

Ex Convict 52

Chapter 52

“Sister, do you like that man because he said those things?”

Jason asked.

His dark eyes continued to bore into hers. The unsettling feeling tickled up her spine. It felt a lot like... attraction or anticipation. But this was her ‘brother’ and she needed to push those thoughts from her mind.

Grace cleared her throat. “No, I don’t like Chase.”

He tilted his head and a lock of his thick hair shadowed one eye.

Jay was a handsome man, and that boyish tilt of his head only amplified his good looks.

Grace sucked in a breath. But it carried more of his scent and had her wanting to lean close. To see if that smooth bit of skin along his neck tasted as good as it smelled.

She searched his eyes. Swallowed hard as his gaze dipped to her mouth then back to her eyes again. Did he want to kiss her?!?

“Oh God, what am I thinking?!”

Grace laughed at herself at the idea that had just crossed her mind.

“Are you sure?” he pressed her.

What was he asking about? Her mind was on kissing. Chase. Right. “No. I don’t like Chase,” she replied. “I can only apologize to him for his feelings for me.”

Her reply seemed to please him. His lips curved. He was likely trying to protect her, as any brother would. She would be

smart not to think about having a normal future. Even if a man proclaimed that her ‘past’ didn’t bother him, she knew, over time, it would.

Jason stared at her and asked once more, “Sister, do you really not like that man?”

“Why would I lie to you?” she retorted. “Ever since I got out of jail, I’ve never even considered the idea of falling in love with someone. I did that once. I put all of my emotions into someone else, and when I was abandoned, I was struck by a devastating blow. I don’t wish to go through that again.”

There was a touch of joy in his eyes. “Then you have to remember to reject him. If not, a man like him will probably wait for you forever.”

“I’ll reject him,” she said. And she would. Chase deserved better. “Since I don’t reciprocate his feelings, I won’t string him along. Chase is a good man. He should have a relationship with someone who truly belongs to him and not waste time on me.”

Jay’s lips thinned. “How does he know that you have been to jail?” he asked suddenly.

Grace's face darkened as she said, "A colleague found out about the news of my car accident all those years ago, so now the entire Sanitation Service Center knows about my imprisonment."

As she said it, Grace was overcome with shame. She wouldn't forget their accusing stares, the whispering. The sidelong looks. "All right, let go of me, I still have to tidy up the room."

Jason let her go. This woman's moods affected his own. Her bits of joy buoyed him. Her sadness transferred until he wanted to right the wrongs of the world just to see her smile. For a man like him, such feelings were not acceptable. This was a game. A diversion.

He'd wanted a glimpse behind her facade because he'd harbored many doubts about Grace Cummins. But every day spent with her was like peeling back another layer, and what he saw didn't match what he'd thought of her originally.

He was...growing attached.

Even this pitiful apartment was a delight he looked forward to, only because Grace was in it.

He didn't know how long they could play this game or live in this insulated bubble. But as he thought it, his subconscious chimed that he could do this...for the rest of his life.

For the next few days, Grace's colleagues continued to whisper and gossip about her at the Sanitation Service Center, and plenty of them were intentionally distancing themselves from her.

She had already mentally prepared herself for this. She could not change the fact that she had been in jail, after all.

But somehow knowing what would transpire and actually experiencing it were two different things. The callous and cruel gossip hurt.

However, Claire treated Grace as usual, taking care of her when they were doing their regular jobs, which she was grateful for.

"Grace, you're a university graduate, why did you find a job like this? Do you really want to sweep roads for the rest of your life?" Claire chatted with Grace during their lunch break.

"I have a criminal record and it isn't that easy to look for a job," Grace said frankly.

"Many employers asked about the incident when they found out that I had a criminal record. When they realized that I was the perpetrator who killed Mr. Reed's fiancée, Jennifer Atkinson, they all rejected me without any exception."