

## Ex Convict 20

### Chapter 20

Grace looked at the back of her right hand, at the spot where Maria had stepped on today.

"Today, when I was working, I accidentally hit it. It's nothing," she said casually, not wanting him to worry.

"Is that so?" Jason stared fixedly at Grace. "Sister, if someone bullies you, just tell me and I will stand up for you."

He would make those people pay the price. In the future, no one would dare bully her.

For a moment, her heart pounded quickly. It was as if he knew everything. Was he ...testing her? She didn't want to lie. Not to him. But she didn't want him to worry either.

Especially when he couldn't help her.

He was poor and broken down like her. And if he were to take on one of those privileged assholes, it'd only end badly for him.

And she wouldn't let that happen.

"I can protect myself," she said.

"What if you can't?" he asked.

If that were the case, it would still be useless to tell him, but

Grace did not say that. She didn't want to prolong this conversation.

2/6

"Don't you want me to protect you?" He stared at her with his dark and deep eyes.

She bit her lip. "You already saved me once, remember? Now it's my turn to try and protect you. And I'll try my best not to let others bully us."

There was a flash in his eyes, but he did not say anything in the end. Instead, he simply replied faintly, "Okay."

After dinner, Grace took that shower she'd been waiting for. Underneath the hot water, she tried to channel all of those terrible feelings and fears out of her and right down the drain.

She only partially succeeded.

In law school, she'd studied and strove to always protect the innocent, and yet... what had she learned? That there were many people above the law. And being innocent didn't mean you couldn't lose.

What happened today was proof of that.

She shuddered.

What if that man on the second floor hadn't intervened? What then?

Would that bastard Greg have abused and drowned her? And

what of Maria and Mia, two 'classmates' who'd stood by and watched the assault...

If she were to press charges, they would be accomplices.

If... she wasn't a convicted felon. If their families didn't have enough money to buy entire juries... if anyone actually cared about her or the pain they'd caused her.

She knew seeking justice was pointless.

It would never come for a person like her.

It's okay. You're okay.

Tomorrow is a new day.

She said it over and over again, but deep down, she knew it wasn't true.

Jason found it hard to bite back the words he wanted to say.

On the one hand, he knew why she remained silent. His 'sister' was hellbent on protecting him. Which was just ridiculous.

Maybe she was holding back because of his physical sickness from the other night. If that was the case, well, f\*ck that. He'd been in pain, yeah. But it was bearable.

He'd allowed her to mother him because he'd sensed that was what she needed to do.

Grace sat back down at the kitchen table.

She wore a fluffy bathrobe over her pajamas and she worked in the dim light of the kitchen lamp to sew back together the uniform shirt that Gregory had torn.

Jason's hands clenched into fists.

Grace hummed some nameless tune.

She had her head lowered, and her long hair was hanging loosely over her shoulders. Her hair seemed to lack some shine due to malnutrition. After three hard years of imprisonment and the recent exposure to the wind and sun, her skin was not fair at all. Even though she had a comely appearance, she still looked weathered, and given all that had befallen her in the short time. He'd known her, it was obvious the hardships in her life were taking their toll.

However, at this moment, she was sewing her clothes, stitch by stitch, and... she looked beautiful.

The quiet and elegant way about her was unusually attractive.

In the circles he moved in, he seldom saw women sewing clothes like this. The very notion was laughable. The women he knew wore couture clothes that cost more than Grace would make in a year.

He had never thought that one day, such a simple and plain woman would capture all his attention.

Grace finished sewing and looked up. She met Jay's gaze.

His eyes were so focused that her face turned slightly red.

"What's wrong with you?" she whispered. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"I just think that you are really beautiful," he said.

Grace laughed. She knew how big the gap between her and her past self was. At most, she was not ugly.

"You're sweet," she said.

From her tone, he knew she was patronizing him. But the blush in her cheeks and lingering smile told him she liked the compliment.

"By the way, when I was free earlier during the day, I saw something for you on the internet. Have a look, do you like it?" She took out her mobile phone, opened the shopping website, and clicked on a sweater in the shopping cart. Then she handed the phone over to show him.

Jason looked at it. It was particularly attractive and expensive. From the reviews, he could tell that tens of thousands of pieces had been sold.

1

"You only have one sweater for winter," Grace said. "And you don't even have a spare one. I think the reviews for this are rather good so it seems worth the price, and you should look good wearing this color..."

"If you like it, I will like it," Jason said.

"Don't think about what I like. You should like it yourself. If you don't like it, I will find you another one in a different style."

"That's okay, this one is good," he said.

"Okay then, I'll buy it for you." Grace started the online purchase.

She was staying up late into the night to stitch back her own clothes but was going out of her way to buy him something new. He looked at her and suddenly asked, "... why are you so good to me?" The coat and clothes, the phone and food. He knew she didn't make much money. She couldn't afford to buy him these things.

1

"You are like my younger brother. Of course, I have to be good to you," she said as if it was given.

However, for some unknown reason to him, the whole “younger brother” was a little hard for him to hear. Had she really forgotten that he was actually still a man?