street.

Lareina pulls the shoulder fired rocket tube off of her back and extends it to its full length.

Cautiously, she loads the three rounds that Masheff carries in his backpack into a large magazine.

Jacob checks his watch, then the sky.

JACOB
It's almost time.

INTERVIEWER
How do you know?

Jacob retrieves a pair of binoculars from his thigh pocket, rising just enough to get a view of the street below. He answers her while scanning the sidewalks.

JACOB
Because it is 6:15 and sunrise is at 6:18 today... We have a man on the ground right now, waiting out of sight... we may need him to mark our target.

He hands the binoculars to the Interviewer and points to the street corner opposite their position.

JACOB (CONT'D)
You see there?... the SpecBot standing on the corner?

They drop down behind the cover of the roof line ledge.

JACOB (CONT'D)
It used to be, back in the beginning, that we could hit one of those things and that would be that... But they are adapting... even as short as a few weeks ago, we could take one unit out and make a statement. Now... they're deploying them faster than we can make our 'statements'.

(beat)
They used to be deployed alone. Now they work in pairs, one a visible deterrent to anyone who'd try and exercise their right to free speech, or their right to congregate... the other lurks in the shadows with it's adaptive camouflage turned on. If we hit the first one, the second unit waits, holding a position to respond.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

Dawn and dusk are the best times for our operations because even though the camouflaged units are invisible to the eye, they still cast a shadow because they are physically standing there. A low sun means longer shadows... They're easier to see. They are aware of this and do their best to minimize their shadow profile, such as standing on the light side of a telephone pole or street lamp... In the recesses of a doorway... On the dark side of a building, for example. If we find a shadow with nothing standing there to cast it, we know we've found our target. It has become a game of 'cat and mouse'. Also, there tends to be less people out during these times so there is far less chance of collateral damage.

Lareina pulls out her binoculars and watches the street while Jacob explains their dire situation.

JACOB (CONT'D)

The bitch of it is, these things have access to the 'eye in the sky' cameras that have been sold to the public, ironically, for our protection, throughout all of our major cities... So while they can see pretty much anywhere through the system, we are limited to line of sight and rudimentary detection methods... all in all, we've had to be very careful with our operations.

Masheff speaks from behind his rifle scope aimed at the street.

MASHEFF

The founding fathers of every nation would roll over in their graves if they saw what had become of their democratic dreams.

JACOB

Government has been in bed with the military industrial complex for so long that they've lost all credibility in these matters.

(MORE)

JACOB (cont'd)

The fate of people in this country, in neighboring countries, in countries on the other side of the globe... all decided by a group of soulless contracting companies. Even some of the men within those companies have become slaves to their corporations... their own creations. People ask how this is possible? How did we get here?
(beat)

A lifetime of compromised moral decisions by an organization that isn't bound by any true moral guidelines. Over the years, all those little indiscretions in boardrooms and back alleys add up. That legacy has lead us here, now.

LAREINA

I've heard reports from other cells that they're deploying these things on our borders in the name of 'national security'. If that's the case, why are they facing inward? We're prisoners in our own state.

Masheff draws their attention to the street.

MASHEFF

Guys...

Immediately, they are all peering over the edge as a MAN (40) stands in the middle of the intersection, obviously distraught. They listen as the man SCREAMS from street level.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

The man stands in the street, tears streaming down his face. We are GUTTED BY HIS ABSOLUTE DESPAIR. He seems to take no precaution to protect himself from the light but steady traffic passing by him.

MAN

YOU BASTARDS! WHERE DID YOU TAKE HER!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

MASHEFF

This could complicate things.

JACOB

Damn.

The SpecBot below turns and advances on the man in the intersection.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

MAN

YOU! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HER!

The hollow digital voice of the SpecBot replies at it steadily approaches.

SPECBOT 1

Sir, calm down. State your name.

The man takes a step backward. The SpecBot stops.

MAN

Like HELL I'm gonna give you my name! I'm not telling you ANYTHING until you tell me where my daughter is!

The Specbot takes another step forward.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

JACOB

Lareina, get ready... This poor son of a bitch may give us a window.

