

My Sister's Keeper
by Erin Wade

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CHAPTER 1

The Rockstar and the U.S. Marshal



Wednesday, January 8 – Shaw Rose

“What are you doing here?” a familiar voice demanded.

I turned to face the man that had mentored me through my early years in the U.S. Marshall’s Service.

“Praying for my sister,” I replied, “but a better question is why are you here?”

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“Shannon Rose is your sister?” Brad Taylor’s skeptical tone let me know he couldn’t reconcile me with the beautiful woman hooked up to all the beeping and swishing machines in the hospital room.

“Yeah, it’s amazing what a difference a color job and cosmetics will make.” I smirked. “To be completely honest, we are identical twins. She makes a bigger effort than I do to look gorgeous.”

He studied me then whistled softly. “I’ll be damn, you do look like her, Shaw. Shaw Rose, of course you are her sister.”

“Seriously, Brad, why are you here in Nashville?”

“Your sister is involved in a drug smuggling ring. When I heard she had overdosed, I came to check on her.”

“I don’t believe it. Shannon would never take drugs.”

“I didn’t say she was doing drugs,” Brad clarified. “Can we go somewhere private and talk? Maybe grab a cup of coffee and a piece of pie in the hospital cafeteria.”

I glanced at Shannon and all the tubes and wires connected to her. “Sure, she isn’t going anywhere.”

“I just placed two guards outside her door,” Brad informed me.

I followed Brad to the cafeteria where we picked up pie and coffee. I let Brad pay. This was his party. He walked to a table on the far side of the room and pulled out a chair for me to sit down.

“Within the next two days we will move Shannon to a private hospital and check her in under another name,” Brad informed me. “We will move her during the early morning hours, and you will take her place.”

I jumped to my feet, but he caught my arm and pulled me back into the chair. “Just listen to me before you go off halfcocked. I need you to color your hair blonde and make yourself look exactly like her. I need you to become Shannon Rose.”

“I don’t understand,” I said slowly.

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“She was working with us to bust a drug ring that is operating in the entertainment industry. A big ring, bigger than T-Piddly, run by important people.”

“Why wasn't I read in on this?” Anger flooded me when I realized he had used my sister—a civilian—to help gather evidence against dangerous criminals.

“It all came together last week. You were in upstate New York on a much-needed vacation. I couldn't locate you. Even your partner only knew you were in the Finger Lakes Region. It would help if you kept your coworkers informed.”

I ignored his advice about keeping my coworkers informed about my private life. “Brad, Shannon is famous. She is the hottest name in country music right now. I mean she is Taylor Swift famous. I can't pull this off.”

“You used to be in the band with her.”

“When we were in high school and college.” I shrugged. “I was her drummer, and we sang duets, but that was a long time ago.”

“Do you want to find out who overdosed your sister or not?” Brad cut to the chase.

There was only one answer I could give him. “Yes! Hell yes!”

“This afternoon or tomorrow I want you to go to your beauty salon and have your hair colored exactly like Shannon's, blonde with a few streaks. Do whatever it is that women do with makeup to make yourself look like her. I will confiscate a hospital gown and those socks they make everyone wear. When we whisk her away, you will take her place in the hospital bed. The next morning you will be Shannon Rose.”

“I don't know, I—”

“You will need to stay in the hospital a week. When the word gets out that you have regained consciousness, you will begin to get visitors. Pretend to be disoriented and act like you don't know who they are. It will give you time to meet everyone and find out who Shannon's friends and band

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members are. Query them like you are trying to remember them and their importance in your life. If you are lucky, they will tell you everything there is to know about their relationship with your sister.”

“I can do that,” I agreed. “I’ll get my hair colored this afternoon. We can make the switch after midnight tonight. When I am allowed to have visitors bring me a laptop and a pair of the best earbuds you can buy.”

“Why?”

