
June 1, 2501 – 1230 hours; Lawson Orbital Shipyards, the 1st Ring of Industry, Earth orbit, Sol System

“Candice, please hold my calls,” says Marcus Henry Lawson II, President and CEO of Lawson Aerospace, as he enters his office.

The door finishes closing silently on her, “Yes, Mr. Lawson”.

A man in his early 50s, his salt and pepper hair still cut in the ‘old school’ fashion as he described it to his son. A large StarCorp Academy class ring adorns his right ring finger. He walks over to his private bar, places several ice cubes in a tumbler, and pours in a healthy dose of scotch. Taking a large sip of his drink, he moves over to a floor to ceiling viewport and presses a button.

The viewport irises open revealing a spectacular view of the shipyards below, all back dropped by a blue/green/brown Earth with white swirls over top of it. Like the previous generations before him, he watches as the various ships sold by his company are assembled; long and short jump ships of all makes and models for both commercial and military uses. To his left the standard ships are being produced in an assembly line fashion, while the covered docks to the right are where the ships of bleeding edge of technology are being put together. In the distance is the crowning achievement of Lawson Aerospace, the Large Ship Assembly Area or LSA² for short. It’s one and only inhabitant at the moment is Sol Fortress One, the flagship of the StarCorp fleet; currently in dock for its first technology upgrade.

Taking another sip of his drink, a commotion outside his office draws his attention. He turns to the door as it opens and two women enter. One, the younger of the two, is dressed in a dark business jacket and skirt. She wears a Lawson Aerospace ID badge. The second, older woman is dress in a stylish yellow dress whose design reflects European influence.

As she draws in a breath to berate the younger woman, Marcus Lawson says, “Candice, it is ok. My wife is always welcome here. That will be all. Thank you.” He turns back to the portal and takes another drink.

Candice nods and backs out of the room, the door closing silently after her.

Once the door closes, Mercela Lawson walks up to Marcus and says, “Marc. What did you find out about Beverly’s situation? Is the government going to put any pressure on the Hawdons to release her?”

Without looking at his wife, he says, “No. They are not; at least not at the moment. The government is of the opinion that those UPC citizens involved with the piracy in the Saga system are at the mercy of the government of the Saga system. They evaluated the trial process and found it ‘efficient’, ‘speedy’, ‘merciful’, and ‘well documented’. Those they could not make a case for, the Saga government expelled from the system, banned for life from Saga and any association with any company doing business with them. Unfortunately, Beverly was not among them. This time, Beverly will have to endure with the consequences of her actions. At the moment, I’m told that is life in isolation. She will be kept completely isolated from the prison population, no technology, no... nothing.”

Mercela draws in a sharp breath, tears beginning to well up in her eyes, “That’s horrible... Marc, surely there is something that you can do? Don’t you have some influence with the Hawdons. You cannot want to just leave her there?”

“We discussed this when she left home,” he replies, “We agreed then that she would have to face the music for anything she did.”

Anger and frustration boils out of Mercela Lawson, “You agreed... Not me! Damn you Marcus Lawson,” she says, “Damn you and your high minded StarCorp inbred principles! If you’d been more understanding with her, we wouldn’t be in this situation. It was you that told her she either lived by your rules or hit the road. It was you that ... it was you... it was you that drove my baby girl away...”

She watches to see if he says anything. After several moments of silence, she explodes again, “Say something damn you...”

He turns to look at his wife and says, “What would you have me do? I never envisioned her getting herself into this kind of trouble, but here we are...”

“Oh spare me that load of crap,” she exclaims, “You know what you need to do. Just go and do it. I don’t really care what you have to do to do it. You just bring our daughter... our flesh and blood... home out of the clutches of that trollop, safe and sound... Or don’t come home at all.” She turns on her heel and storms out of the office.

Marcus watches her go and looks back out the window as he finishes his drink. He contemplates another but sits the glass down instead. “Damn...” he tells himself as he walks over to his desk.

June 3, 2501 – 1400 hours; Special Housing Wing, Dry Gulch Canyon Holding Facility, Saga

The correctional officer leads Marcus Lawson down a brightly lit corridor, the new prison jumpsuit rustling with every step he takes. “Sorry about the search sir, but its standard procedure for anyone entering this section of the facility; just past this set of security doors. You will have fifteen minutes with the prisoner.”

