

CFINN by G.L. Anderson - Chapter SEVEN

The Doc had been away for several weeks, and Zena was nervous about going to his office for her examination. “I don't want to go in there, Cree. Why couldn't he come to the cabin like before?”

“The machine is here.” “Why do we need the machine?” “So we can see the baby move, Zena.”

Then, placing his finger on her lips, he said, “We've been through all this, Zena. No more questions. No more complaints. You are going inside.”

“No. I decided not to go.” “Zena, don't test me.”

“I'm not going, Cree.” “You are.” “No, I am not.”

Sighing, his fingers encased and massaged the sides of her neck. Leaning his face to hers, she turned her head, offering herself to him and smiling. He lifted her hair, brushed his lips against the nape of her neck, leaving a love bite, and whispered, “You'll see the Doc today, Zena, and you'll trust me to take care of you.”

She leaned toward his lips with a soft moan and clung to him, but seeing tears welling in her eyes, Cree said, “Zena, stop it.” “I don't want to go in there,” she said as tears slid down her cheeks. “It reminds me of the academy, Cree.” “At some point, you are gonna have to start trusting me. I'll be with you the whole time.” “I trust you, Cree, I do.” He dabbed her eyes and then took her inside the building.

They were led to one of the exam rooms, where the nurse handed a gown to Zena and told her to put it on before turning to Cree and telling him to wait in the lobby. Gazing at Zena, Cree said, “No, I'll stay with her.” “Suit yourself,” and returning for Zena's weight and vital signs a few minutes later, she was finishing up when the door swung open, and the Doc sauntered into the room.

Zena flew into his arms, softly weeping. "I missed you, Doc, but I don't like it here" The Doc and Cree both sighed, and the nurse quickly left the office. "Zena, I missed you too, but this is the only place where we can do what we need to do today. Now let's get started because we have a lot of ground to cover."

Glancing at Cree, Doc told him that he was cleared for the rest of the day and then turned to Zena, "Let's get you on the table." Spotting the stirrups on the table, Finn became frantic, "What are you going to do to me, Doc?" she cried. Cree grabbed her before she got to the door and took her to the table. "No, Cree. Please!"

Frowning at Cree then, Doc asked, "Zena, have you been on a table like this before?" Nodding through her tears, Doc said, "Ok, let's try this a different way. Can you just put your feet on top of the stirrups instead of inside them? Yes, like that. I'll be as fast as I can, but we really need to check the baby today, Zena. Just hold on to Cree." "Doc, you're not gonna kill the baby, are you? Oh no, I'm gonna throw up!" she cried, and Cree hurriedly took her to the bathroom.

Once back on the table, Doc assured her that no one would kill her baby and finished the exam as quickly as possible. "Now, let's move down the hall to the machine I told you about. You're doing fine, Zena." The room was intimidating and already weak and nauseous, Zena began trembling when she saw yet another examining table. "Cree," she whispered as he lifted her to the table. "Zena, I'm right here. Doc's just gonna rub some of this stuff on your belly."

"Just watch the screen, and I will tell you what you are looking at. See here?" he pointed. "That's your baby." They stared in disbelief and watched the screen, "Let's see if your baby will allow us to see, oh, yes, there it is! Can you guess what we're looking at?" the Doc asked.

"It's a boy!" Cree, shouted. Doc slapped him on the back, saying, "Yep, that's your son right there, Cree!"

Zena looked at her stomach and then back to the screen. “It looks big, but my stomach looks small. How big is he, Doc?” “Around three, maybe three and a half inches, I'd say.” He held his fingers up as an example. “I'd say this little guy will join us around the end of January or early February. Just in time for his Dad's birthday.” “I never knew any boys,” she said. “The 'tomas' lived in different rooms. Will a boy like me?” Smiling, he said, “Cree and I are boys, and we like you! Your baby boy will love you so much, Zena!”

Cree kissed her and said, “Zena, we're gonna have a son!” She smiled, feeling a little overwhelmed. Doc handed them a picture from the ultrasound, and Zena clutched it to her chest. “Okay, Zena, get dressed and meet me back in my office. I have more news for you, for both of you.” Cree glanced at the Doc curiously.

Settled in big leather easy chairs, Cree and Zena looked at Doc expectantly, and he started right in. “Okay, first, Zena, I have a couple of questions. May I begin?” Clinging to Cree's hand, she nodded. “Johanssen Academy.” Zena clenched Cree's hand as both men watched her panic-stricken face turn pale. Again the Doc said. “Johansson Academy.” Her color changed from white to ashen as she sat motionless and then wavered when she tried to stand. Cree pulled her to his lap and shouted, “What the fuck, Doc?!”

