

HWY 550

Rock Point #3

Excerpt

“Arrow’s Edge? What am I doing there?” I ask, even though I can guess the answer. First time I was up there I was investigating a weapon as well. They run a decent outdoor shooting range, there aren’t that many around.

“That’s where you’ll find Mark Strongbow.”

“How can you be so sure he’s there?”

“Pretty positive they know him up there, just ask at the gate.”

Can’t say I particularly look forward to heading into the gated compound again and running the risk of bumping into the club’s fearless leader. I just did that two nights ago at the gym.

The man gets under my damn skin every time I run into him. Misogynistic pig. Looks at me like I’m some alien specimen under a microscope. I’m likely an anomaly in his world, being a strong, capable woman. Felt damn good though to teach that young punk a lesson in the ring. The kid’s attitude is even worse than his boss’s. Foulmouthed little miscreant.

“Barnes!” I call out, as I walk to the door. “You’re coming with.”

I hear the scrape of his desk chair on the floor, and next thing I know the heavy fall of his boots is right behind me on the stairs. The guy’s like a coiled spring, ready to jump into action.

“Where to?” he asks when we get to the bureau-issued Expedition. He tries to round the SUV to the driver’s side, but I just throw him a dirty look. I was the rookie in the office for the longest time until Dylan joined, it’s my time to reap some seniority perks. He doesn’t argue and gets into the passenger seat.

“Name came up on the weapon left at the scene of that last robbery in Silverton. According to Damian, we can find the guy at the Arrow’s Edge compound.”

“Sweet.”

I glance sideways at him as I drive off the parking lot. Not an expression I would’ve expected from the mostly quiet man. Guess it’s inevitable, MCs seem to have that effect on men of any age. It’s a fantasy: bikes, brotherhood, the lure of the open road, freedom. Although if I’m honest, I have to admit the lifestyle has its appeal. There have been times I’ve been sitting on the porch of my small home, drinking my morning coffee, listening to those bikes rumble by, when I’ve wondered what that life would be like. Living outside of any kind of established structure, away from society’s expectations.

I use the drive up the mountain to update Dylan on the latest in the case. The weapon, left at the Silverton scene, is a Smith & Wesson M&P series, nine millimeter rounds, all accounted for. So far, other than a few of the less compliant employees who were pistol-whipped, no weapons have been fired at any of the robberies.

Just my luck, the gate is manned by a familiar lanky figure, who is not going to be happy to see me.

“The fuck do you want now, bitch?”

Yup, as expected, the young man’s attitude hasn’t improved one bit. I’m tempted to go another round with him, but since this is a professional call, I shall have to restrain myself.

“Dylan.” I turn to my partner, who is grinding his teeth and glaring at the kid. One wrong move will undoubtedly set him off. My curse to be saddled with men intent on defending my virtue. “I don’t believe you’ve been properly introduced to this delightful creature. Meet Rowtag, gatekeeper extraordinaire, but unfortunately his false sense of power doesn’t do much for him in hand-to-hand combat.”

The kid may not have two brain cells to rub together, but he knows a taunt when he hears one. This is confirmed when I hear the sound of a safety catch releasing right by my ear. I watch Dylan’s eyes flick to mine before they narrow over my shoulder. Taking in a deep breath, on my exhale, I swing my elbow around through the open window, catching the kid off guard. Before he knows what’s coming, I have the gun knocked out of his grip, his hand twisted in an unnatural position, and his body pulled through the window. My face is inches from his, and I work hard not to flinch at the unwashed stench wafting off him.

“A little slow on the uptake, are we?” I ignore the hate-filled eyes directed at me. Not making any friends today. “Let’s try this the polite way. I am looking for an individual by the name of Mark Strongbow. I’ve been told I can find him here. I suspect he might be a member of the shooting range? Could you please find out for me?”

“Let the boy go.”

I should’ve expected that too. Fate would not be so kind as to let me off the hook today. I turn my head and watch Ouray’s leisurely approach.

“Would love to, but he wanted to play with guns, and I wasn’t in the mood today. I’d rather not let go until the gun is secured, if you don’t mind.” The kid is trying to twist out of my hold, which isn’t getting him anywhere. It’s amazing how easy it is to control someone’s movements, without exerting a whole lot of strength, by simply manipulating a few small parts. It’s the first thing I was taught in my old self-defense training: eyes, nose, fingers, and my personal favorite, balls.

Ouray slowly shakes his head, that perpetual toothpick hanging from the lopsided grin on his lips. He momentarily disappears from view when he bends down to collect the weapon, holding it up for me to see as he resets the safety, and tucks the gun behind his back.

The moment I release the kid, his other hand, curled in a fist, comes flying through the window, but falls a fraction of an inch short of the bridge of my nose. Courtesy of Ouray, who has his paw around the kid's fist, doing some manipulating of his own, judging from the kid's face.

"Lesson I thought you would've learned at the gym, Rowtag: brute force rarely ever wins out over dexterity and cunning. Now open the fuckin' gate and let 'em through. I'm keeping your gun for now."

Like I said, I doubt I'm making any friends today, Ouray may have well asked the kid to hand over his dick.

"So, Agent Roosberg," the man drawls when I park the Expedition and he pulls open my door. "To what do we owe the pleasure?"

"Knock off the theatrics, Ouray. We need to speak to someone by the name of Mark Strongbow." I turn to include Dylan, but he's already off ogling the collection of bikes parked on the other side. Figures. "We were told we could find him here."

Ouray tilts his head to one side, giving me that semi-amused, semi-inquisitive look again. "Who told you that?"

"SAC Gomez." My response seems to be funny, since it elicits an amused chuckle. "Don't see what's so amusing," I snap, already bristling at the man.

"Funny part is, SAC Gomez apparently left some information out," he says lazily, chewing on the end of that damn toothpick.

"And what would that be?"

I hate my short stature, especially when I have to look up and squint into the sun to see the man in front of me.

"I'm Mark Strongbow."