

Ex Convict 4

Chapter 4

Evelyn's face contorted with rage just as her father's vicious slap connected with Grace's face.

"What are you talking about!" her father screamed. "You drove a car into someone else and were locked up in jail because of it. Our entire family was shamed because of you. You don't have a future anymore. Do you want to ruin your sister's future as well?" His eyes were full of disgust for her.

"The one thing you did right was dating Sean Stevens and then you destroyed it all. We had so much respect from other businessmen and our relatives from that connection..."

Grace nodded, understanding that her father, Tony Cummins had been embarrassed.

Her relationship with Sean had afforded her dad the chance to claim a higher social ranking. When she fell... he did too. And her father resented her for it.

Her face burned and she knew she'd likely bear a bruise. But her expression remained calm as if she didn't care at all.

"I originally just wanted to say a prayer for my mother—that was why you invited me back home, wasn't it?—But now it seems there is no need for me to do it here. I won't step foot in this house ever again."

After saying this, Grace walked out of the house without looking back.

This place had never really been her "home," and she should've stopped hoping for it to be a long time ago.

When Grace got to her apartment, the place was dark and the lights were off. When she turned on the lights, she was greeted by cold silence.

She could tell at a glance that there was no one else in the room.

Was Jason gone? Her heart suddenly felt a little empty. Which was silly, she knew. The man was a stranger. He'd helped her out, but he didn't owe her anything, and she was very foolish to think he'd want to stay with her.

Grace let out a bitter laugh. She was alone. Again.

Something in her chest ached painfully at the thought as if acknowledging that even out of prison, she was still constricted, and destined to live out her existence without anybody.

Just as she was about to close the door, she saw a figure slowly walking towards her. She was stunned.

It was Jason.

He was still wearing those worn-out clothes of his from yesterday while he held a bag in his hand. His longish hair almost covered the entire upper part of his face, making it difficult for people to see him clearly at a glance, but she knew that under that mussed hair was a face that could easily take over people's hearts.

If not for the clothes, she would've thought him an actor like her sister might work with on one of the TV series. He was that powerfully handsome.

Such a man... was he really a homeless person?

And if he was... why? Drugs, mental illness, violent tendencies? There were a number of causes that could set someone on the streets, and most of them carried elements of instability. She knew that taking him in like this was an impulsive decision and could put her in danger, but... she couldn't stop herself.

Perhaps humans were tribal animals after all. They needed company.

"I'm back." His voice was low and indifferent, but to her, it was the sweetest sound.

Her throat suddenly felt tight. "I... I thought you wouldn't come back."

He stared at her. "I just went out to buy something."

She quickly leaned to one side, pulled him into the room, and closed the door. Then, she saw two white steamed buns in the bag he held.

She smiled gently and felt that her whole body seemed to be much more relaxed now.

Sad, wasn't it? Her family abandoned her, but some homeless stranger was the one to keep her company.

"We'll eat together, but before that, I... wanted to light a candle for my Grandpa and mother. Today is the anniversary of his passing...as well as my mother's."

Fate was cruel to her. Her beloved grandpa and mother died only a few days apart.

Jason's dark eyes followed her movements as she took the prayer candle from her bag that she'd

bought on the way home along with a framed photo.

It was a black-and-white photo of a man. The man in the photo was about sixty years old. His eyes crinkled up in a smile that looked kind.

Grace lit the candles and channeled her thoughts.

She kissed the photograph gently.

“Grandpa, I’ve started a new life now. I’m living a good life. I have a job that pays well enough for me to feed myself. You can rest in peace, and in the future, I will only live a better and better life...”

Jason stood to one side and looked at the woman in front of him with a smile on her lips. However, her almond-shaped eyes looked misty. The light of the candle and the light of the lamp in the corner of the room mixed together and caused shadows to dance across her face.

She had arched eyebrows, a small nose, and pink lips. She was not at all bad-looking, but he’d seen countless women more than Grace.

Back then, Jennifer Atkinson, his fiancée, had been a rare beauty. To Jason, Grace’s looks were only ordinary.

He had seen her information and naturally knew that today was the anniversary of her Grandpa’s death. He understood her to need to say some kind words and to acknowledge her Grandpa’s passing, but fresh out of prison and working in a sanitation center, to say she was ‘doing well’ ...was one hell of a stretch.

“Also, grandpa, there’s another person here who’s staying with me,” she said softly. She then turned her head and looked at him. She smiled. Under the light of the candles, she seemed to glow from within.

It was like his presence in and of itself was enough to bring her joy. After a moment, she turned to look at the man in the photo again. “So, I am doing really good, grandpa. You can rest in peace.”

After saying this, she respectfully bowed to the photo. She closed her eyes and though her lips moved, whatever words she said were between her and her grandpa or deity.

It was several minutes before she nodded and opened her eyes. “Alright, I’ll clean up and make some soup. Let’s have dinner together.”

“Sure,” he responded easily.

He offered to help, but she bid him sit. He washed his hands and set out plates and utensils before sitting at the small table and watching her move around the kitchen.

Her movements matched her name—graceful. And while she didn’t hum and there was no sound in the room, there was a rhythm to her motions as if she moved to some languid melody.

When she set a pot of soup on the table between them and a plate of some egg frittata she’d mixed up with leftovers from the refrigerator, he inhaled deeply.

It smelled delicious.

She thanked him profusely for the buns he’d brought back and rather than eat them out of the back she set them out formally on dishes.

His lips twitched at that. She’d been the one to give him the money.

He was the guest here. He should be the one thanking her if anything.

They both quietly ate, and after a few minutes she asked, “Jay, what kind of work did you do in the past?”

“I did all sorts of work,” he said vaguely. “If there was work to do, then I would do it. If there wasn’t, then I would just find a place to rest,” he said.

“Rest? I hope you had comfortable places to rest.” From the way she said it, he assumed she was thinking of how she came upon him—wandering the streets on a cold winter night. Hardly a ‘comfortable place to rest.’

“How old are you?” she asked.

“Twenty-seven,” he replied.

“We’re the same age,” she said in surprise. “Which month were you born in?”

“November.”

“It’s July for me. In that case, I’m a few months older than you.” Grace took a bite of food. She dabbed at her mouth with her napkin. “You don’t have any family, and neither do I. Why don’t you treat me as your sister from now on? I will also regard you as my younger brother.”

“Sister?” He smiled lightly. There had never been anyone who had dared to be his family before, and yet this woman still insisted on being his sister?

If she knew who he was, would she still dare to say such a thing?

However, it was exactly because she didn’t know that it was so interesting to him.

“Can’t you?” Her eyes darkened.

“You look sad,” he said. “This was your idea, adopting me.”

Her lips twitched and then she gazed back to the small candle still burning on the countertop in memory of her grandfather and mother. “When my mother passed away, I was only three. I don’t have many memories of her, to be honest, but I know she loved me.”

He’d have to think very hard to recall his life at that age. And for a child grieving, the trauma would probably overshadow the good memories.

“How did she die?”

“Miscarriage. The baby was six months along.” She glanced back at him. “My brother. But he only lived for ten minutes after entering this world. It would’ve been so wonderful, I think. Having him with me.” A

tear slipped down her cheek. “I like to think that they’re together.”

He grunted. So... a brother.

“Are you sure you want to be my sister?” he asked suddenly.

She nodded.

“But, neither do I have a permanent home nor do I have an actual job. I can’t even provide for myself properly. Why do you want to be my sister?”