



# Taken By the Outlaw

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**Category:** Erotic, Romance, New Adult

**Description:** Emilia West is a quiet, bookish librarian, tucked away in her safe little world—until she witnesses a deadly biker gang's heist. Now, she's in too deep, and the gang's ruthless leader, Clark "The Wolf" Bishop, will do anything to keep her quiet. One look at her, though, and he realizes this innocent beauty is more than just a liability. She's his obsession.

Clark doesn't ask for permission. He takes. And he's taking her, whether she likes it or not.

Emilia never expected to be thrown into a world of violence and danger. But she can't fight the magnetic pull she feels toward the brooding, dangerous man who has locked her away. He promises she'll be safe... if she gives him just one unforgettable night.

But Clark has plans that go far beyond a single night. She's his—body, heart, and soul—and no one, not even Emilia, can deny it. And if she dares try to escape? He'll hunt her down, claim her, and make her his forever.

**Total Pages (Source):** 28

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

one

Emilia

The library is empty at this hour, just the way I like it. Closing time always brings a specific kind of peace—the smell of old books, the soft echo of my footsteps against the polished floor, the gentle click of lights switching off one by one. I run my finger along the spines of the classics section, savoring the moment before I have to step outside into the real world. If I'd known what waited for me in the darkness tonight, I would have barricaded myself among these shelves until morning.

"Goodnight, Ms. West," calls the security guard as I slip through the staff exit.

"Goodnight," I respond softly, tugging my oversized cardigan closer around my body.

The night air hits me with a chill that makes me quicken my pace. The streetlights cast long shadows on the pavement, and I adjust the strap of my bag, heavy with borrowed books I couldn't resist taking home. My apartment is only fifteen minutes away, but tonight I've stayed later than usual finishing the catalog updates.

The shortcut through the business district is something I rarely take this late, but exhaustion wins over caution. Empty storefronts and darkened office buildings line the street, their windows like vacant eyes watching me pass. My footsteps sound too loud in the silence, and I find myself holding my breath at odd intervals.

A crash echoes from somewhere ahead, and I freeze. My heart gives a weird little flutter, the kind that happens when you're startled but trying to convince yourself it's

nothing. Just someone dropping something, I tell myself. Or maybe a cat knocking over a trash can.

But then I hear voices—low, harsh, angry. Male voices.

I should turn around right now. Walk away. Call someone.

Instead, curiosity pulls me forward on trembling legs. I've spent nineteen years behind books, imagining other lives, other risks. Something primal in me wants to see, just for a moment, what danger looks like up close.

I creep toward the sound, staying close to the buildings. There's an alley ahead, and the voices grow louder. I peek around the corner and immediately wish I hadn't.

Four men in leather jackets stand outside the back door of what I recognize as the high-end jewelry store. The door is open, its alarm system clearly disabled. One man holds a gun. Another is loading something into duffel bags. A third keeps watch. And the fourth...

My breath catches in my throat.

The fourth man stands with his back to me, but there's something about him that makes my skin prickle. He's taller than the others, broader in the shoulders, and even from behind, I can tell he's in charge. There's authority in the set of his stance, in the way the others keep glancing at him as if waiting for approval.

"Hurry the fuck up," he growls, and his voice slides down my spine like ice water.

I should leave. I need to leave. My body tenses to run, but in my haste, I bump against a metal trashcan. The sound, though slight, might as well be a gunshot in the quiet night.

Four heads snap in my direction.

My blood turns to slush. I duck back behind the building, pressing myself flat against the wall, hoping somehow they didn't really see me. My heart pounds so hard I'm sure they can hear it.

Heavy footsteps approach. I turn to run, but my legs have forgotten how to work.

"Well, well. What do we have here?" A rough hand grabs my arm, and I'm yanked back toward the alley.

My captor is a thick-set man with a beard and cold eyes. He drags me into the light spilling from the broken door, and I'm suddenly facing all four men.

"Found a little mouse," the bearded man announces, shoving me forward.

I stumble, nearly falling, and look up to find myself staring into the coldest blue eyes I've ever seen. It's him—the leader—and up close, he's terrifying in his beauty. Dark hair, sharp cheekbones, a mouth that's currently pressed into a hard line. He wears his danger like expensive cologne, and I shrink beneath his scrutiny.

"What were you doing back there?" he asks, his voice deceptively soft.

I can't speak. My throat has closed up, and my vision starts to blur at the edges.

He steps closer, and I catch his scent—leather, smoke, and something darker. "I asked you a question."

"I-I was just walking home," I manage to whisper. "From the l-library."

His gaze flickers to my bag, noticing the edges of books poking out. One dark

eyebrow rises slightly.

"Kill her," says one of the other men. "She saw our faces."

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

My knees nearly buckle.

"Shut up," the leader snaps without looking away from me. He studies me for a moment longer, and I swear I see something shift in those ice-blue eyes. Interest, maybe. Or calculation.

"What's your name?" he demands.

"Emilia," I whisper. "Emilia West."

He nods once, as if confirming something to himself. "Emilia West, the librarian. Well, Emilia, you've created quite a problem for yourself tonight."

"I won't tell anyone," I promise quickly. "I didn't see anything. I don't?—"

"You're a terrible liar." His mouth quirks up at one corner, not quite a smile. "But that's not necessarily a bad thing."

I don't understand what's happening. Why isn't he more worried? Why is he looking at me like I'm a puzzle he's trying to solve?

"Boss," the bearded man says urgently. "We need to move."

The leader—the boss—nods without taking his eyes off me. "Finish loading the van. I'll handle this."

My heart sinks. Handle this. I know what that means.

"Please," I whisper. "I have a family. My mom is sick, and my sister?—"

"Do you always talk this much when you're scared?" he interrupts, and there's a hint of amusement in his voice that makes me want to scream. How can he be entertained when I'm about to die?

"Only when I'm about to be murdered," I retort before I can stop myself.

Something flashes in his eyes—surprise, maybe even respect. Then he laughs, a sound so unexpected and rich it momentarily stuns me.

"I'm not going to kill you, little librarian," he says, reaching out to tuck a strand of hair behind my ear. The casual intimacy of the gesture makes me flinch. "That would be a waste."

Behind him, the others have finished loading whatever they stole. The van's engine rumbles to life.

"Clark," one of them calls. "Now."

Clark. The leader's name is Clark. It seems too ordinary for someone like him.

Clark nods without looking away from me. "Change of plans. She's coming with us."

"What?" The word bursts out of me. "No, I can't?—"

His hand clamps over my mouth, and he pulls me against him with an arm around my waist. I'm crushed against his chest, feeling the hard planes of muscle beneath his jacket.

"Listen carefully," he murmurs, his lips close to my ear. "You have two options.

Come quietly, or I'll knock you out and carry you. Either way, you're coming with me."

Terror floods me, but beneath it is something else—a traitorous heat that flares where our bodies touch. What is wrong with me?

"I promise you'll be safe," he continues, so quietly I barely hear him. "But you're a liability I can't leave behind. Do you understand?"

I can't nod with his hand over my mouth, but something in my eyes must answer him because he slowly removes his hand.

"Why not just let me go?" I ask, my voice shaking. "I swear I won't?—"

"Because I don't believe you," he cuts me off. "And because I don't want to."

That last part hangs in the air between us, strange and heavy with meaning I can't decipher. Then his arm tightens around me, and he's leading me toward the van.

"Get in," he orders, opening the side door.



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

Inside, the other three men stare at me with varying expressions of disbelief and annoyance.

"Boss, you can't be serious," the bearded one starts.

"Did I ask for your opinion?" Clark's voice has turned to steel, and the man immediately falls silent.

Clark guides me into the van with a firm hand on my lower back, the heat of his palm burning through my cardigan. He follows me in, sliding the door shut with a sound of finality that makes my stomach drop.

As the van lurches into motion, I sit rigidly between Clark and the wall, trying to make myself as small as possible. The other men eye me suspiciously, but no one speaks. The weight of Clark's presence beside me is overwhelming—he's not touching me anymore, but I feel him like a physical force, pulling at something deep inside me.

"Where are you taking me?" I whisper.

Clark turns those ice-blue eyes on me again. In the dim light of the van, they seem to glow.

"Somewhere safe," he says. "For now."

"For how long?"

His gaze travels over my face, lingering on my mouth in a way that makes my cheeks heat. "That depends."

"On what?"

One corner of his mouth lifts in that not-quite-smile. "On how long it takes me to figure out what to do with you."

The way he says it—low, almost intimate—sends a shiver through me that has nothing to do with fear. And that terrifies me more than anything else. Because whatever this feeling is—this strange, unwelcome pull toward this dangerous man—it's not something I understand.

And as the van carries me deeper into the night, away from everything familiar and safe, I have the sinking feeling that nothing in my life will ever be the same again.

two

Clark

I slam the compound door behind us, my hand still wrapped around the librarian's delicate wrist. She's trembling, this fragile thing I've dragged into my world, but she hasn't cried or begged since that first moment in the alley. Something about that makes my blood run hotter. The boys are watching me, waiting to see how I'll handle this complication. They think I've lost my mind, bringing a witness back to our headquarters. Maybe I have. My thumb traces the pulse point at her wrist—rapid, like a trapped bird. I shouldn't notice how soft her skin is. I shouldn't be thinking about how those wide hazel eyes would look clouded with pleasure instead of fear.

"Boss," Mick approaches, keeping his voice low. "The fuck are we doing with her?"

I fix him with a stare that has made grown men wet themselves. "We're keeping her where she can't run to the cops."

"And then what?"

Good question. The job went sideways the moment this woman stumbled across our path. Three million in diamonds, the perfect score, and now a complication wearing a cardigan two sizes too big for her slim frame.

"Let me worry about that," I say, voice clipped.

The librarian—Emilia—hasn't said a word since we arrived. She stands perfectly still beside me, eyes darting around the main room of our clubhouse. Taking in the worn leather couches, the pool table, the bar along the back wall. The MC insignia painted across the concrete. The weapons placed strategically throughout. I watch her catalog it all, those intelligent eyes missing nothing.

Dangerous, that mind of hers.

I jerk my chin toward the hallway. "Dex, take her to the room at the end. Lock her in."

Dex moves to grab her arm, but I tighten my grip instinctively. He stops, eyebrows raising slightly.

"I'll do it," I say, annoyed at my own reaction.

Mick exchanges a glance with Dex. I ignore them both, pulling Emilia down the dimly lit hallway. She stumbles once, and I catch her against me, her body momentarily pressed to mine. The contact sends an electric current down my spine.

"Please," she whispers, the first word she's spoken since the van. "I won't tell anyone what I saw."

Her voice is soft, educated. Nothing like the rough voices of the women who typically pass through here.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"You're not in a position to make promises," I tell her, unlocking the door to our most secure room.

It's bare-bones—a bed, a small bathroom attached, a single window too small to climb through and reinforced with steel bars. We've held rivals here before negotiations. Never a woman. Never someone like her.

I push her gently inside, surprised at my own restraint. "You'll stay here until I decide what to do with you."

She turns to face me, chin lifted slightly despite her fear. "And how long will that be?"

I study her for a moment. She's younger than I initially thought, maybe nineteen or twenty. Not a child, but not hardened by the world either. Her chestnut hair falls in waves past her shoulders, slightly mussed from the night's events. Her skin is pale, perfect, unmarked by the harsh realities that have shaped my own life.

"That depends," I say, letting my gaze trail over her deliberately. "On a lot of things."

Her cheeks flush, and there it is—a reaction that drives a spike of satisfaction through me. I want to see more of that blush, want to discover how far down her neck it travels, whether it spreads across her chest.

"What things?" she asks, her voice steadier than I expected.

I take a step closer, invading her space, watching as she forces herself not to back

away.

"Whether I can trust you," I say, though that's only part of the truth. The other part is darker, hungrier. Whether I can have you. Whether one taste will be enough.

Her eyes widen slightly, sensing the unspoken.

"I need to call my family," she says. "My mother is sick, she'll worry?—"

"No calls," I cut her off. "No contact."

"But—"

"This isn't a negotiation, little librarian."

Her lips press together, frustration briefly overtaking fear. "My name is Emilia."

I find myself smiling, genuinely amused by her attempt at asserting control. "I know your name."

"Then use it," she says, surprising me. "If I'm going to be your prisoner, at least give me that much dignity."

I lean in, close enough to smell her—vanilla and paper and something uniquely female. Not perfume. Just her. "Emilia," I say, dragging out each syllable, watching goosebumps rise on her skin in response.

Satisfaction blooms hot in my chest. I affect her, this innocent creature. She's afraid, yes, but there's something else in those hazel eyes. Curiosity. Maybe even desire.

My cock goes rock hard in my jeans, and I hiss in a breath at the sudden urgency of

it.

I step back abruptly, unsettled by my own reaction. "There's a bathroom through that door. Try to sleep. I'll bring you food in the morning."

Before she can respond, I leave, locking the door behind me. I stand in the hallway for a moment, breathing deeply, trying to regain my equilibrium. What the fuck is wrong with me? She's a witness, a liability, potentially the downfall of everything I've built. I should be concerned with damage control, not with how soft her skin feels or how her eyes darken when I say her name.

Mick is waiting when I return to the main room. "We need to talk about this, Clark."

I reach for the bottle of whiskey behind the bar, pouring a generous glass. "She stays here until I decide otherwise."

"She saw everything. Our faces, the job?—"

"You think I don't know that?" I snap, slamming the glass down hard enough that whiskey sloshes over the rim. "I'm handling it."

Mick runs a hand over his beard, his usual stoic demeanor cracking with concern. "This isn't like you, man. You don't make these kinds of calls. Witnesses get silenced."

"She's not getting 'silenced,'" I growl, the very thought making my stomach turn.

"Then what? We keep her locked up forever?"

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I take a long swallow of whiskey, letting it burn down my throat. "Go count the take. I'll deal with this."