“I only see Shannon a few times a year. With her touring schedule and my assignments, we must work to find time to get together. I want to watch every YouTube video I can find on her, every podcast, every television interview, and performance. I need to know what she knows and who she knows. This is going to be tricky at best.”

“Great. Be sure you do something with your eyebrows, so they look like Shannon’s.”

I curled my lip at him. “I can’t believe you put her in harm’s way.”

“It wasn’t my idea. Someone sold her steel guitar player recreational drugs laced with fentanyl. She died. We were working with the Nashville drug squad to apprehend the ringleaders. Shannon contacted us and insisted that she could help us nail the kingpins. I know she wouldn’t voluntarily use drugs, so someone injected her. Our medical examiner identified the injection site of fentanyl in her arm. Thank God, someone got her to the hospital in time for them to resuscitate her even if she is in a coma.

“The worst part of all is that fentanyl is extremely easy to get. It is a mail-order drug openly available on the internet. Fentanyl is shipped directly to consumers and dealers; no international drug cartels are involved. Unregulated labs in China offer it online and guarantee delivery via standard mail.

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“Fentanyl is more a mass poisoning for Americans than a traditional drug problem. Since 2019 over a million U.S. citizens have died from fentanyl poisoning.

“Think about it this way, China never has to go to war with the U.S. They are simply killing our citizens with illegal drugs like fentanyl and our people can't sniff it or inject it fast enough. We must stop it.”

“You have a nightmare job,” I sympathized. “I thought keeping people safe in witness protection was difficult. It is nothing compared to this.”

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CHAPTER 2

Becoming Shannon Rose—Superstar



Thursday January 9 —The Switch

I was able to get into a beauty salon that offered the work—from a bleach job to eyebrow dying and shaping. I showed them my best photo of Shannon and said, “I need to look just like her.”

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By the time the sun set I had blonde hair, perfectly arched eyebrows, radiant skin, and beautifully polished fingernails.

I looked into the mirror. I was my sister.

I didn't worry about clothes. When Brad and his men took Shannon, they would take my blue suit and white shirt leaving me a hospital gown and Shannon's clothes.

My constant prayer is that Shannon will awaken and tell us who injected her. At 9:00 p.m. I called Brad to let him know I was ready for the switch any time he was.

"The hospital staff changes at midnight and reduces to a skeleton crew," he informed me. "Meet me in the hospital parking garage at 11:30 p.m. I'll be driving a black suburban."

"Of course you will," I teased.

"What is your ride?"

"Red Mustang."

"Of course it is." Brad laughed. "Go to the top level of the parking garage. I will be there."

Since I had no other place to go, I drove to the top of the parking garage. The view was astonishing. I got out of the car and walked to the far edge of the lot.

I haven't seen Shannon in nine months. As twins growing up, we were inseparable. She was the outgoing one and I was the serious one. We both loved music and participated in every choral program our school offered. By the time we reached high school, we had formed a decent five-piece girl band. Shannon played the guitar and was the lead singer, and I was the drummer. Other members came and went. By the time we entered college, we were well known in Nashville and in big demand for parties and official college functions that required music.

Our senior year of college we cut an album with Shannon as the lead singer and me playing the drums and harmonizing when a song called for a duet. We recorded songs we had written so it was all new music. To this day

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Shannon still sends me my share of the royalties from the songs we wrote together.

We carried our album to every radio station in town begging them to play it. One station played it, then another until it spread across the nation resulting in a recording contract and more money than I'd ever dreamed existed.

When we graduated, I entered the U.S. Marshal's Service and Shannon hired another drummer. She was furious with me for choosing a different life, but I had no desire to spend my nights on a bus going from town to town to perform in smoky dance halls.

Shannon was gregarious and outgoing while I preferred an enjoyable book and quiet evenings in front of the fireplace. As she grew in fame, we had less contact, but we always kept track of each other. If she was performing close to a town I was working in, I would call her, and she always made time to meet me for dinner so we could catch up.