Lareina immediately readies her shoulder fired rocket and waits for a target.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

With the SpecBot in the street, traffic has come to a halt.

SPECBOT 1

I assure you sir, that the I.S.S. will do everything possible to help you.

This only enrages the man further. He is seething mad.

MAN

IS THAT WHAT YOU TOLD MY WIFE?
RIGHT BEFORE YOU KILLED HER!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

LAREINA

I don't have a clear shot.

Jacob watches through binoculars as the SpecBot takes another step toward the distraught man.

JACOB

If this guy doesn't calm down, it's not going to matter.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

The man's survival instincts are beginning to overtake his need to be heard. He scans the area for any source help or escape, though he finds none.

MAN

SOMEBODY HELP ME!
(to SpecBot)
YOU STAY AWAY FROM ME!

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

LAREINA

I still don't have a shot.

Masheff is watching events unfold through his rifle scope.

JACOB

Masheff, any sign of the second unit?

MASHEFF

Not yet.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

The SpecBot lunges forward grabbing the man by the throat. It scans the man's face and begins to read him his rights as the man struggles in futile effort to free himself.

P.O.V. SpecBot Display - It holds the man at arm's length as points on the man's face are highlighted and compared to the I.S.S. database. It finds a match in the photo identification of College Electronics Professor DAVID PETROVICH.

It opens sub-files on MARILYN Petrovich, 42, wife, status: deceased 08/08/2018 and daughter SARA Petrovich, 14, daughter, status: detained 08/08/2018.

SPECBOT 1

David Petrovich, Under the Charter of Civil Compliance, you are under arrest. You will be directed to detention facility twenty-three for processing.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

Lareina speaks with urgency in her voice.

LAREINA

Jacob!

Jacob is watching the events unfold below through his binoculars.

JACOB

Hold you fire!

Suddenly, a WOMAN walks nonchalantly passed the recessed doorway of the opposite building, steps back from the wall and throws a paint filled balloon into the seeming void. While some of the paint hits the brickwork, the majority of it lands on the invisible, second SpecBot effectively defeating its adaptive camouflage. This is the marking that the rooftop team is waiting for. The woman turns and runs as fast as she can for the other side of a transit bus, putting the vehicle between her and the second SpecBot. The backup unit steps out of the recess and begins its pursuit of the woman with its weapon raised.

JACOB (CONT'D)

THERE! FIRE!

Without hesitation, Lareina aims her weapon at the second SpecBot. She fires the rocket down to the street.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

A massive explosion destroys the backup unit, shattering surrounding windows. The SpecBot's head ricochets off of the side of the bus, bouncing into the now stampeding crowd.

The explosion gets the attention of SpecBot 1. Immediately it releases the man's throat from its steel hand. Ignoring David entirely as his body collapses to the ground.

It tracks the trajectory of the rocket and raises its weapon to return fire at the roof line. David scrambles to his feet, heads around the corner of Office Building and ducks through a door in the Abandoned Warehouse (2) across the street.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

With mechanical precision the first round whizzes past Lareina's head, narrowly missing her as she drops down behind the roof line.

She slides the weapon over to Jacob who in turn passes it on to Masheff. Instantly, he has it on his shoulder ready to fire at the robot on the street. Mortar and brick pock and shatter at Lareina's section of roof line. She is hunkered down in relative safety, covering her head with her arms.

Masheff takes a deep breath, raises himself over the roof line and fires.

EXT. STREET - DAWN

SpecBot 1 sees Masheff's head and shoulders break the linear line of the roof and readjusts its aim, firing one shot.

The rocket finds its target with devastating effect as the ground where SpecBot 1 was standing is turned into a small crater.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, ROOF - DAWN

Lareina jumps to her feet, excited. Jacob is happy but contains his jubilation behind his stoic facade.

The camera turns to catch Masheff's reaction...

... But the lone shot from SpecBot 1 has found its mark.
MASHEFF IS DEAD.

Lareina sees the still body of her comrade in arms and rushes to aid him.

LAREINA
MASHEFF!

She slides to his side. She cradles his head, ignoring the blood seeping into the forearm of her jacket. Jacob knows that there is no hope, Masheff has fought and fallen with honor.

