

## **Ex Convict 42**

### Chapter 42

She combed his bangs gently with a comb, then began to trim the hairs on his forehead bit by bit. All of her attention was concentrated on the task at hand.

Jason watched her. The way she studied him, so focused on her task.

That singular focus had served her well in her life—first with her education and graduating top of her class at University and later at Law School. And then in surviving prison.

Guilt stabbed at him.

He saw how she'd been abused in the time that he knew her.

What must her life be like behind bars, with no one to champion or protect her, and countless criminals coming after her all in the hopes of pleasing him?

She sucked in a breath and he hung on to that little sound.

Her mouth was pretty. Full lips, a bright smile.

She didn't smile enough, he realized.

Her skin was still red, likely from the wind and cold, and though it pinkened her cheeks and nose, it only enhanced her beauty.

If he looked hard enough, he could see that she'd been beautiful once.

Her features carried symmetry and character.

But it wasn't the outward appearance that drew him, but rather what came from within.

This woman... she'd been the one to fight for him. To sacrifice so that he could have a roof over his head, warm clothes, and something good to eat. She'd asked for nothing in return.

And knowing that she appreciated him for him... awakened something inside him.

"It's done." After an unknown amount of time, her voice suddenly sounded in his ear.

"Oh, already?" he asked. It was as if time spent with her passed extremely quickly.

“Mmm.” She smiled, took two steps back, and carefully looked at him for a while. “My skill isn’t too bad. In fact, it’s rather good, and we’ve saved twenty dollars.”

She smiled as she spoke. Then, she took out a dry towel and flicked off the fine strands of hair that were stuck to his face, neck, and on his clothes.

“Alright, go take a shower,” Grace said.

Jason took the change of clothes and walked into the narrow bathroom. Knowing that she wanted to conserve energy and keep their bills low, he didn’t set the shower to hot as he normally would. Warm water rushed over his body as he stepped in and lowered his head to rinse away any shorn hairs. As he glanced down, he saw the scar on his chest.

With time, this scar had grown very shallow. However, every time he saw it, he would think of that woman.

The woman who had abandoned him and his father.

Perhaps this wound was the only thing he had left of her.

He recalled her pushing him away as he knelt and begged her not to leave, and not to abandon him and his father.

The woman had shaken her head and pried his hands free.

When she shoved him aside so she could leave, he’d fallen on a bit of rebar. Jason’s memories didn’t remember the construction or the details of the day, aside from what she wore, how her beautiful smile had transformed into a snarl, and how he’d been unable to breathe when the metal he fell on pierced his chest.

The doctors had said that the metal had gotten very close to his heart. He was lucky, a centimeter to the left and they would not

have been able to save his life at all.

At that time, he had told himself that that woman was no longer his mother.

He walled himself off.

After his father’s death, he stopped having expectations of anyone.

As long as he did not have expectations, he would never be disappointed.

It was just that...

Jason turned off the tap, wiped his body dry with a towel, and put on his clothes. When he walked out of the bathroom, his eyes fell on Grace. She was sitting at the table and seemed to be looking at something.

Since when had he started having expectations of her? He was looking forward to seeing her smile, looking forward to her happiness.

He lived for those moments when she looked at him with gentle eyes and smiled. Her smile lit up the whole room.

“Jay”.

Even the sound of his name on her lips brought him joy.

“Jay, you’re done washing up? I’ll help you blow dry your hair,” she said as she stood up to get the hairdryer.

He walked to the side of the table and saw some documents placed on the table by her side. They were... copies of the record of her original case.

His eyes flashed. “What are you looking at, Sister?” he asked, even though he already knew the answer.

“Some of the related information from my case back then,” she said. “Lina helped me collect them.”

“Why are you reading this again?” he asked.

Yes, why? Grace had asked herself the same question.

It had been three years, and she could not reverse the verdict. She did not even know where the witnesses from that year were now.

What else could she do just based on her status as a sanitation worker?

But could she really give up and accept her false conviction?

She knew what the evidence said, but she also knew it wasn’t

true. She had not been drinking. So there must be some kind of mistake. It simply wasn't possible for her tests to have shown a high level of alcohol in her system. Because she hadn't consumed a drop.

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"Perhaps... this case, there are still some things that I don't understand," Grace mumbled.

And she was determined to get to the bottom of them...

She also did not understand why Jennifer's car had been rushing toward her.

What made her even more confused was why those witness statements were all targeted at her.

She could not explain. All the witnesses and evidence at that time had proven that she was the perpetrator.

Admittedly, the accident had been traumatic and some of the details surrounding the investigation that followed were still murky. She'd been in shock.

But she couldn't for the life of her understand how there was so

much security or camera footage. Almost every street in the city had some kind of traffic camera. And the people who'd been

witnesses, they'd all had the exact same version of events.

But as an attorney, she knew that rarely happened either. People always had different perceptions, based on their physical position in relation to a crime, their age, sex, and perspective.

Even something as simple as running a traffic light could be interpreted in different ways, depending on who you asked.

Could it have been something else entirely?