

Chapter 449 Have You Missed Me These Years

Mark felt an urge to turn around. 1

But Cecilia's grip tightened, her embrace so intense that her nails dug into his skin.

Her body quivered uncontrollably.

In that instant, Mark's resolve wavered, and tears threatened to fall.

Life had thrown myriad challenges his way, teaching him to maintain a facade of tranquility. However, the heartfelt sobbing of the woman he cherished shook his composure.

"Cecilia," he uttered, his voice laced with emotion.

She offered no response, her face pressed against his back. He was leaner now, but his frame was actually more robust than during his illness.

After what felt like an eternity, her voice, barely above a whisper, broke the silence. "Does it still hurt?"

"The pain's gone."

Finally, Mark rotated, his eyes meeting Cecilia's tear-streaked face.

For the first time, he realized reconciliation wouldn't bring sheer joy.

Instead, a profound sorrow engulfed him.

Mark switched off the gas stove, his gaze deep and intense as he gently caressed her face.

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It had been ages since he'd allowed himself to look at her this way.

Her skin, warm and inviting under his touch, felt like his sanctuary.

Cecilia's voice, quivering, called out to him.

Overwhelmed, he leaned forward, capturing her lips in a passionate French kiss.

She staggered, finding support against the kitchen counter.

Their kisses were fervent, repeated.

Ultimately, they went no further than that embrace. Cecilia rested her head on his shoulder, her tears a silent stream.

Mark's hand brushed through her long hair, comforting her.

After a prolonged silence, he softly proposed, "You must be hungry. I'll prepare something for us."

"Okay," she replied, her eyes reddened from crying.

Gently patting her shoulder, Mark suggested, "Freshen up in the bathroom. We'll eat once you're done."

Cecilia complied.

Moments later, in the master bathroom, she turned the faucet, letting cool water cascade over her face to regain her composure.

The mirror reflected her visage.

Her eyes were tinged with red, her complexion flushed.

Cecilia caught her breath.

It had been a considerable time since she'd last blushed, a reaction only Mark could elicit. Despite the ordeals they'd weathered over the years, he alone had the power to stir such

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profound emotion within her.

She had attempted to move on, to explore relationships with others.

She craved a fresh start.

But it just wouldn't work. Her brother had pointed out the undeniable truth—she hadn't moved past Mark because her feelings for him remained deep-seated.

Now, reunited with Mark, her heart seemed to reawaken, pulsating with life once more.

"Dinner's ready. Come, let's eat," Mark invited, his tone tender.

Cecilia responded with a simple affirmation.

As she emerged, she found him poised at the bedroom doorway. She averted her gaze, intending to sidestep him, but he halted her escape.

Backing her against the door, he lowered his voice, a husky note evident. "Your flushed complexion... it's enchanting."

Cecilia's resolve faltered.

She offered a gentle shove, chiding, "Flattery isn't your best tactic."

Her eyes, still tinged with red, betrayed her emotions as she added, "I don't want to rush things between us."

Their maturity precluded the need for explicit statements. He understood her hesitation to physically rekindle their relationship prematurely. Respecting her boundaries, he caressed her dark tresses, his smile acknowledging her sentiments.

Mark was a proficient cook, preparing a meal that included her favorites.

Cecilia indulged heartily.

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Post-dinner, a twinge of regret surfaced. She patted her slightly protruding belly, lamenting, "Extra pounds don't translate well on camera."

In response, Mark brewed a cup of fruit tea, offering it with a reassurance, "This is a one-time indulgence. I'll prepare a salad for you tomorrow."

"You understand me well," Cecilia acknowledged, sipping her tea.

The ambiance was comforting, the warm yellow lighting complementing the cool, air-conditioned interior of the tastefully adorned house. Contentment seemed a natural consequence, and Cecilia was not immune.

Both harbored desires to bridge the distance between them, to compensate for lost time.

Yet, three years of silence, coupled with significant age disparities and differing social circles, had erected barriers.

Their sole mutual interest appeared to be their discussions about children.

After a brief exchange, Cecilia's smile waned.

In a subdued tone, she requested, "When you see Miss Holt next, could you apologize on my behalf? I wasn't at my best earlier."

"It's on me," Mark interjected, playfully pinching Cecilia's cheek. "I'll extend your apologies."

An ensuing silence enveloped Mark and Cecilia, their gazes locked.

In the past, their connection was primarily physical, a fervent urgency underpinning their interactions, leaving little room for verbal communication. Now, a palpable estrangement lingered.

As the night deepened, Mark proposed, "Stay here. I have more to share."

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Cecilia harbored no illusions.

Their history was marked by intimacy and a shared life; pretense was unnecessary when he suggested they converse in bed.

While Mark attended to the dishes, Cecilia opted for a shower.

Subsequently, she found solace by the window, initiating a call home, received by Juliette.

Cecilia's voice was faint, a stark contrast to the impulsive boldness of her youth.

After a brief conversation, she ended the call, her gaze falling upon Mark.

A sudden unease overtook her.

