

Chapter 67

Ryan leaned forward in his chair, staring hard at Detective Mark. "So, the police are just... giving up? You're leaving me to handle this alone?"

Mark looked down at his hands, guilt weighing heavily on him. For a long moment, he didn't say anything. Then, slowly, he reached out and placed a hand gently on Ryan's shoulder.

"Mr. Walker," he said quietly, "my wife just gave birth to a baby boy last week."

Ryan blinked, caught off guard by the news.

"I have a family," Mark continued, his voice showed fear and helplessness. "And this man... Robert Ryder, he's not just another criminal. He's a monster hiding behind power and influence, going after him means risking not only my badge but the safety of everyone I love. If it comes down to resigning or dragging my family into this kind of war... I'll choose my family every time."

Ryan sat still, absorbing those words. He wanted to scream, to argue, but he couldn't. Mark's fear was valid and he understood it and didn't want to push further.

Detective Mark sighed deeply before saying his next words, "I'm sorry, Mr. Walker. I truly am but as far as the station is concerned, this case is closed."

Ryan stood up slowly, stunned. His head felt heavy, as if a thousand voices were screaming inside it. He didn't know what to say. What could he say when the police themselves were so afraid of their lives that they couldn't go up against this Robert Ryder? He turned to leave immediately knowing it was of no use.

But just as he reached the door, Mark called out. "Mr. Walker, wait."

Detective Mark hesitated for a moment, his eyes narrowing slightly before he spoke, "There's... There is one more thing, Mr. Walker... I don't know if it's worth mentioning, but your uncle Smith said something about a banquet."

Ryan placed his hand on the doorframe and looked at Mark with interest. "A banquet? What kind of banquet?"

Mark nodded slowly. "It's called the Lords Banquet. According to Smith, it's an exclusive gathering held by the elite in the underground world. Rumor has it that Robert Ryder or rather, Lord Ryder as he's called there.. will be present."

Ryan's heart skipped at that moment. "Then it is definitely worth mentioning. I'm going to be there to confront him."

Mark frowned instantly from fear. "It's not that simple Mr. Walker. You can't just walk into the Lords Banquet, it is not a teenage night club or something. Entry is reserved for Level 2 bosses and above, you don't get an invitation unless you have serious pull in the underground network. Their security is airtight."

Ryan stood there for a moment silent as he kept thinking about all Mark was saying. "Then I'll find a way, give me the location."

Mark sighed, knowing better than to argue. "It's being held at the Lord's Private Villa. It's a private lounge cloaked in high-level security, this means that Lord Ryder might be the one organizing this banquet himself. But listen to me, Mr. Walker...you might get in, but making it out alive? That's the real challenge, especially if you confront Lord Ryder."

Ryan paused. "Lord Ryder? That's his nickname?"

Mark nodded grimly. "No one calls him Robert to his face, according to what your uncle said. It's said that even whispering his name in the wrong circle can get you killed. Everyone addresses him as Lord Ryder."

Ryan swallowed, the weight of the name finally settling in. "Understood, I'll address him as Lord Ryder then."

Later that day, Ryan returned home to an empty house. The silence greeted him before he even stepped fully through the door. On the dining table, he found a note in Claudia's handwriting.

"I have gone on the business trip and would be back in a few days. Please take care of yourself, and I hope you find your mother," she wrote in the note.

"I will surely find her," Ryan muttered to himself.

He held the small paper in his hand for a long moment, reading it twice before setting it down. With Claudia gone, the reality of what he was about to do sank in fully. There would be no one to watch his back.

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