

**Alone and Unafraid**

Brandi J. Morton

17 June 2023

Torn between her favorite blanket or her stuffed animal she used to bring everywhere, Belle wraps up packing for a summer vacation in the Caribbean she waited all school year for. Undecided of which she would consider more important, she stuffs them both in her suitcase and sits on top of it, attempting zip it shut. The bedroom door slowly creaks open as Belle's mother peaks through to canvass her progress. "You put the blanket and the stuffed bear in there didn't you?" her mother says as she laughs fully expecting this outcome before opening the door. Belle continues to struggle with the suitcase zipper, completely disregarding her mother's comments about her two most prized possessions. Belle's mother fully opens the door to the room and kneels next to her daughter explaining to her to is getting too old for her blanket and bear as she begins to remove the items from the suitcase. Belle exhales in disappointment but finally comes to terms that her mother is right. The two finally get the suitcase to close and they begin to pack their things into the taxi that has been impatiently waiting. Belle's father already in the taxi, smiles at his two favorite girls and says to the taxi driver, "We are off to the airport!"

Upon arrival, the airport was packed with frantic people rushing to their gates. The commotion of them moving in every direction with no organization made Belle nervous. She decided that she would calm herself by listening to music as they waited for the airplane to be prepared for departure. "Group 1 can board," says a lady over the intercom. Various people began to line up at the gate entrance, Belle and her family get up and shuffle into the line. Entering the plane in delight to see that she has a window seat and hops into place. She continues to buckle her seat belt with a huge grin from ear to ear as she stares out the window waiting for departure. After several moments go by and passengers settle into their seats the flight attendant announces it was time for takeoff. Belle continues to listen to calming sounds of some of her favorite song while watching the plane take off the runway. The plane continues to climb in height and the buildings in the sky grow smaller and small, eventually disappearing by the cover of the clouds. She raises

the volume for her music which eventually puts her to sleep as her parents sit in the seats beside her munching on airline pretzels and discussing their first plans for their arrival.

In the mence of her sleep, Belle's music is still blaring in her ear as she was rudely awakened by rigorous turbulence in the sky. A muffling sound of commotion and chaos can be heard behind the music as Belle begins to look around from just opening her eyes. The seatbelt light illuminates and passengers are rushing to their seats. The rumbling of the plane caused an unsettling feeling in Belle's stomach. She quickly becomes concerned. She looks over at her father who is sitting very still and upright as he tried to maintain his composure. Her mother, who is gripping her father's hand for dear life, looks over at Belle and realizes she is awake. She places her other hand on Belle's lap and then looks out the window in fear. Belle rips out her headphones, instantly ending the sound of the music, and hears a combination of screams, cries, and prayers. A voice over the intercom identifies himself as the captain of the aircraft and urges people to stay calm. The captain further explains there have been some complications with the plane, but passengers need to remain calm in their seats until further notice. Belle, whose face is now covered in tears from confusion and anxiety finally looks out the window. Clouds whirl passed and the water becomes visible through the cover. The plane is moving downward rapidly, and panels begin to fly off the wing of the plane. In the cabin, personal items from passengers that haven't been secured properly are bouncing around. Bang! The cries and screams grow louder as more and more passengers realize that the plane is going down. Oxygen masks deploy from above the seats. Belle's parents quickly place them over her face and instruct her to keep them on tightly. "Everything is going to be okay honey," her mom yells over the chaos. The captain takes a turn attempting to safely land the plane on what seems to be a small island in the middle of the ocean. The jerking movement of the plane causes the overhead storage to open and luggage to fling around the cabin. The ride becomes bumpier and bumpier. The plane is nearing the island

then bang. A suitcase flies across the cabin hitting multiple passengers along the way. Belle becomes unconscious.

“My leg, my leg!” a man screams so loud it can be heard from a mile away. Belle regains consciousness. Still strapped in her seat with her limbs dangling beneath her. As she opens her eyes, she sees what seems to be left of the plane crashed and thrown on the beach of the island. Part of the plane burst into flames in the distance. Other parts are scattered in the sand along with parts, luggage, and what is left of the passengers. Realizing what is happening, Belle frantically looks to her side for her parents. Instead, she finds empty seats filled with blood but no parents in sight. The portion of the cabin with her family’s assigned seat has crashed in the intertidal zone of the water. It seemed to have rolled upside down making it nearly impossible for her to escape her chair. Belle squirms around in her seat attempting to break free. Fire crackling and screams still can be heard in the background mixed with the smell of burnt gasoline and salt water. “Help me, please. Somebody.” Belle hears a woman who also seems to be stuck just a few rows behind her in the wreckage. She then quickly unbuckles her seat belt which drops her to the top of the cabin. Her head is gushing with blood from the luggage that hit her. She holds her head wound and begins to cry out for her parents. No response from her parents we heard. Just the cries of the woman still stuck in her seat. Belle struggles to stand up. Her head is throbbing, her vision is blurry, and she has a sharp pain coming from her leg.