“That's where you lived. Right, Zena?” and panting, she nodded. “And Vanessa said she was your friend and that she was taking you on a trip to New York, where they would send you to school to learn to read and write.”

Zena was visibly shaking now and nearly faint, while Cree glared at the Doc. “Zena, our team has been investigating Vanessa for some time. In fact, she was the target we aimed for when Cree got you instead. Turns out that Vanessa is actually a top-level trafficker, and she was taking you to New York for a New Year's Eve auction where you were to be sold at a trafficking auction.” “She wasn't my friend then?” “No, she is a top-level trafficker, Zena.” “She wasn't my friend.” Tears flowing pathetically, Zena slumped in Cree's lap. “I believed her. I thought she was my friend.”

“Cree, they were tipped off about our plan to nab Vanessa and set zena up in her place.” “I have good news too. Zena, we learned about you, your parents, and your name.”

Cree felt her stiffen in his lap as Doc continued. “It's okay; we're here for you. Take a deep breath,” Doc said. “Friends help each other get through scary times, Zena.”

He took her chin in his hands and peered into her eyes. Smiling. “So, guess what? Your birthday is Valentine's Day, February fourteenth. You turned eighteen on your last birthday. Your Dad's name was Finn Murphy Hayes, and your mother was Kathleen Emma Hayes. You were kidnapped from your home shortly before your third birthday. Your parents never had any more children and spent the rest of their lives searching for you, and I'm sorry to say they were killed in a car accident just a couple of years ago.”

“These are some pictures. See? They are holding you in this one.” Her hands shaking, she took the pictures and, looking down at them, began sobbing. “I need them,” she cried. Unable to contain themselves, both men were also wiping their eyes.

“Your parents wanted you to have both of their names, so they called you Finn Kathleen. This is your birth certificate.” She stared at the paper, and Cree pointed to her name. “Finn Kathleen Hayes,” he said. “That's your name.” “Finn Kathleen,” she said, “like my parents. They gave me their names. I'm a real person.”

“Sweetie, you've always been a real person, but the traffickers didn't want you to believe it.” “Finn. My name is Finn. Cree. Do you like my name?” Grinning through his own tears, he said, “I love your name, Finn.” he smiled. “I'm not a zena anymore. I am free!” She flung herself at Doc, straddling his lap, and stretching her arms around his chest, she wept into his shoulder.

“By the way, Cree, we also confirmed that Vanessas' ring operates internationally just as we suspected. The children are all sold into sex and organ trafficking. The female victims are called zenas; the males are called tomas.” Pointing at Finn, he said, “She tried to tell us that from the very beginning. Take her, Cree. She's had more than enough for one day.”

Once back at the cabin, Finn chatted incessantly. “Cree, I never saw a baby before.” So they made plans to look at pictures and maybe find a real baby to meet. “My mother gave me my father's name, so I want to do the same. I'll call the baby Cree. You are his Dad, right? Cree Murphy. What do you think? Will his last name be Hayes or Doyle? This stuff sure is confusing, Cree.”

“I'm getting a beer. Do you want anything?” he asked as a pretense to escape the conversation. Leaning against the kitchen wall for a few minutes, his face paled, and his mind racing, Cree tried to collect himself. 'This girl is, was, a victim of the organization that I've battled for more than five years, and she's pregnant with my kid. This is getting too real,' he thought. 'I don't know if I can do it, and I'm not sure that I want to do it.'

Cree and Doc spent the next month composing the Zena-Toma Report, which would be the foundation of their newly forming International Intelligence Network that, beginning within the next twelve months, would target Vanessa's now underground organization. Doc would serve as one of two Executive Directors in charge of an eighteen-person unit, whose primary goal would be to locate and rescue the victims at all Vanessa locations within the USA, as many as possible internationally, and permanently shut them all down.

Cree was disappointed and struggling with resentment because he was declared ineligible to share command of the international Network unit due to his responsibility for the primary zena (Finn) and her pregnancy.

As summer pressed onward, confused by Cree's growing detachment, Finn kept busy in the gardens, trying to avoid his temper, which seemed to smolder more with each passing day. She enjoyed the cool breezes under the trees in the mornings and studied diligently every evening. The afternoons, however, were playtime when Finn was confined only to the limits of her own imagination. She'd managed to drag the hose, sprinkler attached, to a sturdy limb above the tree swing, where she secured it strategically so that the water showered and cooled the entire area below and then swirled downward, creating a mudslide that she could jump to from the swing.

