

### Bonus Scene: Gemma & Shade in Storage Bay

The moment Ty skidded around the corner of the aisle in the storage bay, disappearing from view, Gemma felt Shade's grip on her neck loosen. Not enough that she could jerk out of his hold, but at least she wasn't on the verge of gagging anymore.

Slipping his other hand through the bars of the shark cage, the outlaw pressed something into her palm. Richard's picture.

"He's not the hero you think he is," Shade said roughly.

So Ms. Spinner had said every chance she got, which meant Gemma had a retort at the ready. Furious, she twisted in the outlaw's grasp. But as she opened her mouth to launch into Richard's defense, her brain caught up with her ears. "*Is?*" she croaked. "You mean *was*."

Shade's black-eyed gaze flicked over her. "Do I?"

As abruptly as he'd grabbed her, he released her. Staggering back, Gemma stared at him, disbelieving. Why had he let her go? Whatever the reason, she should run. Find Ty and tell him she was safe. Yet she stayed, pinned into place by a desperate hope, which was stupid. There was no truth in anything Shade said. He was amusing himself at her expense. Or was he?

Brown-skinned and tattooed once more, he leaned against the bars, watching her.

She took a deep breath. She had to know. "Is my brother alive?"

"For what it's worth..." Shade couldn't have sounded more bored. "Yeah."

Steeling herself, Gemma waited for his laughter, certain it would come. But his expression remained mask-like. Unreadable.

“Before you go looking for him, little girl” Shade went on softly, “best you know what you’re going to find. He’s an outlaw. Like me. Steals. Leaves innocent--”

“Where is he?” she cut in. No matter what Richard had done to survive, he’d never be anything like the monster before her.

With a snort, Shade kicked the crate across his cage. A casual action, but Gemma knew it held a warning. Like she cared. “Tell me how to find him.”

“Better if you don’t.” With that, Shade turned away and disappeared into the shadows.

Stunned, Gemma waited for him to say more. To taunt her or talk in riddles. Anything. But when she heard him settle onto the crate she knew he was done talking. Clearly, she hadn’t amused him enough. She glanced around, heart pounding. Ty was nowhere to be seen. She was alone with the outlaw and more scared than ever. Scared that she would never find out the truth.

Circling the cage, she could just make out the outlaw’s profile as he lounged with his back against the bars. “Please,” she said, kneeling by his side. He didn’t move. Reaching into the cage, she touched his hand. “Richard is the only family I have. Please tell me where he is.”

When Shade looked down at the hand she’d placed over his, she almost stopped breathing. Without raising his eyes, he turned his hand palm up and entwined his fingers with hers. The intimacy of the gesture chilled her. Then he turned their hands over and the black snake tattoo on his bicep began to move, winding down his forearm and over his wrist.

With a cry, Gemma tried to jerk away but his grip tightened. The tattoo snake slithered onto the back of his fist, shrinking as it went and curling itself into a ball. She stopped struggling and watched in horror as the black circle on the back of his hand began to bleed. No, she realized, it wasn’t real blood. Just a patch of his skin changing color, from black to red. Pulsing,

the circle formed a new shape -- a heart. One throb later, it vanished, leaving Gemma unsure that she'd seen it.

Her gaze flew to his face and his skin smoothed out. Then the darkness drained away, leaving him pale, but not albino. When his eyes lightened to gray, then blue, his transformation was complete. Richard sat before her. Not the teenage Richard she remembered. Or the adult she had pictured in her mind so many times. Yet still, she knew beyond all doubt that he was her brother.

She had always imagined that when they finally reunited, she'd throw herself into his arms. But now the moment was here and she couldn't bring herself to do anything more than hold his hand. He was Richard, yes. But he was also Shade. A fact she couldn't ignore.

A distant swoosh echoed through the storage bay and he released her hand. His snake tattoo wound back up his arm as he rose. "Door."

Reluctantly, she followed his lead in taking up their original positions.

"Help me get out of here," he whispered and for the first time, he sounded like the Richard she remembered.

After missing him for so long, how could she deny him anything? With a nod, she stepped neatly into his grip. But when Ty appeared, key in hand, she couldn't look him in the eye. With her head down, she heard the man behind her snarl, "Where's Ranger Grimes?" and knew that Richard had disappeared again and that only Shade remained.