

## Chapter 26 – The Man Who Ran San Francisco

They saw a great deal of the event through the window perched up on the sixth floor across the street. Although it started off almost impossible to see anything at first, the televisions captured that portion perfectly.

The first time their eyes were drawn from the TV, was right after the cops had seen the terrorist reaching out the front doors of the Federal Reserve in an attempt to grab the shotgun fastened to Gregory's head. The priest's truck came to a screeching halt in between them and the Federal Reserve building across the street. Their heads pivoted to the television after the priest got out of the truck and ran towards the front door of the building, out of sight. They heard a large booming gun shot, and then they looked back through the window as the priest immersed with the child. Then the sound of multiple shots commenced for about ten seconds; then, silence.

At that point Franc and Hector were standing up in front of the corner window anxiously awaiting the next move, and they turned to see through the TV, what could not be seen through the window.

The footage had panned back and forth between Bradley laying in the street gutter in front of the federal building, and the cops with smoking guns, closing their distance with him.

“What the fuck?! Are they letting him go?!” Robert Baron yelled.

Hector walked closer to the television to get a sanity check. The camera's panning back and forth between the cops and Brad grew shorter and shorter as the cops closed the distance, until no panning was necessary. Hector knew by the officer's movement, that they were letting him go. Then the camera actually zoomed in on one of the officer's mouths. It was as plain as day. His lips could be read, 'Go' he said. Then the camera zoomed out a little. Other officers were saying it too.

Then the cameras caught Bradley roll and jump to his feet. He hopped one of the cement roadblocks, and ran. Right as he ran out of the view of the camera, he came into view through the sixth floor window across the street. Franc watched as Bradley jumped in the back of the truck that lay at the street below.

The crowd from in front of the building ran, hundreds now, en masse, to the corner to follow Bradley, and they all, as well as Franc and Hector saw the truck take off. However, the crowd did not catch the return stare of Bradley as he held his son in his arms; victorious. It was Franc and Hector that received that.

Hector was dumbfounded. Franc took it personal.

“I'll be back.” Franc said angrily, “Giovanni, call you're fucking people and take care of this thorn in our side.” And he left the conference room.

Giovanni stared at the floor soaking in what just happened. This was the ultimate level of human frustration. On top of the plan going south, Giovanni Paulo, the 'iron claw of American organized crime', had been reduced from the leading position in his industry to a person who takes orders. He did not earn the public title of 'iron claw' from the media because he was secretive, or elusive. He earned it by being in the face of anyone who opposed him, taking them out, and then making sure as many people knew about it as it took to scare anyone in their right mind from even thinking twice about it. Not since his father has anyone even come close to telling him to 'call his fucking people'. The part that frustrated him the most was that fact that he had no choice but to dial the number. His head pulsated, he looked up for a moment, and the only thing that came to mind was destroying every object his eyes locked on, so his gaze returned to the floor for several minutes as he tried to cool off.

He pressed three buttons on his phone, and it began dialing. He sat there as it rang, trying to figure out what he was going to say. He had no idea. Then someone picked up, "Ciao Giovanni..." an Italian-accented voice answered on the other line. Giovanni knew immediately that something was not right. One, Giovanni recognized the answering voice. It was an under-boss named Guiseppe, and he sounded spun out. Two, it was not Giuseppe's phone; and equally as important three, no one that worked for Giovanni called him by his first name.

Giovanni started slowly, "Ciao Giuseppe... why are you answering Adriano's phone? Where is he?"

Giuseppe laughed a coked out cocky laugh, and sniffed, "He's busy boss."

Giovanni's prior frustration carried over to the conversation, "Where the fuck is he Giuseppe, and shut your stupid fucking laughing up."

Giuseppe quit his laughing, but kept on with the cocky joking attitude, "Let's just say, Adriano couldn't tread water."

Giovanni's heart jumped. Adriano was an under boss like Giuseppe, and Giovanni considered him close. He kept his voice low, so the other men in the conference room wouldn't be drawn to the conversation, "If you're saying what I think you're saying there will be repercussions Giuseppe. Adriano was a made man. His grandfather was a boss, and a friend of mine. If you mean what I think you mean I would take it personal. I would take it personal on every single person involved."

Sniff, "Orders from up top, huh huh. I was just doing what I'm told boss."

"I am up top Giuseppe. Who gave the order." Giovanni was now gritting his teeth.