I knew she liked women but had no idea if there was someone special in her life. I've never thought about a life partner one way or the other, because I wouldn't ask anyone to tolerate my work schedule. It is a lonely life, but I like it.

I checked my watch as headlights flashed up the incline leading to the top level. Brad's black suburban parked beside my car and four muscular men climbed out. They were dressed like hospital orderlies.

I walked toward Brad as he stepped from the vehicle. "Hot damn," he exclaimed. "Is that you Shaw?"

Wolf whistles and teasing came from the officers with him. "Wow, Shaw, you look just like Shannon Rose."

"Mission accomplished," I replied. "I've done my part now you fellows must smuggle me into the hospital and spirit away my sister."

"We've got you covered, Shaw," Brad assured me. "I have arranged for the first room by the elevator to be empty. You and I will go in there where you will change into a hospital gown that is waiting on the bed. Jamison and I will

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roll you into Shannon's room as Bryant and Lee roll out Shannon."

"But how will you transport—" I didn't finish my sentence because a hospital ambulance emerged from the ramp onto the level with us. I knew it would be waiting for Shannon.

"Kent will cause a distraction at the nurse's desk," Brad continued. "Hopefully everything will go as planned. The guards at Shannon's door will remain there as long as you are in the hospital. When Kent causes a ruckus, the guards will rush to the nurse's station to help the nurses drawing their attention away from us."

"Let's get this show on the road." I exhaled the breath I was holding and followed Brad into the hospital.

As we slipped into the room by the elevator, Kent staggered toward the nurse's station. "I want to see Shannon Rose," he slurred obviously drunk.

"Sir, there is no one here by that name," one of the nurses tried to placate him.

"I'm not stupid," he yelled. "I know—he fell to the floor and began convulsing as if having a seizure.

All the nurses gathered around him and screamed for a gurney. The two guards at Shannon's door ran to help, pretending to hold him to keep him from hurting himself.

I slung off my clothes, pulled on the gown, and jumped into the hospital bed as Bryant and Lee silenced the alarms hooked to Shannon and rolled her bed onto the elevator. Brad and Jamison rolled me into Shannon's room, flicked the monitors back on causing them to chime, then they disappeared.

Nurses entered my room, and I did my impersonation of Kent's seizure. "She's pulled loose from the monitors," one of them said.

Then something happened I wasn't prepared for. She gave me a shot. My faked seizure halted, and I slipped into blackness.

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CHAPTER 3

I Don't Know You!



Friday, January 10 – Is She Dead?

“Baby, baby, please wake up.” A soft hand stroked my cheek and the scent of the sexiest perfume I’ve ever smelled filled my nostrils.

I didn’t have to fake coming out of a coma. I felt sluggish and I had been drugged by the nurse. I moaned and opened one eye getting a good look at a beautiful woman that screamed, “high maintenance.”

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"Nurse!" she called. "She opened one eye."

Nurses swarmed my bed taking my blood pressure and checking my heart rate and all other vitals.

The auburn-haired beauty beside me clutched my hand and began talking to me. "Shannon, talk to me baby. Say something."

I opened both eyes and asked her an honest question. "Who are you?"

"Stacy," she exclaimed. "I'm the love of your life. Your fiancée."

I wasn't faking when I stared at her as if I'd never seen her before. I shook my head no and closed my eyes. *Shannon never mentioned a fiancée. Stacy, at least I have a name for her.*

Stacy grabbed my arm and began shaking me. "Shannon, talk to me."

"Don't shake her," a nurse said. "Just talk to her soothingly. Perhaps she will respond to your voice."

Stacy began talking in a soft, soothing tone and I let my head roll to the right and opened my eyes so I could watch her.

"Shannon," she squealed. "Can you speak? Can you talk to me?"

"I...I...I don't know you." I stuttered sending her into a tizzy.

