

Ex Convict 16

Chapter 16

Grace's body froze.

Seeing Sean and Lily, and reliving those hours in the prison... the pain, the terror. Not knowing if she'd live or die.

Her whole body shuddered.

And that stupid ring...Sean had taken her to that jeweler and she'd tried it on. He'd been ready to buy it and she'd laughed and said it was too extravagant. She'd told him to save his money. Her love didn't cost anything.

"Grace... are you going home?" a man's quiet voice asked.

Grace lifted her head and saw a man about thirty years old smiling shyly at her. He had short hair and wore the uniform of

the Fleet.

She recalled that this was Chase, from the Sanitation Service

Center's Fleet.

"Yes," Grace replied.

"I'm free. Let me take you home," Chase said.

His light eyes crinkled at the corners. He looked kind. A little bashful even.

Grace remembered Claire telling her that Chase was interested in her. That was sweet, but she had no intention of getting into a relationship.

"You don't have to." Grace turned him down.

"It's all right. I have a car. It's no trouble to give you a ride home," Chase said as he made a second attempt.

"Huh! Your car is too cheap. This is Grace Cummins-she only wants to sit in a luxury car. If you could buy her a six-carat diamond ring, maybe then she'd let you drive her around," Farah said.

Grace sighed.

She was not interested in Chase, but she had wanted to let him down gently.

Chase's face immediately turned red, not knowing what to say.

Grace glanced at Farah and said, "I think perhaps that's your dream. Because you only care about material things. Or maybe I have it wrong, and you'll go home with anyone who asks you?"

Farah sucked in a breath. "You-you..." Farah was rendered speechless and she settled for glaring at Grace.

Grace turned to Chase. "Thank you for the offer. You're very kind. However, I live nearby and I'm used to walking home."

She left quickly after that, wanting to avoid a scene.

On the way home, Grace bought some lean meat and vegetables.

She'd never been one to enjoy cooking and had viewed it more as a necessity, but having someone to cook for... mealtimes had more significance now, and she took more care with her recipes.

After she returned to the apartment and started cooking, she settled into a comfortable routine. When Jay arrived as she was finishing up, she smiled. "Perfect timing."

He grunted and removed his shoes and hung up his coat. Then he came beside her to wash his hands.

His nearness had the oddest effect on Grace. It both settled and excited her.

But she knew not to let her thoughts turn in such a direction.

This was her friend, her brother' and she'd be wise to remember that.

"How are you feeling?" Grace asked.

"Better."

"That's good. But please continue to take the medicine for another few days. I'd hate to see that pain flare up again."

He nodded.

"Maybe you can look for another job. Something more stable so

you can eat your three meals on time." Grace continued, "Shall I help you check on the Internet to see if there are any suitable jobs for you?"

"It's all right. I will look around," Jason said. "If you want me to get a stable job, I'll do that."

"Wonderful!" Grace lifted her hand and touched Jay's head, smiling happily.

She was really taking this sisterly role seriously.

Jason wanted to laugh. But he knew that would hurt her feelings, so he turned his head so she wouldn't see him smiling.

What would Grace say if she learned that he was the President of one of the wealthiest corporations in the city? That his job earned him revenues that rivaled some countries' GDPs.

He had money, power, and privilege.

As the head of Reed Group, there was nothing denied to him.

He had everything that he had wished for, but he wasn't content. There was something that he desired. He desired... his gaze fixed on the person standing before him...

Grace's mobile phone suddenly rang.

She moved her away to pick up the call.

When Grace answered the phone, a stumbling voice was heard on the other end of the line.

"Is this Grace? This is Chase. Clare gave me your number. I just, uh, would like to... tell you not to take to heart what Farah said. I know you're not a materialistic girl. Although I'm driving a domestic car, I'll work hard and get a better car in the future!"

Before Grace could reply, Chase had ended the call.

Grace looked at her phone, appearing troubled.

"Who called you?" he asked. His tone was sharper than he intended.

"A colleague from the Sanitation Service Center," Grace replied as she put down the phone and resumed plating their dinner.

Jason glanced at the phone and asked, "A male colleague?" Although she had not put the call on speaker, he could hear the voice clearly.

"Yes."

"Does he like you?" Jason frowned.

"Maybe," she replied.

"What about you? Do you like him?"

Grace shrugged. "If he finds out that I've been to prison before, he will stay away from me. So it's not important whether I like

him or not."

"Is there something wrong with you being in prison before? If he truly likes you, he will not mind that," Jason said.

Grace smiled bitterly. "Oh, I'm not so sure. Many people might not mind such things. Until...they do. Love is not so 'true' as the movies make it out to be."

Jason tilted his head. "What if that guy accepts that you were imprisoned before? Would you like him then," Jason asked.

Grace was stunned-was she open to a new relationship or the possibility of one, even? She wasn't sure. "If someone is willing to accept me, knowing that I'm an ex-convict...I suppose, maybe."

Jason looked unhappy. "Would you like him?" He was determined to get an answer from her.

“No,” Grace replied, “I’d treat him like any other colleague.” Moreover, she had no desire to get into a relationship.

When Jason heard what she had said, he smiled. “In that case, continue to treat him like any other colleague.”

His smile deepened as he asked, “Do you like me, Sister?”

“I like you,” Grace replied without hesitation.

“I like you too. I like you very much,” Jason said. It had been ages since he had last found someone who could interest him.