

***The Raft***  
**By S.A. Bodeen**

We recently learned that, after *THE RAFT* is published this August, S.A. Bodeen's next book will be the sequel to *THE COMPOUND*.

But while you're waiting, take a look at *THE RAFT*. Among the survivor tools in it are four flares, a little yellow cup, a small square mirror, a flashlight and some extra batteries, a sponge, seasick tablets, some gauze and bandages, a couple of packs of Tylenol, a patch kit for the raft, and a bag of Skittles. But will they be lost to Robie, the fifteen-year-old daughter of research biologists who live on Midway Island? *THE RAFT* is a gripping, edge-of-your-seat page-turner and the following excerpt is just one brief example:

From underneath the bottom of the galley's shelves, he pulled something out and tossed it down the aisle in front of him. The cabin was still dark, and I couldn't see what it was.

With a foot, he pushed it along as he walked, until he reached me.

Now I wanted to scream.

It was a yellow raft. An emergency raft.

But we would only need that if –

Max reached beneath a seat, yanked out a flotation device, and shoved it in my lap. Then he uttered the first words I'd heard him speak.

Those words weren't *Everything is okay* or *You'll be okay* or *We'll be landing at Midway soon*. Instead, they were the worst words I've ever heard:

"We lost an engine and the hydraulics are acting up. We can't get out of the storm, so Larry is going to ditch the plane while he can still control it." He nodded at the flotation device in my lap. "Put that on."

(chapter break)

My limbs froze and my heart pounded in my ears as I watched Max struggle to get back to the cockpit.

The flotation device was still in my lap, but I didn't even try to put it on. I couldn't make myself look at it. None of this was real, none of it.

Everything was fuzzy. Dull.

None of it could possibly be real.

The G-1 bounced all over, and then we went into a dive, so steep my belly strained against the seat belt, and then I couldn't do anything but hold my hands over my face and scream into them.

I didn't see Max coming until he was right there.

With one hand, he held on to the seat across the aisle. With the other, he grabbed my shoulder and shook, hard, until I stopped screaming. His face was inches from mine and his eyes narrowed. "Listen to me! If you want to get out of here, you have to listen!"

I couldn't move. I couldn't speak. I couldn't do anything *but* listen.

His breath smelled of coffee as he continued to yell at me, face-to-face. "The G-one should stay on the surface for about five minutes. If we stand any chance at all, we've got to get the raft out the window exit, then inflate it. You can't inflate it before it goes out the window, understand?"

He was so close, it seemed like I absorbed his words through my face, not my ears. I couldn't do anything but look at him.

Leaning back a little, he grimaced and then yelled, "Do you understand?" A few flecks of spit landed on my face.

I just sat there.

He slapped me.

Shocked out of my paralysis, I set a hand on my cheek and nodded like a maniac.

“Five more minutes and we’re down. Get your life vest on; get ready to exit.

We’ve got to be fast or...”

He hesitated, and then finished his sentence. “Or we’ll go down with the plane.

Understand?”

Again, I nodded, even though I only wanted to scream.

Max stumbled back to the cockpit.

I wanted so badly to hear what was worse than this. I needed to know what was worse. There had to be something worse.

Didn’t there?

My hands shook so bad that I just sat there, cradling the one thing that might save my life. The one thing that would do absolutely no good if I didn’t get it on in time.

Things suddenly got quieter.

Then there were new sounds.

Shudders and squeaks and an anguished mechanical groan like something out of a horror movie. Max barreled down the aisle toward me and, with a loud grunt, ripped the exit window open. The wind and rain burst in and would have nearly blown me away if I hadn't been strapped down.

But in one motion, Max clicked open my seat belt, gripped me under the armpits, and picked me up like a small child. Wobbling as the plane jostled us, he stepped to the opening.

The wind whistled and rain pelted my face. Putting up my hands to protect myself, I shouted, "My life vest!"

He just tightened his grip on me and screamed back, "Hold your breath and kick for the surface! The raft will be there!"

And then he threw me out the window.