She leaned down and whispered in my ear, "Don't you remember that thing I do with my tongue that drives you crazy?"

I gulped. I wasn't sure what *thing* she was talking about, but I was confident I didn't want to experience it.

"I can't remember anything," I mumbled. "Where am I?"

"You are in Vanderbilt University Medical Center, baby. I've been sitting with you night and day."

The nurse standing behind Stacy rolled her eyes letting me know my fiancée wasn't telling the truth.

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"How long have I been here?" I let my eyes wander around the room.

"Five horrible days," Stacy replied.

"What is wrong with me? Why am I here?"

"Someone shot you full of drugs," the nurse replied. "You almost died from an overdose."

"Am I a druggie?" I asked.

"Lord, no!" Stacy's voice jumped three octaves. "You would never do drugs. Someone tried to kill you."

I closed my eyes, and my head fell back against the pillow. "I'm so tired."

Confident I was okay; the nurses left the room, and Stacy gently stroked my arm. I've already figured out that Stacy isn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, so I opened my eyes and smiled at her. "May I have a drink of water?"

"Of course. Would you like your head raised?" She located the bed controls and began to raise me into a sitting position.

I sipped the water from the straw she held to my mouth and thanked her.

"We're engaged?" I asked her.

"Yes." She flashed a gorgeous diamond ring. "Don't you remember giving me this?"

I shook my head no. "Obviously, I love you, if I gave you that rock. I'm certain I trust you too."

"Of course, you do silly."

"I may need your help. I can't remember anything or anyone. I will have to rely on you to tell me about my life. What do I do for a living?"

"You are a famous country music star."

"How did I end up here?"

"You and the band performed at the Grand Ole Opry Saturday. After the show we joined a bunch of other artists at the Opry Bar and Grill to party. Someone must have slipped something in your drink because you fell over and

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began to convulse. I immediately called an ambulance and brought you here.”

“I have a band. I can’t remember them or their names. Tell me about them.”

“It’s an all-girl band. You are the lead singer and guitarist. Kelly Clinton, 30, plays the drums. Shy Sanders, 36, plays the keyboard. Everyone calls Shy the Old Lady because she doesn’t party with us. Faye Farmer, 32, is your bass guitarist, and Ziggy Jones, 28, plays lead guitar.

“Would you write their names and instruments on a note pad? This is too much for my addled brain to comprehend.”

She pulled a cash register receipt from her purse and wrote the information on the back of it.

“Do you travel with me? I asked.

“Of course, I do. I can’t stand being away from you. I love you.” To reinforce her declaration, she stood, bent over and kissed me on the lips. My immediate reaction was to pull away from her.

She frowned then stepped back from the bed. ‘I’m sorry. You don’t know me from Adam. I had no right to kiss you.’”

“It’s okay, I rather liked it,” I lied.

She smiled. “I’m glad.”

“Tell me more about our business. Do we travel a lot? Is the band booked for appearances? Do we have hit songs?”

She laughed. “You have the number one song right now. It has been at the top of the charts for two months. In two weeks, you are booked for the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show and Rodeo. Do we need to cancel?”

“I don’t know. Let’s not make any decisions yet. Hopefully my memory will return to normal in a few days. Do I have a manager that handles our bookings and bookkeeping? That sort of thing.”

“Eleanor Kincaid is your manager and financial advisor.”

“I need to talk to her. Can you arrange for her to visit me tomorrow?”

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"I can do that."

I looked around my room then turned my gaze on her.
"Where's my cellphone?"

She opened the drawer of the nightstand beside my bed.
"Here it is. The battery is dead," she declared as she tried to turn on the phone. "I will go home and get your charger. Do you need anything else?"

"Do I have an iPad?"

"Yes, you are a fanatic about staying connected. I will bring it and your earbuds too. Anything else?"

"No, that is all I need. Thank you so much for doing this for me. I really appreciate it."

A half smile curved her lips. "That's the first time you have ever acknowledged what I do for you."

