

SCENE: "LIABILITY"

INT. SANDRA WARREN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

[SCENE START]

The office is a silent cathedral of power. The Los Angeles skyline glitters beyond the immense floor-to-ceiling windows.

SANDRA WARREN (late 30s) sits not at her desk, but in a low armchair, her back to the door. On the massive wall screen before her is not news or data, but a silent, 4K live feed of a coral reef—a complex, self-regulating ecosystem. It is the only light in the room. She is the picture of calm, untouchable authority.

BENJI FAROUK (mid-20s) enters quietly, carrying a single porcelain mug of tea. He navigates the opulent space with an easy, unimpressed grace. He sets the mug down on the small table beside her without a word. He knows this ritual.

BENJI The D.C. follow-up is queued for your morning brief. Everything else is quiet.

Sandra gives a slight nod, her eyes still on the vibrant, silent world of the reef.

SANDRA Quiet is the optimal state.

A single, discreet BEEP emanates from the tablet on the table. A small, crimson icon flashes on its screen.

[URGENT] AFTER-ACTION REPORT: OP ANTHEM DIVERSION.

Benji sees it and his posture tenses slightly. He knows what that icon means. Sandra's hand moves with deliberate slowness, picking up the tablet. Her eyes scan the screen, the data reflected in their stillness.

Benji watches her back, the only person who can read the subtle shifts in her silhouette. Her shoulders, which were relaxed, become rigid. The calm is gone, replaced by a terrifying, focused stillness. Seconds stretch into a minute.

She places the tablet back on the table with a soft, definitive CLICK. She doesn't speak. She rises from the chair and walks toward the window, her movements tight with a controlled fury.

SANDRA (voice low, almost a whisper) Liability.

Benji remains silent. He knows not to ask.

SANDRA (Her voice is pure ice, directed at the city below) A diversion. A simple, tactical nudge to shape a narrative. That was the directive. The parameters were set. The probabilities modeled. And they still failed.

She turns from the window, her face unreadable but her eyes burning with a cold, intellectual fire. This is not the face of a sad or disappointed boss. It is the face of a brilliant strategist watching a novice ruin a masterpiece through sheer, baffling incompetence.

SANDRA (CONT'D) This isn't a failure. It's an embarrassment. It's a loud, clumsy, amateur mess that creates risk where there was none. An unforced error. We are a scalpel, Benji. Someone took our scalpel and used it like a club.

She paces once, a predator in a cage of her own design.

BENJI What are the operational...

SANDRA (cutting him off, her voice laced with venom) The operational fallout is *noise*. Unnecessary, sentimental noise that I now have to manage.

She stops pacing and looks directly at Benji. The mask of "The Architect" is fully in place, but it's a mask stretched thin over livid rage.

SANDRA (CONT'D) Find the protocol for a compromised asset. The one for unsanctioned exposure resulting in mission-critical failure.

Benji nods slowly, his own face pale. He understands the gravity of the command. He knows what she is asking for.

BENJI And the asset?

Sandra turns back to the window, looking down on the millions of lights below as if they were dust. Her voice is flat, final, and utterly devoid of emotion. The execution order.

SANDRA Toss the Frenchman.

The words hang in the silent, immaculate room. On the wall, the fish on the coral reef continue to move with silent, predictable grace, utterly oblivious.

[SCENE END]