Mick hesitates but knows better than to push further. He retreats to the back office with the others, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

The image of Emilia standing in that alley flashes through my mind. The moment I turned and saw her—wide-eyed, clutching her bag of books, looking so fucking out of place in our world of violence and stolen goods. Any other witness would have been handled immediately, permanently. But something stopped me. Something in those frightened eyes that reached inside me and grabbed hold of something I thought was long dead.

I drain my glass and pour another. Then, almost against my will, I find myself walking back down the hallway to her room.

There's a small viewing panel in the door. I slide it open silently and look in.

She's sitting on the edge of the bed, back straight, hands clasped in her lap like a schoolgirl at prayer. Her face is turned slightly away, toward the barred window where a slice of moonlight falls across the floor. A tear tracks silently down her cheek, but she wipes it away quickly, almost angrily.

Something twists in my chest.

She stands suddenly, moving to explore her prison. The moonlight catches her figure as she passes through it, illuminating the curves hidden beneath that oversized



cardigan. She's small but perfectly proportioned—subtle breasts, narrow waist, the gentle flare of hips. My hands itch to trace those curves, to peel away the layers hiding her from me.

She starts removing books from her bag, lining them up on the small table beside the bed. Even in captivity, she creates order. I watch as she gently touches each spine, as if drawing comfort from their familiar presence.

Has anyone ever touched her with that kind of reverence?

The thought hits me like a physical blow, followed by a wave of possessiveness so strong it nearly staggers me. I want to be the first. The only. I want to see those careful librarian's hands on my skin, want to watch her face as she discovers pleasure for the first time.

Because she is untouched—I'd bet my life on it. Everything about her screams innocence, from the modest clothes to the careful way she holds herself, like someone who's never been roughly handled, never been claimed.

I want to claim her.

The realization should disturb me. Instead, it settles into my bones with the weight of certainty. She was meant to witness our heist tonight. Meant to be brought here. Meant to be mine.

She removes her cardigan, draping it carefully over the back of the chair. The t-shirt beneath is simple, worn thin with washing, clinging to the curves I'm already obsessed with. She reaches up to gather her hair, tying it in a loose knot at the nape of her neck, exposing the delicate line of her throat.

I'm hard instantly, painfully, my cock straining against my jeans at the mere sight of

that vulnerable expanse of skin. I imagine pressing my lips there, feeling her pulse against my tongue. Marking her.

My hand tightens on the door handle, nearly jerking it open before I catch myself. No. Not yet. I need to think this through, need to plan. A woman like Emilia isn't taken. She's seduced, convinced, won over. She needs to come to me willingly.

The idea of her submitting—not out of fear but out of desire—makes my blood run hot. I'd have her eager, wet, begging. Those intelligent eyes glazed with want, that proper mouth forming my name as she comes apart beneath me.

One night. That's all I need to get her out of my system. One night to possess her completely, and then I can figure out what to do with her after. Let her go, maybe, once I'm sure she won't run to the cops. Once I've satisfied this unexpected hunger.

She sits back on the bed, drawing her knees up to her chest, making herself small. Vulnerable. The sight triggers every predatory instinct I possess.

And it makes my chest ache unfamiliarly.

No. One night won't be enough. Not with her.

I close the viewing panel quietly, resting my forehead against the door for a moment. I've built my reputation, my entire empire, on control. On making calculated decisions. On never letting emotion interfere with business.

Yet here I am, risking everything for a librarian with frightened eyes and a spine of steel. A woman who should mean nothing to me beyond the threat she poses.

I push away from the door, stalking back to the main room. I need distance. Need to think clearly.

But as I pour another whiskey, all I can see is Emilia's face. All I can think about is how she'll look when I finally claim her. How she'll feel beneath me, around me. How she'll sound when she breaks.

I knock back the drink, embracing the burn. Tomorrow, I'll deal with the gang, with the diamonds, with all the practical implications of what we've done tonight.

But Emilia...Emilia is mine now. And I'm keeping her.

three

Emilia

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I wake with a start, momentarily confused by the unfamiliar ceiling above me. It takes exactly three seconds for reality to crash down—the heist, the alley, Clark. I'm lying on a narrow bed in a locked room, prisoner to a man whose cold blue eyes haunted what little sleep I managed to get. Sunlight filters through the barred window, highlighting dust motes that dance in the air like tiny stars. In the harsh light of day, I should be focusing on escape, on survival. Instead, my traitor mind keeps replaying the way Clark's voice dropped low when he said my name, the heat of his hand around my wrist, the dangerous promise in his gaze.

I sit up, pushing tangled hair from my face. The books I arranged last night still stand in a neat row on the bedside table—my small attempt to create order in chaos. I run my fingers along their spines, drawing comfort from their familiar presence.

The room looks different in daylight. Less ominous, but no less a prison. The walls are bare concrete, painted a faded blue-gray. The furniture is sparse but sturdy—bed, table, chair, small dresser. The bathroom is little more than a closet with a toilet, sink, and shower stall, but it's clean. Someone has put thought into this space, designed it specifically for keeping people contained.

How many others have been locked in here before me?

I splash cold water on my face and attempt to tame my hair with my fingers. My reflection in the small mirror above the sink shows shadows under my eyes and a pallor to my skin that makes my freckles stand out starkly. I look younger than my nineteen years, more vulnerable. I hate it.

A key turns in the lock, and I freeze, heart leaping into my throat. I quickly retreat to

the bed, sitting with my back against the wall, knees drawn up like a shield.

The door swings open, and Clark fills the frame. He's even more imposing in daylight—tall and broad-shouldered, his presence seeming to shrink the room. He's dressed simply in dark jeans and a black t-shirt that stretches across his chest, revealing the muscled contours beneath. Tattoos peek out from beneath his sleeves, crawling up his neck. His dark hair is slightly disheveled, as if he's run his hands through it repeatedly.

He carries a tray with what smells like coffee and food. My stomach growls embarrassingly in response.

"You're awake," he says, voice rough like he hasn't used it yet this morning.

I nod, not trusting my voice.

He sets the tray on the table, then stands back, studying me with those penetrating blue eyes. I fight the urge to fidget under his gaze.

"Did you sleep?" he asks.

The question surprises me—it sounds almost like concern. "Not much."

"Understandable." He gestures to the tray. "Eat."

It's not a suggestion. I unfold my legs and move to the chair, conscious of his eyes tracking my every movement. The tray holds coffee, toast, eggs, and a banana. Simple but thoughtful.

"Thank you," I say automatically, manners ingrained by my mother surfacing even in captivity.

A ghost of a smile touches his lips. "Well-brought-up little thing, aren't you?"

I take a sip of coffee to avoid responding, surprised to find it prepared exactly how I prefer—light with no sugar. It's a coincidence, it has to be, but it unsettles me nonetheless.

"Your mother must be proud," he continues, leaning against the wall, arms crossed. "Raising such a polite daughter."

My cup freezes halfway to my lips. "My mother," I repeat, anxiety flooding back. "She's expecting me home. She's sick—she needs her medication, and my sister can't?—"

"It's been taken care of," he interrupts.

I stare at him. "What do you mean?"

"Your mother received a text from your phone last night. You're staying with a friend from the library for a few days, helping her recover from surgery."

Horror washes through me. "You went through my phone?"

"Of course I did." He says it like it's the most obvious thing in the world. "I know everything about you now, Emilia West. Twenty-six Maple Street, apartment 3B. Graduated high school two years ago with honors. Working at the library while taking night classes at the community college. Mother with MS, younger sister still in high school. Father left when you were twelve." His eyes never leave mine as he recites the details of my life. "You live a very small existence, little librarian."

I should be terrified by how thoroughly he's invaded my privacy. Instead, I feel a strange rush that he's bothered to learn so much about me. That he's interested enough

to memorize these details.

"What do you want from me?" I ask, my voice steadier than I expect.

He pushes off from the wall, approaching slowly, deliberately. I remain seated, refusing to show how his proximity affects me.

"That's the question, isn't it?" He braces his hands on the table, leaning down until his face is level with mine. Close enough that I can see the darker flecks of navy in his ice-blue eyes, smell the mint on his breath. "What do I want from Emilia West?"

Our faces are inches apart. I should be shrinking back, should be terrified. But something hot and unfamiliar curls in my stomach, crawling up my spine, making it hard to breathe.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"I don't understand," I whisper.

"Don't you?" His voice drops lower. "I think you do. I think you feel it too."

My cheeks heat. "Feel what?"

He reaches out, tracing one finger along my jawline, the touch feather-light but scorching. "This," he says. "This thing between us."

Our fingers brush as I instinctively reach up to push his hand away, and I feel a spark—like static from the dry air, but it jolts through me with unexpected force. I pull back as if burned.

Clark straightens, satisfaction evident in the slight curve of his mouth. "I'm offering you a deal, Emilia."

I swallow hard. "What kind of deal?"

"One night." He says it simply, but the words hang in the air, heavy with meaning. "One night with me, and then you're free to go. Back to your small life, your sick mother, your dusty books. With the promise that you'll never speak of what you saw in that alley."

My mind goes blank. One night. With him. The implication is unmistakable.

"You can't be serious," I say, but my voice sounds distant, detached.



"I rarely joke." His eyes travel over me, a physical caress that makes my skin tingle where his gaze touches. "One night of complete surrender, Emilia. That's my price for your freedom."

I should be outraged. Should be screaming, fighting, demanding to be released. But all I can focus on is the way my name sounds in his mouth, the way his proposal sends heat flooding between my thighs.

"I've never..." I start, then stop, cheeks burning hotter.

His expression softens fractionally. "I know."

Of course he knows. He's probably read it in every anxious glance, every awkward movement. My inexperience must be painfully obvious to someone like him.

"Why?" I ask. "Why would you want...that...from me?"

"Because from the moment I saw you in that alley, I haven't been able to think of anything else." The raw honesty in his voice startles me. "I want to be your first, Emilia."

My breath hitches. No one has ever wanted me like this—with this intensity, this focus. Boys my age fumble and stammer, their interest superficial and easily diverted. Clark's desire is something else entirely. Something that both terrifies and thrills me.

"I can't," I whisper, though something inside me screams the opposite.

"Can't?" He arches an eyebrow. "Or won't?"

I think of my life before last night—quiet, predictable, safe. Wake up, care for Mom, go to work, study, sleep. Repeat. I've never taken a real risk, never stepped outside

the narrow boundaries of my responsibilities.

"I don't know you," I try again.

"You know enough," he counters. "You know I can hurt you, but I haven't. You know I could have killed you, but I didn't." He pauses, eyes intense. "You know I want you. And you want me too."

The accusation hangs between us. I want to deny it, but the lie sticks in my throat.

"It doesn't matter what I want," I say instead. "I can't just...do that. With a stranger. With someone who's keeping me prisoner."

"Not a prisoner," he corrects. "A guest with limited options."

Despite everything, a surprised laugh escapes me. His eyes brighten at the sound, something like triumph flashing in them.

"There she is," he murmurs. "There's a fire in you, little librarian. I saw it when you stood your ground in that alley. When you demanded I use your name."

He's right. There is a part of me—a part I've carefully suppressed beneath responsibility and routine—that craves something more. Something dangerous. Something like Clark.

"Think about it," he says, stepping back. "You have until tonight to decide."

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

He moves toward the door, then pauses, looking back at me over his shoulder. "Just so you know—if you say no, I'll respect that. But I won't let you go. Not yet. So consider your options carefully, Emilia."

The door closes behind him, the lock clicking into place with finality.

I remain seated, food forgotten, mind racing. Was that truly a choice he offered? Freedom for...my virginity? The thought should disgust me. Should make me hate him. But all I can think about is how it felt when he touched my face, the heat in his eyes when he said he wanted to be my first.

I press my thighs together, trying to ease the unfamiliar ache building there. What's happening to me? Is this Stockholm syndrome, developing an attachment to my captor? Or is it something that was already there, waiting to be awakened—this craving for danger, for the unknown, for a man who looks at me like I'm something precious to be devoured?

I've spent my entire life being good, being responsible. When Dad left, I became the substitute parent, holding our family together while Mom's condition worsened. I've never complained, never rebelled. Never even considered putting my own desires first.

But Clark makes me want to be selfish. Makes me want to grab something for myself, just once.

One night. One night of complete surrender, and then back to my life, to responsibility, to safety.

I move to the small window, pressing my forehead against the cool glass. The compound seems quiet outside, no sign of the other men from last night. Just a dusty yard surrounded by a high fence, beyond which I can see trees and open sky. Freedom.

But as I close my eyes, it's not freedom I see. It's Clark's face, those blue eyes burning into mine. His hands, strong and capable, touching me in ways I've only imagined in my most secret dreams.

One night.

I don't know how much time passes, but the door opens again, and I turn quickly, heart leaping.

It's him, standing there as if my thoughts summoned him. He fills the doorway, powerful and beautiful in his danger, and the decision crystalizes in my mind with startling clarity.

I want this. I want him. God help me, I've never wanted anything more.

"Yes," I say, before he can speak. "One night."

The hunger that flashes across his face makes my knees weak. I've never felt power like this—the knowledge that I affect this dangerous man as much as he affects me.

"Good girl," he says softly, and something inside me melts at the approval in his voice.

I've just made a deal with the devil. And all I can think is that I can't wait for tonight.

four

Clark

I pace the length of my bedroom, checking the time again. Eight minutes since I last looked. The waiting is excruciating, but I won't rush this. For nineteen years, Emilia has belonged to herself, to her responsibilities. Tonight, she belongs to me. My body hums with anticipation, cock already half-hard just thinking about what's to come. I've changed the sheets, set out water, dimmed the lights. Like I'm preparing for a fucking date instead of claiming what's mine. It's ridiculous—I've never given this much thought to fucking before. But she's different. Untouched. The weight of being her first presses on me, a responsibility I didn't expect to care about. But I do. I want to ruin her for anyone else, yes. But I also want her to remember this night with something other than regret.