"Maybe I've come back as a better woman," I joked.

"Maybe." She agreed. "I'll be back in a couple of hours."

"I'm going to take a nap." I informed her.

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I was awake when Stacy returned with my electronic devices and charger. "You are just in time to join me for dinner," I invited her.

"If you don't mind, I have a dinner engagement this evening," she said sweetly. "I can cancel if you want me to."

"No, go have a nice dinner. I'm certain it will be better than hospital food."

She plugged my phone and iPad into the charger, got fresh water, and kissed me on the forehead. "I will see you tomorrow, sweetie."

"Have a good time and thank you again for all you are doing for me."

She nodded and slipped out the door.

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CHAPTER 4

The Outside World



Saturday, January 11 – Connected

“Can we remove all this paraphernalia?” I asked the first nurse I saw this morning.

She checked all the readings and my vitals and nodded. “The doctor is on his way to see you. Let’s let him make that call.”

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I nodded and moved to a recliner in my room while clean sheets were put on my bed and breakfast was placed on my roller tray. "Is it okay if I sit here to eat my breakfast," I asked.

"If you feel like it, that will be great," the nurse replied.

The doctor entered my room as she left. "Do you know who you are?" he asked.

"I've been told I am Shannon Rose," I replied.

"Does that name mean anything to you?"

"Not really."

"Your memory hasn't returned?" He questioned me.

"In bits and pieces. I'm sure it will come back."

"I want to keep you for two more days," He informed me. "I will have the nurse remove all of your attachments, but I want to observe you to be certain you are improving the way I think you should."

"Sounds good," I agreed. In two more days, I should meet all my band members and my business manager. I wondered if I should call our parents then decided against it. Mom would know my voice and ask about Shannon.

The doctor left and I called Brad. "Hey, I wanted to tell you not to worry about the iPad. My fiancée brought Shannon's from her home. I have everything I need. The doc said he will release me the day after tomorrow."

"Good. The less I'm seen with you the better. Keep in touch and Shaw don't be a hero. If you encounter anything the least bit suspicious, call me."

"Yes, sir," I agreed.

I hung up, put the earbuds in my ears, and began surfing the internet for any information I could find on Shannon Rose. Wikipedia had several pages of information including the many hits she had recorded. I was familiar with all of them. I had all her audios. Her name was all over the Top Billboard websites and in every gossip column on the internet. It struck me as funny that there was not a single mention of her being engaged to Stacy Thornton.

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I was delighted when lunch was delivered giving me a chance to get the earbuds out of my ears.

An attractive older woman entered the room as I lifted the cover from my baked chicken and green beans. I had no idea who she was.

"Stacy said you wanted to see me," she said as she sat down in the chair beside my bed.

"And you are?"

She observed me for several seconds. "Eleanor Kincaid, your financial manager."

"Okay," I drawled. "Did Stacy tell you I am having memory problems?"

"She said you don't remember anything. How are you going to perform if you can't remember the words to your hit songs?"

I held up the earbuds and my iPad. I'm relearning them now, but I am wondering if we should cancel our performance at the Fort Worth Fat Stock Show and Rodeo."

"It's not just one performance," Eleanor pointed out. "They booked you for every night. It is a multi-million-dollar contract, and it has already sold out. I think you would end up with a lawsuit on your hands if you are a no show."

"You mean I'm going to be in Fort Worth for two weeks?"

"Yep," Eleanor snickered. "You love Fort Worth. You and your sister went to public school there."

I nodded. "The show must go on," I quipped.

Eleanor went over the band's schedule as I ate my lunch. "This is a grueling schedule. Are you going to be able to do it?"

"I'm sure I can. There is nothing wrong with me physically. It's just the mental thing."

"How long have I been engaged to Stacy Thornton?"

"Too long," Eleanor scoffed. "She's no good for you. The sooner you get rid of her the better."

