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ESCAPIST PLEASURE. I ADORED IT!"  
—Sophie Kinsella, *New York Times*  
bestselling author of *Confessions of a Shopaholic*

# Adored

A NOVEL

TILLY BAGSHAW

# *Shored*

TILLY  
BAGSHAW



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## THE MAJOR PLAYERS

**DUKE McMAHON:** Legendary Hollywood movie star and Lothario. Autocratic patriarch of the McMahon dynasty.

**MINNIE McMAHON:** Duke's long-suffering wife.

**PETE McMAHON:** Their embittered son. A producer.

**CLAIRE McMAHON:** Pete's quiet, academic wife. Mother of Siena.

**LAURIE McMAHON:** Duke and Minnie's fat, useless daughter, Pete's sister.

**TARA:** Pete's spiteful PA.

**CAROLINE BERKELEY:** Upper-class English gold digger, Duke's long-term mistress and Hunter's feckless mother.

**GEORGE AND WILLIAM BERKELEY:** Caroline's pompous, bigoted brothers.

**SEBASTIAN BERKELEY:** Caroline's besotted, elderly father.

**HUNTER McMAHON:** Gorgeous, sweet-natured but neglected illegitimate son of Duke and Caroline.

**SIENA McMAHON:** Duke's feisty granddaughter, the only child of Pete and Claire McMahon. A raving beauty.

**MAX DE SEVILLE:** Childhood best friend of Hunter McMahon. Sexy, blond cad in the finest English tradition.

**HENRY ARKELL:** Max's beloved half-brother, farmer, family man, and all-around good guy.

**MUFFY ARKELL:** His harassed but devoted, very pretty wife.

**BERTIE, CHARLIE, AND MADDIE ARKELL:** Their children.

**TITUS AND BORIS:** Their dogs.

**TIFFANY WEDAN:** Hunter's actress girlfriend. Like him, beautiful inside and out.

**LENNOX:** A gay actor/waiter. Tiffany Wedan's loyal best friend.

**JACK AND MARCIE WEDAN:** Tiffany's parents, simple folk from Colorado.

**RANDALL STEIN:** Billionaire producer and biggest Hollywood player since Duke McMahon. A bastard.

**SEAMUS:** Duke's old childhood friend, now his valet.

**GARY ELLIS:** Unscrupulous cockney property developer.

**CHRISTOPHER WELLESLEY:** Charming old gentleman farmer, owner of one of the most beautiful estates in the Cotswolds.

**MARSHA:** Siena's diminutive but powerful modeling agent. A drunken dynamo.

**INES PRIETO MORENO:** Flame-haired Spanish supermodel.

**DIERK MULLER:** Charmless but talented German movie director.

**HUGH ORCHARD:** Highly respected, discreetly gay king of US network television. Writer and creator of a number of hit shows, including *Counselor* and *UCLA*.

**JAMIE SILFEN:** The most powerful casting agent in Hollywood.

**CAMILLE ANDREWS:** Texan model/actress/whore. A Sky Bar bimbo on the make.

**MIRIAM STANLEY:** L.A. starlet. Has slept with every successful producer in town.

*Adored*





## PROLOGUE

ENGLAND, 1998

Siena was going back to Hollywood if it killed her.

"So you see, Sister Mark," she continued, carefully composing her features into an expression she hoped looked both remorseful and resigned, "I do realize this is an expellable offense. And I just want you to know that I *totally* accept responsibility for my actions."

God, she sounded almost tearful. But then she'd always known she was a terrific actress. The old witch might actually be falling for it.

"I just don't know what made me do it"—she dropped her eyes shamefully to her lap; all nuns, she had learned, were suckers for a bit of humility—"but I quite understand that I have left you with no choice. I've let St. Xavier's down."

Fabulous. This was working like a charm. Mentally, Siena began calculating how long it would take her to clear out her poky little dorm room. She'd have to say goodbye to the girls, of course, but if she really got her skates on she might make the six o'clock flight to L.A. Or maybe there'd be formalities to go through? She'd have

to see the head of governors, perhaps. Even so, an early-morning flight out would still get her there in time for a blow-dry at Zapata before she hit the bars on Melrose.

"Miss McMahon." The headmistress's softly lilting Irish voice belied a firmness of purpose that Siena recognized only too well. She had come to hate the way Sister Mark pronounced her name: "McMaaarn." She seemed to stretch the word out, like torture. She wondered what sort of rambling lecture she was in for this time.