It felt as though she was with a man for the first time, nervously adjusting her crimson silk bathrobe.

"You look stunning," Mark complimented softly.

A blush crept across Cecilia's cheeks.

He smiled, retreating to the bathroom. Soon, the sound of running water filled the silence.

Cecilia contemplated waiting on the sofa but eventually decided the bed was more appropriate. Frustrated with her own timidity, she reasoned they were just going to share a bed, after all.

She chastised herself before climbing into bed.

Clutching a pillow, she pressed her face against it, her shyness persisting.

Emerging from a steam-filled bathroom, Mark's slightly chilled body joined her.

The coolness made Cecilia shiver; she instinctively curled into

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his embrace, looking up to inquire, "Did you have a cold shower?"

Mark's casual affirmation concerned her, sparking worry for his well-being.

Within the quilt's embrace, he caught her hand, drawing her close, and reassured her in a whisper, "It's alright. As long as I'm cautious with my diet, there's nothing to worry about."

He wouldn't have returned if he wasn't certain.

Cecilia fell silent.

Time stretched on until he presumed she had withdrawn into sleep. Then she reached out, extinguishing the light.

She nestled her face into the crook of his shoulder.

Her voice, barely above a whisper, confessed, "Actually, if you wanted to, I wouldn't have rejected you. You didn't need to take that cold shower."

Mark remained silent, his hand gently tracing her waist.

Gradually, warmth spread from his palm...

They both inhaled softly, each wary of betraying their desires. Yet, such things defy restraint, and soon their breaths quickened in unison.

Unable to resist the mounting tension, Mark cradled the back of her head.

As he kissed her, his free hand began to ease her bathrobe from her shoulders.

"Mark."

Her voice, vulnerable and tender, beckoned him as she gazed up.

He answered without words.

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Reaching to the bedside table, he retrieved a small box, setting it aside before his lips eagerly found hers once more...

Soft moonlight bathed the room.

Their shadows danced upon the wall.

As their bodies merged, the night air was punctuated by their shared ecstasy.

Sensuality deepened the night's embrace.

By the time their passion subsided, the clock struck 3:00 AM.

Cecilia's head rested on his shoulder, her raven tresses cascading over him.

This intimate reconnection promised to accelerate the thaw in their relationship.

Gently, she caressed his warm skin, her voice a soft murmur. "In those two years, did you ever think of me?"

"Every single day. I longed for you, for Edwin, for the unborn child within you," Mark confessed, his voice tender.

"And you? Did thoughts of me ever cross your mind?" he inquired, lowering his gaze to meet hers.

Shifting slightly, Cecilia confessed, "Constantly. Memories, both fond and painful, but you were always there, in my thoughts."

Mark pressed a kiss to her forehead.

"Do you have work tomorrow? Join me in visiting my mom if you don't. Later, I'll accompany you to see your parents," he proposed.

Cecilia's smile was faint.

"How do you have the courage to go see my parents?" she teased.

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In the darkness, Mark's voice carried a hint of playful challenge. "Why shouldn't I? I've even had plans to propose and share a bed with you, leaving you pleading for respite."

Cecilia shot Mark a glance.

After a pause, she softly suggested, "Let's discuss marriage proposals some other time."

Their proximity in bed notwithstanding, marriage was momentous. She was reluctant to impose further on her parents.

Mark didn't press her.

"Let's just sleep. Otherwise, we might just have to go for another round," he quipped.

Cecilia inwardly branded him shameless.

Noses touching, Mark whispered, "I'm quite capable, you know."

"Have you no shame?"

Despite her retort, Cecilia faced a hectic day ahead.

They planned a weekend visit to see Zoey.

Upon reaching the film set, Mark stopped the car, silently watching her.

Cecilia's patience waned.

Unfastening her seatbelt, she chided, "Enough already. I can't be glued to your side all the time. Don't you have a company to manage?"

Mark captured her hand, his thumb tracing gentle circles on her skin.

Cecilia had changed since their reconciliation.

Even in the heat of passion the previous night, she'd abandoned

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the endearment Uncle Mark, addressing him simply as Mark.

He ventured, "Shall I pick you up tonight?"

After a moment's thought, she declined, "No need. I'll have the driver take me home. My car's still at my brother's place."

However, Mark insisted, "I'll arrange for someone to deliver your car to the set."

Finding the proposal sensible, she acquiesced.

While Mark yearned for more time with Cecilia, she hesitated to maintain constant closeness, agreeing instead to a weekend rendezvous.

She exited the car and departed.

Mark, meanwhile, headed to his company.

Upon his arrival, Peter's expression lit up, though he quickly became speculative. "Were you out all night with Charlie and the others?"

He'd noticed Mark's change of shirt.

Disregarding the inquiry, Mark shed his jacket, draped it over the sofa, and reclined.

Meeting Peter's gaze, he divulged softly, "I spent the night with Cecilia, at the house on Gamous Road."

Peter reeled in shock.

After composing himself, he offered Mark tea, remarking, "You must be exhausted. Cecilia's a handful when she's had too much to drink."