Unnoticed by Cree, she amused herself with her 'DIY' mudslide for several days until finally, by chance, the water drizzling through the branches caught Cree's attention as he walked past the garden window. Stunned, he watched as Finn jumped from the swing, fell to her butt, grabbed Bear, and squealed with joy as the pair slid down the mudslide together. Laughing and clearly overjoyed, she began the climb back to the swing when the sprinkler abruptly stopped. Looking up first and then to the water spigot, where Cree stood, Finn laughed and yelled, "This is so fun, Cree! Come play with us."

"Get over here, Finn!" he ordered, and realizing that he was angry, she froze in her tracks, dreading the consequences of his temper. "Why are you mad, Cree?" Rather than answer, he advanced toward her, and she scrambled up the nearest tree, where she clung to the limbs and wept in fear. "Come down, Finn." "No!" she cried. "You're pushing your luck, Finn. Now get down here." "Are you gonna hit me?" "I won't hit you." She made her way down slowly, and when she was within reach, he grabbed her and walloped her butt. Howling, she struggled to escape his grip, as he called Bear, and took both of them to the front faucet where he hosed them both down.

"You said you wouldn't hit me, Cree!" she screamed. "I didn't hit you; I walloped your ass, Finn. Now settle down, or I'll swat you again!" Ignoring his threat, she yelled. "You're just a big liar, Cree. I hate you!" Clenching her hair and pulling her inside to the bathroom, she wailed when he walloped her again and then plunged her into the tub.

Afterward, with a towel wrapped around her shoulders, Cree sighed while gazing at her bruised rump as she ran from the bathroom, still whining. After dressing, Finn crawled under the bed and cried herself to sleep. Cree didn't disturb her there nor mention the mudslide incident again.

A few weeks later, Finn asked Cree to take her to visit the town she'd seen in the distance. "I don't have time, Finn. Maybe next month." Wondering if there might be another travel source, early the next morning, Finn began walking the highway toward the Village. She'd only been walking a few minutes when he pulled the car alongside her, and shoving the passenger door

open from the inside, he ordered her to get in the car. "I don't want to, Cree" "Get in the car Finn!" Sighing, Finn climbed into the car, and Cree shouted, "Just gotta have your way don't you? Everything is all about Finn!"

"I have a right to go places, Cree. You aren't my jailer anymore," she wailed, and dodging the blow, his fist barely clipped the side of her head but was powerful enough to knock her out, and stunned, Cree watched as she collapsed in the seat.

She was ready for her check-up when Doc arrived two days later, asking when Cree would join them. "He's busy, Doc." Concealing his concern, Doc asked if she would be okay without Cree in the room. "I can do it," she smiled, "Do I take everything off?" she asked. "No, we can manage without that this time," he said. "Baby's growing," he smiled. "You walk into a wall?" he asked, pointing at her bruised temple. "No," she stuttered, looking away. "No, I fell down," Finn sighed. "Let me look at it closer," he said, gently pushing her hair aside.

"You need to be more careful, Finn. You know that I will be gone for a while, so I'm arranging for another doctor to see you while I am away." "That's okay, Doc. I'll wait for you to get back." "No, Finn. You and the baby will need to be checked regularly and more often when the holidays get here. Cree will take you to the office for your check-ups while I am gone, and he'll stay with you like he always does."

"Cree's too busy for that, Doc. I'll wait for you to get back."

"Never mind, Finn. I'll figure something out. Any questions before we're done here?"

"No. Oh, wait. Doc, could you get me some books? I finished the books I have."

"You finished all those books? Good Job, Finn!"

The Doc told Finn to take Bear outside for a while, so he could talk to Cree about work.

"What the hell are you doing, Cree?" he demanded after shoving the office door open and clearing Cree's desk with one wave of his arm. "Another 'Tactic'? Not done tormenting the girl?"

She doesn't understand what you're doing, but I do. She says she fell, but I suspect otherwise, and if I find out you're abusing her, I will turn your ass in, Cree.” “What did she tell you, Doc?”

“She didn't tell me anything. She's confused.” “She's always confused,” Cree grumbled.

“Oh, so that's it. I should have known you'd take your fill and then dump her. I knew I should have relocated her!” “I'm not dumping her, Doc. I'm just tired of her bullshit.” “Bullshit? Bullshit. Yes, Cree. Her life has been bullshit since she was three years old. Cancel your plans for the next few days. There's something we need to do before I leave.” “I don't have time for this, Doc. I have deadlines!”

Raging now, Doc flew across the desk, grasped Cree's shirt collar, and growled, “Look, you rotten piece of shit. You'll make time, or by God, I'll turn your ass in for what you've done to that girl! ...I'll be in touch.”

