

Scene from: 192 DAYS MISSING Copyright 2023, Sue Denver

Sara Flores

In the air from Mexico to Tulsa

We'd barely reached altitude when Emma started crying. Big, sloppy tears, then loud wails of despair. I wanted to be empathetic. I really did. I got that she was in pain from withdrawal. But her voice was like fingernails on a blackboard.

We gave her liquor. That quieted her for, oh, maybe 10 seconds. Then she got angry. She cursed me for forcing her onto the plane. Then she got up out of her seat and headed for the pilots — screaming they had to take her back. I grabbed her and threw her back in her seat.

Like a flash, Emma was out of her seat and racing to the cabin door. She grabbed the handle to open it. I ran to her faster than I'd ever run before. I grabbed her, ripped her away from the door, carried her back to her seat, and threw her back in it.

I took out zip ties to fasten her there, and she hit me in the eye with a roundhouse punch. I was shocked at how much it hurt. I finished zip-tying her to the seat.

She screamed.

I got a rag and jammed it in her mouth.

She spit it out.

I ripped off one of the window curtain ties, re-jammed the rag in her mouth, and secured it with the tie.

The noise level went a little, but she shook her head and body, kicked her feet, and made all the noise she could through the rag.

I walked slowly to the pilot's cabin, trying to lower my blood pressure. Both pilots looked at me, eyebrows raised. Their expressions clearly asked, *DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THE FUCK YOU ARE DOING?*

I said, "Please, please, tell me one of you has a sleeping pill?"

Fortunately, James did.

How do you give a pill to a kicking, screaming maniac? The same way any pet owner gives one to an unwilling pet.

I got behind her so she couldn't kick me and undid the gag. She screamed louder. I grabbed her jaws and pried them open. She tried to bite me, but really — compared to my wolf-dog Skidi — her jaw strength wasn't much.

I tilted her head back so I could drop the pill as far down her throat as possible, then I slammed her jaws shut and held them up so gravity could work on the pill. I pinched her nostrils shut and she panicked — her throat trying to swallow air. Finally, when I was absolutely sure the pill was down, I let go. She tried her best to bring back up the pill, but it didn't work.

When she started screaming again, I reattached the gag.

I walked back up to the pilots and asked if they had an extra set of headphones. I looked back into the cabin, and Carmen was pointing frantically to herself.

"Two sets," I corrected. "If you have them." They did. I walked back and handed one to Carmen.

"*Brava, chica,*" she said to me, laughing her ass off.

I sank down in a seat, pulled on the headphones, and was asleep before I could count to ten.

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