Belle continues to leave the wreckage and barely makes it out to some other survivors who all seem to be severely wounded. One was an older male, whose leg was missing and screaming in pain. A woman was kneeling over him wrapping some cloth around the wound to control the bleeding. The woman calls out to Belle, “Sweetie, my name is Anne. Are you okay? You are lucky to be alive!” Belle tells her she is ok and is only suffering from a minor head wound. A boy then tugs on her shirt and begins to speak, “My name is Toby. My mommy is missing too.” Toby seemed to be about 6 years of age and grasped tight to his teddy bear he

managed to salvage from the crash. She asks the group if anyone seen her parents, but they respond saying they are the only known survivors. Belle is scared but she does what she can to help the wounded survivors by salvaging items from the luggage scattered across the beach as Toby sits there continuing to hold his bear as tears drip from his eyes.

Tide is reseeded while fires continue to burn, but the screams and cries have died down over time. The survivors of the wreck came to an agreement that finding shelter to last through the night would be in their best interest. At the break of dawn, they will continue to look for more survivors and supplies to stay alive. The one-legged man grows in and out of consciousness, but the group eventually gathered that his name is Bill. He was on a business trip for work hoping to return to his family soon after his trip away from then. He used to be a boy scout in his younger years, and he instructed Belle on how to make a stable shelter with the supplies found along the beach. He also teaches Belle how to catch fish. Though still weak from her injuries, she promises Bill she will attempt to catch some fish soon. Anne builds a fire close to the partially stable shelter to keep the group warm as they settle in for the night.

At the crack of dawn, Belle awakens from what seemed to be a nightmare. Surveying the area, she realized that Toby and his bear were missing from the shelter. The fire has been dimmed and Anne was seen placing a cloth over Bill's body. The Cloth that remind her of her blanket she left in her room that she would wrap around her body when she was sick and scared. Belle looked over to Anne in confusion. "He didn't make it," she explained while looking at Belle in disbelief. Now overwhelmed with emotion and anxiety, her mind ran endlessly of all the possibilities of what could have happened to her family and what will happen next. Will we be saved? Are there more survivors? She starts to cry, and Anne comes to comfort her. "We will find a way to make it while help is on the way," she says to reassure her they will make it. The two attempted to scavenge what they can find while calling out for survivors along the way. No sign of Toby or Belle's parent anywhere along the beach. During the walk back to the shelter Anne began to grow

ill, grasping her stomach and moaning from the aches and pains. Anne was able to make it back by the fire with the assistance of Belle by placing her arm over her shoulder. Belle maintained the fire so it can last a few hours and decided to try and catch a fish for supper.

Approaching the water Belle prepped her spear with some wood and a knife, just as Bill taught her. She looked along the waters for fish and when she finally found one, she tossed her spear. Multiple failed attempts went by, and Belle was ready to give up. She walks through the waters hoping that maybe a new spot would give her better luck. Off in the distance she sees an object washing up against the shore. She rushed to the object in hopes it could be something to eat for her and Anne. As the object got closer she realized it wasn't any type of fish, but instead a teddy bear. In fact, it was the same teddy bear Toby would not let out of his site the day of the plane crash. Anne picks up the bear, wrings out the water and holds it close. The bear reminded her so much of her own and she decides to hold onto it in case Toby reappears. The bear also gave a sense of security and bravery she thought she left behind in her bedroom back at home. She travels back to the shelter along the water and sees another fish. The sun is beginning to set, the waves have calmed down and this may be her last chance for the day to catch it. She gives her spear one last toss, and she nailed it.

Running back to the fire eager to roast the fish, she approaches the shelter excited to tell Anne. She begins to shake her vigorously and no response. Belle puts the teddy bear down and begins to cry. She doesn't want to be alone deserted on the island and Anne was the last one left. She places a cloth over her body as Anne did for Bill. She cooks and eats her fish then cuddles by the fire next to the teddy bear. It is at this moment Belle loses her fear. She decides that she will use the tools and skills she learned from the previous and survive until help arrives. Motivated to make more progress in the morning, Belle goes to sleep so she can get an early start when the sun rises.

“Honey, are you almost ready? We are going to be late,” Belle awakens to the sound of her mother’s voice. When she opens her eyes, she is shocked to see that she is in her room and her mother is at her bedroom door. Her suitcase lies on the floor open full of unfolded clothes and all her favorite things. Belle jumps out of bed in complete excitement and rushes to give her mother a hug. Her mother then insist she hurry to be ready because the cab was on the way to bring them to the airport. “Mom, can I bring my bear and blanket?” pleaded Belle. Her mother looked down at her and smiled, “Of course you can sweetheart, I know how first flight jitters can be.”