

ZOE CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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Zoe is thrown into a dark, gloomy maternity nunnery with other pregnant women who the sisters are cruel.

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"Alright, time to wake up girlie, we're here at your new home," a deep, unfriendly voice said. "Get up."

I opened my eyes and had a smile on my face thinking I was in bed next to Devon but when I saw more clearly that Devon was not beside me in bed and I was just in back of a van with a mean looking man staring down at me in dark uniform my smile vanished. Memories of what happened flashed before my eyes. Devon, Gene and I going to a restaurant, Devon getting a job in North of France and we were so happy and in love. Made plans to be married. We had our whole lives planned out until horrible people came along and tore all our dreams and us apart forever.

The man pulled me roughly to my feet onto the ground.

"You do know it's rude to pick a lady up like that without her permission, don't you? Especially one who's in a delicate condition," I said firmly. "Who are you?"

"It doesn't matter who we are, Mam, we've just been told to bring you here," the man replied taking me roughly by the elbow.

I looked up at what was in front of me - a tall, dark, and gloomy building standing before me with a cross right next to it. We were at a nunnery? I thought with confusion. Why was I here? The men dragged me towards the door that said, 'SISTER ANDREA', and knocked on the door.

The door opened and a tall woman in a black and white nun's uniform stood there with a firm expression on her face. She looked at me, "you must be Zoe Smith, is that correct?"

"Yes," I said.

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, mam," I replied.

"That's better," she said walking to her desk and sat down in the chair. "Please," she gestured towards the empty chair in front of her desk.

I walked into the room and sat down on the chair.

The two uniformed men came into the room as well but stood near the door.

"Now, do you know why you're here?" Sister Andrea asked, hands clasped together on her desk.

I shook my head.

Sister Andrea raised her eyebrows in surprise and glanced over at the two uniformed men. "You haven't told her why he's here?"

One of the men stepped forward with his hands behind his back "no, Sister Andrea," he said.

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"Why ever not?" she demanded.

"We thought it be best better coming from you, you being a nun and all," the hardness of her eyes made the man uncomfortable.

Sister Andrea shook her head in disapproval and then turned back to me. "Miss Smith, the reason why these two officers have brought you here is because we have reason to believe that you are carrying a child inside you due to the devil's work. Saying that all pregnant young women who are not married must have the devil's work in them all must come here to have their babies."

"But I have someone and my baby was created by love and not the nonsense of the devil's seed," I began angrily, but an amused expression on the Sister's face stopped me from continuing.

"Oh, yes, you mean your cousin, Mr Devon Smith. Miss Smith you seem like an intelligent young woman but do you honestly think that having an affair with a family relative and becoming pregnant, is right? I don't think so. It is the work of the devil. Evil is inside you and you should remain here until your baby is born. Once it is born it shall be taken away to an orphanage where it shall be taken cared for by a young couple who shall love him or her as their own."

Tears of anger welled up in my blue eyes "you can't do this. I have rights to keep my child when I have it. I will hire the best lawyer in the county to stop this," I said angrily with determination. "You cannot take away my baby!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Smith, but God will not allow the mother of such an incestuous act to keep her child when it is born." Sister Andrea told me calmly and firmly.

There was a knock on the door and another nun walked into the room.

"Sister Maria, this is Zoe Smith. Take her to the maternity building with the others," Sister Andrea commanded.

Sister Maria nodded and looked at me, "this way, Miss Smith," she said, waiting for me to stand up and follow her out. I did.

I glanced back and said with such vengeance "this isn't over Sister Andrea, not over by a long shot," I slammed the door shut behind me.

I followed Sister Maria down the long, narrow hallway of the maternity building. There were rooms on either side of the corridor with pregnant young women inside. Sister Maria stopped at the end of the corridor and unlocked a door. She pushed me inside and then locked up the door again and her heels clicked away as she walked back down the corridor.

I looked around the room of grey stone walls, narrow Stone Age windows and six beds. There were five young pregnant women sitting on them staring at me.

One of the heavier pregnant women struggled to her feet and waddled over to me with her hands on her lower back she stuck her face in my face and then walked around me checking me out with a face of disgust. "Who are you? You seem like some fancy, snotty, rich woman in your fancy dress?" she said, making fun of my clothes and me. She laughed and so did a couple of the other women.

"My name is Zoe Smith," I replied confidently, holding my head up high. "And I am not snotty."

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She picked up a big, brown dress from the empty bed and threw it at me, "put this on. This is no place for fancy clothes and in a couple of months you won't be able to fit in them anyway," she said.

"Thank you," I said. "Is there a bathroom anywhere where I can get changed in?"

All five women looked at each other and then burst out laughing.

"Sorry, doll face, there's no bathroom here to change into. We all have to change in here. It's the rules," said the young woman before. "Oh, by the way, my name's Heather Green."

"Nice to meet you," I felt uncomfortable that I had to change in front of five strangers.

They laughed again.

"Go on then," urged one of the other pregnant women. "We're not going to bite."

