

Excerpt from *Finding Grace*

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A flurry of activity occurs at the front door. Several nuns holding umbrellas line the entrance to greet the girls. I press my face against the glass to watch them climb off the buses. The sound of their chatter drifts up as they run to avoid getting wet from the rain.

I take one last glance at the photo album and then tuck it underneath my pillow.

A herd of clomping shoes and chatting girls enters the dorm. Within minutes twenty thirteen-year-old girls talking at once take over. "First one there gets dibs on their old bed from last year!" a girl yells.

I open my armoire doors and rearrange my clothing again. With my curtains closed, I feel safe and protected listening to their conversations.

"Who's nicked my spot?" someone says from the other side of the curtain. Without waiting for me to answer, a girl with long red hair whips open my curtain.

My throat is suddenly bone dry. I recognize Deirdra, one of the girls who chased Dotty and me several times.

"Grace?" she says.

I glance down at my feet.

"I thought you lived with the nuns. What are you doing in my old spot?"

"Deirdra!" An older girl with a clipboard and a whistle around her neck shouts.

"Kitty, are you really going to follow me all over this god-forsaken prison?" Deirdra pelts back. "You've been on me ever since the boat ride over!"

"Put a sock in it, Deirdra. Maybe try being nicer and see how that works for you," Kitty says. "You've just lost a point – not the best way to start the term."

“I think you’re taking this ‘prefect’ thing a little too far,” Deirdra says, stomping off.

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