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I nodded in complete agreement with my business manager. "What is my financial situation?"

"If you live two hundred years, you couldn't spend all the money you have."

"Good to know. I'd like to see a balance sheet as soon as possible along with the usernames and passwords on all my financial accounts and holdings."

Eleanor frowned. "Why do you want that?"

"Because I have no idea about my financial situation or my income and expenditures. If I don't recover, I may need to hang up my guitar and call it quits."

"Surely not," Eleanor blurted as a look of horror covered her face. "I'll bring your complete financials and everything you have asked for tomorrow. Right now, I must meet with the band and let them know your plans."

"I want to talk with each of them tomorrow," I instructed. "Schedule them two hours apart. I need to reacquaint myself with them."

"Good idea. When you get out of here, we need to hit the ground running."

I like Eleanor. She is a straight shooter. I leaned my head back against the recliner as she left the room. I wondered who was supplying drugs to the band and who was using them.

As soon as the door closed behind Eleanor, I opened my iPad and put the wireless earbuds in my ears. I searched the internet for information on each band member. I learned as much as possible about their public and private lives. Each member had been with Shannon for ten or more years. That told me they liked their job or the money they made—hopefully both. I want to get out of the hospital so I can visit my sister and check on her progress. The last time I saw her she was comatose.

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CHAPTER 5

The Girls in the Band



Sunday, January 12 – Getting to Know You

I had dressed in my street clothes—or Shannon’s street clothes—and was listening to my sister’s latest hit album when a text dinged into Shannon’s cellphone. It was from Eleanor and contained a schedule of time and who was meeting with me today. I love her efficiency. My first visitor of the day would be Kelly Clinton, drummer.

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Kelly was thirty, with flashing brown eyes and dark wavy hair. From watching the performance videos, I knew she took showmanship to a whole new level—energetic and magic on the drums. She was a beautiful butch. The fans loved her almost as much as they loved Shannon. Kelly played the field and always had a beautiful woman on her arm.

“How are you doing, Boss?” Kelly carried a fresh arrangement of roses into the room and placed them on the counter that covered the wall under the windows.

“I’m getting better,” I replied.

“What happened? One minute you were fine and the next minute you were convulsing on the floor.”

I observed her as I answered. “The theory is that someone gave me a shot of narcotics meant to kill me.”

“No! Who would do such a thing?” Kelly blurted. “That’s crazy. It couldn’t possibly be a member of the band. That would be like killing the goose that laid the golden egg. I mean without you there would be no Shannon Rose Band.”

She made a point I hadn’t considered.

“Does anyone in our band use drugs?” I asked.

“I don’t think so. You are very explicit about your *no drugs* policy. Since I’ve been with you, you’ve fired three musicians for using drugs. I know everyone believes you would fire them in a heartbeat over drugs. This is a sweet gig. No one wants to leave your band.”

“Good. I should get out of here tomorrow. We need to hit it hard. We must be in Fort Worth in ten days. Honestly, I need all the practice time I can get. I don’t remember a thing.”

“You know we will do whatever it takes to make the rodeo a success. We know it is one of your favorite gigs.”

“That’s good to know,” I smirked. “I don’t remember it being one of my favorite gigs.”

“You grew up in Fort Worth. You talk about it all the time.”

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"Do I have friends there?"

"I don't know. I know your folks live there."

I jerked involuntarily. In all my reading I had not found anything connected to Shannon that would let the world know Mom and Dad lived in Cowtown. She truly worked at protecting them from her adoring fans.

"Have we put together the show we have planned for the Rodeo?" I asked.

"Yes, I think you have it on a spreadsheet on your computer."

I opened the section showing the last folders opened and saw one titled FTWH Rodeo. I opened it and read the list of information it held.

I opened one titled *Bus* and read the list of people who were riding the bus from Nashville to Fort Worth. My name wasn't on the list. The rest of the band was listed along with a couple of extras.

