

CALIBRATION

Episode 6 – "PROTOCOLS"

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COLD OPEN

INT. DIA FACILITY – HUGO'S QUARTERS – NIGHT

Hugo sits on his bunk. A laptop open on the desk – Raya's laptop, left behind after a visit. The screen has timed out but the session hasn't locked. A notification badge on a minimized window: an email from M. KEYES, subject line "PROMETHEUS – Sample Set 14 Analysis."

SUPER: DIA FACILITY, VIRGINIA – JANUARY 2025

Hugo looks at the laptop. He looks at the door. He looks at the laptop.

He opens the email.

The email is technical – data tables, gene expression matrices, cascade timing analysis. But the header tells Hugo everything he needs to know:

PROMETHEUS Program – Physiological Research On Modified Enhancement Through Heritable Upgrades to Soldier Effectiveness

Sample Source: DANNER, H. – Medical Monitor Collection (Dr. R. Patel)

Hugo reads. The clinical language describes what he already suspected: his blood, his tissue, his stress-response data – all of it flowing from Raya's medical exams to a program at Fort Detrick that is trying to replicate him. His body is a template. His medical monitor is the conduit. The woman he loves is the pipeline.

He closes the laptop. He does not slam it. He does not break it. He closes it with the precise, calibrated care of a man containing a detonation.

He sits in the dark. The calibration holds. But barely.

> TITLE CARD: CALIBRATION

ACT ONE

INT. DIA FACILITY - LYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Lyle's office is sparse: a desk, two chairs, a window facing the mountains, a flag. No personal items. The office of a woman who exists entirely within her function.

Hugo enters without knocking. Lyle looks up. She reads his face - the controlled blankness that is more dangerous than visible rage.

HUGO

PROMETHEUS.

Lyle sets down her pen. She does not feign ignorance. She has prepared for this conversation the way she prepares for everything: completely.

LYLE

Sit down.

HUGO

I'll stand.

LYLE

Then stand. What do you want to know?

HUGO

Everything. Start with what's in Building 568 at Fort Detrick.

Lyle studies him. She calculates: deny, deflect, or disclose. She chooses disclosure - controlled, partial, the institutional version of truth.

LYLE

PROMETHEUS is a DIA-DARPA joint program. Fourteen researchers. Three years of funding. The objective is to replicate the Danner modification in viable embryos.

HUGO

Using my data.

LYLE

Using every data source available. Your father's journals. Published research. And yes – your medical data, collected under the monitoring program.

HUGO

Raya.

LYLE

Dr. Patel was assigned as your medical monitor with instructions to collect comprehensive biological data. She's been feeding samples and analysis to Dr. Keyes at Fort Detrick since her assignment began.

Hugo absorbs this. The word "assigned" – not "volunteered," not "chose to participate." Assigned. Raya was a tool. Like Hugo. Like the data. Like everything in Lyle's architecture.

HUGO

Did she know? From the beginning?

LYLE

She was briefed on the program before she met you.

The sentence lands like a physical blow. Hugo's jaw tightens. A muscle in his forearm twitches – the involuntary signature of calibration under extreme stress.

HUGO

You recruited me to study me. The deployments, the missions, the operational purpose – all of it was a container. Something to keep me compliant while you harvested data.

LYLE

The deployments were real. The missions saved lives. Your operational contribution has been extraordinary.

HUGO

And convenient. Because operational stress produces the data you need – full-output biomarkers, cascade behavior under maximum load.

Lyle does not deny this.

HUGO (CONT'D)

The embryos. How many?

LYLE

Twelve. Modified with an incomplete cascade. Four survived initial modification. Those four are at sixteen weeks.

HUGO

Are they viable?

LYLE

No. The cascade is degrading. Without the complete protocol –

HUGO

They're dying.

LYLE

They're deteriorating.

HUGO

They're dying. Say it.

Beat.

LYLE

They're dying.

Hugo walks to the window. He looks at the mountains – the Blue Ridge, green and ancient, indifferent to what happens in the buildings below.

HUGO

These are people. They didn't consent to this. Neither did I.

LYLE

They're embryos. Pre-viability. The research parameters -

HUGO

Stop. Don't give me parameters. Don't give me funding justifications or national security language. Four things are dying in a lab because you couldn't replicate something my father did in a garage, so you studied me like a lab animal and fed my data to a program I didn't know existed.

He turns from the window.

HUGO (CONT'D)

I want to see them.

LYLE

That's not -

HUGO

I want to see them. Or I walk through every wall between here and Fort Detrick.

Lyle considers this. She considers the man in front of her - 265 pounds of fourteen-gene modification, calibrated rage, and the capability to do exactly what he's threatening. She picks up the phone.

LYLE

Prepare a transport. Building 568.
Full access.

INT. FORT DETRICK - BUILDING 568 - EMBRYO LABORATORY - DAY

Hugo stands at the observation window. Below: the four artificial wombs. The embryos float in amniotic fluid, connected to monitoring systems, the blue light giving the room the atmosphere of an aquarium.