Looking around her, Siena took in the familiar surroundings of Sister Mark's office for what she hoped would be the last time. It was simply furnished, as befitted a nun's rooms, but not austere. A full but slightly overblown bunch of peach-colored roses dominated the desk, and their scent carried all the way to the window seat, which was lined with brightly colored cushions, the slightly threadbare handiwork of generations of budding seamstresses. An unobtrusive crucifix hung against one of the whitewashed walls, while the others were plastered with photographs of St. Xavier's girls past and present, commemorating various sporting or dramatic achievements. Siena, who was not much of a team player, did not feature, other than on the giant white board displaying the detentions received by pupils, where her name made repeated appearances.

It was actually the third time this term that she had been summoned to the headmistress's aerie of an office above the school chapel. In fact, in the seven years since Siena had first arrived at the school as a frightened ten-year-old, Sister Mark had lost count of the times she had peered across her desk at the beautiful, truculent, scowling little face of this most talented and yet most troublesome of pupils.

No matter how many times she looked at Siena, she never ceased to be struck by the uncanny resemblance: She really was the spitting image of her famous grandfather. As a young girl in Connemara, Sister Mark (or Eileen Dineen, as she was then) had always had a bit of a soft spot for Duke McMahon. Well, it was hard not to. *Capri Sunset*, that had been his first big film, with Maureen O'Hara. Eileen and her pals must have seen it, what, nine or ten times? That dark flowing hair, that deep, rich, almost smoldering voice. Oh yes, in his day old Duke's romantic films had been quite an occasion of sin for half the teenage population of Ireland—not to mention the rest of the world. And now here she was, fifty years later, forty years a nun, wondering what in heaven's name to do with his troublesome granddaughter.

Smoothing down her brown Viyella skirt—the nuns at St. Xavier's no longer wore the habit, and the only thing that set them apart from the rest of the teaching staff was a plain silver cross worn at the neck—she moved her mahogany chair back a couple of inches and fixed her gaze once again on the enigma that was Siena McMahon.

For some reason, the child had never really settled in at St. Xavier's. She was popular enough, that wasn't the problem. There may have been a touch of the green-eyed monster going on with some of the other girls, but as a rule, they all wanted to be associated with Siena: Granddaughter of a Hollywood legend and daughter of one of the world's most successful movie producers, she represented a glamour and excitement far beyond anything that these well-bred English gentlemen's daughters had ever experienced.

Siena had other advantages as well. She was undoubtedly a beauty, and fifteen years of teaching in a girls'

boarding school had taught Sister Mark that this, sadly, was a surefire passport to popularity, with or without the McMahon name behind her. And despite her truly appalling lack of discipline and almost pathological aversion to hard work, Siena had sailed through her school career with straight A's across the board. On the face of it, she had very little to complain about.

Even so, it didn't take Einstein to work out that, for all her advantages and talents, the girl was deeply unhappy at school.

Her complaint had been the same since the first week she arrived, a belligerent, feisty little madam even then: She wanted to go home. It was this that Sister Mark found particularly odd, since it was obvious Siena profoundly disliked both her parents. Tragic really. Other than the yearly Prize Day, which they both religiously attended, Pete and Claire McMahon seemed to spend as little time with their only daughter as was humanly possible. Six weeks over the summer holidays were the only time they spent together at the family compound in Hollywood. Siena never flew home for half-terms or the shorter holidays, spending her breaks instead in the charge of a Spanish housekeeper at her parents' Knightsbridge flat. To be sure, that was no life for a child. But it only seemed to make the girl more willful, more determined and desperate than ever to get back home.

Looking across at Siena, Sister Mark noticed she was biting her lower lip, a childish signal of nervousness that looked out of place on the womanly seventeen-year-old she had become. A previous generation would have described Siena as "buxom," but nowadays the girls seemed to interpret that as "fat." In fact, Siena had a small frame dominated by a very curvaceous bust, to which her blue

uniform sweater clung almost obscenely. Her small rosebud mouth, pale skin, and thick cascade of dark curls all belonged to another, more sensuous and feminine era. Only her eyes—two dark blue flashes of ruthless determination—gave her otherwise angelic face its modern, edgy twist. Today they were narrowed in wary anticipation.

The headmistress sighed. She was almost as tired of this battle as Siena was. This time she had been caught red-handed, smoking marijuana in the prefects' common room. Actually, "caught" was hardly the right word, as she had made no attempt whatsoever to conceal the offense. Under normal circumstances, she should, of course, be expelled. But A-levels were only a few months away, and Siena was predicted to do exceptionally well. Besides, after seven long years, Sister Mark was damned if she was going to send the little horror home now.