The compound is quiet. I made sure of it, sending the boys out on various errands, ensuring we'll have privacy. No interruptions. No witnesses to whatever weakness I might display in the face of her innocence.

I catch my reflection in the mirror—a hardened man in his thirties, scarred by a life of violence, undeserving of something as pure as Emilia West. For a moment, I consider calling the whole thing off. Letting her go, finding another way to ensure her silence. It would be the decent thing to do.

But I've never claimed to be decent.

I'm standing outside her door. My heart rate spikes, anticipation coursing through me like a drug.

I adjust my cock and open it. She's still wearing the same clothes from yesterday—that oversized cardigan that hides too much of her from my view, jeans that have seen better days. Her hair falls loose around her shoulders, chestnut waves catching the low light. She's been crying. I can see the slight redness around her eyes. But her chin

is lifted, her posture straight. Brave little librarian.

"Are you ready?"

"I keep my promises," she replies, and the quiet dignity in her voice hits me like a physical blow.

I cross the room slowly, not wanting to frighten her. When I reach her, I lift a hand to brush her hair back from her face, tucking it behind her ear. She flinches slightly but doesn't pull away.

"Are you afraid?" I ask.

She meets my eyes directly. "Yes."

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"Of me?"

A small pause. "Of how you make me feel."

The honesty in her answer stirs something dangerous in my chest. I trail my fingers down her neck, feeling her pulse jump beneath my touch. She's wearing a delicate silver chain with a tiny book charm—the kind of sentimental jewelry a young girl would cherish. I rub the charm between my fingers.

"Tell me about this," I say, needing to ease her into what's coming, to build a bridge between her world and mine.

She looks surprised by the question. "My father gave it to me, before he left. I was twelve." Her hand comes up to touch the pendant, brushing against mine. "It's from 'The Little Prince.' It was our favorite book to read together."

I nod, filing away this piece of her history. "And now you surround yourself with books. Building walls of words between you and the world."

Her eyes widen slightly. "I've never thought of it that way."

"Haven't you?" I step closer, invading her space deliberately. "Safe inside your library. Everything categorized, understood, contained. Unlike real life. Unlike me."

She swallows hard. "You're definitely not contained in any category I understand."

I smile at that, a real smile that feels strange on my face. "Good."

I take her hand and lead her to my room. She looks around when we step inside, eyes wide. Her gaze meets mine, and she swallows.

Fuck, she's beautiful.

My hands find her waist, and I guide her deeper into the room, toward the bed. She moves with me, trembling slightly but not resisting. When the backs of her knees hit the mattress, she stops, uncertainty flashing across her face.

"I don't—I don't know what to do," she admits, voice barely above a whisper.

"You don't have to do anything," I tell her, my own voice rougher than intended. "Tonight is about what I'm going to do to you."

Her breath catches, cheeks flushing with that pink I'm already addicted to.

"Can I—" She hesitates. "Can I touch you?"

The request nearly undoes me. I've had countless women, experienced hands that knew exactly what I like, how to please me. None of them affected me like this simple question from Emilia's lips.

"Yes," I manage to say. "Wherever you want."

Her hands come up hesitantly, fingers brushing across my chest, exploring tentatively. She's wearing a curious expression, like she's reading a new book, trying to decipher its meaning. Her touch is light, almost reverent, tracing the contours of muscle beneath my shirt.

"You're so strong," she murmurs, more to herself than to me.



I capture one of her hands, bringing it to my lips, kissing her palm. The gesture is oddly intimate, more tender than I intended. Her eyes dart up to mine, surprise and something deeper reflected there.

"Tonight," I tell her, "I'm going to show you what it means to belong to someone. To belong to me."

She shivers, but not from fear. "Is that what this is? Belonging?"

"Yes." I reach for the hem of her cardigan, slowly pulling it up. "Arms."

She raises her arms obediently, letting me draw the garment over her head. Beneath it, she wears a simple t-shirt that clings to modest but perfect curves. Her bra is visible beneath—white cotton, practical, innocent. The sight of it makes my cock throb.

I let my hands slide down her sides, feeling the warmth of her through the thin fabric. "You're beautiful."

She looks down, disbelieving. "I'm not?—"

"Don't," I cut her off. "Don't contradict me. Not tonight." I lift her chin with my finger, forcing her to meet my gaze. "Tonight, you're exactly what I say you are. And you're beautiful, Emilia. Perfect."

Something shifts in her expression—surprise giving way to wonder, to the first hints of desire. Good. I want her willing. Want her desperate.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I pull her against me, one hand tangling in her hair, the other pressed to the small of her back. Her body is soft against mine, yielding. I lower my head slowly, giving her time to process what's happening, then press my lips to hers.

The kiss starts gentle, a question rather than a demand. Her lips are soft, tentative, inexperienced. But when I deepen the kiss, sliding my tongue along the seam of her mouth, she responds with unexpected hunger, opening for me, a small sound catching in her throat.

The taste of her hits me like lightning, sharp and sweet. My control slips, grip tightening in her hair, pulling her head back to give me better access. I devour her mouth, claiming her with a thoroughness that surprises even me. She clings to me, fingers digging into my shoulders, body arching instinctively toward mine.

When I finally break the kiss, we're both breathing hard. Her lips are swollen, eyes glazed. I've barely touched her, and already she looks halfway to ruined.

"Do you want this?" I ask, needing to hear her say it. "Say it, Emilia. Tell me you want me."

"I want this," she whispers. Then, stronger: "I want you, Clark."

My name on her lips snaps something inside me. I lift her, laying her down on the bed, coming over her like a shadow. Her hair fans out across my pillow, and the sight of her there—in my bed, willing, waiting—nearly breaks my self-control.

I pull my shirt over my head, watching her eyes widen as she takes in my bare chest,

the tattoos that mark my skin, the scars from a violent life. Her gaze lingers on a knife wound just below my collarbone, then travels lower, to the trail of dark hair disappearing beneath my jeans.

"Can I?" she asks again, hand hovering above my skin.

I nod, not trusting my voice. Her fingers trace the tattoo that covers my right shoulder, a stylized wolf—the mark that earned me my nickname in the MC. Her touch is feather-light, curious, sending sparks across my skin.

"This is why they call you The Wolf," she says.

I'm startled that she knows this. "Who told you that name?"

"I heard the others say it." Her fingers continue their exploration, moving to a scar on my ribs. "How did you get this?"

"Knife fight. Five years ago." I capture her hand, pressing it flat against my chest, over my heart. "Feel that? What you do to me?"

My heart is racing, a fact she can surely feel beneath her palm. Her eyes widen slightly, understanding dawning.

"No more questions," I tell her. "Not tonight."

I reach for the hem of her shirt, drawing it upward slowly, giving her time to object. She doesn't. She raises her arms again, letting me pull it over her head. Her bra is as simple as I imagined—white cotton with a tiny bow between her breasts. The sight makes my mouth water.

"Perfect," I murmur, running a finger along the edge of the fabric, watching

goosebumps rise on her skin.

I take my time undressing her, savoring each new revelation—the constellation of freckles across her collarbone, the gentle curve of her waist, the soft swell of her breasts. By the time she's naked beneath me, I'm painfully hard, every muscle tense with the effort of holding back.

She tries to cover herself, arms crossing over her chest, but I gently pull them away.

"Don't hide from me," I say. "I want to see all of you."

Her blush spreads down her neck, across her chest. I follow it with my lips, tasting the salt of her skin, the rapid flutter of her pulse. She gasps when I take a nipple into my mouth, back arching off the bed.

"Clark," she breathes, the sound somewhere between a plea and a prayer.

I've never been a patient man, never cared much for foreplay. But with Emilia, I find myself wanting to extend every moment, to draw out her pleasure until she's mindless with it. I worship her body with hands and mouth, learning what makes her gasp, what makes her moan, what makes her say my name in that broken, desperate way that drives me crazy.

By the time I settle between her thighs, she's trembling, wet and ready for me. I take her hands, pinning them above her head, needing her completely at my mercy.

"Look at me," I command softly. "I want to see your eyes when I make you mine."

She obeys, those hazel eyes locking with mine, trust and desire warring in their depths. I position myself at her entrance, feeling her heat against the head of my cock. The urge to thrust forward, to claim her roughly, is nearly overwhelming. But I hold

back, pressing forward slowly, giving her body time to adjust to the intrusion.

The tight heat of her is exquisite torture. I watch her face carefully for signs of pain, ready to stop if it's too much. Her expression tightens momentarily as I breach her barrier, a small sound of discomfort escaping her lips. I freeze, waiting, fighting every instinct that screams at me to move.

"Don't stop," she whispers, surprising me. "Please, Clark. Don't stop."

I capture her mouth in a deep kiss as I push forward, swallowing her gasp as I seat myself fully inside her. The sensation is overwhelming—tight, hot, perfect. Mine. She's mine now, in the most fundamental way possible.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I remain still, letting her adjust, my forehead pressed against hers, our breath mingling. "Are you okay?"

She nods, shifting experimentally beneath me, causing a friction that makes me grit my teeth.

"It hurts," she admits. "But I like it. I like feeling you inside me."

Her words nearly undo me. I begin to move, slowly at first, shallow thrusts designed to ease her discomfort. But soon her body responds, hips lifting to meet mine, small sounds of pleasure escaping her throat. I increase my pace, still mindful of her inexperience but unable to hold back completely.

The sight of her beneath me—flushed, eyes half-closed in pleasure, lips parted—is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. I've taken what no one else has had, claimed her in a way that has marked us both.

"Mine," I growl against her neck, the word torn from somewhere primal inside me. "Say it, Emilia. Say you're mine."

"Yours," she gasps as I thrust deeper. "I'm yours, Clark."

The admission pushes me closer to the edge. I slide a hand between us, finding the bundle of nerves that will send her over, circling it with my thumb. Her reaction is immediate—back arching, a cry escaping her lips as her inner walls tighten around me.

"That's it," I encourage her. "Let go for me, beautiful. Let me feel you come."

Her orgasm takes her by surprise, her body clenching around me, face transformed by pleasure. The sight of her coming apart beneath me triggers my own release, and I bury myself deep inside her, groaning her name as I empty myself.

In the aftermath, we lie tangled together, her head on my chest, my arms around her. I stroke her hair absently, mind racing. One night, I told myself. One night to get her out of my system.

But as her breathing evens out, as she drifts toward sleep in my arms, my suspicions are confirmed. I know it was a lie. One night will never be enough. Not with her.

I've had countless women, seeking pleasure without attachment, satisfaction without complication. But none of them crawled under my skin like this librarian with her quiet strength and surprising passion. None of them made me want to be better than I am, made me imagine a different kind of life.

Emilia shifts in her sleep, pressing closer to me, trusting in her vulnerability. Something protective and possessive surges through me. The world I inhabit is dangerous, violent, not made for someone like her. But I can't let her go. Won't let her go.

My life has been built on taking what I want without apology. And I want Emilia West—not just her body, but all of her. Her mind. Her heart. Her future.

Our deal was one night for her freedom. But as I watch her sleep, peaceful in my arms, I know I'll break that promise. The risk she poses to my operation is too great—or that's what I'll tell myself, what I'll tell the crew.

The truth is simpler, more frightening: I'm keeping her because I can't imagine letting

her walk away.

In one night, this innocent librarian has done what no one else has managed in all my years of violence and power.

She's made The Wolf want to be tamed.

five

Emilia

I waketo sunlight warming my face and an unfamiliar ache between my thighs. For one blissful moment, I exist in the limbo between dreams and reality, floating in the lingering sensation of strong hands and whispered promises. Then memory crashes over me like a wave—Clark, his bedroom, my decision, his body moving above mine, inside me, claiming me in ways I never imagined possible. I'm alone in his bed, the sheets tangled around my naked body, bearing the scent of him and sex and things I didn't know existed twenty-four hours ago. I press my face into his pillow, breathing in his essence, confused by how much I want him to be here beside me.

I sit up slowly, wincing at the soreness—a physical reminder of what I've given away. Given to him. My virginity, held close for nineteen years, surrendered in a single night to a dangerous man who took me hostage. What was I thinking?

But I know exactly what I was thinking. I was thinking about freedom. About his eyes, the way they burn when they look at me. About his hands, gentle despite their strength. About the way he made me feel—desirable, powerful, alive in a way I've never been before.

The room looks different in daylight—larger, less intimate. It's sparsely furnished but high-quality, nothing like the concrete cell where I spent my first night. A king-sized



bed dominates the space, flanked by simple nightstands. A dresser stands against one wall, a leather jacket thrown carelessly across its top. There's a desk in the corner, papers neatly stacked, a laptop closed beside them. Everything orderly, controlled—just like Clark himself.

My clothes are folded at the foot of the bed, a consideration I didn't expect. I dress quickly, feeling strangely vulnerable despite being alone. My body feels different—marked, changed. I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror hanging on the closet door and barely recognize the woman staring back. My hair is a mess of tangled waves, my lips swollen from his kisses, a small bruise forming at the junction of my neck and shoulder where his mouth claimed me. I look...used. Claimed. And underneath the shock, there's something else in my expression—a satisfaction I've never seen before.

I should be free now. That was our deal. One night for my freedom. I should be walking out of here, returning to my life, my responsibilities. To normalcy.

But there's no one here to release me. No open door. No sign of Clark.

The realization sends a chill through me. Did he lie? Was this all just a way to get what he wanted? The thought brings a flush of anger, hot and unexpected. I've never been one for confrontation, always the peacemaker, the one who accommodates. But something about Clark—about last night—has shifted something fundamental inside me.

I find the bathroom attached to his bedroom, wincing again as I use the facilities. There's a new toothbrush still in its packaging beside the sink, another unexpected consideration. I use it, then splash water on my face, trying to gather my thoughts. My reflection shows someone caught between who she was and who she's becoming—someone I don't quite recognize yet.

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

The bedroom door isn't locked. I open it cautiously, peering into a hallway similar to the one that led to my cell. But this must be a different part of the compound—the private quarters, perhaps. I follow the sound of voices, padding barefoot down the corridor until I reach what appears to be a kitchen.

