

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

Brides

by Rosalyn Hurst

Can you have any idea what it was like for me, to be sent away from home to that bloody convent because I caused my mother grief? Because I did not live up to your expectations at school? Or did you just want me out of the way so I couldn't embarrass you? You the lay preacher at church and your very close friend the priest.

And that boarding school, harsh, cold, devoid of love. All those women and their long black habits, their faces hidden. Invisibility was not achieved, their shape and their shoes gave them away. Jaz and I could spot the tyrants from miles away and hide the fags and roll down our skirts before they spotted us.

You wrote to me in anger, when Reverend Mother contacted you about my choice of confirmation name. We all had to choose a saint who would be our life model. Those wimps in my class wanted to be like St Theresa, what did she do, lock herself up in a room, or others all virgins and martyrs. Not me, I chose St Joan of Arc. The Bishop asked me why and I said because she rode horses and led an army, at least she had some guts.

Then he gave a sermon about how us girls should think of becoming nuns and joining the order. And then what did he say, "Well Reverend Mother, I don't think this one will ever be a bride of Christ."

'Hah! Over my dead body,' I thought, but how prophetic that was.

Only Jaz, the exotic Non Catholic was my pal, Jaz who never talked about her background or her family, lovely Jaz, my best and only friend. Crunch day came, when Jaz was overheard saying she thought the new young curate was fit.

"Let's go before we both get slung out of here," she said, "huh those brides of Christ what they need is a good session of proper sex."

I laughed, shocked, horrified and delighted.

So, we scarpered, first to pals of hers, who she described as honourable but 'fit' men who would look after us. Then a plan to go and help in Syria, visions of Joan of Arc came to mind, she was my saint after all and I am sure would look after me. Then war death famine failure, a blinding drive to keep alive.

Now I am in the refugee camp, surrounded by women, black all black, hooded, faceless. Yesterday, I borrowed Jaz's shoes to just to go out a little further. It was the convent nightmare again, Jaz was dragged out and shot, and I kept silent, remember, we are invisible except for our shoes. And me, I am trapped, not a bride of Christ but a Jihadi Bride.

Money is useless so despite your wealth it will be taken by the men, and don't think of visiting, not that you would, I know you don't want me back. I am not fooled by your late concern. All I need is a bloody passport for anywhere and I cannot see you getting one.

Don't write. Don't come. I don't need it. It's not why I've written.

Just send this letter to your Brides of Christ.