

Ex Convict 17

Chapter 17

After the inspection from the Urban Management Bureau ended, Mia told Grace. "We're having a reunion with our high school classmates this weekend. Come and join us."

"A gathering?" Grace laughed. Given her current condition, she would be mocked if she were to go. No doubt, that was exactly what Mia intended. "You're so kind to think of me," she said.

"But, no. I'm not free, and I won't be going."

"Oh come on, Grace. These events are impossible to pull together. It's a rarity. What is it you're busy with? Come and join us!" Mia tried to persuade her.

Did Mia think that Grace was born yesterday?

This woman had been rude, spiteful, and petty. She could just imagine how a 'reunion' would play out with Mia, no doubt, telling everyone how Grace, former beauty and valedictorian, lost it all, went to jail, and was currently working in Sanitation.

Nope. Not happening.

"I need to work over the weekend. Do you really think that weekends would be rest days for me given the scope of my job?" Grace asked.

Mia was speechless when she heard that. Indeed, she had forgotten.

"However..."

"I'm clearing the rubbish. Let's talk another time." Before Mia could finish her statement, Grace turned to leave.

She was not stupid. And, seriously, Mia was so obvious.

It's okay. You're okay.

Tomorrow is a new day.

Grace repeated her mantra and pushed the negative thoughts from her mind. She couldn't control the mean or shallow people around her, but she could control herself. And she could choose to meet experience with positivity.

Two days later, the Vice Director instructed her to send a document over to someone from the Urban Management Bureau, only problem was it was the weekend, and the Management Bureau representatives were at a country club luncheon.

Ordinary sanitation workers were not allowed to enter such a place, and more than one employee at the prestigious club tried to intercept her as she entered the lobby.

Grace caught the odd stares of other wealthy people, their looks saying clearly, 'what is SHE doing in here!?' Like she was some other species or something.

Grace had been to this particular club many times before for dinners and charity events. Sean belonged to this particular country club.

One of the staff nodded to her. "We're expecting you," he said.

"Follow me."

"Sure."

The sooner she could hand off this paperwork, the better.

Then she could leave.

The staff member led her down one hallway and into another. Then he opened the door to a ballroom. Many people were inside.

When Grace stepped in, she heard a familiar voice, saying, "Look who's here!"

Grace saw Mia Jenkins, Maria, and some of her high school classmates.

"There you are, Grace!" Mia called out loudly.

Grace knew immediately that Mia had deliberately made this arrangement. As she was from the Urban Management Bureau, the supervisors would be eager to get on her good side. As long as Mia wanted a document and specified the person she wanted to bring it to her, the Vice Director would accede to her request.

"See! I didn't lie to you. The prettiest girl in our class has become a sanitation worker!" Maria said, looking snobbish.

Grace's uniform completely stood out from the classy attire of the rest of the people in the private room.

"Is this our beautiful super scholar? You were imprisoned for three years and I almost couldn't recognize you." Greg looked down his long nose at her. "Aw, what's wrong, Sean didn't want to dote on you anymore after you killed his sister?"

Between the mention of Sean, the horrible accident that ended Jennifer's life, and seeing this man in front of her, Grace froze.

The pain of so many memories slammed into her like a flood.

Greg smiled. "You're not so high and mighty now, are you?"

Grace stepped back instinctively. Greg had been a rich and entitled jerk back then and he didn't appear to have matured at all.

She'd been cornered by him at a charity auction when she'd gone outside for a bit of fresh air. Greg grabbed her arm and assaulted her. If Sean hadn't come out to find her, she knew it would've been worse.

Sean had taught him a lesson that day.

But there was no one here to protect her now.

Greg fingered a small scar near the corner of his eye. "Your ex is untouchable... but you aren't. And I still owe you for what he did to me."

Mia and Maria's eyes were glittering like this was the greatest show they'd ever seen.

Grace ignored Greg. She walked a few feet over to Mia and

handed the paperwork over to her, saying, "This is the document you asked for."

Mia smiled. After taking the document, she said, "Grace, sorry you had to make the trip."

Sure, she was.

From the way Mia grinned, this had been better than Christmas.

Grace turned around and was about to leave the room when Greg caught hold of her arm. "Why are you in such a hurry? This is our reunion. Let's catch up."

After saying that, he took a glass of red wine and put it to Grace's lips. "Come on, drink up. Back then, you were convicted of driving under the influence. Don't tell me that you can't drink!"

Grace refused to open her mouth. She turned her head and pushed him away.

Greg lost his balance and spilled the red wine down his shirt. He became angry and gave Grace one tight slap in the face, shouting, "Ugh! Do you think you're still Sean's girlfriend? You're an ex-con and a sanitation worker. You don't know what's good for you!"

As Greg was shouting, he took up the bottle of red wine beside him and poured it over Grace's head.

The cold wine soaked her body, embarrassing her.

What chilled her more were the looks her other classmates gave her. They shook their heads and cringed, but no one called Greg to stop. No one tried to help her escape.

Maria laughed openly.

Mia smiled, saying, "Grace, apologize to Greg quickly. He may forgive you."

"Apologize?" Grace found the idea ridiculous. She was

humiliated and assaulted, but she was expected to apologize to Greg. No. That wasn't happening.

She might be the butt of their jokes and she might have to deal with being looked down upon for the rest of her life, but she still had her dignity.

Grace pursed her lips. "No."

Greg only became more infuriated. "Grace, do you think that you're still Sean's girlfriend? I'm giving you a chance to apologize to me. Even if I raped you right here, no one would stand up for you!"

A bell sounded, signaling the meal, and Grace was horrified as the other guests filed out of the room, ignoring her plight

entirely.