Clark is there, his back to me, talking in low tones to the bearded man from the heist—Mick, I think his name is. They fall silent when I enter, both turning to look at me. Clark's eyes darken when they land on me, something possessive flashing in their depths. Heat crawls up my neck under his scrutiny.

"You're up," he says, as if this is a normal morning, as if I'm not his prisoner who just fulfilled her end of a devil's bargain.

"Yes," I reply, voice steadier than I expected. "I'm ready to go home now."

Mick snorts, shaking his head as he pushes past me, leaving the kitchen. The look he gives me is a mixture of pity and amusement that makes my stomach clench.

Clark sips from a coffee mug, watching me over its rim. "Are you hungry? There's coffee. Toast."

"Did you hear what I said? I fulfilled my part of our deal. I want to go home now."

He sets his mug down carefully, approaching me with that predatory grace that simultaneously frightens and thrills me. "The deal has changed."

My heart drops. "What do you mean, 'changed'? You promised?—"

"I know what I promised," he interrupts, standing close enough now that I have to tilt my head back to meet his gaze. "But circumstances have evolved. You're still a liability, Emilia."

Anger flares hot in my chest. "You lied to me."

He has the audacity to look offended. "I didn't lie. I merely...reassessed the situation."

"After you got what you wanted." The bitterness in my voice surprises even me.

His expression hardens. "If you think last night was only about sex, you weren't paying attention."

I wasn't. That's the problem. Last night was about more than physical pleasure—it was connection, vulnerability, something I never expected to find with someone like him. And that makes his betrayal cut even deeper.

"My mother needs me," I say, trying a different approach. "My sister?—"

"Are fine," he cuts me off. "The text has been updated. You're staying with your friend for a week now. Her recovery is taking longer than expected."

Fresh anger surges through me. "You can't just decide these things! You can't control my life!"

"I can," he says simply. "And I am."

I stare at him, this man who took my virginity, who made me feel things I never thought possible, who's now calmly informing me that I remain his prisoner. I should hate him. I want to hate him. But beneath the anger and fear is something else—a pull toward him that defies logic.

"Why?" I ask, hating the tremor in my voice. "Why keep me here if you've already had what you wanted?"

Something flickers in his eyes—vulnerability, quickly masked. "Who says I've had all I want?"

The words send a shiver down my spine, memories of last night flashing unbidden—his hands on my skin, his mouth marking me, the weight of him pressing me into the mattress. My body responds traitorously, heat pooling low in my stomach.

He notices, of course he does. His eyes darken further, a small, satisfied smile playing at the corner of his mouth. "You feel it too. Don't deny it, Emilia."

I take a step back, needing distance. "That doesn't give you the right to keep me prisoner."

"Not a prisoner," he corrects, as he did before. "A guest with?—"

"Limited options. Yes, I remember." I wrap my arms around myself, suddenly cold despite the warm kitchen. "How long? How long are you going to keep me here?"

He studies me for a moment, head tilted slightly. "Until I'm sure you won't run to the cops the moment you're free."

"I promised I wouldn't!"

"And I believe you mean that," he says, surprisingly gentle. "But you're not a liar, Emilia. If questioned directly, you'll break. You're too honest for your own good."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

He's right, and we both know it. I've never been able to lie effectively—not to my mother, not to my teachers, certainly not to law enforcement. I would try to keep his secret, but if directly confronted...

"So I'm just supposed to stay here indefinitely? What about my life? My job? My family?"

"All taken care of." He steps closer again, one hand coming up to tuck a strand of hair behind my ear, the gesture aching intimate after everything we've shared. "You'll want for nothing while you're here."

Except freedom. Except normalcy. Except a life that makes sense.

But even as I think it, I wonder if I could go back to that life now, after experiencing Clark. After feeling, for the first time, what it's like to be truly wanted, truly seen. After having passion instead of just responsibility.

"I need to think," I say, pulling away from his touch. "I need space."

He nods, surprising me with his easy acquiescence. "Your original room is still available, if you prefer. Or you can stay in mine."

The choice hangs between us, weighted with significance. Return to the cell, assert my status as prisoner? Or accept his bed, acknowledge whatever this is growing between us?

"My room," I say finally. "Please."

Something like disappointment flashes across his face, but he nods again. "As you wish. You're not locked in, Emilia. You can move freely within the compound. Just don't try to leave."

"Or what?" I challenge, finding a spark of defiance I didn't know I possessed.

His smile is cold, warning. "Or I'll have to show you why they call me The Wolf."

I shiver involuntarily, remembering the tattoo I traced last night, the power coiled in his muscles, the barely leashed violence I sense beneath his control.

"I understand," I say quietly.

"Good." He gestures to the coffee pot. "Help yourself. I have business to attend to. I'll see you tonight."

Not a question. An expectation.

He leaves me standing in the kitchen, conflicted emotions warring within me. I'm angry—at him for his betrayal, at myself for my weakness. I'm afraid—of him, of this situation, of my own confusing feelings. But most disturbing of all, I'm already anticipating tonight, already wondering if he'll touch me again, if he'll make me feel that strange, wild freedom I found in his arms.

I pour myself coffee with shaking hands, trying to think clearly. I need to focus on escape, on getting back to my family, my responsibilities. Not on the way Clark looked at me just now, like I'm something precious he's determined to keep. Not on the heat that flared between us, as potent in the light of day as it was in the darkness.

But as I wander the compound, coffee growing cold in my hands, I find myself looking for him. Drawn to him despite everything, like a moth to flame, knowing I'll

be burned but unable to resist the heat.

The compound is bigger than I realized—a sprawling building that must have been a warehouse once, now converted into the MC's headquarters. There's the main room I glimpsed when I first arrived, a kitchen, several hallways leading to private rooms. I find a library of sorts—a small room with shelves of books, worn leather chairs, a single window looking out onto the fenced yard. I run my fingers along the spines, finding an eclectic mix—motorcycle manuals, business manuals, business books, and surprisingly, a shelf of classics—Dickens, Austen, Hemingway. I pull one down, inhaling the familiar scent of old paper. Books, at least, are something I understand.

I settle into one of the chairs, opening to the first page, but the words blur before my eyes. All I can think about is Clark—his hands, his mouth, the way he looked at me this morning like I belong to him. The way part of me wanted to belong to him.

What's happening to me? I've spent my entire life being sensible, responsible, the one who takes care of others. Now I'm caught in something I don't understand, torn between fear and desire, between the safety of my old life and the dangerous allure of this new one.

I close the book, restless. I need to see him again. Need to understand what this is between us. Need to know if what I felt last night was real or just a product of fear and manipulation.

I wander the compound searching for him, drawn by a pull I can't explain or resist. When I finally spot him through a doorway, talking with his men, my heart leaps traitorously in my chest. He looks up, as if sensing my presence, those ice-blue eyes finding mine immediately.

A jolt of recognition passes between us, an awareness that transcends our brief acquaintance. Something electric and undeniable.

I back away, suddenly afraid—not of him, but of myself. Of how much I want to go to him, to feel his arms around me again, to lose myself in his dangerous world.

The consequences of one night stretch before me, endless and terrifying. I've given more than my body to Clark—I've given him power over me, a hold I'm not sure I want to break.

And the most frightening part is how much I'm already craving more.

six

Clark



*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I can't focus on a damn word Dex is saying. The diamonds from the heist are spread across the table—three million worth of sparkle that should have my full attention. But all I can think about is another kind of treasure, currently wandering my compound with that stubborn tilt to her chin. Emilia. Even her name in my mind sends a jolt of possession through me. I've had her body, claimed her in the most primal way, but it wasn't enough. One night was a fucking joke. I need more—need all of her. My fist clenches on the table, and Dex pauses mid-sentence, eyeing me warily. The crew thinks I'm losing it. Maybe I am. But I'm not letting her go, not when the mere thought of her walking away makes something violent rise in my chest.

"Boss?" Mick's gruff voice pulls me back to the moment. "Did you hear what I said?"

I straighten, forcing my attention to the business at hand. "Repeat it."

Mick exchanges a glance with Dex, both clearly noting my distraction. "I said our buyer's getting antsy. Wants to move up the exchange to tomorrow night."

"No." My response is immediate, instinctive. "The original plan stands. Three days from now."

"Why wait?" Dex asks, pushing his luck. "The longer we sit on these rocks, the more risk. Let's move them and be done."

What he's saying makes sense. It's what I would normally do—get the merchandise moved, collect payment, close the job. Clean, efficient, minimal risk. But the thought of dealing with the exchange tomorrow sends a spike of unease through me. Tomorrow means leaving the compound, leaving Emilia. Or bringing her along,

exposing her to more danger, more criminals. Neither option sits right.

"Three days," I repeat firmly. "The buyer can wait."

Mick leans forward, lowering his voice though we're alone in the office. "This about the girl?"

My eyes snap to his face, warning clear in my expression. "Careful."

But Mick's been with me longer than the others, has earned the right to speak his mind. "The crew's talking, Clark. Wondering why she's still here. Why you brought her in the first place."

"Let them wonder." I gather the diamonds, returning them to their velvet pouch. "My decisions aren't up for debate."

"Since when do we keep witnesses?" Dex persists, either braver or stupider than I gave him credit for. "That's never been our way."

My hands still on the pouch, something cold settling in my chest. "Are you questioning me, Dex?"

He swallows visibly but doesn't back down. "I'm questioning the risk. She's seen our faces, our operation. She knows where our compound is. If she talks?—"

"She won't." The certainty in my voice surprises even me.

"You can't know that," Mick says quietly.

"I do know that." I rise to my feet, reminding them both who's in charge here. "And even if I didn't, she's not going anywhere. Not until I'm certain she's not a threat."

"And when will that be?" Dex pushes.

Never. The answer rises unbidden in my mind, startling in its clarity. I'll never be ready to let her walk away. But I can't say that aloud, can't admit that what started as a strategic move has become something else entirely.

"When I say so," I answer instead. "Until then, she stays. Under my protection. Is that understood?"

Both men nod, though I can see the reservation in their eyes. They think I'm compromised. Maybe I am. But I'm still the leader of this MC, still the one who built this operation from nothing, still The Wolf. They'll follow my orders, even if they don't understand them.

"What about the Vipers?" Mick asks, changing the subject. "They've been sniffing around since the job. Probably heard about the score."

The Vipers—a rival MC with a grudge against us that goes back years. The mention of them sends a different kind of tension through me. If they know about the diamonds, if they're watching us...

"Double the security," I order. "No one gets within a mile of this place without us knowing."

"Already done," Mick confirms. "But if they're determined?—"

"They won't get past us." I cut him off, not wanting to consider the alternative. Not with Emilia here.

The meeting concludes, both men filing out with backward glances that speak volumes. I'm losing their confidence. All for a librarian with wide eyes and soft skin

who's crawled under my defenses like no one else ever has.

I should care more about that. The MC is everything I've built, my life's work, my family. But as I catch a glimpse of Emilia through the window, walking in the enclosed yard with a book in her hand, something shifts in my priorities.

I move to the window, watching her. She's removed her cardigan in the afternoon sun, exposing slim arms and the gentle curve of her neck. Her hair lifts slightly in the breeze, catching the light, turning from chestnut to gold at the edges. She reads as she walks, completely absorbed, occasionally lifting her head to glance at the fence line, calculating, measuring. Looking for escape.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

My jaw tightens. She won't find one. I've made sure of that.

I should be handling business—calling the buyer, checking our security, debriefing the crew about the heist. Instead, I'm standing here like a lovesick teenager, watching a woman read a fucking book.

But I can't look away from her. Can't stop remembering how she felt beneath me last night—tight, hot, perfect. The surprise in her eyes when pleasure overtook her, like she never imagined her body capable of such response. The way she said my name like a revelation, a prayer.

My hands are numb from gripping the windowsill, but I feel a warmth in my chest, an uncomfortable heat that I recognize as something dangerously close to tenderness. This isn't about sex anymore. If it were just physical, I could have had her and let her go, satisfied the curiosity and moved on. But one taste of Emilia West has left me hungry for more—not just her body, but her mind, her heart, her future.

It's fucking terrifying.

I've built my life around control—of my crew, of our territory, of my own emotions. Feelings are weaknesses, exploitable vulnerabilities that get men like me killed. I learned that lesson early and reinforced it with every betrayal, every knife in the back, every loss.

Yet here I am, watching a slip of a woman pace my compound, feeling things I have no business feeling.

A knock at the door interrupts my thoughts. Cruz enters without waiting for permission, his usual stoic expression replaced with tension.

"We've got incoming," he says without preamble. "Viper scouts, two miles out. Watching the compound."

My body goes cold, then hot with rage. "How many?"

"Just a couple now. But if they're scouting..."

"They're planning something." I finish his thought, mind racing through scenarios, none of them good. "Alert the crew. Full lockdown protocol."

Cruz nods, already turning to go, but pauses at the door. "What about her?" He jerks his chin toward the window, toward Emilia.

"She stays with me," I say immediately. "At all times."

"You sure that's smart, boss? If things go sideways?—"

"She. Stays. With. Me." Each word is clipped, final.

He leaves without further argument, and I return my gaze to the yard. Emilia has settled on a bench, face tilted toward the sun, book open in her lap. She looks peaceful, untouched by the danger that surrounds her. That's about to change.

I stride out of the office, making my way to the yard. She looks up as the door opens, her expression shifting from startled to wary as she sees me approaching. Something flickers in her eyes—fear? Anticipation? Both?

"Come inside," I order, harsher than intended.

She frowns, closing her book slowly. "I'm reading."

"Now, Emilia." I scan the perimeter, suddenly feeling exposed, though I know the Vipers aren't close enough yet to pose an immediate threat.

She must hear something in my voice because she stands without further argument, clutching the book to her chest like a shield. "What's wrong?"

"Inside." I take her arm, guiding her firmly toward the door. "We need to talk."