"What nonsense! We've made amends," Mark corrected, a serious undertone in his voice.

Peter's eyes widened in disbelief.

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Though Peter took a moment to process this, Mark's thoughts were elsewhere. "I can't afford to hurt her again."

He sensed a shift in Cecilia's demeanor towards him.

Perhaps it was estrangement, or maybe she'd simply grown up.

In essence, their bond wasn't as intimate as before.

Peter, somewhat flustered, inquired, "How... How did she come around so suddenly?"

Mark's smile was knowing. "I believe Waylen had a word with her."

He then turned the conversation businessward, asking Peter, "Are there any projects suitable for collaboration with the Exceed Group? Offer them favorable terms so Waylen can spend more time at home with Rena and the kids."

Peter's grin was complicit.

"I'll scout for the right project to partner with them. If nothing surfaces, I'll create one."

Mark felt a sense of relief wash over him.

As fate would have it, a business associate reached out, extending an invitation for a round of golf.

Normally, Mark might decline such social entanglements.


But buoyed by his current spirits and seeking relaxation, he accepted without a second thought.

Observing Mark's demeanor, Peter surmised the previous night had been eventful, teasing, "You look spent from last night. You should take it easy today."

"How could I be exhausted? As if I couldn't keep up with a young woman. I'm the furthest thing from tired."

Peter's gaze held a touch of wistful envy.

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The three days leading to the weekend saw no rendezvous between Mark and Cecilia.

She was immersed in her professional life.

Gone were her days of idly awaiting him.

Similarly, Mark, preoccupied with corporate demands, couldn't devote his every moment to her, managing only to fetch her and the kids came Friday.

When Mark pulled into the Fowler residence, dusk had painted the sky; it was seven.

The evening unfurled in splendor.

The final wisps of cloud staged a breathtaking display.

Life thrummed within the Fowler home, the air alive with the commotion of family. Waylen and Cecilia present, children in lively play.

Stepping from his car, Mark was greeted by the tantalizing aroma of a meal underway.

Little Alexis latched onto his legs, greeting, "Great uncle."

Mark affectionately ruffled her hair, lifting her into his arms. Alexis had a knack for courting affection.

And Mark indulged her.

Once inside, Mark's attention would be irrevocably drawn to Edwin and Olivia, meaning Alexis had to seize her emotional connection with him while she could. It was an opportunity she wouldn't squander.

Mark remained oblivious to Alexis' calculations.

They approached the porch.

Set off to one side was a diminutive table and chair, where Edwin was ensconced.

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Disentangling from Mark's embrace, Alexis announced brightly, "Edwin, I've brought your great uncle back to you."

Mark's laughter was heartfelt.

In the next moment, Alexis was a blur, darting away.

Edwin lifted his gaze to Mark, addressing him in a subdued tone.

Squatting down to Edwin's level, Mark caressed his head. "Silly boy, have you been waiting for me here?"

Intent on maintaining his dignity, Edwin replied with slight discomfort, "No, it's just brighter here."

Not pressing further, Mark reviewed Edwin's homework. Suddenly, Edwin, eyes fixed on Mark, inquired, "Did you and Mommy make up?"

Mark responded with a nonchalant affirmative.

He then posed a question to his son, "Do you want to reconcile with me?"

The young boy's cheeks flushed, and he remained silent.

Respecting Edwin's reluctance, Mark hoisted both Edwin and his chair, heading toward the hall, remarking, "Don't study here anymore. The lighting is poor, and it's too warm."

Korbyn, overhearing while sipping his tea, offered a rare smile. "Well, Mark, you truly have the child's interests at heart."

His tone sardonic, Korbyn added, "Remarkable. From crafting rockets to showing such dedication to your family. Quite heartwarming, indeed."

Korbyn's tongue was as acerbic as Waylen's.

Juliette elbowed her husband gently.

Yet, Mark remained unflustered. Presenting gifts to Juliette and

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Korbyn, he said graciously, "There are many things I haven't handled well. I plan to make amends, step by step, in the future. I anticipate guidance from you both."

Korbyn, astute as he was, recognized the need only to apply subtle pressure on Mark.

He knew pushing too hard might upset Mark, potentially distressing Cecilia once more.

Instead, Korbyn invited Mark to take a seat, and then instructed a servant, "Please inform Waylen and the others it's time to come downstairs for dinner. They shouldn't isolate themselves every time they congregate."

"Rena and Cecilia went shopping, coming home with an array of clothing and jewelry," Juliette shared. "They're seeking Waylen's opinion. They get along so well. That pleases you, doesn't it?"

A twinge of disappointment struck Mark.

Cecilia had claimed her schedule was too packed for meet-ups.

A hint of jealousy emerged in Mark, though he kept it to himself.

As he pondered, footsteps signaled their descent.

Waylen led the way, with Rena and Cecilia following, side by side. Cecilia, leaning on Rena, had her arm linked through Rena's...

Korbyn's voice, cool, interjected, "Your uncle has arrived."