Before letting himself out, Doc said, “Oh, and get her some damn books, Cree. You said you'd teach her, yet sat back while she's been teaching herself. The least you can do is get her some books”

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Standing in the dining room, Dr. Seth Tumare, the Network's newest resident, shook Cree's hand and said, “I'll take good care of her, Doyle.” “Yeah, yeah,” Cree replied. Aware that Finn was timidly watching them, Cree said, “Come here, Finn.” Hesitantly, she walked in, taking Doc's hand rather than Cree's.

“Finn, this is Dr. Tumare. He's gonna be your doctor when I am away.” The doctor took her hand, saying. “I'm happy to meet you, Finn. You can call me Seth if you want. I'm going to keep you company for a few days while Doc and Doyle are away.” Finn nodded nervously and watched while Cree rapidly showed Dr. Tumare the bedroom on the opposite side of the cabin, then fleetingly glanced at her and walked out the door. Doc hugged Finn, reminding her to behave and promising something special if she did.

The two men did not share a single word as they drove to the airport, where, looking at the boarding pass, Cree sighed and said, "We're going to the academy." "Yep, unfinished business."

After the plane took off, Cree said, "I don't care for your Dr. Tumare. I don't trust him." The Doc turned, looked Cree straight in the eye, and asked, "Worried he'll seduce her like you did?" and snickering, he added, "Well, at least he won't knock her up, Cree. You already covered that base." Livid, Cree locked his jaw, and the two did not share another word until the taxi dropped them off in front of 'the Store.'

Cree scanned the area, recognizing some of the landmarks that Finn, or he should say, 'the zena' had described. Wandering down the adjacent alley, he saw remnants of where the 'friendly alley' people still spend their nights. Looking up were the trees and building ledges, just as she described. Turning back, they walked a few hundred yards to the academy, which was now closed, and still encased in Yellow Barrier Tape.

The Doc pulled a key out of his pocket, and as the two entered the building, Cree thought, 'This isn't so bad. Nothing like the hell she described' he thought. "Looks like any ordinary boarding school," he said. They investigated the halls for a while, checking the classrooms, cafeteria, library, and staff offices. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Next, they moved to the boarding floors, and they too were more than acceptable. "Two more floors," said the doc.

The next floor was encased with yellow barrier tape, and there was no elevator to the top floor. Climbing the stairs, the lighting became more cryptic until they reached a door that locked from this side only. Pushing it open, they entered what could only be described as a long narrow vault-like hallway, lined with solid doors distanced about fifteen feet apart on both sides. Other than random small skylights, and vents, there was no lighting and no windows. Doc pushed one of the doors, and it squeaked open, revealing a dank, stenchy room of about fourteen feet square. A small, maybe ten-inch skylight provided the only source of light, and the room reeked of varied foul odors. Pulling their flashlights, the two men examined the room. Loosened dried, and peeling paint hung from the ceiling like thick cobwebs. The walls were randomly stained and

smudged with what appeared to be dried blood, and only God could know what else. The floors were the worst, as it was obvious they'd been used as toilets. Choking and gagging, the two men returned to the hall, pulling the door shut behind them. "This is where she spent her entire childhood, Cree."

Remembering Finn's description of the room she lived in, without a word, the Doc followed Cree to the end of the hall and entered the door on the left side. Turning his flashlight to the far right corner, Cree choked a sob when he saw the stick people carvings on the wall. "That's where she lived, Doc." He studied the floor, and the corner walls, pushing lightly with the palm of his hand, searching until he found a soft area. Then, carefully pulling, a small section of the wall peeled back, exposing a narrow passageway. Pointing, Cree said, "her escape route. My God, Doc, look how small it is."

They spent another couple of hours investigating the roof and ledges of the building. Every last detail was exactly as Finn had described. And finally, Cree found her roof hideout beneath an air conditioning unit. Laying on his back and scooting inside as far as he could fit, Cree saw the dark opening leading to the gut of the building and more carved stars and stick people. He lay there for a few minutes, absorbing the stark reality of what she had told him.

They took a room and spent the next several hours discussing the academy, Vanessa, the traffickers, the zenas and tomas, and of course, Finn. "I don't know what you expected, but I tried to warn you, Cree. Finn will never be what society, and apparently, you too, consider 'normal.' It's not too late to relocate her, and we can put the child up for adoption. It wouldn't be an exemplary mark on your record, but it could be worse."

"I need to think about it, Doc."

"Well, don't think for too long; the baby will be here in four months."