"Who are the extra people on the bus?"

Kelly pulled a chair close to me and studied the list on my laptop screen. "Melody is Ziggy's wife, and Lady is married to Shy. The rest of us are single."

"No girlfriends?"

"None we take on the road with us." Kelly grinned.

"My name isn't on this list," I pointed out.

"You have a gig at the Opry using their house band. As soon as you finish Eleanor will take you to the airport and you will fly to DFW on a redeye flight. One of us will pick you up at the airport. I think your flight gets in around 3:00 a.m."

"Can I just walk on stage with any band and do a good performance?"

"Some folks would have a problem with that, but you are always great." Kelly complimented

Great! Just because Shannon can do it doesn't mean I can. I thought.

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“You are going to perform four numbers then catch the red eye to DFW. We will start practice after lunch. That will give you about seven hours sleep.”

“I’ve lived on less,” I commented recalling the twenty-four-hour stakeouts I’ve been on.

“You have my phone number, Boss. Call me if you need anything. We will be practicing tomorrow. It would be good if you could join us when you get out of the hospital.”

“I will do that,” I assured her.

##

My next visitor was Shy Sanders, the keyboard player. I remember she was brilliant on the instrument. I was impressed with her style as I’ve watched her on the YouTube channel. At thirty-five, she was next to the oldest band member. Her brown hair was stylish and barely touched her shoulders. She wore light makeup and was very pretty. She was accompanied by her wife Lady.

“Hey,” I greeted them. “Thank you for coming.”

“Do you know who we are?” Shy asked.

“You are Shy and your wife Lady. I only know who you are because I looked you up on the internet. I’ve been studying the band and our performances hoping something will jog my memory.”

“Then you know I play the keyboard, and you promised me a huge raise.” Shy smiled slightly.

I searched her face for any indication she was kidding. “I know you play the keyboard, but I’m not so sure about the raise.”

Lady laughed. “Shy, she is recovering from a terrible experience. Don’t tease her.”

I liked Lady instantly. Shy, not so much. She will have to grow on me.

“Do you remember our songs?” Shy asked.

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“Not really, but I have been watching our performances and memorizing the words of the songs from *Song Sheet* on the internet.”

“When will the doctor release you?”

“Tomorrow. I thought we would rehearse for the next nine days before the band leaves on the bus for Fort Worth.”

“Yeah it’s a ten-hour drive and we take our time, so it takes us two days.” Shy replied.

“I always want the bus to leave in plenty of time for everyone to spend the night halfway,” I pointed out, “or to have time to spare if you encounter a problem.”

Shy raised her eyebrows. “Maybe we should drug you more often. You usually make us drive straight thru without stopping.”

“That sounds dangerous,” I muttered forgetting that I am the more reasonable one compared to Shannon.

“Yeah, it is, but we do have two drivers that switch out on overnight trips, and we can sleep on the bus.”

“There is that,” I agreed making a mental note to find a photo of the bus. “Anyway, plan on taking two days to make the drive to Fort Worth. I will arrive on the twenty-fifth, and we will have two days to practice before our first show on the twenty seventh.”

“Works for me, Boss. I’ll see you at the rehearsal hall tomorrow afternoon.”

I frowned. “Where is the rehearsal hall?”

“The building behind your house.” Shy smiled. “Let me know when they release you and we will be here to pick you up and take you home.”

“Thank you. I feel like a fool, but I have no idea where I live.”

##

After Shy and Lady left, I slipped into the hospital bed. I don’t want to look too recovered. I raised the head of the

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bed and leaned back on my pillow. The door slowly opened and base guitar player Faye Farmer entered followed by lead guitarist Ziggy Jones. I smiled at them and nodded.

"I'm Faye Farmer," the brown-haired beauty introduced herself.

"I'm Ziggy Jones. I play lead guitar in your band." A tall woman with thick chestnut colored hair flowing down her back introduced herself. "Faye plays the bass guitar."