"It was Guy Ratone, and he says he's running the show now boss. He says you left." Giuseppe answered obviously aware of the plot.

Giovanni felt cold. His vision went blurry, and his voice quivered as he whispered, "Tell Ratone he's a dead man by nightfall."

"Ha ha, okay Giovanni." Giuseppe condescended.

"Giuseppe?"

"Yeah."

"I was going to have you killed because you called me by name... but now I'm going to kill you myself the next time I see you, no matter where it is." And he hung up the phone with the push of a button.

Crack!

A far off noise echoed through the city catching the attention of each man in the conference room. Hector turned and looked out the window toward the direction of the noise, "That was an explosion." He pulled out his cell phone, and began dialing.

Giovanni was still in a state of anger from the phone call, and was mumbling to himself as he ran his thick fingers through his hair, the explosion mattered not to him, but the timing of everything; the back-to-back of everything today, was getting to him.

“Wow, your guys move quick Giovanni.” Franc blurted as he entered back into the room.

“There’s no way that was us. It happened about five seconds after I got off the phone.” Giovanni turned to Hector looking for some sort of confirmation that his timeline was correct.

Hector had his cell phone up to his ear. He nodded slightly, “Yeah, it wasn’t us.” Whoever Hector was calling must have answered, because he started right in, “Hey Rick, do we have any reports of an explosion south of Market? Yeah, we heard it too. Sounded like a small explosion. Ah, nothing. I’m just here with a few colleagues, and I heard the sound. As the chief I have to be concerned.”

Giovanni tried with all his might to clear his mind, and think clearly. He needed to contact someone that could hunt down Bradley. He didn’t want to talk to anyone else on his side because he didn’t have time to deal with Adriano’s death, and Ratone’s possible mutiny. He needed to deal with that later, but now the task at hand was to find a man in hiding.

He thought to himself, the only way anyone would find Bradley would be to stumble upon him, or hear from someone who did. As previously mentioned Giovanni had been given the nickname ‘iron claw of organized crime’ by the media itself. Without a doubt, if you did your research all dusty roads led to Giovanni Paulo. Juan Pedro was the man with the most sway in his country, and even he knew that his line was drawn to Giovanni Paulo on the organizational chart. Even though, Giovanni knew it was not he who was making this city run from the ground up. Part of what got Giovanni to his boss of bosses status was his bloodline, but just as helpful was the fact that he knew there were powerful men of every race and nation in power positions in the same ball game as him, and it was a dirty ballgame with dirty teams. Yes, Giovanni was feared by any man that heard the stories, but he was a boss that brought together the other mobs. He made sure his mob was playing nice with the others, and he networked.

He was constantly seen with other men of organizations that would traditionally oppose the Italian mob. He setup a lot of face to face time with the various bosses. He had honest to goodness real friendship with the bosses of the Russian mob, the Columbians, Cubans... he even allowed his daughter to marry a son of his Irish counterpart.

The man that he was going to... that he needed to call, was the man that ran San Francisco. At first Giovanni thought that it had to be the fact that the man who ran San Francisco also lived in the Bay Area, and in Marin for that matter, that allowed for these two opposites to become so tight. It was more.

Giovanni’s move to the bay area was awkward in many ways. He moved as far from the main bosses as possible, and gave little warning between his decision and the move itself. It was during hard times, and Giovanni gave no reason for his relocation. Also awkward, was the fact that San Francisco was so small that it only needed one man to run it. Having Giovanni living next to it, and no other city for four hundred miles, gave the impression that Giovanni was becoming more ‘hands off’. Though, the day he moved in, he placed a call and set up a lunch meeting for the next day, with the man who ran San Francisco. His name was Lo Ping, and he had become Giovanni’s best friend.

Giovanni entered into Chinatown unsure of what to expect, and even of why he was coming. He knew he needed to show respect to a crime lord that would be his neighbor, so to speak. But Lo Ping had San Francisco on lock down, and things ran to his tune, and they ran smoothly. Lo was older than Gio, and it would be inappropriate, and unwarranted for Giovanni to try and change things. Lo knew these things too. Both men weren’t stupid, and if neither was abrasive, it might turn out to be quick cordial meeting. However, this was not the case.