The monitors show the deterioration: declining cardiac function, connective tissue failure, the incomplete cascade consuming what it built. Four organisms enhanced

with thirteen of fourteen targets, the missing target creating a cascading failure that will end in death.

Hugo watches. His face is still. His hands rest at his sides. He does not touch the glass.

KEYES stands behind him. The scientist watches the soldier watch the experiment.

KEYES

We've tried everything. The individual edits are clean. The cascade doesn't hold. The thirteenth target destabilizes without the fourteenth, and the fourteenth is one of the gaps in your father's journal.

HUGO

My father left those gaps deliberately.

KEYES

I know.

HUGO

He knew someone would try this. He designed the failure.

KEYES

If he did, it was effective. We've spent three years and \$183 million failing exactly the way he predicted.

Hugo looks at Keyes. The scientist is not a villain. He is a good scientist – competent, thorough, dedicated – who has spent three years trying to replicate the work of a genius and discovering that competence is not enough. The expression on Keyes's face is not ambition. It is exhaustion.

HUGO

How long do they have?

KEYES

At the current rate of deterioration?
Weeks. Maybe a month.

HUGO
Will they suffer?

KEYES
They're pre-conscious. Neural
development hasn't -

HUGO
Will they suffer?

KEYES
(quietly)
I don't know.

Hugo looks at the embryos one more time. Four lives that exist because of what he is - because the institution that recruited him decided that one Hugo Danner was not enough, that the solution to the problem of a man they couldn't control was to make more men they could.

He turns and walks out.

ACT TWO

INT. DIA FACILITY - RAYA'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Raya sits at her desk. Her phone is in her hand. On the screen: a contact labeled SARAH COLLINS - a journalist at the Washington Post. Raya has been staring at this contact for ten minutes.

She dials.

SARAH (V.O.)
Hello?

RAYA
Sarah. It's Raya Patel. I need to talk
to you about something. Off the record
first.

SARAH (V.O.)

Raya, it's been – what, five years?
What's going on?

RAYA

I have information about a classified government program. Genetic modification of human embryos. A joint DIA-DARPA operation. Unauthorized human experimentation.

Silence on the line.

SARAH (V.O.)

Raya, where are you calling from?

RAYA

A government facility. I know the call is –

The line clicks. Dead.

Raya stares at the phone. The call lasted twenty-three seconds. Enough for the monitoring system to flag, route, and terminate.

She puts the phone down. She knows what comes next: the knock on the door, the debrief, the consequences of a scientist who tried to become a whistleblower on a classified program from inside a classified facility.

The knock comes in ninety seconds. Two SECURITY OFFICERS enter. They are polite. They are firm. They escort Raya out of her quarters and down a corridor she has not walked before – the administrative wing where people go when they are no longer trusted.

INT. DIA FACILITY – RAYA'S QUARTERS – LATER THAT NIGHT

Hugo enters. The room is empty – Raya's personal items are untouched, but Raya is not here. On the desk: her laptop. Open. The screen shows a PROMETHEUS file directory – folders labeled by date, by sample type, by analysis category. Hugo's name appears on every folder.

Hugo sits at the desk. He reads.

The files tell the complete story: every blood draw, every tissue sample, every stress test, every fitness assessment – all of it cataloged, analyzed, and transmitted to Fort Detrick. Raya's notes accompany each data set. The notes are clinical, thorough, precise. They are also the work of a woman who was doing two things at once: caring for a patient and harvesting him.

Hugo finds a folder labeled PERSONAL NOTES – NON-PROGRAM. He opens it.

The notes are not clinical. They are dated journal entries. Hugo reads:

"May 14 – He asked me how it feels. No one has ever asked him that. The isolation is not metaphorical. He is fundamentally alone in a way that no psychological framework can address, because the framework assumes a human baseline, and Hugo is not baseline. He is something else. And that something else is kind."

"July 3 – I sent the full-output data to Keyes today. The data is extraordinary. The man who produced it is extraordinary. I cannot reconcile what I'm doing – studying him, reporting on him, feeding his biology to a program that wants to copy him – with what I feel when he looks at me and trusts me. The trust is the worst part. Not because it's false. Because it's real, and I'm exploiting it."

"September 22 – I love him. I know this now. I also know that the data I've collected has given PROMETHEUS its best chance of completing the cascade. My love and my betrayal are simultaneous. I don't know how to stop either one."

Hugo closes the laptop. He sits in the dark room.

The silence is the silence of a man processing two simultaneous truths: the woman he loves was spying on him, and the woman who was spying on him loved him while she did it.

INT. DIA FACILITY – HOLDING ROOM – NIGHT

Raya sits in a windowless room. A table, two chairs, the fluorescent aesthetic of institutional consequence. She has been here for three hours.

The door opens. Hugo enters.

Raya looks at him. She knows. His face tells her everything – the laptop, the files, the journal entries. He has read it all.

HUGO

You knew. From the beginning, you knew.

RAYA

Yes.

HUGO

You were assigned to me. The medical monitoring was a cover. You were collecting data for PROMETHEUS.

