

AEGIS SECURE LOG // B. FAROUK // PERSONAL_REFLECT_77B

TIMESTAMP: [Redacted]

LOCATION: VSI-LAX, Personal Vehicle

AUDIO-TO-TEXT // E2E ENCRYPTED

Okay, Aegis, just... log this to my personal file. And if you ever show this to her, I'll tell her you've developed a sentimentality matrix that's a clear security risk.

(Sighs heavily)

The burrito is on its way.

The kid's name is Kalen. Aegis says he likes fishing, has a latent interest in Scottish folklore, and his mother lives in a town he hates. So, a week-long, all-expenses-paid trip to a remote lodge in the Scottish Highlands it is. Finance cleared it under "personnel retention and morale initiative." The flight leaves tomorrow. The burrito—specifically, a carne asada from that place on Olvera Street with the green salsa she likes—is being flown via VSI courier to the Nevada data center. It should get there before the kid's panic attack subsides.

All because Sandra said, "Get the poor kid a burrito."

She didn't say, "Task a multi-trillion-dollar AI to run a deep-dive psycho-social workup on a terrified intern, then authorize a five-figure expenditure to send him on his dream vacation as a positive reinforcement measure." But she didn't have to. That's the job. Reading the subtext. Executing the *intent*. And her intent was clear: "This kid found a crack in the world. Reward him so he'll do it again."

I sometimes wonder what Kalen will think. Probably that it's a trap. That the fishing lodge is a black site. Can't blame him. I'd think the same thing. He'll spend the first three days checking for bugs and waiting for the hit team. Then, on day four, when all he's seen is a trout and an old guy named Angus, he'll realize it's real. And he'll be loyal for life. It's a terrifyingly effective system.

It's funny. I didn't know who she was when we first met. Not really. She was just "Sandra," the quiet client at the gym who hired me for personal training sessions I was barely qualified to give. I was working two jobs, my dad was sick, and she paid in cash.

I remember this one time, we were training in the park, and some tourist was throwing

pieces of a croissant to a flock of gulls. She just stopped, mid-lunge, and walked over. Didn't raise her voice. Just said, "That's a Western gull. *Larus occidentalis*. Its gut can't process enriched flour. You're killing it with kindness." She said it with such... clinical sadness. Like it was an inefficient system that bothered her. The tourist just blinked and shuffled away.

I saw *that* person long before I ever saw The Architect. The woman who worries about birds.

I think that's why I'm still here. My parents, they know what happens when a government gets messy, when the abuse is chaotic and uncontrolled. They saw neighbors disappear for no reason other than a bureaucrat's whim. It was butchery. It was a club.

What Sandra does... it's horrifying, yes. But it's *surgical*. She detests amateur-hour butchery. She despises chaos. She wants to run the world like a clean, self-regulating ecosystem, just like the coral reef on her wall. She is building a monster, no doubt. But she also built it a leash. A very, very strong one.

So I stay. I get the burritos. I book the nightmare-calming vacations. I act as the human interface for the machine, because I know the alternative. I've seen the other kind of monster. The one with no rules at all.

This one, at least, rewards you for finding the cracks.

(Log ends)