The meeting stayed cordial, and started out on the right foot when Lo Ping informed Gio that he knew and worked with his father a long time before. This segwayed into a conversation about how Lo's father had also preceded Lo, and was a figure whom he looked up to. Giovanni was quite familiar with Lo's father, and they spoke about the fact that both of their father's had quite admirable sides to them, contrary to their public personas. This led to the topic of how both men's minds had led them to the top, and they could equally attribute this to their fathers. Before either of the men knew it Lo's servants were trying to learn what they wanted for dinner.

It was obvious that ice had been broken by the time alcohol was being poured at the table, and Lo Ping asked as he raised his tea cup for the last sip, "Giovanni, I am going to test our new found friendship." He took a sip, and placed the cup down on the table, using two hands to steady. He said no more, and waited for a response. Giovanni knew that Lo Ping was more serious than his wording led on, and he nodded, prompting for him to continue. Lo Ping did, "From talking to you today, I am able to see your intellect first hand, and it has confirmed my preconception of you as the leader of leaders." Gio nodded, knowing there was more. Lo continued, "and it is my belief that you moved out here to neither retire, nor watch over me." Giovanni could tell the Lo Ping knew something was going on, and he only could nod as the old leader of the San Francisco Triads continued to wisely put him into a checkmate. He continued, "I know you are like me, and you will never retire; and I know you are like me, in that every move you make is thought out. Knowing this, I ask you simply, why are you here Giovanni?" Giovanni looked at his surroundings, and Lo Ping clarified, "I am not wondering why you are here in Chinatown with me for lunch, I know that. Rather, I want to know the well thought out plan which has caused you to move here. What is so compelling that you would move away from the heart of what your father, and you, have built?"

Ring! Ring!

Giovanni snapped out of it, and he was back in the sixth floor conference room with his cell phone in his hand. It was ringing, and it was Lo Ping.

"Hello?" Giovanni answered too distraught for a more formal greeting.

"Giovanni? It's Lo."

"Lo, I was going to call you. I am in need of your...:"

"Giovanni I must be quick and secretive." He paused for no more than one second, "You are in danger. The events of today have created ripples within the organization, and the foundation is crumbling. People are angry, and there is no question of your involvement. There is a full scale mutiny, and it is not limited to your family. I fear that I no longer hold sway in my own circle."

Giovanni answered, "Yes, I have learned this. I am aware that there is currently a situation with a specific under boss on my side, but I do not have time to deal with him."

"I believe I know what you are talking about. Is it this Guy Ratone? Was that why you were going to call?"

Giovanni froze. He had a dilemma. Does he have Lo's gang deal with Ratone, or Bradley? Giovanni thought, do I try and save the structure, or do I focus on the task at hand.

"Actually, I was hoping you could help me track down Bradley Harris."

"This is the father from the television, who broke out of jail?" Lo Ping sounded very surprised.

“Yes, we need to take care of him.”

“I’ll see what I can do Giovanni-san, but as I said I fear that I am losing control, and acting upon Bradley would only show my involvement.”

Giovanni understood completely. His secret has been blown open, and he couldn’t involve Lo. “Yes, you are right. I don’t want to do that.”

“Giovanni, I am not sure what will become of our situation, but we must act wisely with every move. I will see if my men can do anything about Ratone. I must go now, but we must stay in touch.”

“Agreed.” Gio answered, and Lo hung up.

Giovanni, stared at the floor, helpless.

“I see smoke. Looks like it's a couple blocks south of Market.” Hector interrupted with his deep voice. Giovanni looked over. The police chief was still on the phone. “What?! How many vans?” Hector sounded worried. Then a burst of gun fire could be heard off in the distance. Hector said, “Yeah, we fucking heard that from where we are too. Do you have control over the situation?”

Boom!!

A sound much greater than the previous ones they heard, emitted and echoed throughout the city. From Hector’s judgement, every person in the seven mile by seven mile city should have heard the sound. “Hey, what the fuck was that Rick?” Hector asked. “Rick? Rick, you there?” Hector pulled the phone away from his ear and looked at the screen. “Fuck!”

“I see a ton of smoke now.” Baron said.

With that, the men stood silently in conference room, just staring out the window. They could tell everything they were seeing and hearing was due to them.

“Well, big storm off the coast, so says the weather man.” McCain had entered back into the conference room. He was leaning against the wall next to the door way, and he looked at every man’s worried face. “At least this will make it hard for Bradley to take refuge.”