

## Chapter 2

What's happening to me?

Combat techniques and arcane knowledge flooded his mind – secrets that seemed to span centuries of the country's military history and beyond. The ring pulsed with each revelation, its golden surface etched with symbols that predated the nation itself.

The guard dogs at Marcus's private kennel sensed the change, their trained aggression turning to primal fear. The alpha, a massive German Shepherd, lunged forward with bared teeth.

Robin moved with impossible speed, his kick sending the dog flying into the chain-link fence. The crack of impact echoed through the compound.

"Impossible," Robin whispered, staring at his hands. My strength... it's increased beyond human limits.

The remaining dogs retreated, whimpering. Their instincts recognized what their training couldn't – they were no longer the apex predators here.

Suddenly, the distinctive thrum of Black Hawk helicopters cut through the night. Spotlights pierced the darkness as three unmarked choppers descended, each bearing a subtle insignia: an eagle wrapped in the country's ancient script.

A woman stepped out of the lead helicopter, her bearing that of a seasoned commander.

Her tactical gear fit like it was custom-made, hugging her curves in all the right places without sacrificing that badass military look. Her dark hair was pulled back tight, and her eyes—sharp, focused, like she could see right through you.

"Young master," she called out, her voice carrying over the rotors. "The Ring of the Founders has chosen. We've finally found you."

Robin ripped the cage door off its hinges with one hand. "Who are you?"

"I'm Katherine Hayes, Director of Guardian Operations." She dropped to one knee, her team following suit. "We serve the true power behind the country – your father."

My father? The word hit Robin like a thunderbolt. "That's impossible."

"The ring's activation led us to you," Katherine continued. "Only one of the Founding bloodline could awaken its power. You're the lost heir, hidden to protect you from those who would destroy our legacy."

Robin stared at the ring, now pulsing with steady blue light. "You expect me to believe I'm some kind of... hidden heir?"

"Your father leads from a secure facility beneath Mount Rushmore," Katherine rose smoothly. "He's searched for you since you were taken. The ring was left as a beacon, to activate when you came of age."

"Convenient timing," Robin's eyes narrowed. "Where was he when I was bouncing between foster homes? When I was being used by—" He stopped, Sarah's betrayal still raw.

"There are forces that would tear this country apart if they could," Katherine's expression softened. "Hiding you was the only way until you were ready. Until the ring chose you."

The helicopter spotlights caught the ancient markings on Robin's ring, making them shimmer like liquid gold. More knowledge poured in – military tactics, political secrets, things that seemed impossible yet felt innately true.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now you claim your birthright." Katherine gestured to the lead helicopter. "Your father is waiting. He'll explain everything."

Robin looked back at the broken kennel, at the cowering dogs. Somewhere in that mansion, Sarah and Marcus were probably still laughing about their cruel joke.

What do I have to lose?

"Lead the way," he said finally. "But I need answers."

Katherine nodded. "Of course, sir. This is just the beginning."

As the helicopters lifted off into the night sky, Robin felt the ring pulse once more. His old life lay in ruins below, but ahead... ahead lay answers he'd spent a lifetime searching for.

The secret chamber beneath Mount Rushmore took Robin's breath away. Historic flags and military medals from every era lined the walls between polished granite columns that stretched toward the carved ceiling. At the far end, a man stood before a wall of security monitors, his presence commanding even in silence.

"Father?" Robin's voice echoed in the vast space.

The man turned, and Robin saw his own features reflected in an older face. "My son," his voice cracked with emotion. "After twenty-five years..."

This is real, Robin thought as they embraced. I actually have a father.

"Why?" Robin asked, pulling back. "Why leave me in the foster system?"

Pain flashed across his father's face. "Your brother... your mother... they were murdered. The same shadow organization that killed them wanted you dead too. Foster care was meant to be temporary, just until we eliminated the threat." He gripped Robin's shoulders. "When I went to get you back, you'd been moved. I've had our best people searching ever since."

"I was adopted," Robin explained. "Then ran away when..." He trailed off, dark memories surfacing.

"I know. I'm so sorry." His father walked to a modern steel desk and pressed his palm to a biometric scanner. "But now you're here. Ready to take your rightful place."

Rightful place? Robin's mind spun. "What exactly does that mean?"

"Son, there's a reason they call me the King of the World. Our family has guided this nation's destiny since its founding. Eagle Industries is just the public face of our true power."

He slid a matte black card across the desk. "Unlimited credit line, backed by our private banks. Consider it compensation for twenty-five years of missed Christmases."

Robin stared at the card. "That's... a lot of catching up."

"Katherine will help you take control of Eagle Industries as its new CEO." His father smiled. "She'll be your best assistant."

Katherine nodded professionally. "Looking forward to working together, sir. The board won't know what hit them."

"This is..." Robin shook his head. "A lot to process."

"Take time to adjust," his father said. "But remember - this ring, passed down through generations of our family, chose you. You're ready."

Robin looked at the ring glowing softly on his finger, then at the black card that represented more wealth than he'd ever imagined. Just this morning he'd been a betrayed ex-boyfriend. Now...

"When do we start?" he asked.

His father's smile widened. "That's my boy."