Seeing an I.S.S. search aircraft headed their way, he buries his emotion. Placing a hand on Lareina's shoulder, he speaks tenderly.

JACOB
We have to move.

The Interviewer and Cameraman are already on their feet, still capturing footage while making their way to the stairwell door.

Jacob picks up the rocket launcher, slings it over his shoulder and follows them.

Lareina pulls the crimson scarf from around her friend's neck, wrapping it tightly around her fist.

Jacob stops at the rooftop door and turns back to Lareina. This time, it is an order.

JACOB (CONT'D)
LARS! LET'S GO!

She glances at him, then over her shoulder. Spotting the approaching I.S.S. search aircraft is enough to spur her on. Snatching up her rifle, she bolts for the door. As soon as she is inside, Jacob slams the rooftop shut.

The group races down the stairs heading back toward their entry point.

INT. TUNNEL - MORNING

One by one, they jump into the tunnel and make their way to the other end.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (2) - MORNING

Lareina throws open the trap door in the floor. As before, she is immediately on her feet with her weapon raised. This time however, cowering in the corner sits the man from the street - David Petrovich.

Lareina spins on her heels, aiming her weapon at his head.

LAREINA
Sir... I've got a stray.

Jacob pushes past the Interviewer and the Cameraman and exits the tunnel to evaluate if the 'stray' is a threat or not.

He aims his weapon at the David, who does nothing but raise his hands in fear.

Jacob speaks to him in a commanding voice.

JACOB

Get up.

David nervously does as he is told, keeping his hands high over his head.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Scan him.

Lareina lowers her weapon and pulls a small digital device from her thigh pocket. She waves it over his body while it emits a SOLID TONE. She recognizes him from the street, and speaks softly to him.

LAREINA

Please put your arms out straight.

DAVID

I'm not a threat to you people.

LAREINA

We just need to be sure.

She passes the device over the full length of his arms with no change in the SOLID TONE.

LAREINA (CONT'D)

He's clean.

Jacob doesn't respond other than to stare at the man. After a moment of thought, he gives the order.

JACOB

Bag him. He's coming with us.

DAVID

Hey? What? Coming with you where?

David begins to protest, to no avail. Lareina pulls zip-ties from her hip, binds his wrists, and uses Masheff's crimson scarf as a blindfold. Her voice is calming to the now blinded and bound instructor.

LAREINA

It's okay Mr?

DAVID

David Petrovich.

LAREINA

Well, Mr. Petrovich... my name is
Lareina and we're gonna get you
outta here, okay?

He nods.

Jacob, confident that he won't cause any problems, pulls the Interviewer and Cameraman out of the tunnel and turns to stand guard. Lareina ushers the Interviewer over to the blindfolded man and places his hand on her elbow.

LAREINA (CONT'D)

Mr. Petrovich, you're going to hold
on to this elbow, okay? Just follow
it wherever it goes and you'll be
fine.

The Interviewer tries to comfort him.

INTERVIEWER

It's okay... We had to do it this
way too.

Jacob glances over his shoulder.

JACOB

We ready?

Lareina is at the back of the line with her rifle in her hands.

LAREINA

All good.

Jacob leads off, headed for the door to the street running outside the warehouse.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

The group crosses quickly, without event and enters the warehouse.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE (1) - MORNING

Once in the warehouse office, Jacob stands where Masheff stood earlier, watching out the window for any signs of I.S.S. patrols.

JACOB

Sorry guys, you too.

He tosses the two black hoods to Lareina and motions to the Interviewer and Cameraman.

INTERVIEWER

What? You don't trust us yet?

JACOB

I trust Lareina and myself...
Besides, you wanted to meet the
players in this game didn't ya?

INTERVIEWER

Yes... But...

Jacob cuts her off.

JACOB (TO LAREINA)

We're not going back to the
safehouse, we're going to
Resistance Headquarters.

Lareina's face shows her concern, but she does not protest.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, the typical, tiny room is lit by a single overhead lamp high above the steel door. The steel door is unlocked and opened.

David is unceremoniously shoved into the room by a very LARGE MAN. Once inside, the man strips the blindfold from his eyes and leaves, locking the door With a loud CLINK and CREAK.

