

In Search of the Absolute Truth

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Note: All names are purely fictitious

Chapter 1

Do your best shoes have an FBI file?

Y'all ever heard of the time some wacko put a bomb in his shoes and tried to blow up a plane? Pretty famous news story, I tell you. Ever since then, the TSA's turned into one of those creepy guys in your social media DMs asking for feet pics. Now, if you ask me, the TSA's always been kinda scummy; all those body scanners and body checks; can't a woman get some privacy in this world? But this? This was preposterous, asking us to strip off our shoes and reveal our bare feet? OUR NAKED BARE FEET? I could not believe the world would ever be okay with that, but here we are now, slaves to our shoe-stripping overlords.

Now, being the chatterbox that I am, I had a good job in sales. Funny how just a little convincing and some sweet talk has dollars raining down on you. I was so good at ripping people off of their money that they even gave me an award. Outside of the office, they'd probably put you in jail for that, but it's not even close to the weirdest thing you can go to jail for, as you'll find out soon enough. So, I'm traveling to Saint Thomas with my co-workers for the award trip and bless the airport security's souls for making the process smooth. On the other hand, damn the airline, the pilot strolled off to get a donut, and we landed too late to catch the connecting flight. To top it off, I had to throw down money on a hotel room and wait for the next flight. The room smelled of death and cigarettes like a zombie coming out of the grave to hit that one last puff.

Now I'll tell you; when you've had to spend money on a trip that was supposed to be free, broke up with your boyfriend who's now a million miles away on some god-forsaken planet called Australia, and woken up smelling like you've engaged in adultery with a druggie zombie, you won't be in the best of moods. The worst part was that I cried all night thinking about my now ex-man, closed my eyes for barely a minute, and then it was 5 in the morning. To other people, that might not matter, but I really am not a 5 a.m. person.

I strutted down to check-in wearing jeans and my pride and joy; red patent leather silver studded Stuart Weitzman sandals. These babies had the chunkiest heel you'd ever see in a sandal. I stepped up to the counter as a buff check-in agent scanned me from top to bottom. Damn, I thought; this girl was towering over me like The Hulk; I wouldn't want those hands anywhere near me. Now She-Hulk here eyed my Weitzman sandals with what I could only describe as immense lust. I met her eyes with a stare that clearly said, "No bitch, mine!" As if she had read my mind, she ordered me to take them off. No uh. Nope. No way was she ever put her filthy hands on these babies. But I looked back up at her, towering above me, a poster child for some steroid company, and decided against taking my chances.

Reluctantly, I stripped them off my feet, placed them on the table next to her, and planted my bare feet on the dirty airport floor. There goes my foot virginity, I thought. Now this dirt was international; the filth on my feet had probably traveled the world more than I had. I made a mental note to dunk my feet in bleach after and turned to face her, fuming the entire while.

She picked up one of the sandals in her filthy hands, but I immediately snatched it and banged it against the metal table, saying, "Look, it ain't blowing up. No explosives in here." Till now, I'd never seen a white person ever go pale, but one look at her made it clear she was just a big yellow banana now. A really big one. With muscles. "OFFICER!" she yelled at the top of her lungs, loud enough to wake up a corpse. The officer, just as buff as her, stepped out from a room in the corner and strutted towards us. "Do these guys hire from a gym or what?" I thought, looking at the mass of muscles with barely distinguishable features.

Now with the officer in front of me, I could be smart and lie and say something else or repeat what I said to his colleague and probably end up in jail. Never been to jail, I thought, as I repeated to him what I had said to her. Oh boy, I hadn't seen anyone pull out anything faster since the time I told my boyfriend I wasn't on the pill. One second the handcuffs were in his hands; the next, they were on mine.

Now, I forgot to mention that I hadn't taken my Prozac and was already going into withdrawal, coupled with the claustrophobia of having my hands cuffed behind my back. "I can't breathe," I yelled and collapsed on the floor. By the power of the law, they ended up having to

call paramedics on me, and I could hear them cursing the cost of the paramedic under their breath. I giggled internally as I heard it; they'd have to pay a ton of money just because Mrs. Hulk here eyed my shoes.

