Chapter 64

Ryan walked slowly toward the large steel door of the basement hideout, Philip was following him behind him.

"Thank you, Mr. Walker," Philip said with a low, "If you hadn't fought the way you did... I don't even want to imagine what could have happened."

Ryan gave him a nod. He paused at the entrance, ready to step into the fresh air for the first time in hours, when a voice behind him stopped him in his tracks.

"You're walking out now, but you'll be back," Smith rasped.

Ryan turned slowly to face his uncle, who now sat slumped on the cold floor with blood on his lip, one of his eye already swelling. Smith looked beaten but but his voice still carried a hint of something darker.

"There are things you don't know, Ryan," Smith said. "You think I'm the worst of your problems? I'm not, for a fact... I'm the least of them. This shiny new life you have got, It's going to bring you more enemies than joy, mark my words dear nephew. It will bring more danger than peace."

Ryan's eyes narrowed a bit as he tried to understand what his uncle was saying, but then, his face became straighter as he dismissed it. "Shut up!"

Smith leaned his head back against the wall. "You'll need help and I'm the only one who can give it. You think you're safe now? You're not. I know this town even more than you do. You, my dear nephew, have just put a massive target on your back."

Ryan scoffed and took another step toward the exit.

"But what about your mother?" Smith's voice stopped him again.

Ryan's shoulders stiffened as he heard him speak about his mother.

"I can help you find her," Smith continued. "Whoever took her... they're not small at all. That person must be a level 3 boss."

Ryan turned fully around now, confused. "Level 3 boss? What the hell does that mean?"

Smith winced and shifted slightly. "Those are Criminal ranks. It's how the underworld works, petty thugs and loan sharks are Level 1. The more organized, more connected, the higher they go. Level 3 bosses don't just run gangs, they run operations, syndicates and dark cults. They're dangerous, powerful and hidden in plain sight. And someone like that, they're the only ones who could pull something like this off, undetected."

Ryan clenched his fists, his mind was becoming filled with different thoughts, was his uncle saying the truth or was just trying to fool him? " Why are you telling me all this now?"

"I was going to tell you," Smith replied, raising his hands slightly. "I thought maybe... if you calmed down, we could work together. I can get you information, contacts... I know where to start looking."

Ryan stared at him for a moment, his expression growing colder by the second. "You think I need your help?"

Smith's eyes narrowed. "You'll be begging for it soon enough."

Ryan turned again to walk out, but then Smith dropped the final blow.

"I know who took her."

Ryan froze instantly after hearing this.

His hands slowly curled into fists again as he spun back around.

"What did you just say?" he growled.

Smith didn't respond at first, he just looked at Ryan with a knowing smirk.

Ryan marched back, grabbed him by the collar, and slammed him against the wall.

"You knew? All this time?!"

Smith groaned from the impact. "I didn't want to say anything until.."

"Who is it?!" Ryan roared at this face.

Smith smiled through bloody teeth. "You're not ready." 1

Ryan punched him hard across the face, and then again. "I said who?!"

Smith let out a bitter laugh. "I'm afraid to even say his name."

Ryan was gritting his teeth now. With Philip's help, they dragged Smith out of the basement bloodied, beaten, and no longer cocky, Smith barely protested as they shoved him into the back seat of his own car.

Philip took the wheel while Ryan sat beside him, his mind racing fast.

They drove straight to the police station. Detective Mark and Detective Kevin met them at the entrance.

Ryan wasted no time. "This is the man who had me kidnapped."

Mark blinked in surprise. "Who is he?"

Ryan nodded. "He is my uncle, Smith... He held me, interrogated me,

tried to beat the truth out of me."

Detective Mark frowned. "Claudia told us there were at least 3 men with weapons. How the hell did you get out?"

Ryan gave a small smile. "I've seen worse."

Mark shook his head in awe. "I don't know how you pulled this off, but you did good. Still... you should get home, Ryan. You're injured, let us handle it from here."

"I need answers," Ryan said through gritted teeth. "He says he knows who took my mother."

"We'll get it out of him," Mark assured him. "But right now, you need rest. Go home, Mr. Walker, we'll call you as soon as we get anything."

Ryan hesitated, but then nodded. He booked a cab and left the station to the mansion.

Back at the mansion, Claudia was pacing outside, clearly refusing to sleep. At that moment, she saw the cab pull in, and she froze at first. She didn't know who it was but her guts told her to move forward.

"Ryan!" she shouted the moment Ryan walked thorugh the gates. He barely stepped in before she was in his arms, holding him tightly.

"You're alive! Thank God!" she cried, holding him tightly.

Ryan wrapped his arms around her, exhaling deeply. He hadn't realized just how much he needed that hug.

She pulled back, searching his face. "How did you escape? Are you hurt? Did they... did they say anything about your mother?"

Ryan didn't answer with words, instead, he leaned in and kissed her.

She kissed him back, giving him a long and deep kiss, her hands wrapping around his neck, as if holding onto him meant he wouldn't slip away again.

When they finally pulled apart, Claudia whispered, "We're going to find her, I promise. We'll find your mom, together."

Ryan nodded. "Yes, and we'll also find out who this so-called Level 3 boss is... and end him."