Reluctantly dragging her thoughts from the duty-free Burberry coats at Heathrow—or perhaps a bag, to pacify her mother?—Siena turned to face the elderly nun. Could she just get on with it for once and skip the damn lectures?

"Miss McMahon," resumed Sister Mark, "as you rightly say, you have indeed let St. Xavier's down."

Thank God, thought Siena, she's finally going to kick me out of this hellhole.

"However, I feel it would be"—a glancing smile flickered across the older woman's lips—"precipitate. Or, shall we say, rash? to assume that you leave me with 'no choice' in terms of your punishment."

Siena swallowed hard. Fuck. What was she going on about now? The spluttering roar of a broken exhaust pipe broke the silence for a moment, and Siena's eyes were

drawn to the rickety old minivan belching its way down the school drive, its chassis seeming to shiver and shake in the biting January wind. It was supposed to be white but was covered in a layer of grime so thick that it stood out as almost metallic gray against the backdrop of snowy lawns. Inside, giggling groups of girls huddled together on their way to some hockey match or other. They all looked so fucking happy, it made Siena want to throw up.

"It has not entirely escaped my notice, Siena," continued Sister Mark as the noise of the failing engine faded into the distance, "that you harbor a strong desire to leave St. Xavier's. Although I will confess I am not quite sure why this should be."

Not sure why she would want to leave St. Xavier's? Jesus Christ, surely the question was why the hell would anybody want to stay? Chapel at seven-thirty in the morning, lights out at ten-thirty P.M., more fucking meaningless rules than the Gestapo. And the worst thing was, most of the girls became totally brainwashed. They actually *looked forward* to coming back to sixth form because they got to have their own toaster in the common room! Toast Privilege, that's what they called it. Was Siena the only one who wanted to scream out loud: *EATING TOAST IS NOT A PRIVILEGE, IT'S A BASIC FUCKING HUMAN RIGHT!* In L.A., seventeen-year-old girls had cars. They wore designer clothes, not some dykey old uniform. They went to parties. They got laid. They had *lives*, for Christ's sake. St. Xavier's—in fact, the whole of fucking England, gray, freezing, miserable England—was stuck in some kind of nightmare time warp.

"I am not prepared to be manipulated into expelling you when I know full well that this was the response you

were hoping for," announced Sister Mark. Siena glared at her openly now, all pretense at humility gone. The headmistress plowed on. "I have, instead, decided to revoke all your sixth-form privileges until the end of the year."

Oh my God. Siena's stricken face said it all. "Till the end of the *year*? You can't do that!"

"Oh, I think you'll find I can." The nun smiled serenely. "Furthermore, you will be gated for the next four weeks. That means no Exeat weekends, no social events, no after-school activities. Other than Mass, of course."

Oh, of course. Mass. Terrific.

"Siena. Listen to me." Sister Mark's tone had softened, but Siena was oblivious. If she wasn't going home, then what was the point in listening? What else mattered? The nun reached across the desk for her hand and squeezed it with genuine kindness, ignoring the girl's look of revulsion. "You are in the home stretch, my dear."

Siena watched the sunlight glinting off Sister Mark's crucifix and shielded her eyes. She didn't want to hear this.

"It's January now. By July, your A-levels will be over, and if you'd only start to apply yourself, well, you've every chance of a place at Oxford. Every chance." The headmistress squeezed her hand again encouragingly, willing the child to look up.

But Siena had tuned out. Sister Mark didn't understand. How could she? Withdrawing her hand, she gazed out the window, across the frosty convent lawns, to the frozen hills of the Gloucestershire landscape beyond. It was so cold that icicles still clung to the twigs of the sycamores, and she could see the frozen breath of the group of third-years chattering animatedly on their way



to class, no doubt excited by the snow and the prospect of sledding at the end of the day.

Despite the beauty of the scene, Siena's mind was six thousand miles away. Not in her parents' home in the Hollywood Hills but at Grandpa Duke's in Hancock Park, far back into her childhood. Suddenly she was eight years old again, bounding up the steps of the mansion and into his arms. Whenever she closed her eyes, she could feel the warmth and strength of that embrace as though it were yesterday. Sitting in the hard-backed mahogany chair in Sister Mark's underheated study, she longed for that warmth with every breath in her body.

To her childish mind, it had all seemed so permanent. Grandpa Duke, the house, her happiness. But it had all melted away, all of it, like the Gloucestershire snow. And now here she was, as far from that happiness and comfort as it was possible to be.