

**THE MENTOR**

INT. HAWTHORNE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - NIGHT

A large windowless office with thick stone walls is dimly lit by a few wall lamps of amber light. Edwin stands, facing a framed painting on the adjacent wall. Vargas sits behind his desk, studying his drink.

EDWIN

I expected fewer challenges,  
Vargas. I feel powerless.

VARGAS

Strange words from the Vice Chair.

Vargas doesn't look up, swirling the amber liquid in his glass.

EDWIN

The title means nothing while Dugan  
continues to undermine my efforts.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

He's not leading. He's preserving  
the illusion of his legacy while  
Eden's reality corrodes around him.

Edwin pauses, stepping closer to Vargas' desk. His voice hardening with frustration.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

And now this... Cecelia Thorne. She  
may win a council seat on charm  
alone.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

A symptom of the very same  
instability that old fool invited.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Now the public is so restless,  
they'll embrace anyone making idle  
promises of change.

Vargas sits in his desk chair, studying his glass of whiskey. His warden's uniform is slightly unbuttoned. Casual, but not sloppy.

VARGAS

Hmm.

EDWIN

We're sliding backward, and the rest of the world is watching.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

We have become vulnerable.

Edwin drains the rest of his whiskey, setting the glass down with deliberate force as if to put the final nail in the coffin of his future. A moment of silence passes. Vargas rises, slow but certain, turning to his shelf of trophies and accolades. A framed photo of a younger, uniformed Vargas stands next to a much younger Edwin. He fastens the buttons of his uniform, reclaiming it to the stature of the uniformed man in the photo.

VARGAS

I've served your family my entire life.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

Helped your father establish a legacy.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

Stood beside you through every decision that forged your ascent.

He turns to face Edwin with the weight of history behind his eyes. His towering figure casts a long shadow in the dim office light, stretching across the desk toward Edwin. His voice sharpens, held between irritation and expectation.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

Yet, you come here. Now?

Vargas steps toward his desk, resting his fists on the wooden surface. His eyes quickly sweeping across the room.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

To my... little domain. To complain?

He locks eyes with Edwin, the disappointment no longer hidden.

VARGAS (CONT'D)

Because a frail, old man stands in your way?

VARGAS (CONT'D)

Because you're threatened by an upstart with no track record? No legacy?

VARGAS (CONT'D)  
Have I taught you nothing?

EDWIN  
You've taught me many things,  
Vargas. And I am grateful.

Vargas' posture softens, if only slightly, but he doesn't break eye contact.

EDWIN (CONT'D)  
You have been a close friend.

Vargas watches him. Waiting.

VARGAS  
So ask the question.

Edwin exhales, the weight of pride and vulnerability sitting heavily in his chest. He speaks without flinching.

EDWIN  
Will you help me?

A moment passes. Vargas says nothing at first. He adjusts the cuff of his sleeve.

VARGAS  
Come. Walk with me.

Vargas strides toward the door, not waiting to see if Edwin follows.