Once we're back inside the compound, I steer her toward my quarters, away from the main areas where the crew is already mobilizing for potential conflict. She allows herself to be led, though I can feel the tension in her body, the questions building.

"Clark," she says as I close the door to my bedroom behind us. "What's happening?"

I consider lying, consider sheltering her from the reality of the situation. But something about Emilia makes me want to be honest—something in those direct hazel eyes that seems to demand truth.

"There's a threat," I tell her, keeping it simple. "Another MC that doesn't like us much. They're watching the compound."

Fear flashes across her face, followed quickly by resolve. It's an impressive transition, one that makes something tighten in my chest.

"Are they coming here?" she asks, voice steady.

"Maybe." I move to the window, checking that the reinforced shutters are secure. "Probably."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"Because of the diamonds?"

I glance at her sharply. "What do you know about the diamonds?"

She gives me a look that makes me feel strangely chastised. "I was there, remember? I saw what you took from the jewelry store."

Right. Of course she did. It's why she's here in the first place, why I've turned my life upside down keeping her. I sometimes forget that part, too caught up in what's developed between us since.

"Yes," I confirm. "They want what we took."

She nods, processing this. "And if they come here...there will be violence?"

The clinical way she phrases it almost makes me smile. "That's usually how these things go."

"I see." She places her book carefully on the bedside table, then turns to face me fully. "What do you need me to do?"

The question takes me by surprise. I expected panic, protests, maybe tears. Not this calm acceptance, this offer of assistance.

"Stay here," I tell her. "Stay out of sight. If things go bad—" I cross to the closet, pulling out a small handgun from a hidden compartment. "You know how to use this?"



She stares at the weapon, throat working as she swallows. "No."

"Simple enough." I check that the safety is on, then approach her slowly, not wanting to frighten her more. "Safety here. Point and pull the trigger. Only as a last resort, understand? Only if someone other than me comes through that door."

Her hands shake slightly as she takes the gun, holding it awkwardly. "I don't think I could?—"

"You could," I interrupt, certain of it. "If it meant survival, you could."

She looks up at me, something vulnerable and trusting in her gaze that makes my chest ache. "Will it come to that?"

"No." I take her face between my hands, needing her to believe me. "I won't let it. No one will touch you, Emilia. No one but me."

The possessiveness in my voice should frighten her. Instead, I watch as her pupils dilate, her breath catching. She's responding to it—to the claim I'm staking, to the protection I'm offering.

"I should be trying to escape," she whispers, almost to herself. "I should be hoping your enemies break in and create a distraction so I can run."

"But you're not," I state, seeing the truth in her eyes.

"No." Her confession is barely audible. "I'm afraid for you. How twisted is that?"

I laugh softly, the sound rusty and unfamiliar. "About as twisted as me keeping you prisoner and then giving you a gun."

A small smile curves her lips, and the sight of it hits me like a physical blow. Even in this moment of danger, of uncertainty, she can smile. Because of me. For me.

I lean down, pressing my forehead to hers, breathing her in. "This isn't how I planned to spend our second night together."

"You planned a second night?" There's something in her voice—hope, maybe. Desire, certainly.

"I planned every night," I admit, the truth dragged from somewhere deep. "From the moment I saw you in that alley, something inside me knew. You were meant to be mine."

Her eyes widen, searching mine for deception, for manipulation. She won't find any. I've never been more honest about anything in my life.

"I need to go," I say reluctantly, pulling back. "The crew needs me out there. But I'll be back, and I need you to be exactly where I left you. Understand?"

She nods, still holding the gun awkwardly.

"Under the bed," I instruct. "If you hear fighting. And only use that if you have no choice."

"Be careful," she says, and the genuine concern in her voice wraps around my heart like a fist.

## Page 17

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

I kiss her then, hard and possessive, claiming her mouth with a desperation that surprises us both. She responds immediately, rising on tiptoes, free hand clutching my shirt, pulling me closer. When I break away, we're both breathing hard.

"I'll be back," I promise again. It's a vow, a declaration of intent. Nothing—not rival MCs, not diamonds, not my own crew's doubts—will keep me from returning to her.

I leave her there, standing in the middle of my bedroom with a gun in her hand and my taste on her lips. The image burns itself into my mind as I stride toward the main area where my crew awaits instructions.

I've kidnapped Emilia West. Taken her freedom, her choice, her innocence.

But now I've given her a gun. I must be cerifiably insane.

But somehow, in the process, she's captured something of me as well—something I didn't even know was available for the taking.

And as I prepare to defend what's mine, I realize that list now includes more than just my crew, my compound, and three million in diamonds.

It includes a librarian with hazel eyes who's surrendered to me in ways that run much deeper than the physical.

seven

Emilia

The gun weighs heavy in my hand long after Clark leaves. I place it carefully on the nightstand, then pace the confines of his bedroom, trapped energy buzzing through my limbs. Hours pass. The compound grows quieter as night falls, most of the crew positioned outside, watching for threats. I should be terrified, huddled under the bed with the gun Clark gave me. Instead, I'm standing at the window, peering through a crack in the shutters, seeing armed men moving like shadows across the yard. And all I can think is: this is my chance. The one opportunity I might have to escape while everyone's attention is focused outward. I'm not a prisoner, Clark said himself. I can move freely within the compound. And right now, the compound is barely guarded from the inside.

I shouldn't even be considering this. Clark told me to stay put, warned me of the danger. But the longer I remain here, the more entangled I become—in his world, in his bed, in feelings that make no sense but grow stronger by the hour.

I need to go home. Mom needs her medication managed properly. My sister can't handle it alone. The library will have questions about my extended absence. My small, ordinary life is slipping away with each moment I spend in this dangerous, intoxicating alternative reality.

And if I'm honest with myself, I need distance from Clark. From the way he makes me feel—desired, possessed, alive. From the way my body responds to his merest touch, the way my mind drifts to memories of him inside me, claiming me in ways I never imagined possible. I'm losing myself here. Becoming someone I don't recognize—someone who craves danger, who finds excitement in fear, who's drawn to a man capable of violence and control.

I gather my few possessions—the clothes I arrived in, now clean and folded, the book I was reading earlier. I leave Clark's gun on the nightstand. I won't need it. I don't want it.

The hallway outside his room is empty, dimly lit. I move silently, years of library work teaching me how to walk without making a sound. The main room is deserted—the crew all outside, watching for the rival gang. I can see them through the windows, positioned strategically around the perimeter.

My heart pounds so loudly I'm certain someone will hear it. But no one stops me as I make my way to a side door I discovered during my earlier exploration—an exit the guards likely aren't watching since their focus is on defending against external threats.

I pause with my hand on the door handle, unexpected doubts flooding me. What if Clark is right? What if the danger is real and I'm walking straight into it? What if my attempt at freedom puts me in worse jeopardy?

But I've been capable of taking care of myself for years. Before Clark, before this insanity, I navigated life just fine. I can do it again. I need to do it again, before whatever's happening between us becomes something I can't walk away from.

Decision made, I slip through the door into the cool night air. The compound is situated in what appears to be an industrial area, surrounded by similar warehouse-like buildings, most dark and apparently abandoned. The fence that surrounds the property is tall, topped with barbed wire, but I noticed earlier that the northeast corner has a gate for deliveries. If I can reach it undetected, I might be able to slip through.

I stick to the shadows, heart threatening to burst from my chest every time I hear a sound. The MC members are positioned facing outward, looking for approaching threats. Not for an escaping librarian creeping along the inside perimeter.

I reach the gate and find it padlocked. For a moment, despair threatens to overwhelm me—then I spot a gap beneath the fence where something has eroded the ground away. It's small, but so am I. If I lie flat, I might just squeeze through.

I drop to my stomach, pushing my bag ahead of me, and begin to wriggle beneath the fence. The rough ground scrapes my arms, my cardigan catching on the metal. For a terrifying moment, I think I'm stuck—but with one final push, I'm through, lying on the other side of the barrier that's kept me contained.

Free. I'm free.

The realization brings a rush of emotion—relief, triumph, and something else. Something that feels uncomfortably like loss. I glance back at the compound, at the room where I know Clark will eventually return, expecting to find me waiting. Will he be angry? Worried? Will he come looking for me?

The thought sends a complicated mix of fear and hope through me. Part of me wants him to find me, to sweep me back into his arms, to make me forget why I tried to leave in the first place. But the rational part knows this is my only chance—that if I don't go now, I might never leave.

I force myself to my feet and start walking, staying in the shadows, moving away from the compound as quickly and quietly as I can. The industrial area gradually gives way to a more commercial district—closed shops and empty parking lots. I have no idea where I am, but I keep moving, figuring any direction away from Clark is the right one.

I'll find a phone, call a taxi, make my way home. Back to normalcy. Back to safety.

But as I walk through the unfamiliar streets, the darkness feels oppressive rather than concealing. Every shadow might hide a threat, every sound makes me jump. I've traded the known danger of Clark's world for the unknown dangers of the night.

I quicken my pace, wishing I'd thought to check which way led to the main road, to civilization. The streets become narrower, the buildings more rundown. I'm heading

in the wrong direction, moving deeper into what appears to be an abandoned industrial zone.

## Page 18

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

A sound behind me—footsteps, multiple sets. My heart lurches painfully as I glance back. Three men are following, their pace matching mine, closing the distance with deliberate intent.

I walk faster, clutching my bag to my chest like a shield. The footsteps speed up too. No coincidence, then. They're following me.

"Hey, sweetheart," one calls. "You lost?"

I don't answer, don't look back, just walk faster still, approaching a jog.

"Rude to ignore us," another voice says, closer now. "We just wanna help."

The laughter that follows has nothing to do with help and everything to do with threat. I break into a run, fear lending speed to my legs. But I hear them running too, gaining on me easily.

A hand grabs my arm, yanking me backward with enough force that I nearly fall. I'm spun around, facing three men in leather jackets—similar to Clark's crew but with different insignia. A snake emblem. The Vipers. The rival gang Clark warned me about.

"Well, what do we have here?" The man holding my arm is older, with a beard and cold eyes. "A little mouse scurrying away from the Wolf's den."

They know. They know where I came from, who I'm connected to. Terror floods me, sharp and metallic in my mouth.



"I don't know what you're talking about," I try, voice shaking. "I'm just walking home. Please let me go."

The bearded man laughs, joined by his companions. "Sure you are, sweetheart. Just happened to be crawling under the Outlaw MC's fence at two in the morning."

They saw me escape. Were they watching the compound all this time?

"Look at her," says another, younger with a shaved head. "Pretty little thing. No wonder The Wolf's keeping her."

The third man circles behind me, and I feel trapped, cornered. "Bishop's got good taste, I'll give him that."

Bishop. Clark's last name. They know him personally, this rivalry isn't abstract—it's specific and focused.

"Please," I try again. "I'm nothing to them. I was being held against my will. I was escaping."

The bearded man's grip tightens painfully on my arm. "Even better. Bishop's plaything, running straight to us. Must be our lucky night."

"Should we take her back to base?" the bald one asks. "Jonas will want to question her about the diamonds."

"After we have some fun," the third suggests, his hand coming up to touch my hair. I jerk away, but there's nowhere to go, trapped between them.

"Clark will kill you," I say, the words tumbling out before I can stop them. "If you touch me, he'll hunt you down and tear you apart."

Something flickers in the bearded man's eyes—concern, maybe even fear. But it's quickly replaced with calculated cruelty. "Bishop's got a soft spot for you, huh? All the more reason to keep you around." His grip shifts to my throat, not squeezing but threatening. "Maybe we'll send him pieces of you, one at a time, until he gives us what we want."

My vision tunnels, terror overwhelming everything else. This is how I die—at the hands of monsters even worse than the one I was running from. Except Clark isn't a monster, not really. Not to me. He's dangerous, yes, possessive and controlling, but he never made me feel unsafe. Never threatened to hurt me.

The bearded man starts dragging me down the street, toward a van parked at the curb. I struggle, kicking, scratching, fighting with everything I have. But I'm no match for his strength, for the three of them together.

"Clark!" I scream, abandoning all pretense that I don't belong to the man I was fleeing. "CLARK!"

"Scream all you want, sweetheart," the bald one laughs. "Your wolf can't hear you."

But he's wrong. Because suddenly the night is split by the roar of an engine, impossibly loud, impossibly close. Headlights blind us as a motorcycle tears around the corner, bearing down on us with terrifying speed.

The bearded man shoves me aside, reaching for something in his jacket—a gun. But he's too slow. The motorcycle slides to a stop and the rider is off in one fluid motion, a blur of violence that slams into the bearded man with inhuman force.

It's Clark. Of course it's Clark. Even in the dim streetlight, I'd know him anywhere—the broad shoulders, the lethal grace, the controlled fury of his movements.

He takes down the bearded man with brutal efficiency, a sickening crack echoing as fist meets jaw. The bald one rushes him from behind, but Clark is ready, spinning and landing an elbow to the man's temple that drops him instantly.

The third attempts to run, but Clark is on him in seconds, dragging him back, throwing him against the wall of the nearest building with enough force to knock the breath from his lungs.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"You touched what's mine," Clark snarls, voice so cold, so different from any tone I've heard from him before. He punctuates his words with a punch that makes the man's head snap back against the brick. "You put your hands on her."

Another punch. Blood sprays from the man's nose.

"Clark," I call, voice shaking. "Clark, stop. Please."

He freezes at the sound of my voice, head turning slightly in my direction though his grip on the man doesn't loosen. "Emilia." My name sounds like it's being dragged over broken glass. "Are you hurt?"

"No," I whisper. "I'm okay."

He nods once, then turns back to his victim. "Tell Jonas that if he comes near what's mine again, there won't be enough left of him to bury." He slams the man's head against the wall one more time, then lets him crumple to the ground, unconscious or worse.

Then Clark is moving toward me, eyes wild, face spattered with blood that isn't his own. I should be terrified. Should be running from him as fast and far as I can. But all I feel is relief so profound it makes my knees buckle.

