

## Ex Convict 79

### Chapter 79

Jason strode into the hospital room. His gaze swept the space, taking in the machines beeping, the x-rays mounted on the wall and the physician standing quietly at Grace's bedside.

"You're here!" Grace said.

"There was a traffic jam on the highway, or I would've been here sooner," Jason replied.

She smiled. "You arrived faster than I expected." She picked at the bedsheets. "I hate that I inconvenienced you..."

Jason moved to the opposite side of the hospital bed to engage the physician directly.

Lina returned to the room and handed Grace a small cup of water. "One second you were in the ER, the next you were gone. Sorry, Grace. It took me a minute to devise where they'd moved you to."

"I'm fine," Grace said easily. She sipped the water.

"Doctor, how is she?" Lina asked. "Is my friend all right? She was knocked down several steps by someone on the escalator."

Grace watched Jason as Lina relayed the events. She wasn't too happy with her friend for saying all of that. A muscle in Jason's jaw started to tick.

"The injury is not too serious," the doctor said. "Thankfully, there is no internal hemorrhaging or any signs of TBI-traumatic brain injury."

Lina sighed loudly in relief.

"What did you discover?" Jason asked in a deadly calm voice.

Dr. Craigge turned back to him. "There are some slight fractures. We'll put her foot in a brace, and she should stay off

it for a few weeks to allow the bones around her ankle to heal, but... Dr. Craigge hesitated.

"But what?" Jason asked in a frigid tone.

Grace trembled.

"There are injuries that would point to more sustained, systemic trauma." He gestured toward the X-rays of her hands. "You sustained multiple broken bones and fractures. Many of these injuries to your

fingers did not set properly, and at this stage, it's unlikely given the bone fusion and time lapsed that re-breaking and resetting the bones would affect any positive change."

Grace lowered her gaze.

The doctor cleared his throat. "I've noticed a number of areas on your hands, arms, feet and legs that point to significant trauma."

Grace pressed her lips together. She knew damn well who and what had caused her those injuries.

And the doctor, it seemed like he was digging for information. He probably thought her an abused woman. And she had been. Just not by some vile husband or family member.

Grace's injuries had come in the form of retaliation and on behalf of wealthy families.

"What is the prognosis on the older injuries?" Jason asked carefully. Again, his voice was underlaced with hostility.

"It's hard to say," Dr. Craigge admitted. "In my professional opinion, given the traumas and how they healed, there will be complications. Perhaps if Miss Cummins had sustained suitable care at the time, the conversation would be different now..."

"Complications?" Grace frowned. "But I don't think there's anything wrong with my body."

"You are still young now, so the effects will be less pronounced, and, you've properly adapted to the pain. But injuries like this can play into degenerative issues, so as you age, the complications will slowly come out!"

"What kind of complications?" Jason asked bluntly.

"In the future, you may often feel pain in your joints. There will most certainly be arthritis. You may have sustained nerve damage or cramping. If it is serious, you may not be able to lift heavy things with your hands, and you might have trouble walking," Dr. Craigge said.

Grace stayed silent, looking down at her hands and feet. Her old wounds were from her time in prison. Prisoners were afforded the minimal treatment required by law. There were no gifted surgeons to reset her bones. Her fingers were put in soft splints and taped.

Yes, the attacks had been painful, and the time spent recovering from them, even more so.

Even now, her bones and joints ached. So no doubt, what the doctor said about residual pain and worsening, debilitating injuries over time... it all made sense.

"Then... is there any way to cure it?" Lina's voice trembled as she asked.

On the contrary, Grace seemed to be relatively quiet.

"You mainly need to recuperate and eat food that's high in calcium. Osteoporosis later in life would compound these issues significantly. Eat foods that reduce swelling and inflammation. Take vitamins and minerals. Also, you have to take good care of yourself. You can't afford to continue to abuse your body," Dr. Craigge said.

Grace leaned back and was lost to her thoughts after that.

These last few years, it seemed all she had known was abuse. Being out of prison, she'd been accosted by her own sister, by 'friends' of Sean and even his sister and fiancée.

Would she ever know any peace?

"...she can stay a few days and we can monitor her," Dr. Craigge was saying.

"-No. I want to go home."

"Grace, I think you should listen to the doctor," Jason said.

"I will," she agreed. "I'll take it easy and rest. Please. I just want to go home."

Jason gave a barely perceptible nod.

"Lina," Jason said. "Please work with Dr. Craigge to determine any medicines Grace will need and what follow up treatments he recommends."

Grace held out her arms to Jay and he carefully, gently helped her to rise from the bed.

Lina remained in the room to obtain the prescriptions and Jason guided Grace into the hallway. When she winced, he sat her in the nearest chair. "This is ridiculous. Go back to that hospital bed and rest."

Her eyes watered. "I don't want to stay here. Please."

He muttered a curse.

"I probably can't just walk out of here." Grace rubbed her head. "I'm sure there will be paperwork, and I'll have to go on a payment plan. The county offers insurance, but I don't think it'll cover a fraction of this."

“Let’s not worry about that now,” Jason said. “Does it hurt?” he asked.

“Actually, it’s not that bad.” Grace drew her sweater over her hospital gown and buttoned it. “My ankle aches, but honestly, I’ve had worse. You heard the doctor. He said that it’ll only take a few weeks to heal.”

Jason pressed his lips together. “The old wounds that the doctor mentioned – did you get them while in prison?”

Grace pretended to be relaxed and smiled. “I was beaten in prison several times, but it wasn’t serious.”

Jason cursed again.

“Truly, it’s not a big deal. I think the Doctor was being a bit dramatic. I’ll be fine. Some vitamins, some rest, and these old wounds will be a thing of the past.”

The calmer she was, the angrier Jay became.

“Sister, do you hate the person who put you in prison?” he suddenly asked.

She laughed a little. “Who would I hate? Should I hate the judge? The Atkinson family? Or the Stevens Family that has been unwilling to help me? Or maybe I should hate Jason Reed himself, right? Because really, he’s the root of everything.”