

## **Ex Convict 83**

### Chapter 83

"If I'm dismissed, I don't have anything to fall back on. The accident... all of my savings were cleared out with court fees and fines. I need this job. It pays the rent and buys our food..."

"You still have me!" he shouted.

Grace gasped. Jay never yelled. He was always calm. Even in horrible situations-violent situations-he was not so volatile.

"I'll earn money to take care of you," he said more quietly. As if the outburst never happened. "Don't give it another thought."

Grace stared dazedly at the man before her. She believed

him. Even though he didn't have a steady job and no home of his own, she trusted his word. Indeed, his words had given her an unprecedented sense of security.

Maybe she didn't have to go it alone. Maybe she did have someone she could rely on.

"Make the call." He brought the phone before her.

She hesitated for a few seconds, then took the phone and called her manager on-call at the Sanitation Center.

As the phone rang and she waited to be connected to her manager, she felt her blood pressure rise. She didn't love this job, but she really didn't want to lose it. She trusted that Jay could provide for them, but she didn't want that responsibility

to fall to him.

"Hello, Mrs. Jacobson," she said politely when her boss answered. Then she gave a summary of the accident, leaving out the whole "I was pushed by Zoe Stevens and bullied by my ex-fiancee's new fiancee Lily Atkinson."

She thought Mrs. Jacobson would tell her no. Or that she'd have to apply with the county or request additional approvals,

but there were no extra hurdles. To her total surprise, Mrs.

Jacobson inquired about her health and suggested she take longer than a week if she needed to. Furthermore, she would still be paid the minimum wage and her salary would not be affected.

Grace couldn't believe it.

"What happened?" Jason asked.

"She said yes."

He continued to wash her foot, and his hand slipped around to massage her ankle. Then her calf.

She sucked in a breath.

His dark gaze cut to hers.

"She, uh, told me to take more time." Grace could feel her face heating. "That particular manager has never been very warm toward me..."

"Don't overthink it. You're injured. It's the right thing to do."

His fingers gently along her ankle again and she felt tingles of goodness from her foot to the top of her head. Had anyone

ever washed or massaged her like this? Sean never did. Even

in their most intimate times, he wasn't one for much foreplay.

As those tingles continued to race from the sole of her foot, up her leg to all those other places, Grace felt her face grow

redder. She could imagine his strong hands, those long fingers, tracing higher up her legs, to where they v-ed. And once her thoughts took that turn, she couldn't look at him without imagining the things he could do to her.

"All... all right. Thank you. I'm, uh, all clean,!" she hurriedly said. Ankles... who knew she had such sensitive ankles!?!

And yet his fingers were still gripping her leg. "Let me dry you."

"It's okay. I'm not that wet." At least her legs and feet weren't...

"Don't move, Sister," he ordered.

She felt awkward and frozen. Her senses were heightened with anticipation. Maybe it was the meds from the hospital. Maybe it was his touch, scent, his vow to take care of her.

Whatever the reason...

She wanted him.

Jason unhurriedly picked up the towel next to him and carefully dried her. Then he swept her into his arms again, only this time, as he cradled her, she angled her head.

His neck craned instantly toward hers.

His eyelids lowered. When his lips were inches from hers, she sputtered, “J-Jay?”

His body froze slightly, then he lifted his head with his usual expression as he asked, “Sister, what’s wrong?”

“It’s... it’s nothing.” She bit her lip. Oh my god, had she imagined that moment? Was she so starved for intimacy that

his kindness made her leap to the wrong conclusions?

He placed her on the bed. “You should sleep early today.”

“Yes,” she mumbled in agreement.

He turned to go into the bathroom and closed the door.

Jason stared at his reflection and wondered how he’d come to be standing here. In a matchbox of a bathroom, in a studio

flat in a shit section of town, with the woman who’d killed his fiancée sleeping not five feet away from him.

It wasn’t just being in this physical space... it was the emotional side of it.

Touching Grace, feeling the flex of muscle beneath his fingertips, the smooth softness of her skin, just seeing the way she blushed and how her pupils dilated at his simplest touch...

He was drawn to this woman.

He parceled each element away.

Attraction. Respect. Trust. Desire.

So long as she didn’t desire his emotions, they’d be okay.