He catches me before I can fall, strong arms lifting me against his chest as if I weigh nothing. "I've got you," he murmurs, voice gentler now, though still edged with rage. "I've got you, sweetheart."

I cling to him, trembling, face pressed against his neck where I can feel his pulse racing. "How did you find me?"

"I will always find you," he says simply, carrying me to his motorcycle. "Always."

He sets me on the seat, then climbs on in front of me. "Hold onto me," he instructs. "Tight."

I wrap my arms around his waist, pressing myself against his back, drinking in his warmth, his solidity, his safety. The motorcycle roars to life beneath us, and then we're moving, speeding through the dark streets back toward the compound. Back toward captivity.

But it doesn't feel like captivity anymore. It feels like sanctuary. Like protection. Like where I belong.

Clark's body is rigid with tension beneath my hands, his anger still palpable in the set of his shoulders, the tight grip of his hands on the handlebars. He's furious with me, I know. For running. For putting myself in danger. For almost getting taken by his enemies.

But he came for me. Found me. Saved me.

And as the compound comes into view, as we pass through the gate I so recently escaped under, I realize a terrible, wonderful truth: I'm not running from Clark anymore.

I'm running to him.

eight

Clark

I kick the door to my room open, Emilia still cradled against my chest. My hands are steady, my movements controlled, but inside I'm nuclear—rage and terror and relief forming a volatile cocktail that threatens to detonate with every breath. I almost lost her. The thought pounds through me with each heartbeat. She almost got taken by the fucking Vipers. Every time I close my eyes, I see her surrounded, that bastard's hand on her throat, the fear in her eyes. I should have locked her in. Should have handcuffed her to the goddamn bed if that's what it took to keep her safe. I set her down on her feet, more carefully than I feel, and then I'm pacing, unable to look at her directly because if I do, I might shake her. Or kiss her. Or both.

"Clark," she says softly, hesitantly. Her voice trembles, but there's a strength beneath it that only feeds the storm inside me. Even now, even after what just happened, she's not broken.

"Don't." The word comes out harsher than I intend, slicing through the air between us. "Don't say anything yet."

I need to get myself under control. Need to rein in the feral part of me that wants to drag her back to bed, pin her beneath me, mark her so thoroughly that she'll never think of leaving again. The violence still sings in my blood from the fight, heightening everything, making it harder to think clearly.

"I told you to stay here." I finally turn to face her, hands clenched at my sides. "I fucking told you there was danger. That the Vipers were watching us."

She hugs herself, those slim arms wrapping around her body protectively. Her cardigan is torn at the shoulder, dirt streaking one sleeve from where she crawled under the fence. There's a redness on her neck that will bruise by morning—where that bastard grabbed her. The sight of it sends fresh rage through me.

"I'm sorry," she whispers.

"Sorry?" I laugh, the sound bitter even to my own ears. "You're sorry? Do you have any idea what they would have done to you? What they still might do if they get their hands on you again?"

She flinches, and something in me breaks at the sight. I close my eyes, drawing a deep breath, forcing the fury back down. This isn't her fault. She's a captive trying to escape. What did I expect?

"Why?" I ask, voice lower now, controlled. "Why run, Emilia? After everything?"

Her eyes meet mine, direct and clear despite her fear. "I have responsibilities. My mother, my sister. My job. My life." She pauses, swallowing hard. "And I needed...space. From this. From you. From how you make me feel."

## Page 20

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

The last part catches me off guard, hooks something deep in my chest. "How do I make you feel?"

She looks away, cheeks flushing. "Like I'm losing myself. Like I'm becoming someone I don't recognize." Her voice drops so low I have to strain to hear her. "Someone who craves things she shouldn't."

My body responds instantly to the admission, heat coiling low in my stomach. I move closer, drawn by some force I can't resist.

"What things, Emilia?" I ask, needing to hear her say it. "What do you crave?"

Her eyes lift to mine, vulnerability and defiance warring in their hazel depths. "You," she admits. "Even though I shouldn't. Even though it makes no sense. Even though you've taken my freedom." Her chin lifts slightly. "I ran because I'm afraid of how much I want to stay."

The confession hits me like a physical blow, rocking me back on my heels. In all my scenarios, my justifications for keeping her, I never considered that she might be fighting an attraction as powerful as my own. That she might want me as desperately as I want her.

"You could have been killed tonight," I say, closing the distance between us. "Or worse."

"I know." Her hands uncurl from around her body, hanging at her sides in a gesture of surrender that makes something primal in me stir. "But I wasn't. Because you found



me."

"I will always find you," I repeat my promise from earlier. My hand rises of its own accord, fingers tracing the redness on her neck. "But I'd rather not have to. I'd rather keep you safe right here. With me."

She doesn't pull away from my touch, instead leaning into it slightly. "For how long, Clark? Until you get bored? Until I'm no longer a novelty? Until the next heist, the next danger?"

The questions surprise me with their insight. She sees more clearly than I expected—the transient nature of my world, the risks that define my life. But she's wrong about one thing.

"You're not a novelty," I tell her, my thumb still stroking her neck. "You're a necessity."

The admission startles us both. I didn't plan to say it, didn't even know I felt it until the words were out. But they're true. In the span of mere days, this woman has become something I can't imagine being without. The thought of her gone—back to her small life, her responsibilities, her freedom—creates a hollow ache in my chest I've never experienced before.

Our eyes lock, and I see my own surprise reflected in hers. Then something else replaces it—heat, need, the same desperate hunger that's clawing at my insides.

"Clark," she whispers, my name a plea on her lips.

I break. All the control I've been clinging to shatters in an instant. My hands find her face, cradling it with a gentleness that belies the storm raging inside me. Our lips meet in a kiss that's anything but gentle—desperate, consuming, a clash of tongues

and teeth and shared breath. She responds immediately, arms wrapping around my neck, body pressing against mine as if she can't get close enough.

I lift her, her legs wrapping around my waist instinctively, and carry her to the bed. We fall together, a tangle of limbs and need. I tear at her clothes, needing to see her, all of her, to assure myself she's unharmed, that she's still mine. She helps, fingers fumbling with buttons and zippers, equally desperate.

When she's naked beneath me, I pause, drinking in the sight of her—pale skin flushed with desire, eyes heavy-lidded, lips swollen from my kisses. Mine. The word pulses through me with each heartbeat. Mine to protect. Mine to pleasure. Mine to keep.

"Never again," I growl, my hands roaming her body, checking for injuries, claiming every inch. "Never run from me again."

"I won't," she promises, arching into my touch. "I can't."

I believe her. In this moment, with desire coursing through us both, I believe her completely. My mouth follows the path of my hands, tasting her skin, marking her neck, her collarbone, the soft curve of her breast. She moans beneath me, fingers tangling in my hair, guiding me where she wants me.

The knowledge that she wants this—wants me—as badly as I want her is intoxicating. I take my time, despite the urgency pounding through my veins. I want her mindless with pleasure, want to drive every thought but me from her mind.

When I finally slide inside her, we both gasp at the sensation. She's tight, still new to this, but wet and ready for me. Our fingers brush as she reaches between us, and I feel a spark—like electricity jumping between our skin, jolting through my entire body. It's more than physical—this connection between us. More than lust or possession or control.

I set a punishing pace, unable to hold back, driven by the need to claim her completely. She meets me thrust for thrust, her inexperience compensated by enthusiasm, by a natural responsiveness that drives me wild. Her nails dig into my back, marking me as I've marked her.

"Mine," I growl against her neck, the word torn from somewhere primal inside me. "Say it."

"Yours," she gasps, the word breaking on a moan as I hit a spot that makes her arch beneath me. "I'm yours, Clark."

The admission sends me spiraling toward the edge. I reach between us, finding the bundle of nerves that will send her over with me. I need to feel her come apart, need the proof that I can give her pleasure even in the midst of this possessive claiming.

She shatters beautifully, my name a cry on her lips as her body tightens around mine. I follow her over, burying myself deep inside her, emptying myself with a groan that sounds like it's being ripped from my soul.

In the aftermath, we lie tangled together, sweat cooling on our skin, breath gradually slowing. I pull her close, unable to let go even now, some part of me still afraid she'll run if given the chance. She nestles against me, her head on my chest, fingers tracing patterns on my skin.

"I was so scared," she admits softly into the darkness. "When those men grabbed me. I thought..."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"Don't," I interrupt, not wanting her to relive it, not wanting to think about what could have happened if I'd been a minute later. "It's over. You're safe now."

"Because of you." She lifts her head, looking at me with those clear, honest eyes that see too much. "Why did you come after me? You could have let me go. I would have been out of your life, your problem solved."

The question makes me tense. Why did I go after her? The easy answer is possession—she's mine, I don't let go of what's mine. But it's more than that. The thought of her gone creates a physical pain I've never experienced before.

"I couldn't let you go," I admit, the honesty unfamiliar on my tongue. "Not like that. Not ever."

She studies my face in the dim light, as if searching for the truth behind my words. Whatever she sees seems to satisfy her, because she settles back against my chest with a small sigh.

"What happens now?" she asks.

Now. The future stretches before us, complicated and uncertain. The Vipers know about her, know she means something to me. The diamonds still need to be moved, the exchange completed. My crew still has doubts about my decisions, my leadership. And Emilia still has a life waiting for her—responsibilities, family, normalcy.

But all of that feels distant, secondary to the woman in my arms. To the unexpected peace I feel with her here, safe. To the realization that I'm falling for her in ways I

never thought possible.

"Now, you stay with me," I tell her, my arms tightening around her. "Where I can protect you. Where you belong."

"For how long?" she asks again, echoing her earlier question.

This time, I have a different answer.

"For as long as it takes," I say. "For as long as you need to understand that what's between us isn't temporary. That I'm not letting you go. That you're mine, Emilia, in every way that matters."

She's quiet for so long I think she might have fallen asleep. Then I feel her nod against my chest, a small movement of acceptance.

"Yours," she whispers, the word floating between us like a promise. Like truth.

I should feel triumphant. I've won—claimed her, convinced her to stay, broken through her resistance. But what I feel instead is responsibility, weighing heavy on my shoulders. She's trusting me with herself, with her safety, with her heart. No one has ever trusted me that way before.

And as I hold her, listening to her breathing even out as she drifts toward sleep, I make a silent vow. I will be worthy of that trust. I will keep her safe, not just from external threats, but from the darkness in my own life, in my own soul.

Because somewhere between kidnapping Emilia West and falling into bed with her, something fundamental has changed inside me. Something I never thought possible.

I'm falling for her. Hard. Completely. Irrevocably.

And I'll do whatever it takes to make her mine forever.

nine

Emilia

Morning light filtersthrough the curtains, painting stripes across Clark's sleeping face. I've been awake for nearly an hour, just watching him, memorizing the way his features soften in sleep, the steady rise and fall of his chest beneath my palm. Less than a week ago, I was shelving books and worrying about my mother's medication schedule. Now I'm lying naked in the bed of a biker gang leader, my body bearing the sweet ache of his possession, my heart tumbling into something that terrifies me with its intensity. I should feel trapped, should be plotting my next escape. Instead, I feel strangely free—as if I've been released from a cage I never knew I lived in.

I trace a finger lightly over the tattoo on his shoulder—the wolf that earned him his nickname. In sleep, he doesn't look like the dangerous criminal who beat three men unconscious to protect me. He looks almost peaceful, the hard lines of his face relaxed, vulnerability visible in ways he'd never allow while conscious.

What's happening to me? How has my moral compass shifted so dramatically that I'm captivated by a man who kidnapped me, who deals in violence and theft? A man who controls me, possesses me, refuses to let me go?

Except that's not the whole truth, is it? Because when I ran, he followed—not to punish me, but to protect me. When he found me in the clutches of his enemies, he fought for me with a ferocity that should frighten me but instead makes me feel precious, valued. When he brought me back, his anger was born of fear for my safety, not rage at my disobedience.

And in the darkness, when we came together in desperate need, he held me like I

might break, like I was something rare and irreplaceable. His possession is absolute, yes—but so is his protection. His devotion.

Clark stirs beneath my touch, ice-blue eyes opening to find me watching him. For a moment, he simply looks at me, something warm and wondering in his gaze.

"You're still here," he says, voice rough with sleep.

I smile slightly. "Where else would I be?"

His hand comes up to cover mine where it rests on his chest. "After last night, I half expected to wake up and find you gone again."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"No more running," I promise softly. "I meant what I said."

He studies my face, searching for deception, for uncertainty. Finding none, he pulls me down for a kiss that starts gentle but quickly turns hungry. When he finally lets me up for air, we're both breathing hard.

"I have to check in with the crew," he says reluctantly. "After last night's excitement with the Vipers, we need to tighten security."

I nod, trying not to show my disappointment. I'd happily spend the day in this bed, learning more about his body, about the pleasure he can give and take.

"You're free to move around the compound," he tells me, sitting up and pulling on his jeans. "But don't go outside. Not alone. Not after yesterday." He pauses, looking at me seriously. "I'm trusting you, Emilia. Don't make me regret it."

"I won't," I say, meaning it. After my terrifying encounter with the Vipers, I have no desire to leave the safety of Clark's protection.

He dresses quickly, efficiently, transforming before my eyes from the man who held me so tenderly to the leader who commands respect and fear. Only the lingering heat in his gaze when he looks at me betrays the connection between the two personas.

"I'll find you later," he promises, and the words send a delicious shiver through me.

After he leaves, I dress in clothes he's provided—jeans that fit better than my own, a soft t-shirt, a cardigan in deep blue that brings out the gold in my hazel eyes. I brush



my hair, noting the marks on my neck from his mouth, evidence of his possession that I should find objectionable but instead find thrilling.

I leave his room—our room?—and make my way to the kitchen. Two of Clark's men are there, Dex and the one called Cruz. They fall silent when I enter, eyeing me with a mixture of curiosity and wariness.

"Morning," I say, forcing myself to sound casual as I head for the coffee pot.

