

Ex Convict 82

Chapter 82

Jason carefully placed Grace in the chair and propped a storage box beneath the kitchen table so she could elevate

her foot.

“You need to eat,” he said. Then he busied himself in the kitchen reheating the food she’d prepared earlier.

“You know,” Lina said. “I wasn’t too keen on this whole arrangement. You kind of came out of nowhere and basically moved in.” Lina laughed softly as she took in the small

changes around the apartment. “I definitely wasn’t buying all that sister/brother stuff.” She laughed again.

Jason arched a brow at her.

“But now,” Lina went on, “It’s clear you’re good for my friend. Thank you for helping her.”

Jason turned back to plating up food for Grace. “There is no reason to thank me. Grace would do the same for me.”

As he said it, he realized that was true. She’d be there for him. No questions asked. No stipulations or expectations of something in return. And she wouldn’t leave his side.

Could he say that of anyone else in his life? Anyone who wasn’t on his payroll, that is. Or who wasn’t out to gain something from him?

Lina yawned.

“You should go home and rest,” Grace said. “This has been... a stressful day. I’m sorry you got dragged into this drama.”

Lina gave Grace a hug. “The other people brought the drama when they tried to bully you.”

Grace just shrugged. “I shouldn’t have engaged. I know better...”

“That’s nonsense,” Lina argued. “They had no right to target you.”

Grace’s lips tightened like she wanted to reply but decided not

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Lina kissed Grace on top of her head. “Can I do anything else -do you need anything else?”

“No,” Grace said. “Go home. I’ll call you if I need anything.”

Jason walked Lina to the door and closed and locked it behind her. Then he fed Grace her dinner. She protested at first, but Jason was insistent.

After the first few bites, she leaned back in the chair feeling so tired and weary. Her ankle ached. Most of her body did. But mostly, she just felt beaten down. Like she was fighting some battle and there was no way to win. What was worse, even if she did somehow prevail, none of it mattered anyway.

“I don’t like that look,” Jason said quietly.

Grace looked away. “I need to clean up.”

But Jason was already moving. He brought the dishes to the sink and washed them.

Grace sat there, a bit dazed, watching. Given all that she had experienced, she seldom allowed herself to wallow or to feel sorry for herself. What point would that serve?

But just now, she felt a bit hopeless.

When Jason was done tidying up, he asked, “Sister, do you need to go to the bathroom?”

“Huh?”

“Yes or no?” he asked as if it was an extremely normal question.

Grace blushed to the roots of her hair. She made to stand by herself and wobbled on her feet.

She sat back down.

“Let’s try this again,” Jason said. “Sister, do you need to go to the bathroom?”

Her expression was awkward but she ultimately said “yes.”

Jason swept her up and carried her into the bathroom. He left her standing, and waited to make sure she was steady. Then he backed out and closed the door behind him. “Call me when you’re done,” he said.

Her face grew even redder.

It occurred to her, that by him asking, he had been paying attention to how frequently she relieved herself. On the one hand, it was a basic biological process, on the other she felt shy that he should notice such things.

When she hobbled out of the bathroom, Jason was there. He swept her up and carried her to the chair once again.

“Jay, I can walk. There’s a slight bone fracture in only one of my feet but the other is fine.”

“The doctor said you should move as little as possible,” he

said. "Or do you not like me taking care of you like this?"

"No... no." She shook her head.

He smiled faintly and reached out to lightly stroke her flushed

face. "Although I don't like you getting hurt, Sister, I do like how you're depending on me."

"Depending on you?" She was a little puzzled.

"Yes, depending on me. If you want to walk, I'll have to carry you. If you want to eat, I'll feed you. When you're thirsty, I'll be the one to bring you something to drink. I like you relying on me."

Grace swallowed hard.

This seemed more personal, more... intimate than a brother helping his sister.

"I like caring for you," he said.

His body slowly drew nearer to hers. His lips pated and his dark eyes were so focused on her, it was like she finally understood what people meant when they talked about drowning in someone's eyes.

Jason wasn't just attractive. He was devastating so.

The kind of man whose strength drew her in and whose face held her spellbound.

"I... I'm not used to relying on someone." Grace whispered.

"You can get used to it in the future," he mumbled.

If it wasn't for the constant pain, she would think herself dreaming.

At night, before going to bed, Jason prepared a tub of warm water. He took a soft washcloth and gently washed Grace's face and neck. He rinsed each of her hands and her forearms.

When he bent to wash her feet, Grace stopped him, "You don't have to--"

"I heard what the doctor said. I won't get your injured foot wet. Just relax. Please."

His voice was so earnest and she didn't want to admit it, but

she liked his touch. The gentle way he held her and massaged

each limb. It was soothing and exciting all at once. And his hands... he had such great hands. Strong with long fingers.

"You need to request a leave of absence."

“From work?” Grace shook her head. “I can’t.”

“You were told to rest.”

“If I request time off, there is a very good chance that I won’t have a job to go back to.” She tensed. “It was very hard for me to land this job. I went on countless interviews and was always told no. The moment people learn I’m a convicted felon... no one wants a criminal working for them, Jay.”

He was not deterred. “Your health is most important. You need to heal. Even if you lose this job, you must focus on your health. Without it, what would you even be working for?”