David looks at his surroundings. Long decayed paint is streaked with water stains and blood stains. A closed circuit video camera is perched high in the corner to the left of the door. A small table with chairs on either side wait in the middle of the room for what he is sure will play out like a bad detective novel. He squeezes his nose. Something in this room smells awful. David sits in the chair waiting uncomfortably.

INT. RESISTANCE HEADQUARTERS, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Outside of the small interrogation room, Jacob waits. He leans into the wall next to a phone.

It RINGS. Jacob answers.

JACOB

Ya.

The rusty voice of WARREN FISKE replies.

WARREN
You alright?

JACOB
I'll be fine.

WARREN
Masheff was a good man... A good soldier.

JACOB
Yes he was.

WARREN
Is Lareina helping you?

JACOB
She's hacking the I.S.S. database as we speak.

WARREN
Where are the reporters?

JACOB
Cozy in the cell at the end of the hall... Waiting calmly.

Jacob chuckles.

JACOB (CONT'D)
It's amazing what news people will go through for a story.

WARREN
Make sure they get it right.

JACOB
After what they saw today, I don't think that will be an issue.

WARREN
Both of you come see me when you're done. I'll be upstairs.

JACOB
Sure.

The line CLICKS as Warren hangs up.

Lareina rounds the corner with a file folder in her hand.

LAREINA

He was telling the truth on the street today. The I.S.S. file on him has his faculty photo from the college, his full history as a electronics professor... He's written a few high profile, well respected papers... The notes in his personal file state that the reason he never left the college for a bigger, higher paying job was his wife... Marilyn. She was a Burgess... Of the famous Burgess Vintner's family... When her brothers sold their inherited share in the family business, she traded hers for a portion of the land...

Jacob cuts her off.

JACOB

Is there a short version to this story?

LAREINA

The brainiac married the love of his life, who also happened to be rich. They had a daughter, Sara. Wife was killed two years ago... Daughter was apprehended same time... Placed in camp... damn... His daughter is listed in the camp six manifest. That's rough turf for anyone, especially a fourteen year old girl.

JACOB

Sad... she's probably dead already.
(beat)
If he gets the truth, he may prove to be a valuable asset... I'm sure R & D can use him.

Lareina chuckles, handing him the file folder.

LAREINA

He's obviously motivated... And maybe a touch insane.

Jacob grins.

JACOB

Aren't we all?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob and Lareina enter the small room. Jacob sits opposite David, placing the folder on the table between them. Lareina closes the door behind them and remains standing.

JACOB

David... I'm going to ask you a few questions... Your responses will dictate the direction of our relationship.

David shifts in his seat, glancing nervously at Lareina, then turns his attention back Jacob.

DAVID

Okay.

Jacob flips open the cover sheet of the folder.

JACOB

According to I.S.S. files, your wife was killed August 8th, 2018... Correct?

With a solemn voice, David relives the moment that he found out about his wife's death.

DAVID

Marilyn was shopping... With Sara, my daughter. It was a mother-daughter bonding day... they used to head off for a day at the spa, a little window shopping... They always topped it off with a stop at 'Traffelle's' on lower Main St. for their cheesecake... That's when the march happened.

LAREINA

The Liberty March?

DAVID

Yes... though it was quickly branded as a riot... An 'unlawful protest'... A 'civil action'.

(beat)

Within a matter of minutes, full riot squads had surrounded the area... Marilyn didn't realize what was going on until it was too late.

(MORE)

DAVID (cont'd)

The owner of the restaurant told them to hide in the storeroom, but she thought it best to try and get home... back to the Estate.

His voice begins to break. Holding his anger, he does not cry.

DAVID (CONT'D)

The police quartered off the area... Four square blocks... Nobody was let in or out. Within an hour, the robots were deployed. The sight of these steel soldiers set everyone off... The crowd became violent... The man behind Marilyn and Sara threw something at one of the robots... That's when it shot right through her... Right in front of our...

With clenched fists, he spits out the words.

DAVID (CONT'D)

... Right in front of my daughter.

After a moment, he continues.