They exchange glances. "Morning," Cruz finally responds. "Sleep well?"

There's an undercurrent to the question, a knowing that makes my cheeks heat. They must have heard us last night, must know exactly what happened after Clark brought me back.

"Yes, thank you," I reply, focusing on pouring coffee rather than meeting their eyes.

"Boss said you're to be given whatever you need," Dex tells me, his tone carefully neutral. "And that you're free to go anywhere inside."

I nod, surprised by how different their treatment feels today. Not hostile, not even particularly unfriendly. Just cautious, as if they're adjusting to my new status in their world.

"Thank you," I say again, then, gathering my courage: "Is there anything I can do to help? Around here, I mean. I'm not used to just...sitting around."

Another exchanged glance. "Boss didn't say anything about you working," Cruz says.

"I know. I'd just like to be useful." I take a sip of coffee, gathering my thoughts. "I organized books for a living. I'm good at creating order, at cataloging things."

Dex snorts. "You offering to organize our weapons cache, librarian?"

I smile despite myself. "I was thinking more along the lines of the club's records. I noticed the office is a bit...chaotic."

"That's one word for it," Cruz mutters, then shrugs. "Talk to the boss. If he's okay with it, we're not going to stop you."

Their acceptance—grudging though it may be—feels like a victory. I'm no longer just a prisoner to be guarded. I'm someone connected to their leader, someone with a place, however tentative, in their world.

I spend the morning exploring parts of the compound I haven't seen before—the garage filled with motorcycles in various states of repair, a small gym where a couple of members are working out, the surprisingly well-stocked library I discovered yesterday. I borrow a book and settle in one of the leather chairs, but find myself reading the same paragraph over and over, unable to focus.

My mind keeps drifting to Clark. To his hands on my body, his mouth on mine, the way he filled me so completely I felt remade. To the possessive growl of "mine" that should offend my independent spirit but instead makes something hot and needy curl in my stomach. To the tenderness that followed the passion, the way he held me as I fell asleep, as if afraid I might disappear.

I've never felt like this before—consumed, possessed, desired. The boys I dated in high school were fumbling and unsure, their interest in me superficial at best. Clark's desire runs deeper, darker, more absolute. He doesn't just want my body; he wants all of me. My submission. My trust. My heart.

And I'm giving it to him, piece by piece. Despite every rational argument against it. Despite the life waiting for me outside these walls—a life of responsibility and

routine, of caring for my family, of quiet days among my beloved books.

I miss my mother. Miss my sister. Worry about how they're managing without me. But the thought of leaving Clark, of returning to the person I was before him, creates an ache in my chest I can't ignore. I've changed, been changed by his touch, his possession, his protection. The librarian who witnessed a heist less than a week ago feels like a stranger now—a girl who never knew passion, who accepted limitation as safety, who built her identity around responsibility rather than desire.

"Deep thoughts?"

I startle, looking up to find Clark leaning against the doorframe, watching me with that intense focus that makes me feel like the only person in the world.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:02 am*

"Just thinking about who I was. Who I'm becoming." I set the book aside, uncurling from the chair. "Wondering if they're compatible."

He crosses the room, pulling me to my feet and into his arms with easy strength. "And? What's the verdict?"

I look up at him, at the face that's become so dear to me in so short a time. "I don't know yet. But I'm not afraid to find out."

Something softens in his expression, his hand coming up to cup my cheek. "Brave little librarian."

The tenderness in his voice undoes me. I rise on tiptoes, pressing my lips to his in a kiss that starts gentle but quickly deepens, his arms tightening around me, my body melting against his.

"Here?" he murmurs against my mouth. "Or our bed?"

Our bed. The casual claim sends a thrill through me. "Bed," I whisper, not ready to be so exposed in the common areas of the compound.

He lifts me easily, my legs wrapping around his waist as he carries me through the halls to our room. The journey is punctuated by stops against walls, doors, his mouth never leaving mine for long, his hands exploring, claiming.

By the time we reach the bed, we're both breathing hard, clothes disheveled, eyes dark with need. He lays me down gently, coming over me like a shadow, like

protection, like home.

"I can't get enough of you," he confesses, voice rough with desire. "One taste and I'm addicted."

"Then don't stop tasting," I reply, bolder than I've ever been, pulling him down to me.

We come together with a hunger that should frighten me but instead feels like the most natural thing in the world. His hands know my body now, know exactly how to touch me to make me gasp, to make me arch beneath him. And I'm learning his—the spots that make his breath catch, the pressure he likes, the pace that drives him wild.

When he finally enters me, it's like coming home—a completeness I never knew I was missing until I found it in his arms. We move together, finding a rhythm that builds and builds, his eyes never leaving mine, connection deeper than physical.

"Say it," he demands, voice strained as we near the edge together. "Tell me who you belong to."

"You," I gasp, the truth tearing from somewhere deep inside me. "I belong to you, Clark. Only you."

My surrender is absolute—body, heart, soul. And as we shatter together, as pleasure washes over us in waves, I know I've crossed a line I can never uncross. I'm his now, irrevocably. Marked by him, claimed by him, changed by him.

Afterward, he holds me close, his heartbeat steady beneath my ear, his fingers tracing patterns on my skin. "I meant what I said, you know," he murmurs into my hair. "You're not temporary. This isn't just about the diamonds, or the heist, or keeping you quiet."

I lift my head to look at him, searching his face for truth. "What is it about, then?"

Something vulnerable flashes in his eyes, there and gone so quickly I almost miss it. "It's about you," he says simply. "About us. About the fact that from the moment I saw you in that alley, I knew you were meant to be mine."

"I thought I'd be afraid of that," I admit. "Of belonging to someone so completely. Of giving up my freedom."

His hand slides into my hair, cradling my head. "And are you? Afraid?"

I consider the question seriously, turning it over in my mind, examining it from all angles. "No," I finally answer, the truth surprising even me. "I'm not afraid of belonging to you. I'm afraid of how right it feels. How quickly everything I thought I knew about myself has changed."

He smiles—a real smile that transforms his face, making him look younger, less burdened. "Good," he says, pulling me closer. "Because I'm not letting you go, Emilia West. Not now. Not ever."

And as I settle against him, as his arms tighten around me in protective possession, I realize I'm under his spell completely. The librarian is gone, replaced by a woman who craves danger, who finds freedom in surrender, who belongs heart and soul to a man who lives outside the law.

A woman who wouldn't have it any other way.

ten

Clark

I lean against the doorframe, watching Emilia move around the kitchen with easy confidence, preparing dinner with Cruz and Dex like she's been here for years instead of days. She wears a simple sundress I had one of the boys pick up for her—something casual enough for the compound but that shows off the delicate curves I can't get enough of. Her hair is pulled back in a loose knot, exposing her neck where my marks are beginning to fade. I'll have to remedy that tonight. The thought sends heat through me, but it's accompanied by something else—a possessive pride that's become familiar whenever I look at her. She's adapting to this world, to my life, finding her place among my crew with a grace that continually surprises me. And they're responding to her—the wariness giving way to grudging respect, then to genuine liking. Even Mick, suspicious by nature, has softened toward her. They see what I see—that she's something special, something rare.

She laughs at something Dex says, the sound bright and unexpected in our typically somber compound. My chest tightens at the sound. When was the last time anyone laughed in this place? When was the last time I wanted them to?

"Never thought I'd see The Wolf looking so domesticated," Mick says quietly, appearing beside me with his typical stealth.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:03 am*

I shoot him a warning glance, but there's no real heat behind it. He's earned the right to speak his mind. "Careful."

He shrugs, unintimidated. "Just an observation. She's good for you, Clark. Crew's noticed."

I turn my attention back to Emilia, watching as she tastes something from a spoon, nodding in approval. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Means you're less of a miserable bastard since she's been here." He says it casually, but I hear the underlying seriousness. "More focused. More balanced."

I don't bother denying it. Mick knows me too well. "She's special."

"No shit." He leans against the wall beside me. "So what's the plan? Now that the diamonds are moved and the heat's died down."

The diamond exchange went through smoothly last night—three million in stones transferred to our buyer, cash now safely distributed among the crew with the club taking its substantial cut. The official justification for keeping Emilia—ensuring her silence about the heist—no longer applies.

"What makes you think there's a change of plans?" I ask, eyes still fixed on her as she reaches past Cruz for something, comfortable in her movements, in her place here.

"Because you're not an idiot," Mick replies bluntly. "She has a life out there. Family. Job. People who'll eventually come looking harder than a couple of texts can explain



away."

He's right, of course. We've managed to keep her disappearance below law enforcement radar through carefully worded messages to her family, but that won't work forever. Eventually, someone will report her missing. Eventually, questions will be asked.

"I'm keeping her," I say simply.

Mick sighs. "Figured as much. You gonna give her a choice this time?"

The question hits harder than he probably intended. Have I given Emilia choices? I took her freedom, her virginity, her autonomy. I've kept her prisoner, threatened her, manipulated her. But I've also protected her, pleased her, shown her parts of herself she never knew existed.

"She's already chosen," I say, thinking of her surrender in my arms, her whispered confession of belonging to me.

"If you say so." Mick pushes off from the wall. "Just remember—a caged bird might sing pretty, but it's never really yours."

He walks away, leaving me with thoughts I'd rather not examine too closely. Is that what I've done? Caged Emilia? Forced her to adapt, to survive, to please me because she has no alternative?

She chooses that moment to look up, her eyes finding mine across the room as if she sensed my scrutiny. Her face brightens, a smile curving her lips that's meant only for me. Something shifts in my chest—a warmth that spreads outward, both comfortable and terrifying in its intensity.

This isn't just possession anymore. It's not just obsession or lust or the thrill of claiming someone so pure. This is something I've spent my life avoiding, something I never thought I'd feel, something I'm not sure I deserve.

I'm falling in love with her.

The realization stops me cold. Love isn't part of my world, has never been part of my calculations. Love is vulnerability. Love is weakness. Love is giving someone the power to destroy you.

Yet here I am, watching a librarian chop vegetables in my kitchen, feeling like she's got her hand wrapped around my heart.

I push off from the doorframe, decision made. She glances up again as I approach, that smile widening, her eyes warming in a way that makes my blood heat.

"Need something?" she asks, her voice soft, intimate despite our audience.

"You," I reply, taking her hand. "Now."

Cruz and Dex exchange knowing looks but say nothing as I lead Emilia from the kitchen. She comes willingly, fingers laced with mine, a slight flush coloring her cheeks.

"What about dinner?" she asks as we move through the hallway toward our room.

"It can wait." I open the door, pulling her inside, shutting the world out. Then I just look at her, really look at her—the woman who's turned my life upside down in less than a week.

She tilts her head, confusion crossing her features. "Clark? Is everything okay?"

No. Nothing's okay. Everything's changed. I've changed, in ways I never thought possible.

"The diamonds are gone," I tell her, watching her face closely. "The job's done. The reason I gave for keeping you here no longer exists."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:03 am*

Her expression shifts, fear flashing in those hazel eyes, then something deeper. "Are you... are you letting me go?"

The thought makes something violent rise in my chest, but I push it down. This isn't about what I want. Not entirely.

"That depends," I say, keeping my voice even despite the storm raging inside me. "On what you want."

Her eyes widen, genuine surprise replacing fear. "What I want? Since when does that matter?"

The words sting, but I deserve them. "Since now. Since I realized I can't keep you in a cage."

"A cage?" She looks around our room, at the bed where we've spent nights tangled together, at the books I've had brought in for her, at the clothes I've given her. "Is that what you think this is?"

I step closer, needing to touch her but holding back. "Isn't it? You didn't choose to come here, Emilia. You didn't choose me. I took your choices away."

She studies my face, something shifting in her expression. "At first, yes. But what about after? What about when I ran and came back? What about every night since then?"

"Stockholm syndrome," I say, the words bitter on my tongue. "Adapting to survive."

She laughs, the sound startling in its genuineness. "Is that what you think? That I'm with you because I'm traumatized? Because I have no choice?"

I don't answer, because the truth is, I don't know. Can't know. All I know is that the thought of her staying out of fear rather than desire creates an ache I can't bear.

She moves closer, closing the distance between us, reaching up to touch my face. I stand perfectly still, letting her explore with gentle fingers.

"For someone so dangerous, so feared," she says softly, "you can be remarkably stupid."

Before I can process that, she rises on tiptoes and presses her lips to mine. The kiss is different from our others—not desperate or hungry or dominated by me. It's gentle, tender, her leading while I follow.

When she pulls back, her eyes are clear, direct. "I could have left that night, after the Vipers. You were distracted with the fallout, with securing the compound. But I didn't. I chose to stay then, and I choose to stay now."

"Why?" The question escapes before I can stop it, vulnerability I never show on display.

Her smile is soft, knowing. "Because despite everything—how we met, how this started—I've found something with you I never thought I'd have. Something I'm not willing to give up."

"And what's that?" I ask, needing to hear it.

"Freedom," she says, surprising me again. "Real freedom. Not the kind that comes from being able to walk down any street I want, but the kind that comes from being

truly seen. From not having to hide who I am, what I want." Her hand slides to my chest, resting over my heart. "From being with someone who wants all of me, not just the parts that are easy or convenient."

My arms finally move, wrapping around her, pulling her against me. "I do want all of you. Every part. Always."

She looks up at me, something knowing in her gaze. "I know. That's why I'm staying. Because I want all of you too, Clark. The dangerous parts, the controlling parts, the parts that scare other people. I want them because they're you, and you're what I want."

The warmth in my chest expands, threatening to consume me. I've spent my life taking what I want without asking, without apology. But what I want most now—what I need—is something I can't take. It has to be given.

"I need you to be sure," I say, voice rougher than intended. "Because if you stay, if you choose this—choose me—I won't let you go. Not ever. You need to understand that."

"I understand exactly who you are," she says, and there's no fear in her voice, only certainty. "I've seen you beat men unconscious to protect me. I've felt how possessive you are, how controlling. I know you'll never be easy or simple or safe." She presses closer, her body warm against mine. "And I choose you anyway."

