

## Blackmail- 1967

It was a clear day in Orange County, California. The sun was shining down very intensely. The only offspring of the Wall family had just woken up from his sleep, light shining through the window onto his face. Mr. Wall was an oldish man who had previously lost his wife to heart disease. His son, Jerald, was all he had in his life for someone to love and have a good conversation with. Mr. Walls did not work anymore considering he had hit it large on Wall Street as the founder and CEO of Wall Industries. That did not mean he wasn't busy. He still cared about his business' welfare, so he was at hearings all day. As for Jerald, he was very independent. He always fought to do the right thing, even when it could hurt him. He had a lot of free time on his hands because his father was always out doing business and he would just stay at home. Jerald didn't particularly like the sun because it would blind his eyes and make him too hot. But that was soon going to be his favorite sight.

Mr. Wall had a particularly important meeting today. Wall Industries was about to make the biggest business deal of the company's history. Mr. Wall wanted to be out early on this bright morning, so he said his farewell to Jerald and went on his way. (All crime bosses that live on the edge of the city know about the Wall estate and of their wealth). Being alone he proceeded to his regular activities of getting breakfast, reading comics (the ones with criminals getting the last laugh were his favorites), and playing video games. Jerald was three when his mother died and he didn't really know her when she died. He just remembered she was caring and gentle and pretty. He would always remember the time she taught him to ride a bike. It was one of the last memories he had of her.

Unexpected footsteps hit the floor considering their butler was not to leave his quarters on Sundays until noon and it was only 9:34am. He couldn't believe that his butler would disobey orders. An angry Jerald walked into the butler's room. The butler was there alright, wide awake, but tied up with a cloth in his mouth. You could hear the terrified scream barely escaping his mouth. "Then what wa-" Click! Jerald was almost paralyzed at the sight of a gun at his head held by a man with third degree burns

all over his body. "GET ON THE FLOOR, BOY!!" roared the man. With no hesitation Jerald jumped to his feet and kicked the man on the leg. It didn't have much effect. The man grabbed Jerald by the neck.

"Who do you think you are?"

"I'm the son of powerful man who would die for me!"

That's when his fighting attitude killed him. The man knew what to do. "You saw nothing!" and Jerald witnessed the sight of a bullet fired through the innocent head of Jerome, his butler. "You're not getting away no matter how hard you try!" Jerald was fighting to free himself from the clutches of the man. The man gave him a pill and the last thing he saw was the sight of Jerome, his dead butler.

He awoke on the ground in a dark room with the man standing in front of him. "Rise and shine, honey." A crowbar hit him so hard he almost blacked out. "Not enough? That's okay." Once again another strike put a gash into his bloody head. The man walked away to speak to someone and came back. "Okay, here's what's happening. We are broadcasting your body to everyone in the world. Your father will come and pay us to get you free, but if this clock goes off then this place blows. Because simple blackmail isn't enough fun, we got to make this interesting." One man was holding a camera and filming. "Greetings everyone watching this broadcast. This is Mr. Wall," he said pointing at Jerald.

Mr. Wall was walking home from work, but saw the crowd of people around a T.V. shop.

"What's going on pe-" he froze at the sight of his son.

"You, Mr. Wall senior, need to find him and get him out here. But this won't be fun without a riddle to confuse you. It will lead to your son. Here it is. So a detective is looking for an oil smuggler, but he has disappeared. At his last sighting there is a note. On this note it says, '710 57735 34 5508 51 808'. There are three suspects Bob, Jack, and Matt. Who is the smuggler? You have one hour I'm afraid. Good luck. Oh, wait, Jerald wishes to speak."

"Father, if you are listening I have one thing to ask of you. Bring me back into the sunlight."

And with another hit from a crowbar the T.V. turned off. "How does he have Jerald?!" screamed Mr. Wall.

"We don't know, but we can help you find him," declared a helping individual.

"I wrote down those numbers. I bet we have to decode the message," said another man willing to help.

"Boy, are you afraid or what?" asked the horrible man.

"Why would I be afraid of you?" replied Jerald, now he had a dagger three inches into his body.

"Maybe because I've been beating you with a crowbar?" Gashes and marks were all over his body now from crowbar hits, kicks, and getting hit with rocks. "I'll be back soon, brave boy," he kicked him and left the room.

"What is this riddle about anyway? Why does it help us?"

"I don't know. But my son's life is on the line. I can't lose him. He is all I have."

"Okay, the numbers are '710 57735 34 5508 51 808'. What does that mean?" Suddenly the T.V is turned back on. "Time check! T- 30 minutes." And just like it turned on the T.V. turned back off. "That's 30 minutes until the time expires! We have to hurry!" They thought and thought for a long time discussing different possibilities for the answer, like strategies they used for other riddles that they were successful at. Until one said, "Did you say that you wrote down the numbers."

"Ya."

"Give me the paper." She gave him the paper to him upside-down. "Wait second, look at this!" He held up the note. "Upside-down the numbers say, 'BOB IS BOSS HE SELLS OIL'."

Bob's Oil Shop, the abandoned building at the outskirts of town! Right at their breakthrough the T.V. turned on. "Time's up! Say goodbye!" And the final sight was a blank face of Jerald and the sound of a ticking bomb. "Jerald," Mr. Wall said through the screen.

"Father," he said back. "Goodbye."