

## Chapter 66

Mark gestured to the chair across from his desk. "You can sit, Mr. Walker."

Ryan lowered himself into the seat, his muscles were becoming tense. "You said Smith gave you a name, who is it." Ryan's jaw tightened as he spoke the words, he could not help but imagine what he would do to the person who took his mother as soon as he got the name.

Mark nodded slowly and took a deep breath. "Yes, after a lot of pressure, your uncle gave us a name. He didn't want to talk at first, he said he feared for his life more than the beatings he'd receive in prison and I initially didn't understand why."

"Then who is it?" Ryan asked sharply.

Mark took a deep breath. "Ryan... I need you to understand. We're not talking about some street thug here, this man is powerful, wealthy and deeply connected in the underground business world. He is the kind of person who can walk through walls and make people disappear, he's protected by layers of influence."

Ryan leaned in, "I don't care about the power and wealth he has. Who is he?"

Mark frowned. "Even within law enforcement, we avoid his name. He's what Smith called a 'Level 3 Boss' a term used in criminal circles to classify people who have not only power, but an entire network of loyalists, informants, mercenaries, and politicians on their payroll."

Ryan's fingers curled tightly on the arm of his chair. "So what does that mean for finding my mother?"

Mark walked around the desk and leaned on the edge, facing Ryan directly. "It means this won't be easy. This isn't the kind of guy you just slap handcuffs on, It's going to take planning... and courage."

Ryan narrowed his eyes. "If he's that dangerous, why isn't he already locked up?"

Mark shook his head. "People like him don't get locked up easily, he is clean on paper but dirty underneath. He's not just a criminal... he - he is more like a ghost. We've heard words about him, but no one dares follow through."

Ryan stood up, restless. "Then say it, for crying out loud. Tell me who he is."

Mark hesitated, then sighed deeply. "Robert Ryder."

The name hit Ryan's ears instantly and his entire body froze.

"Robert Ryder?" he repeated slowly.

"Yes."

Ryan swallowed. "That name... why does it sound familiar?"

Mark nodded gravely. "Because he's known in many circles... business, politics, underground markets. He has many faces. To the world, he's a philanthropist, but behind the scenes, he runs so many dirty businesses, drugs, illegal arms, extortion and now... maybe even abduction."

"My worry now is... why did he go for you in particular?" Mark said.

Ryan clenched his jaw. "I don't know. But if he is this dangerous, why hasn't anyone taken him down?"

"We've tried, others have tried. All evidences evaporates once it comes down to him. Ryder knows exactly how to play the game."

Ryan sat there, his mind was slightly beginning to race. "So... you think he has my mother?"

"Smith says so and I believe him, he was trembling just by saying the name and I don't think he would lie with a name like that."

Ryan exhaled slowly. "If truly he was the one who took my mother, then he is my next target."

Mark's eyes widened in horror from the fear of what Ryan just said. "Mr. Walker, no. You can't go after him alone, you have no idea what kind of danger you'd be putting yourself in."

Ryan gave him a cold look. "He took my mother, that's all I need to know."

Mark shook his head quickly. "Mr. Walker, listen to me, I get it, I do and I understand your anger and rage, but Robert Ryder isn't like the McCarthys or your uncle. He doesn't fight dirty he... he is almost invisible. You don't see him until he hits."

"How about you leave that to me," Ryan said bitterly.

Mark ran a hand over his face. "Promise me you won't do anything reckless. Let us investigate further, let us try to find a way in."

"I don't have time for 'trying.' Every minute my mother stays in his hands... could be her last."

Mark's voice dropped to a whisper. "You'll need help."

Ryan nodded. "Then help me," he said with cold eyes.

The two men stared at each other in silence.