

SISTERS
of the
LAST STRAW

**The Case of the Vanishing
Novice**

“Don’t fret,” said Mother Mercy. “Maybe Sister Krumbles and Sister Lovely have already found her.”

But soon they saw the two Sisters walking toward the car. Kathy was not with them!

“Oh...Missing Mystery!” whispered Sister Lacey.

“We looked down every alley and side street!” said Sister Krumbles, now out of breath. “Kathy has vanished!”



Karen Kelly Boyce

SISTERS

of the

LAST
STRAW

#2 The Case of the
Vanishing Novice

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Dedicated to
Kaitlyn Faith Ditchik,
my granddaughter:
Always let those you love know where you are.

With special thanks to Kathy Scudieri,
whose laughter in a coffee shop one night
encouraged me to write this series.

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Summary: New mishaps occur in the Sister's convent when their
neighbor dislikes their new puppy and their new sister-in-training
goes missing!

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Chapter 1

Stepping In It

Sister Shiny's eyes popped open. It was still dark in her bedroom, but her large grin seemed to light the room. She slipped her feet into her white slippers, tied her fluffy robe around her waist and tiptoed quietly out the door.

Last week, when Sister Shiny came downstairs, Mary, the housekeeper, had already finished cleaning the convent! There was nothing left for Sister Shiny to clean. All week she had been upset about it. So today Sister Shiny had set her alarm clock to wake her up an hour before Mary arrived.

And it worked! Sister Shiny was happy as she snuck downstairs. She grabbed a cloth and spray bottle from the closet and began to clean.

Sister Shiny started in the parlor by spraying the large mirror. She almost squealed with delight. Today she would clean all the mirrors, windows, and shiny surfaces. *Not only can I clean, she smiled, I also get to look at myself while I do it!*

Looking at herself in the mirror, she wondered why God had made her so pretty. She knew it was wrong to think so much about how she looked. It was vanity—and her vanity had gotten her dismissed from all the religious orders she had tried to enter before.

Sister Shiny's superiors had told her the problem was not only that she liked to look at herself. The problem was that it distracted her from her other duties. Whenever Sister Shiny was given a job, she would see herself in a mirror and forget what she was doing. She would spend time admiring herself instead of doing her work.

She had tried to stop, but never succeeded. That was why she had been asked to leave the other communities of sisters she had tried to join.

But this community, Our Lady of the Angels, was different. All the Sisters in this convent struggled with bad habits. This order was a chance for them to try to conquer their faults together.

Sister Shiny was glad that she had been allowed to join, even if their Bishop jokingly had nicknamed them the Sisters of the Last Straw. Still, she could not really see what was wrong with admiring herself. *If God didn't want me to enjoy looking at myself, why did He make me so beautiful?* Sister Shiny wondered.

“Look at those large green eyes, and my flawless skin,” she whispered to herself as she worked. Cleaning this big mirror gave her a nice long time to admire herself.

Sister Shiny cleaned and cleaned. By the time she heard Mary opening the convent door, she was almost done. She looked at her happy face in the shiny side of the toaster one more time. That's when she felt it. A cold, wet liquid was soaking her slipper. *What is it?* she thought, looking down.

“No....I’m dirty!” she screamed. Mary came running as the howling woke the other Sisters in the house.



Mother Mercy jumped from her bed. Scrambling for her glasses on the nightstand, she tried to get them on. Looking at the clock, she could feel her face getting warm.

“What kind of racket is going on downstairs this early in the morning?” she shouted. Something was wrong, and she had better find out what it was. **Lord, help me be patient!** she thought.



“Oh! Waking Wailings!” muttered Sister Lacey when she heard the screams. The short sister quickly put on her robe. When she got excited, she had a habit of using bad words. So she tried to use other words instead when something upset her. Now she thought, *Is someone breaking into our convent? Is the house on fire?*

“Oh, Screaming Shenanigans!” she yelled as she stumbled to the hallway.



When Sister Lovely heard the noise, she knew her sisters needed her. Sighing, the tall sister put on her slippers and hurried out to the hallway to see if she could help.



Sister Krumbles fell to the floor in a mass of tangled covers. *What is going on?* She could not get out of the blankets. She rolled around on the floor, getting more and more frustrated. Finally getting free, she rushed to her bedroom door with a blanket caught in her sock. She bolted down the hallway. “I’m coming!” she shouted.



Hearing the shouts and screams, Kathy jumped up in the dark and put on her robe and slippers. But she was confused by her new room.

Kathy had come to the convent just a month ago to decide if she wanted to join the community. She was a postulant in the order.

Instead of opening the door to the hallway, Kathy opened her closet door and ran inside, slamming the door behind her. It took her a few seconds to realize what she had done. Fully awake, she finally found the right door and scrambled out of the room.