Greg grabbed Grace by the shirtfront and sent her flying. She hit the ground hard and her shirt tore open, revealing her skin.

“No!” Grace screamed as he advanced on her.

However, none of her classmates spoke for her, let alone stood up for her.

“What’s wrong with her skin?” Maria asked.

“Probably from the accident,” Mia replied.

No. Her pale flesh was because she hadn’t been exposed to any sunlight during her three years of imprisonment, making her fairer than anyone. And the scars... they weren’t from the car accident, but from the beatings and abuses she endured while imprisoned.

Some of the scars had not faded away, and they were hideous.

Grace struggled to stand up, and though she pushed to her knees, her hand remained anchored to the ground. What the-

Maria was stepping on her right hand with her high heels.

“Grace,” she said dramatically. “Why are you in such a hurry to leave? You have not yet apologized to Gregory,” Maria said. She looked as if she couldn’t wait to see Grace in a more pathetic state as she twisted her heel and stepped down harder.

The pain in Grace’s hand reminded her of her prison days when her finger bones had been broken inch by agonizing inch.

Back then, Grace had been unable to defend herself and was forced to accept the treatment.

However, Grace wasn’t constrained now, and she wasn’t going down without a fight. She used all of her might to push Maria’s foot away from her right hand. Then she lunged to her feet and ran for the door.

She wanted to get out of this place. She had to get out!

She held her torn clothes around herself and ran forward. However, a strong force came from behind her, catching her by her hair and yanking her backward. She screamed, feeling hair ripped from her scalp and then she gasped as her body connected with the floor.

“Stop! Leave me alone!”

But the doors to the room remained closed and no one came to help her.

Greg twisted the hand he held in her hair. “Are you trying to run away? Don’t you know that my family is one of the shareholders of this club... eh?”

Greg paused as he made that statement.

A moment later, Grace heard a familiar voice saying, “Greg, what are you trying to do?”

Grace froze-instantly. That’s... Sean’s voice.

Grace shivered.

She had never expected to meet Sean again-let alone in such a sorry stale after getting out of prison.

“Why? Have you brought your fiancée here for a meal? What a coincidence. Your ex-girlfriend is here to have a meal with me too. However, your ex-girlfriend doesn’t know what’s good for her and she has agitated me.”

“Oh?” Sean replied neutrally.

Greg rubbed at the scar near his brow. “I’m thinking I owe her from our last time meeting.”

As Greg spoke, he pulled Grace’s hair, forcing her to lift her head to face Sean.

Seeing him, after all, that had transpired, it was like a chasm of grief was boiling up to swallow her completely.

And there, besides Sean... Lily Atkinson.

The woman who’d egged him on to break her bones. Who’d stood beside him and goaded him to show no mercy.

Seeing them, being at the mercy of Greg, was like a nightmare roaring to life.

“Let me go,” she demanded.

Greg looked at Sean as if asking his permission.

Sean shrugged. “We’re here for dinner,” he said. “How you choose to...entertain...yourself is up to you, Greg. I have nothing to do with her.”

Grace was cut to the heart.

Although she had given up on Sean and had resented him for his harsh treatment, part of her had believed that he’d been angry by the position her accident had put him in. She expected this of Lily, and could even think that Lily was blinded by her grief.

But Sean?

She’d never given him reason to punish her like this.

She had expected his indifference, but she saw now that he truly wanted her to suffer.

Endlessly.

And for what? To impress his new fiancée?

“You might want to take this outside,” Sean suggested. “Y’all have a good night.”

He held out his arm and Lilly accepted it. They paraded off like they hadn’t a care in the world.

Like he hadn’t all but encouraged this man to rape her.

“No!” she screamed. “No!”

Greg started pulling her toward an artificial pond near the doors.

“I’ll press charges!” she declared. “There are witnesses.”

Greg laughed. “You’re an ex-con. And I own this club. Who do you think they’ll believe?”

Grace tried to stay calm but her heart was beating a hundred miles a minute. She dug in her heels knowing if he got her outside, he’d overpower her.

This couldn’t be happening!

She dug in her heels and cried out as her hair ripped again because she refused to stumble behind him.

“B*tch!”

Greg eyed the pond and the next minute he took her and shoved her face beneath the water.

Grace thrashed and choked and tried to hold her breath while fighting against his grip.

As she started to lose consciousness, her head was dragged back up. She sucked in a giant gulp of air and then choked as the water in her lungs came rushing back up.

Before she could catch her breath, she was shoved back down again.

He was punishing her, she realized.

Greg had lost face when Sean beat the sh*t out of him all those years ago.

Greg had never gotten over it, and while he couldn’t take on Sean because of his family, Grace was an easy target.

Cold water gushed into Grace’s mouth and nose, suffocating her.

“Grace, let’s see who will save you now.”

On the next reprieve, she dragged air into her lungs and blinked rapidly. Oh my god, Sean was still at the edge of the room. Near the grand staircase. And Lily was beside him. “My love,” she said. “Jay is waiting for us. Don’t let him wait too long.”

Lily’s voice resounded in Grace’s ears.

“All right,” Sean said, before turning his back on Grace with complete finality.

Grace felt suffocated and she no longer had the strength to retaliate.

Once, twice, the cold water covered her head, and no matter how she fought or rallied, there was no escape.

Would she die like this?

Had she survived prison only to end up the victim of some spoiled heir's revenge?

No one would save Grace. Even if she managed to survive, she would be half-dead.

"Enough! Bring that woman to me!" A voice suddenly resounded from the second floor.

Grace blinked rapidly, but her vision was too blurry to see.

But she knew that voice. Knew it intimately.

"Brother?"