

Ex Convict 14

Chapter 14

Maria was angered and humiliated. Her hands fisted at her sides and she shook with the force of her outrage. She immediately turned to leave with Mia following her. That was slapping her in the face.

Grace felt as if she were watching a show. The minute she stepped out of the market, she saw a few people smashing a car that seemed to belong to Maria.

“What happened? Has she offended someone and that person is taking revenge?” Grace asked.

“Who knows?” Jason replied as his eyes glittered.

“Anyway, it’s none of our business.” Grace took Jason’s arm and walked to the bus stop.

Suddenly, Jason stopped walking. Grace turned to look at him and saw that he looked pale.

“What’s wrong?” Grace asked, looking worried. “Jay, are you okay?”

“N-nothing,” Jason stuttered. He shook his head as if to clear it.

“You look like you saw a ghost.”

His gaze cut swiftly to her.

The woman who stepped off the bus and disappeared into the market crowd...she’d looked too much like the woman who’d deserted her husband and son.

Surely, he was mistaken.

Grace frowned at him as they got ready for bed. She didn’t pry and he credited her for holding her tongue.

“Thank you for the phone,” he said and forced a smile for her benefit.

Her smile wobbled a bit, but she nodded. It was obvious she was worried about him.

But he was fine.

As the lights dimmed, he closed his eyes and breathed deeply.

He could mark the exact moment that Grace drifted to sleep. Her breathing evened out and she inhaled less frequently.

Sleep evaded him for a while, as bits and jagged pieces of memories floated through his psyche. His father sat him down in the library and told him, ‘Jason, don’t follow in my footsteps. Even if you were to fall for a woman, don’t love her wholeheartedly.’

Later on one of his birthdays, Dad said, ‘The most unreliable thing in this world is love. When she no longer loves you, it will be useless even if you were to kneel before her.’

Then he was in the living room. "Jason, one day, when you fall in love, you will realize that someone in this world has the power to control your emotions. She could make you live or d*e. However, if possible, Dad hopes that you will never get to experience that."

Jason blinked and tried to make sense of his surroundings. It was the mansion but the wall color was different and there was a crib. Was this some nursery?

"Stop saying these things to me. Don't stay here! It's cold... it's so cold... Don't stay here... if you continue to stay here... you will freeze to death!"

The dark-haired woman stormed out the door and he followed. He had to catch her. He couldn't let her leave.

"Jason, I'm leaving. I don't want to hear your father telling me how much he loves me and is yet unable to give me the kind of life I want! I've already done my best."

"Who's that, who's talking to me now?"

"Don't...go..."

Who's that talking about now? Oh, it's him. He's begging the woman. If she leaves, my father would...

"Don't go! Don't go!" Jason struggled to catch hold of her, but it was like trying to catch the breeze.

The surrounding area became darker and he was about to drown. He felt so terrible that he found it difficult to breathe.

He struggled to grab hold of something, even if it was only a straw!

Suddenly, he caught hold of something warm. A gentle voice rang beside his ears. "Jay, Jay, I'm not leaving, I'm not leaving. Don't be afraid, don't be afraid!"

"This voice... Sister. Grace, the woman who has asked me to address her as Sister!"

The minute Jason opened his eyes, he saw a pretty face. Her dark eyes were full of anxiety, her pink lips opening and closing as if she were talking.

She was telling him not to be afraid!

He swallowed hard and then nodded.

When Grace saw that Jay had awakened, she heaved a sigh of relief. "Jay, what happened? Did you have a nightmare?"

Jason frowned. He had not had that dream for some time. It'd been years, actually.

"Yeah, I had a nightmare." Jason realized he was holding Grace's hand tightly as though she was his lifeline.

What was that nonsense she'd talked about straws and lifesavers? He'd thought it so s*illy when she'd said it, but there was no discounting that her presence brought him peace.

In his dream, while he was about to drown, he had caught hold of something... her hand?

And it had saved him.

Jason immediately let go of her and the warmth he'd felt disappeared.

A dull ache spread in the pit of his stomach. He curled up on his side.

When Grace saw him move, she became concerned again. "Are you not feeling well?"

"It's nothing." He tried to suppress the pain. "It's just... stomach cramps. I'll be fine in a while."

"Does the pain come because of the nightmare?"

When Jason was young, he would suffer from severe stomach cramps whenever he tried to suppress his emotions. But that had been the reaction of a child, a boy too young to process his grief and forbidden to talk about it.

As an adult, he'd not experienced a physical reaction like this.

It was as if someone had reached into his abdomen and was twisting his organs out of alignment.

Grace poured a glass of warm water and helped Jason to sit up.

He managed to take a few sips.

Grace looked worried. She suddenly stood up, saying, "I'm going out for a while!" Before she left, she covered him with a blanket, afraid that he would feel cold and that would worsen his pain.

The door clicked as it closed. The sound of footsteps outside the house became distant.

Jason was left alone.

On the one hand, he was glad that she wasn't here to witness his pain. He could bear it, and he would, and it was better that there was no audience for his weakness. But part of him also felt saddened by her departure. Like she, too, was abandoning him.

He continued to sh*t his eyes, waiting for the pain to abate.

The loneliness was familiar.

Ever since his father passed away, Jason had been taken back to the Reed family. Although he had a grandfather and many servants around him, he still felt alone.

After some time, the door opened. Jason heard a familiar voice gasp for air before saying, "Jay, I've bought medicine for you."

Jason opened his eyes and saw her panting. Her hair was in a mess, and it was obvious she'd been running. Her pretty face looked worried. She had a cute nose and slightly red lips. Although Jason had seen many women more beautiful than Grace, at that instant, he couldn't shift his gaze away from her.

He felt as though there wasn't another person in this world for him.

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Grace poured another glass of lukewarm water and took out two tablets, according to the prescription. She helped Jay sit up and watched as he swallowed the pills and washed them down.

"If you still feel terrible, sh*t your eyes and try to sleep," Grace said. "If you're not well in a few hours, I'm taking you to the ER."

"It's... it'll pass," he said.

She wrung her hands together, obviously not so sure.

"Come up onto the bed," she said. And she guided him to lay out and rest his head on her pillow. The sheets and pillow smelled like her. Clean soap and a hint of citrus. She smelled like summer. As she was about to turn around, Jay suddenly caught hold of her hand.

"What is it? Should I call an ambulance now?" Grace asked.

He was in a daze as he looked at her. He had caught hold of her hand unconsciously, as he didn't want her to leave him.

After some time, Jay said, "Just... stay with me."