RAYA

Yes.

HUGO

Every blood draw. Every exam. Every question about how it feels – all of it feeding into a program that is trying to make more of me.

RAYA

Yes.

The monosyllables are not defiance. They are the stripped-bare honesty of a woman who has lost the ability to justify.

HUGO

Why?

RAYA

I was briefed. I was assigned. I believed the research was important. I believed that understanding your modification could lead to –

HUGO

Could lead to what? Twelve embryos in tanks? Four of them dying?

RAYA

I didn't know about the embryos when I started. When I found out –

HUGO

When you found out, you kept sending data.

RAYA

Yes.

HUGO

Why?

RAYA

Because I thought I could – because I believed that if I stayed close, if I kept monitoring, I could influence the program from inside. Redirect the research toward understanding, not replication. Toward –

HUGO

Toward what?

RAYA

(the composure breaking)
Toward protecting you. I thought if I was the one collecting the data, I could control what they received. I could –

HUGO

Could what? Fix it? Fix me?

The question lands. Raya's face crumbles – not dramatically, not cinematically. The quiet collapse of a woman who has been holding two irreconcilable truths and has just been asked to choose between them.

RAYA

I love you. That's not – that wasn't
the assignment. That's not what they –

HUGO

I know.

RAYA

I tried to leak it. Tonight. I called
a journalist. They cut the line. I was
going to –

HUGO

I know.

He stands. He looks at her. His hands are at his sides.
The calibration is holding – the conscious, effortful
modulation that defines every physical act of his life. He
could kill her with a careless gesture. He could break the
table, the chairs, the walls, the building. His body wants
to destroy something. His body always wants to destroy
something.

He does not.

HUGO (CONT'D)

I don't know how to forgive this.

RAYA

I'm not asking you to.

HUGO

I'm not saying I won't. I'm saying I
don't know how.

He walks to the door. Opens it. Pauses.

HUGO (CONT'D)

The journal entries. The personal
notes. Were those real?

RAYA

Everything was real. The data and the
love. Both.

Hugo leaves. The door closes. Raya sits alone. The
fluorescent buzzes.

ACT THREE

INT. DIA FACILITY - LYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Hugo enters. Lyle is at her desk. Two ARMED GUARDS stand outside the door - not to stop Hugo, which they couldn't, but to signal institutional authority.

HUGO

I'm leaving.

LYLE

You're a military asset under classified operational assignment. You can't leave.

HUGO

I'm a person. I can leave any building on Earth.

LYLE

And go where? Back to oil rigs? Pearl diving? You've been inside a classified program for eighteen months. You've seen Fort Detrick. You know about PROMETHEUS. The institutional response to that knowledge is containment. Not because we want to - because there is no alternative.

HUGO

There's always an alternative.

LYLE

Not for what you are. You're the most dangerous human being alive. You're also the most valuable. The program exists because what your father created cannot be allowed to die with you. The modification is the most significant biological achievement in human history. It belongs to -

HUGO

To who? To you? To the DIA? To fourteen researchers in a repurposed lab who can't replicate it?

LYLE

To humanity. Your father gave you something that could eliminate disease, extend life, enhance human capability beyond anything evolution produced. And you want to – what? Walk away? Hide in the mountains? Let the most important advance in human biology die because your feelings were hurt?

The argument is powerful because Lyle believes it. Genuinely, completely, with the moral certainty of a woman whose father died because human bodies are fragile, who has spent her career building toward the moment when human bodies don't have to be.

HUGO

My father's "advance" was injecting a pregnant woman without her consent. Your program is growing embryos in tanks that are dying because you can't replicate what he did. The history of this modification is a history of violation – my mother's, mine, and now twelve organisms who never asked to exist.

LYLE

Progress requires –

HUGO

Don't. Don't finish that sentence. I've heard every version of it. My father said it differently, but it was the same sentence.

He walks to the door.

LYLE

If you leave this facility, I will
have you contained.

HUGO

(without turning)

You can try.

INT. DIA FACILITY – REINFORCED HOLDING CELL – NIGHT

A cell. Not a standard military brig – this room was built for Hugo. Reinforced concrete walls, two feet thick. Steel door, six inches. No window. A cot, a toilet, a fluorescent that never turns off.

Hugo sits on the cot. He is calm. The cell is the calibration metaphor made literal: he is contained. But the cell is designed for normal men. The walls that represent absolute containment to any other human being are, to Hugo, drywall.

He could leave at any time. The walls, the door, the facility – none of it can hold him. The only thing holding Hugo in this cell is his decision to be held. And that decision is temporary.

CLOSE ON HUGO'S HANDS. They rest on his knees. Still. Enormous. The hands that broke cabinets and spines and fortified walls, resting with the deliberate stillness of a man who is choosing – for now – to be contained.

He looks at the ceiling. The fluorescent hums.

HUGO

(to himself)

Not yet.

HOLD. The cell. The light. The man. The choice.

> SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

> NEXT: "ESCAPE"

> END OF EPISODE