Without saying a word, Marcus just nods and waits for the doors to cycle.

Another guard stands outside a closed door. The lettering painted on the door says, “Private Visitation Room #2”. The door is made of solid metal with a sliding viewport that can be opened from outside the room. The waiting guard evaluates Marcus and gives the other guard a raised eyebrow.

The guard opens the door and says to the room’s occupant, “Here you go sweetheart. Enjoy!”

Marcus swallows hard to avoid lashing out at the guard. He turns to the guard that brought him here and says, “Thank you.”

Once the guard closes the door, he looks to the first one and says, “A little old for her isn’t he?”

“It’s her father dumbass,” the first replies.

“Ugh. That’s sick,” the second says.

“It’s not that kind of visit you pervert,” the first says with disgust.

Marcus stops near the bed in the small, dimly lit, musty room. A single chair sits next to a table mounted to the wall. A bed with a blanket and mattress is attached to the opposite wall. Beverly Lawson, in her prison uniform, sits on the bed and slowly looks up to her father; her eyes are puffy from crying. When their gazes meet, she says, “Daddy?”

After several silent moments, Marcus Lawson manages to respond without cracking up, “I’m here sweetheart.”

She jumps up from the bed hugs her father fiercely.

Years of anger and frustration towards his daughter melts away in a flood of tears rarely seen from the stern, hardnosed, ex-StarCorp officer. He wraps his arms around her and all he can say is, “I’m here,” over and over.

Several hours later; Office of the President, Hawdon Business Group Headquarters, Saga

Marcus Lawson quietly waits in the formal visiting office. He glances around the room and notices several differences made since his last visit here. The large imposing wooden desk replaced with a sleeker steel and glass model. Several pictures, plants, and statuary have been added, moved, or removed.

The sound of a door opening prompts Marcus to stand up and turn to face the people is coming in. Avis Hawdon enters the room wearing a very expensive looking business suit. Her personal bodyguard follows behind and takes up a position in the room near the comfortable chairs in front of the desk.

Avis walks up to Marcus and says with a smile, “Mr. Lawson, it is so good to finally meet you. I met your son at the Olympics last year. Father always spoke very highly of you. Please have a seat. What brings you here today?” She takes a seat next to the one he had been sitting in instead of behind the desk.

Never one to mince words, Marcus says while sitting down, “My condolences on your loss Madame President. Your father was a good man. However, I am here about my daughter. You are holding her in prison here. I would like to see what can be done about getting her released.”

"Thank you. Please call me Avis in private. But 'I' am doing no such thing, Marc? May I call you that?" Avis replies, still smiling, "The judicial system here on Saga decided the question about her involvement in recent events, her guilt, and the appropriate punishment."

"But we both know that you are the final word on what happens here," he replies.

"True Marc," she replies but the smile disappears, "but if I did what you imply, I would have rioting in the streets. Leviticus Babel and his ilk caused a lot of pain, suffering, and damage here. People want justice. Their anger and pain is a fact that the rest of known space seems willing to ignore; which only aggravates their displeasure towards people like your daughter. Speaking of which, I assume you saw the group of people, lead primarily by people from the Salvation Way Fellowship, protesting the trial process."

"I did. But the public wouldn't have to be aware of your involvement," he says.

"Maybe for someone less in the public eye," she replies, "But Marc, your daughter's predicament is all over the tabloids. And Mercela's opinions about me and what happened here fan the flames even higher. I would think that someone with your background would want to see the rules followed. After all, rules are what make for a stable society, yes?"

Marcus Lawson says nothing for several moments but plays with the ring on his right hand with his thumb. He finally says with resolution, "Let's bottom line this. You would not have agreed to let me see her or even you see me unless you had something in mind. I want my daughter out of that hole you put her in. You tell me what it is going to take to do that. Then we can go from there."

Avis leans back in the seat; the tilt of her head and narrowing of the eyes gives her a predatory, hungry look. Very few times in his life has Marcus Lawson felt unsure of his position; now is one of those times.