On the other side, I saw my friends passing check-in and yelling to ask if I was okay. They even asked the company president to help, but he was powerless to intervene. Meanwhile, Anthony Agolia walked past coolly, winking at me; the bulge from the bag of hashish in his pocket was as obvious as it ever had been. I chuckled at the thought; here I was being arrested for my shoes, and there he was, walking free with drugs in his pocket. Maybe I should have brought hashish instead of shoes.

The paramedics checked me out, but I was stable by then, so now it was a trip in the paddy wagon. When we got to the station, the cops cuffed me to a bench. Now I could easily just walk away and take the bench with me, so they didn't really think that through. I was considering the thought when they came back and handed me chocolate bars, telling me to eat since I wouldn't get food for a while. They really cut budgets; no wonder the police had gone to shit, I thought, while nibbling on what felt like decade-old chocolate bars. Never thought chocolate would ever taste like cardboard, but leave it on the government to pull it off.

I took the one phone call they offered me, ringing my ex on the other end of the world. As an ex-cop and prosecutor, I felt like he'd still be the most helpful even if we just broke up, and he personally tried to talk to the officers, telling them that it made no sense to take me in for a shoe threat, but they slammed the phone shut midway.

Now I'm stuck in FBI headquarters, watching a cop search through countless files for my Interpol records. An African American girl on my left met eyes with mine, looked down at my feet, and said, "Nice shoes." I giggled hard and thought, "Yeah, they are. Can't wait for you to guess why I'm here." Our conversation was interrupted by a policewoman entering the room, grabbing my arm, and dragging me out to another room. They took pictures of the shoes, asked me a few questions, and then chucked me into a cell with the African American girl and a Hispanic girl, both there on drug charges. Now I've eaten ice raw, but it felt like nothing compared to the metal bench I had to lie down on. There wasn't even a pillow; the Hispanic girl handed me some

tissue paper and taught me how to make a pillow out of it. We kinda used up all of our toilet paper for pillows, so I wondered what we'd do when we needed to go. It wasn't the best pillow, but with how much shit I was in, toilet paper wasn't a bad solution. I talked to my buddies quite a bit, but once the sandwiches came, I realized what held more value in my life and sat in a corner alone, munching. The sandwiches weren't even that good, but I was starved, and at the time, they felt like the best sandwiches ever. I couldn't even tell what meat was in them, and looking back, as long as it filled my tummy, I didn't really want to find out.

The next morning, I was brought to hear charges. I was still shackled by handcuffs but clopped along proudly, my prized sandals smacking hard into the ground as I walked. I heard the most horrific kind of charges, murder, theft, blackmail, but mostly drug trafficking. I couldn't even begin to imagine how stupid my charge would sound compared to those. 'City girl uses her sandals to scare the She-Hulk of TSA,' I thought to myself and giggled. As I stepped up to the judge, apparently, my charge ended up being "intension of harming an officer with a shoe." Any reasonable judge would have dropped it right there. This man wasn't a reasonable judge. How could anyone believe I would try such a thing? If I wanted to hurt her, I'd probably have brought a knife. By the judge's instruction, I would have to come back to Miami a month later to face trial. The prosecutor himself was so embarrassed by the entire affair that he handed me a twenty to get back to the airport and even recommended an attorney to defend me. I boarded the plane and returned home; luckily for me, I didn't have to go foot-nude this time around.

A month later, I got the call for the trial. My attorney played basketball with the prosecutor, so he could get me inside information. Who knew basketball could double as a tool for espionage? He informed me that they were unwilling to drop charges, and back I flew to Miami to answer for my shoe-escapade.

I stood in front of the judge; he read out the charges. Then followed what I can only describe as a pack of hyenas on crack as he burst into laughter, followed by the entire courtroom. I started giggling too. I'd spent a lot of money to be the laughing stock of everyone there; thought I might as well enjoy it now. The judge let everyone finish laughing, enjoying the scene before he finally smacked down his hammer on his desk, and then there was silence. He gave his verdict. The shoe-

toting criminal was free to walk. I got back to work the next week and sat down on my desk. Suddenly, all my colleagues were gathered around my desk, giggling silently. And that's when I noticed it; a replica of my Weitzman sandal with a ball-shaped bomb sitting in the corner of my desk. Before I could read the plaque at the bottom, my boss put her hand on my desk, leaned forward with a smile on her face, and asked smugly, "So, Shoe bomber, is it?"