I forced on a smile and began slowly taking off my dress when I noticed that all five of them circled around me in a row watching me. "Do you mind turning around while I changed?" I asked.

"You have to change in front of us," said Heather Green, a girl with chin length brown hair and green eyes.

I quickly took off the dress and put the brown dress over me.

"See, that wasn't so bad, now was it?" said Heather. "It's huge on you but you'll soon fill out and it will be a tight fit. Like mine is," she glanced down at her enormous bulging stomach and rubbed her hands on it.

The sound of the door unlocking grabbed all of our attention as it opened and Sister Maria and Sister Andrea walked in with a set of keys each hung around their necks.

Sister Andrea smiled at each of us and her gaze rested upon me and she walked towards me making me hold my breath. "How are you settling in, Miss Smith? These girls aren't giving you too much of a hard time, are they?" she asked as her eyes grew wide as she noticed I had changed into the brown dress. "Very nice, Miss Smith. Sister Maria, could you take out Miss Smith's hair from her hairnet, please."

The other Sister nodded and yanked out my hair from the bun and my long blonde hair tumbled over my shoulders.

"Hmm..." commented Sister Andrea with her right hand on her chin whilst walking around me and then stood back in front of me. "Sister Maria."

"Yes, Sister Andrea," said Sister Maria.

"Cut Miss Smith's hair to her chin."

I stared back at them horrified. I lost my brother and my true love, I didn't want to lose my beautiful hair as well which I was blessed with from my mother. "No, please, don't!" I begged.

Sister Maria pulled out a large pair of steel scissors from her pocket and glanced at Sister Andrea waiting for her to give her the nod to start chopping.

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"We do not allow young pregnant women to have long hair here, Miss Smith, because not only is this a place for young, unmarried pregnant women to stay during pregnancy to labour but also a place to work. All of our women have to work; that includes washing, cleaning dirty washing by hand, cooking, scrubbing down floorboards and sinks and bathtubs." With that she gave a small nod to Sister Maria to start cutting my hair.

Sister Maria began cutting my hair. My long, beautiful, golden locks the only thing left of my mother's were part of me. I watched with tears streaming down my cheeks as clumps of hair fell onto the floor.

What did I do wrong? All I ever did was fall madly, deeply in love with my cousin!

Five minutes later Sister Maria had finished and the two Sisters left the room and before Sister Andrea left she said to me, "you start work in an hour, Miss Smith, down in the kitchen don't be late. I want your hair swept up from the floor by the time I come back." The door shut and then the key locked in the lock.

I slowly sat down on my new bed whilst staring down at the big pile of my beautiful blonde locks on the floor. I touched the top of my head with my hands and ran them down the length of my hair, which was cut right to my chin.

"Don't be such a baby, Smith girl, it's just hair, it'll grow back," said Heather Green with a bitter laugh.

One of the other girls walked over to me and was a lot more sympathetic and gave me a white handkerchief. I smiled at her with thanks and she smiled back.

"I'm Sara Wilcox, by the way," she introduced herself. She was a pretty young woman with chin length black hair and blue eyes. "I've got a hand mirror if you want to borrow it."

I nodded, "yes, please," I said, as she pulled out a white hand mirror from the front pocket of her brown dress and handed it to me.

I opened it up and sucked in my breath as I stared horrified at my new hair now. My eyes started to well up again but I choked the tears up. It was time to toughen up. After everything that has happened all my life - all the pain of losing my loved ones, Mama, Papa, Grandmother Maxine, Aunt and Uncle, cousins, and now may of lost my one true love and my brother. It made me angry, real angry. Why had everyone I had ever loved died or is torn away from me?

An hour passed quickly and I had swept up my hair from the floor and put it in the bin and took it outside the kitchen when the girls and I went down to start cooking.

A short, plump woman in her early fifties came walking towards me with a friendly smile wearing a white apron around her waist with flour down it. "Hello, you must be the new girl, Zoe Smith," she said.

"Yes," I said, smiling.

"Welcome to the kitchen working area," she said, gesturing towards the large kitchen with enthusiasm. "I am Mrs Stevens, and if there's anything you'd like to ask about anything or know about anything, I'm here."

"Thank you, that's very kind of you. But I won't be staying here for that long," I told her.

"Oh?" Mrs Stevens said, surprised. "Why is that?"

"I shouldn't really be here; it's all one big misunderstanding that I was brought here."

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"You are an unmarried pregnant woman, aren't you not?" she questioned.

I nodded my head. "Yes, but..." I began but she cut me off.

"Well then, you're meant to be here," she said firmly. "Now, go over to where those other young women are and do exactly what they're doing, OK? And then you'll do fine so don't worry." Mrs Stevens pushed me forward and I walked over to the couple of pregnant women who were making cakes.

I am imprisoned in this hell hole of a place from the man I love and my brother. Tears of unhappiness ran down my face into the cake mixer making it soften and wet. And the fear of losing my unborn child once it's born to some strangers made me cry even harder with sadness.

Could my life get any worse?

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