DAVID (CONT'D)

At that moment, all hell broke loose... The government ordered all participants rounded up and sent to the camps.

His voice solemn again, almost defeated. His eyes well up.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I have spent every moment since then trying to find my daughter... I've tried every avenue that I know, official and non-official channels... It has cost me tens of thousands of dollars in bribes, my tenure at the college... She means everything to me... She's all I have left.

Jacob gives Lareina a knowing glance. He closes the file, folding his hands.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Yesterday, a friend...

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
 my last hope to find her, was
 arrested for 'Actions against the
 Internal Security Service'.

Jacob hands David a handkerchief to wipe the tears from his eyes.

JACOB
 (with compassion)
 Mr. Petrovich... I am sorry for
 your loss.
 (beat)
 The decisions that need to be made
 go beyond me and my team.
 (beat)
 I can't make you any promises.

Jacob stands, pulls out a knife, and cuts the zip-ties binding David's hands. Immediately, David shakes Jacob's hand.

DAVID
 Thank you... Both of you.

INT. WARREN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Warren Fiske (MALE, 55) is an imposing figure. In stark contrast to the operational attire worn by Jacob and Lareina, his blue shirt and matching tie look freshly pressed. A dark blue suit jacket hangs on a hook behind him. He sits behind his desk watching SHAKY SMUGGLED FOOTAGE of a LARGE, NONDESCRIPT FACILITY on a wall mounted widescreen television.

Jacob wraps his knuckle on Warren's door and he and Lareina are waved in.

Warren stares at the screen. The pair enter and sit down opposite him.

WARREN
 This was smuggled in from Fisher's cell... it is the Ophelum SpecBot Factory... On the left is the power substation... in the background on the far right is the assembly plant.

LAREINA
 That is way bigger than the others. I thought it wasn't operational yet?

Warren turns to face them.

WARREN

It would seem that the reported
time frame for the factory's
completion was incorrect.

Jacob moves to the screen for a closer examination of the
grainy picture.

JACOB

Or misinformation... How old is
this footage?

Warren sighs.

WARREN

Two weeks.

JACOB

Two weeks?... These trucks...

Jacob points to area on the screen.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(surprised)
It looks like they're prepping for
deployment.

WARREN

I agree.

LAREINA

Do you think you are compromised?

Warren shrugs.

WARREN

It's possible... The launch date
that I was told by the committee is
still seven weeks away... Perhaps
the committee just thought it would
be safer to give everyone a late
launch date.

Jacob is not convinced.

JACOB

Perhaps they've been stringing you
along in the hopes to catch you off
guard.

Warren squares his shoulders, holding his head high.

WARREN

If that is the case... Then it is already too late for me.

LAREINA

But sir... You can't... How can this operation run without you?

He relaxes his posture and replies with a smile.

WARREN

Should that day come, I have faith in you two.

Jacob cuts in.

JACOB

That's not going to happen.

Warren switches topics.

WARREN

Tell me about Petrovich?

The pair of soldiers exchange a frustrated glance at the overt shift in conversation, but do not fight its new direction.

JACOB

I think we can use him. He's not a field operative, but we can use him in research... Countermeasures and with a little guidance, possibly planning.

LAREINA

He's definitely motivated... He was almost killed today... They have his daughter in camp six.

Warren's eyes show his sadness.

WARREN

Do we know if she's still alive?

JACOB

With your permission sir, I'd like to find out.

Warren nods.

WARREN

If you think having this man on board is worth the operation, I'll authorize it.

LAREINA

We feel he is, sir.

WARREN

Find out what you can... If she's managed to stay alive this long, bring her back here. I want him kept here until then... I don't want a repeat of today.

Warren checks his watch, hesitates slightly.

WARREN (CONT'D)

I have to meet the committee.

He stands collecting his briefcase and suit jacket. Jacob and Lareina look at each other with concern, but put on a brave face for Warren.

LAREINA

Sir... We will see you again.

He simply smiles at her, shaking her hand.

WARREN

(tenderly)
I'm sorry about Masheff.

He leaves the office.

Jacob turns back to the video on the wall. He speaks with focus.

JACOB

Get the reporters up here... They need to see this.

FADE OUT