

# **My Sister's Keeper**

Human Authored  
by Erin Wade

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By Erin Wade

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## DEDICATION

To the one who has always supported me in everything I have ever undertaken. You have encouraged me and have always been my biggest fan. Life is sweeter with you.

Lift me up where I belong  
Put your arms around me  
I've loved you for so long  
You're where I want to be . . . ©*Erin Wade*

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## ***I HEARD A NOTE***

*I heard a note—just one, alone,  
A flicker in the vast unknown.  
While others danced through verses whole,  
I held a fragment of my soul.  
They hummed the chorus, sweet and wide,  
With harmony to single every side.  
Their voices rose, the lyrics clear—  
But only that one tone reached here.  
It sang of something out of reach,  
A shore I could not ever beach.  
A window cracked, a light grown thin,  
A song I knew I shouldn't have been.  
Yet still, that note—so faint, so true—  
It trembled with a secret hue.  
And in its echo, small but bright,  
I found my only light.  
Let them have their symphonies—  
Their soaring highs, their harmonies.  
I'll hold tight my single thread, a start:  
A single note that shaped my heart.*

By Tonya Pinder

# 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 who 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?”

“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 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.

“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 come to, 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 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 her to be resuscitated 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. It 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.



“Basically, 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 is difficult. It is nothing compared to this.”

# CHAPTER 2

## Becoming Shannon Rose--Superstar

*Thursday January 9 —The Switch*

I was able to get into a beauty salon that offered the works 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.

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 a 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 Shannon still sends me my share of the royalties from the songs we wrote together and the sales of the album.

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 for half-drunk fans.

Shannon was gregarious and outgoing while I preferred a good 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 where I was working, 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. Except for my high school sweetheart, 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 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.

# 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*.

“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.*

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 setting with you night and day.”

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

“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 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?”

“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.

##

I was awake when Stacy returned with my electronic devices and charger. “You are just in time for dinner,” I informed 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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