There, she found all the other Sisters stumbling down the dark hallway. Frightened, Kathy cried, “Who is it? Is it a robber?”

Another heart-rending scream rose from downstairs, “No....no!” Sister Lovely covered her mouth and Sister Krumble’s eyes opened wide.

“Let’s try to stay calm!” Mother Mercy commanded. She had noticed that Sister Shiny was missing. “Follow me, Sisters!”

Crowding behind her, the group started down the stairs. Then Sister Krumble’s foot got caught in the blanket. She lost her balance.

She tried to grab the banister to stop her fall. But instead she fell into Sister Lovely, who stumbled into Sister Lacey, who bumped into Mother Mercy.

“Ouch!” “Oof!” “Ow!” “Whoo...oa!” shouted all the Sisters as they stumbled down the steps. Just then, another shriek pierced the air.

“It’s coming from the kitchen!” shouted Mother Mercy. She ran down the hall with the rest of the Sisters right behind her. Reaching the kitchen, they stopped in surprise.

There was not a fire. There was not a burglar. There was just Sister Shiny standing in the kitchen, her fists in balls, her eyes closed. Next to her, the housekeeper Mary was trying to wipe up something on the floor.

“What is it, Shiny?” Sister Krumbles panted. Trembling, Sister Shiny stopped screaming and pointed to her foot. She had one spotless white slipper and one wet, yellow one. “I stepped in this horrible yellow puddle. What on earth could it be?” she cried, tears running down her face.

Kathy hung her head and blushed. “Oh dear... It looks like my puppy Gracie has wet the floor,” she said.

“Oh...Puddles of Pee!” yelled Sister Lacey. “All that screaming for just a little mess?”

A yellow puppy appeared at the kitchen door. She barked with delight at seeing all the Sisters.

When Kathy had come to the convent, she didn’t want to leave her dog behind. Mother Mercy had allowed her to bring her pet, which seemed like a bad idea now.

“That dog!” Sister Shiny sputtered. She pointed to the pup. “That dog has to go!”

Kathy picked up Gracie. “It’s my fault. I let her out of her crate when I woke up to take her for a walk, but then I fell back to sleep.”

This was too much for Mother Mercy. She was cross from having been woken up. She was sore from falling down steps. And she was angry to see the mess on the floor. “Well, for once I think Sister Shiny is right—that dog is too much trouble!”

Sister Lovely noticed the tears that ran down Kathy's face. She rushed to give her a hug, "Now, now—don't cry! Please let her keep her dog, Mother Mercy." Gracie wriggled in Kathy's arms and licked Sister Lovely's face.

Mother Mercy's face grew red with anger. "I am the head of the convent!" she shouted. "I make the decisions, and I say the dog goes!"

Kathy hugged the puppy tighter, and began to weep. Sister Lacey blurted out, "Oh....Mother of Meanness!" Then she remembered that this was not the right way for a sister to talk to her mother superior, and she said, "I'm sorry."

Mother Mercy remembered that her bad habit was losing her temper. She silently prayed and tried to stay calm, but she still felt very, very angry.

"But don't you think Kathy should have another chance?" Sister Lovely asked. "She only forgot once. And dogs can be useful."

Sister Krumbles said, "Why, we can train Gracie to be a guard dog."

Mother Mercy tried not to yell. “Why in the world would we need a guard dog? To protect us from Sister Shiny’s screaming?”

“No, no,” laughed Sister Krumbles. “We can train her to guard the goats. She can live outside with them. That way she will not mess up the house.”

“Why, that’s a wonderful idea!” Sister Lovely said.

“I suppose that might work,” Mother Mercy said gruffly. She was beginning to be sorry for having yelled. Now she would have to ask God’s forgiveness.

Kathy gave Mother Mercy a hug. Mother Mercy tried not to be mad when Gracie licked her nose. “Well, we are up early! Let’s go into the chapel and begin Morning Prayer,” Mother Mercy said. She wanted to apologize to Jesus for yelling. So she quickly went to the chapel before *anything* else could happen to make her lose her temper.

Sister Shiny still stood on one foot weeping.

“I will help you, Sister.” With a smile, Sister Lovely helped Sister Shiny hop to the kitchen sink. Sister Shiny wiped her eyes and said, “Thank you.”

Sister Lacey helped Mary finish cleaning up. Kathy just hugged her puppy and said softly, “Thank you for giving Gracie another chance, Sisters.”

“That’s what community is for,” Sister Krumbles said. She felt so happy about her fellow sisters. She held out her arms and stepped back to look at them all fondly. “Isn’t it wonderful how we can solve any problem by working together?”

Just then, she felt something squish under her bare foot and between her toes. Looking down, she saw something soft and brown. And she yelled just as loud as Sister Shiny had.

Sister Lacey’s eyes opened wide as she scrambled to get the mop again. “Oh...Piles of Puppy Poop!”