

ONE

Shea Bonne didn't remember the plane hitting the ground. She didn't remember coming to. The only imprint she had was a vague mental image of the pilot still strapped in his seat with a tree branch impaled through his torso.

She couldn't remember climbing out of the plane either, but somehow remembered the cool drops of rain hitting her face, merging with the warm blood that was running from her forehead.

How she knew it was blood was anyone's guess. Common sense dictated that after surviving impact, she'd have to be wounded. The thick ooze trickled downward, assaulting her with its metallic stench.

But there was no time to dwell on her injuries or survey the mangled plane wreckage. With double vision and a foggy mind, she stumbled through trees, over fallen trunks, and past foliage.

Shea couldn't keep track of her thoughts. Everything was fragmented. It was dark; that meant night. She could smell nature, so she was outside, in some kind of damp wilderness. But, the overwhelming twist of sickness in her gut wouldn't let her focus on one thing for more than a few seconds.

Being in a plane crash hadn't been on her bucket list. On boarding the tiny craft, she'd been swamped by the sensation of impending doom. She should've known better than to ignore her instincts. But, refusing to get on the plane wasn't an option. The flight had been chartered for her and her alone and having been summoned to corporate headquarters, her livelihood depended on her reaching her destination.

When the man she'd been on her way to visit bounced around the globe, he used a swanky new Gulfstream. Apparently, she hadn't been good enough for an aircraft built in this century. Boarding, with that prickling unease of doubt rousing the hairs on the back of her neck, Shea had wondered if she'd looked beneath the hood of the plane, she'd find nothing but rubber bands and duct tape holding it together. Given that it had fallen from the sky, she couldn't have been far from right.

Falling over a rock, she stopped thinking about the past and tried to clamber back to her feet. But, she fell again. Shock and exhaustion were taking over. When she tried to put weight on her foot to rise, her ankle screamed. Shooting agony radiated from her heel to her hip.

Rolling onto her back, Shea fought to catch her breath and had to close her eyes against the pounding rain that was picking up pace.

Her chest was sore and her head filling with heat. She couldn't keep her eyes open. Her eyelids got heavier and began to sink. All she could hope was that they'd open again.

The noise of an engine was the first thing Shea became aware of. It took a good few seconds for her to realize that it was a vehicle, like a truck or a jeep, something bigger than a regular car, but definitely not a plane.

Warmth in the air made her feel safe, and she was pleased to smell people, men. Yeah, they weren't wearing expensive colognes, and under other circumstances, the smell of their sweat would be offensive, but if there were people there, she had to be saved, they had to be the rescue party.

Before even trying to open her eyes, Shea wanted to talk, but her lips wouldn't part. She couldn't figure out why they were stuck together at first and tried harder. That was when the nip of pinched skin on her cheek filled her with alarm.

Something was stuck to her face... duct tape. Shea tried to move her hands only to find her wrists were tied at her back. And when she did manage to open her eyes, all she could see was blackness. Something was covering her head, like a hood, that was why she was so warm.

This wasn't a rescue party... not like any she'd ever heard of.

She couldn't scream, couldn't move. Her body felt heavy too, maybe it was as a result of the injuries from the crash, but now she was scared of what these men might have done to her.

Wriggling onto her side, she tried again to scream and pull and fight. She wasn't on a gurney or a bed, she was on a floor, a hard metal floor, bouncing along as the noise of the engine betrayed they were picking up speed.

"Hey, calm it, Sexpot. We're taking you to paradise," one gruff voice said.

A bunch of male snickers echoed around her. "Give her another shot," another guy said. "Keep her out until we get back to the compound."

Something pierced her arm and though she did her best to wriggle away, it was too late. Her muscles loosened, her mind began to fog, and she lost consciousness again.

The next time Shea woke up, it took her a while to come around and longer to remember what had happened. Even in spite of the daze and disorientation, she eventually recalled glimmers of what had brought her there. The plane crash, falling unconscious on the forest floor, of the truck, the men.

Panic made her sit up. To her shock and relief, her hands weren't bound anymore. She wasn't in a vehicle either. In fact, she was on a concrete bed in the corner of a concrete room. Her eye was drawn to the thick metal door in the middle of the wall opposite her. With a small circular window near the top and a long shallow rectangle in the center, covered by another piece of metal, it almost looked like...

Confused apprehension made her attention ascend, but it took only a few seconds to absorb the features of the sparse room.

Clarity came slamming down on her. "I'm in a cell," she whispered.

Grabbing the skinny mattress beneath her body, she used her hold on it to scoot to the edge of the bed. Her foot seemed to be weighted. She couldn't figure out why until she raised her head and noticed a cast around her left foot and ankle. Was it broken? Had the men who'd bound and gagged her given her medical treatment? Why would they do that if they were just going to lock her up?

Shea didn't have time to dwell on their motives. Planning a way out of here was the priority.

Quickly cataloging what she did know, Shea wasn't encouraged. She couldn't hear a thing or see outside. The air smelled clean. It was impossible to figure out where she was, but nothing about this set up told her pounding heart it was somewhere safe.

Waking up in a prison cell was another item not on her bucket list. So far, none of her recent new experiences had been pleasant, but she had to keep her wits and not become a victim. If Shea was going to get out of here, she'd need a plan.

Being locked up limited her options, and she didn't have a clue where to begin, but rolling over and playing dead wasn't in her nature.