"It is good to see you. I appreciate you coming by. I must admit I don't know either of you, but I'm trying to familiarize myself with the band members."

"You don't remember me?" Ziggy exclaimed. "No one ever forgets me and my hair."

"It is beautiful," I agreed. "I love the color."

"What happened to you?" Ziggy asked.

"Someone drugged me at the party. I almost died," I replied. "I have very little memory so I'm going to rely on the band members to help me out. I have been memorizing all the lyrics from my own songs."

"Who would want to kill you?" Faye gasped.

"I have no idea," I answered.

While I was getting to know Faye and Ziggy, rhythm guitar player Babs Clay joined us.

"I'm sorry I'm early," Babs apologized. "I wanted to miss the traffic. How do you feel, Boss?"

"Much better. I will be out of here before noon tomorrow and at the practice hall by 1:00 p.m. so we can start practicing for the Fort Worth Show."

"Someone drugged her," Ziggy informed Babs, "and she has amnesia."

"You're kidding me," Babs scoffed. "Who would drug you?"

"I wish I knew," I replied.

"What can we do to help you recover?" Babs asked.

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"Watch me. If I'm not doing things I usually do or singing a number the right way, tell me. I need to make certain I perform like Shannon Rose."

"That will come naturally to you," Melody declared. "Muscle memory will kick in. You are a natural entertainer."

"Do I get nervous or dread being on the stage?"

"Gawd no!" Ziggy asserted. "You love performing for an audience. The bigger they are the better you like them. You come alive on the stage."

"Good to know," I said. Somehow, I couldn't imagine being invigorated by a huge audience of strangers screaming at me.

After everyone left, I rummaged through the hospital bag in the bottom of the closet looking for Shannon's purse. I found a designer clutch bag and matching shoes. The bag contained her wallet, a small notebook, and a car fob.

Feeling like a thief, I looked through her personal belongings. Her wallet contained her drivers license, five twenty-dollar bills and a Black Card. I checked Shannon's drivers license to see where I lived.

I called Brad.

"Hello Shaw," he answered telling me he had me on caller ID. "Is everything okay?"

"I'm fine. The doc is releasing me in the morning, and I have a rehearsal scheduled with the band tomorrow afternoon.

"I need to know what private hospital Shannon is in. I'm being released in the morning, and I must check out of my motel room and pick up my luggage. Then I'm going to visit Shannon before I go to her house."

"I will text you the name and address," Brad said. "Have you met your band members yet?"

"Yes, and my manager. Do you have any idea which one of them is involved in the drug trade?"

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"Not a clue," Brad responded. "Shannon was trying to find out. She must have gotten close. I figure that is why someone tried to kill her."

Holding my breath, I asked, "Is she any better?"

"No, she is still in a coma. I've got guards on her around the clock. I'll let you know if her condition changes."

"She is contracted to perform at the Fort Worth Fat Stock show in two weeks," I informed him. "I'm not certain I can pull that off."

A long silence greeted me. Finally, Brad said. "You must."

"Brad, I—"

"Shaw, we have too much invested in this case to lose it. From now on you are Shannon Rose. Start living it. That's an order."

"You don't understand, Shannon is an incredible lead guitarist. I was a drummer. There is a hell of a lot of difference between fingering the neck of a guitar and beating tin cans with a stick."

Brad chuckled. "I've got faith in you. You'll figure out something. I know you want to catch Shannon's would-be killer."

"You're right," I capitulated.

"Keep me informed," Brad said. "And be careful, Shaw."

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CHAPTER 6

Band Practice



Monday, January 13 – Holding Her Hand

I sat in the chair beside my sister's bed and gently held her hand. The rhythmic beep of the machines on the other side of her bed were the only sounds in the room. I turned her arm to read the name on the wristband. Carol Kane was typed on the white bracelet. *Talk about a common name.*