Something breaks open inside me—a dam holding back emotions I've denied my entire life. I crush her to me, my mouth finding hers in a kiss that's both claiming and surrender. She responds instantly, arms twining around my neck, body arching into mine.

I lift her, carrying her to our bed, laying her down with more care than I've ever

shown anyone. She reaches for me, eager and willing, but I hold back, needing this time to be different.

"Let me look at you," I murmur, hovering above her. "Let me see what's mine."

She flushes but doesn't shy away, letting my gaze travel over her. I reach for the thin straps of her sundress, sliding them down her shoulders with deliberate slowness. The fabric pools at her waist, revealing her to my hungry eyes.

"Beautiful," I breathe, meaning it more than she can know. "Perfect."

I take my time undressing her completely, savoring each new expanse of skin revealed, treating her body with the reverence it deserves. When she's naked beneath me, I step back, removing my own clothes while she watches with dark, desire-filled eyes.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:03 am*

This time, when I come to her, it's different. Slower, deeper, more honest than I've ever been with anyone. I worship her body with hands and mouth, drawing sounds from her that feed something primal in me. But it's not just possession driving me now—it's the need to give her pleasure, to show her with my body what I'm not sure I can say with words.

When I finally enter her, when her body welcomes me home, I keep my eyes locked on hers, letting her see everything I usually hide. The vulnerability. The need. The love I'm only beginning to understand.

"Mine," I growl against her neck, the word a promise now, not just a claim. "Tell me you're mine, Emilia. Not because I've taken you, but because you've chosen to be."

"Yours," she gasps, arms tightening around me, nails digging into my back as I drive deeper. "I'm yours, Clark. By choice. Always."

The admission pushes me closer to the edge, but I hold back, determined to bring her there first. I slide a hand between us, finding the spot that makes her arch and cry out. Her pleasure is my priority, her surrender all the more precious because it's freely given.

When she comes apart beneath me, my name a cry on her lips, I finally let go, emptying myself inside her with a groan that comes from somewhere deep in my soul. The pleasure is intense, but it's the emotional release that nearly undoes me—the feeling of barriers breaking, of letting someone in after a lifetime of keeping the world at arm's length.



Afterward, I hold her close, her head on my chest, her breath warm against my skin. I stroke her hair, marveling at how something so simple can feel so right.

"I meant what I said," I tell her, needing her to understand. "If you stay, it's forever. There's no walking away, no changing your mind. I won't let you go, Emilia. Not now, not ever."

She lifts her head, looking at me with those clear, honest eyes that see too much. "Good," she says simply. "Because I don't want to be let go."

I pull her closer, something fierce and protective surging through me. "I'll take care of you," I promise. "Your mother, your sister—I'll make sure they're provided for. You can see them when it's safe. I'll give you anything you want, everything you need."

She smiles, pressing a kiss to my chest, right over my heart. "I just need you," she says. "The rest we'll figure out together."

Together. The word settles into my bones, into the spaces that have been empty for too long. I've built my life around power, around control, around taking what I want and destroying anyone who stands in my way. I've never needed anyone, never wanted the complication, the vulnerability.

But I need her. Want her. Not just in my bed, but in my life. By my side.

"Yes," I agree, holding her tighter. "Together."

It's a vow, a promise, a new beginning. The Wolf has finally found his mate, and nothing—not rival gangs, not the law, not the darkness of my own past—will take her from me.

Emilia West is mine. Forever.

## epilogue

Two years later

Emilia

I run my fingers along the spines of my newest acquisitions, leather-bound first editions Clark surprised me with last week, still unable to believe this is my life now. Two years ago, I was shelving discount paperbacks at the local library, wearing cardigans two sizes too big and keeping my head down. Now I preside over a private collection that would make any university librarian weep with envy, all housed in the custom library Clark built for me in our sprawling home. The irony isn't lost on me—that being kidnapped by a dangerous man has given me more freedom than I ever had before.

He takes me to visit my mom and sister, and they both love him, so I didn't have to abandon my family to be with him. And he helps them financially. They're better off than they've ever been. He makes sure my mom gets the best care possible.

Yes, my husband is amazing.

Sunlight streams through the tall windows, warming the polished hardwood floors where I pad barefoot between the shelves. This room is my sanctuary, my kingdom—though everything here, including me, belongs to Clark. He made that clear from the beginning. What's mine is mine, and you're mine, so everything is yours. His particular brand of logic, delivered with that slight curve of his lips that still makes my heart skip.

I pause at the window, looking out over the grounds of our estate. Another surprise—that Clark's business dealings were lucrative enough to provide this level of luxury. The compound is still operational, still the headquarters of the Outlaw MC,

but we live separately now, in this secluded mansion nestled against the mountains. Close enough for Clark to maintain control, far enough to give us privacy. Protected. Isolated. Perfect.

My fingers drift to the delicate gold chain around my neck—not the childhood book pendant I wore when we met, but something new. A wolf, cast in gold, with tiny diamond eyes. His mark, his claim, always against my skin. I never take it off.

I hear the distinctive rumble of his motorcycle before I see him, the sound triggering an instant reaction—my pulse quickening, warmth pooling low in my belly. Two years, and my body still responds to him like it's the first time. I move toward the front of the house, anticipation building with each step.

The door opens before I reach it, and there he is—my captor, my protector, my lover. My everything. Clark fills the doorway, larger than life in his leather jacket, dark hair slightly windblown, those ice-blue eyes finding me immediately. The coldness that used to make me shiver is gone, replaced by a heat that's only for me.

"There she is," he says, voice a low rumble that vibrates through me. "My beautiful girl."

I go to him without hesitation, without thought—like a magnet drawn to its opposite pole. His arms wrap around me, lifting me off my feet, his mouth claiming mine with a hunger that hasn't diminished with time or familiarity.

I melt against him, opening for him, surrendering as I always do. His kiss is possessive, devouring, a reminder that no matter how gentle he can be, there's always danger beneath the surface. It's that danger, that edge, that still thrills me after all this time.

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:03 am*

When he finally sets me down, I'm breathless, dizzy with want. "I missed you," I murmur against his jaw, nuzzling the slight stubble there.

"Three hours," he says, amusement coloring his voice. "I was gone three hours."

"Too long," I reply, not caring how needy I sound. We've moved beyond pretense, beyond games. I need him like air, like water, like the books that surround us. And he needs me just as desperately.

He brushes my hair back from my face, his touch gentler than most would believe possible for hands that have dealt so much violence. "Insatiable," he says, but the pride in his voice is unmistakable. He loves that I want him, that I crave him. That I'm his in every way.

"You made me this way," I remind him, pressing closer, feeling the hard length of him against my stomach. "Corrupted me completely."

His laugh is low, warm, secret. "Best thing I ever did."

He leads me further into the house, toward our bedroom, but pauses in the living room. "I brought you something."

My heart lifts. Another book. Clark's gifts are legendary among the crew—rare volumes hunted down and acquired by whatever means necessary, legal or otherwise. He enjoys spoiling me this way, takes pleasure in my excitement over first editions and signed copies.

But instead of a book, he presents me with a small velvet box. My breath catches. Clark has given me jewelry before—the wolf pendant, diamond earrings, a bracelet that cost more than my mother's house—but there's something different in his expression now. Something I've never seen before.

"Open it," he urges, an unusual note of uncertainty in his voice.

Inside is a ring—a stunning emerald surrounded by diamonds, set in platinum. It's breathtaking, but confusing. We're already together in every way that matters. We live as husband and wife, though without the legal documentation that would put me on the radar of authorities still looking for the missing librarian from two years ago.

"It's beautiful," I say, looking up at him questioningly. "But why?—"

"I want more," he interrupts, taking the ring and sliding it onto my finger. It fits perfectly, of course. Clark leaves nothing to chance. "I want everything, Emilia."

There's an intensity to him today, a focused purpose that makes me shiver. "You already have everything," I remind him. "You have me."

"Not everything." His hands frame my face, those blue eyes burning into mine. "I want to see you with our child in your arms. I want to see you round with my baby, growing inside you. I want that, Emilia. I want that with you."

The words send a shock through me, a thrill I wasn't expecting. We've never discussed children, never talked about a family beyond the two of us. But the image his words create—me, pregnant with Clark's child—ignites something primal inside me. Something that recognizes the rightness of it.

"A baby?" I whisper, my hand drifting unconsciously to my flat stomach.

He nods, watching me closely, gauging my reaction. "I've been trying," he admits, a hint of frustration in his voice. "For months now."

Understanding dawns. The increased frequency of our lovemaking—even more intense than before. The way he's been finishing inside me every time, grip tightening as he comes, as if he could will his seed to take root. His hovering attention to my health, my diet, my cycle.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I ask, not angry, just curious.

A ghost of a smile touches his lips. "I wanted to surprise you. Thought I'd just get you pregnant and present you with the fact." He shrugs, a gesture so unlike his usual confidence. "But it's not happening, and I realized—maybe you need to want it too. Maybe we both need to be trying."

The vulnerability in his admission touches me deeply. Clark Bishop, the Wolf, feared leader of the Outlaw MC, is standing before me with uncertainty in his eyes, asking if I want to bear his child.

"Yes," I say without hesitation, the desire crystallizing within me as soon as I acknowledge it. "Yes, I want that. I want your baby."

The relief and joy that crosses his face is beautiful to behold. He lifts me again, spinning me in a circle that makes me laugh with delight. When he sets me down, his expression has changed—hunger replacing relief, determination replacing uncertainty.

"Then let's not waste any more time," he growls, lifting me into his arms and carrying me to our bedroom.

He lays me on our bed—a massive four-poster where we've spent countless hours

exploring each other's bodies, learning each other's desires. Where I've surrendered to him over and over, finding freedom in my submission, in his possession.

His hands are gentle but urgent as he undresses me, his eyes tracking each inch of skin revealed with possessive heat. "So beautiful," he murmurs, reverence in his voice. "And all mine."

"All yours," I agree, helping him remove his own clothes, eager to feel his skin against mine. "Always yours, Clark."

When we're both naked, he doesn't immediately cover me as he usually would. Instead, he kneels between my legs, hands caressing my stomach, my hips, my breasts.

"You'll look so beautiful," he says, voice thick with emotion. "Swollen with my child. Everyone will know just by looking at you—that you belong to me, that I've claimed you in the most fundamental way."

*Source Creation Date: May 20, 2025, 8:03 am*

His possessiveness still thrills me, still makes heat pool between my thighs. I reach for him, needing him closer, needing him inside me. "Show me," I whisper. "Show me how much you want it."

Something flashes in his eyes—that dangerous edge that never fully disappears, that hint of the predator that lurks beneath his control. "I'll give you everything," he promises, lowering himself over me. "Everything I am, everything I have. It's all yours, Emilia. Just like you're mine."

When he enters me, it feels different somehow—more meaningful, more purposeful. We're not just seeking pleasure now. We're creating something together, something that will bind us even more permanently than the past two years have done.

Clark moves with deliberate thoroughness, hitting places inside me that make me gasp and arch against him. His eyes never leave mine, connection deeper than physical, his hands holding me exactly where he wants me.

"Say it," he demands, voice strained as he drives deeper. "Tell me what you want."

"You," I gasp, the word breaking as he hits a spot that sends sparks shooting through me. "Your baby. Our family. Everything, Clark. I want everything with you."

My admission drives him wild, his control slipping as his thrusts become harder, more desperate. "You'll have it," he promises, one hand sliding between us to circle the bundle of nerves that will send me over the edge. "All of it. I'll give you the world, Emilia. I'll fill this house with books. I'll fill you with my children. Whatever you want, it's yours."



The dual assault—his words and his touch—pushes me toward climax. My nails dig into his back, marking him as he's marked me so many times. "Just you," I manage, feeling the pressure building, the pleasure spiraling higher. "I just want you."

"You have me," he growls, his rhythm faltering as he nears his own release. "Forever. Now come for me, beautiful. Let me feel you."

I shatter at his command, pleasure washing over me in waves that leave me gasping, clinging to him like he's my only anchor in a storm. He follows me over, burying himself deep inside me with a groan that sounds like it's torn from his soul, his release hot and powerful.

Afterward, he doesn't immediately withdraw as he sometimes does. Instead, he stays inside me, rolling us so I'm draped across his chest, our bodies still joined. His hands stroke my back, my hair, touch reverent and possessive all at once.

"I never thought I'd have this," he admits quietly, the confession unusual for him. "Never thought I'd want it. A home. A family. You."

I lift my head, studying the face I've come to love so deeply. The hardness is still there, the danger, the control. But there's softness too, in the way he looks at me, in the gentle stroke of his fingers against my skin.

"Are you happy?" I ask, suddenly needing to know. "With this life? With me?"

His eyes darken, his grip tightening slightly. "Happy doesn't begin to cover it, Emilia. What I feel for you—" He stops, searching for words, an unusual struggle for someone usually so decisive. "It's everything. You're everything."

I smile, settling back against his chest, listening to the steady beat of his heart beneath my ear. "Good. Because you're stuck with me now. Forever."

I feel his chuckle rumble through his chest. "That was always the plan, little librarian. From the moment I saw you in that alley, you were mine. You just didn't know it yet."

He's right. From that first terrifying encounter, through the fear and confusion, the desire and surrender, to this moment of perfect contentment—I've been his. And he's been mine, though it took both of us time to realize it.

Our beginning was unconventional, dangerous, maybe even wrong by normal standards. But what we've built from it—this life, this love, this future—feels more right than anything I've ever known.

As Clark's arms tighten around me, as his breathing evens out into sleep, I find myself hoping his wish comes true. That I'm already carrying his child, that our family is already beginning. That the love we've found in the most unlikely circumstances will multiply, expand, grow into something even more beautiful than what we already share.

Because with Clark, I've found my forever. And the future we'll build together will be nothing short of explosive.

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