

Chapter 454 Edwin Is My Son And My Responsibility

The storm was in full swing.

It seemed as if the rainstorm were a chain, linking heaven and earth in a wet embrace.

Off in the distance, the dark sky was pierced by a bright white light, like a fearsome tear had appeared in the heavens.

The roof of Mark's car had given in to the storm's fury.

Rain was invading the interior like an uninvited guest.

Despite it being summer, the night's rain sent chills across his skin, making him shiver uncontrollably.

After what seemed an eternity but was only half an hour, Mark spotted the welcoming lights of a 24-hour pharmacy.

He brought the car to a stop.

Dashing into the pharmacy, Mark noticed the sales clerk was in the midst of a yawn, her attention divided between him and the auditory assault of the rain. She couldn't help but notice the man before her, drenched to the bone and ghostly pale.

Jumping to her feet, she inquired, "Oh my, sir, with the rain coming down like cats and dogs, what brings you out? What medicine do you need?"

Between gasps, Mark rattled off his list. "Medicine for kids. Something for inflammation, pills for fever, and those fever-reducing patches."

To the clerk, it seemed Mark wasn't short on cash.

She selected the finest options available, packing them into several bags with care.

Mark paid for a charger, powered up his phone, and was greeted by several missed calls from Cecilia.

He returned her call, his words brief and to the point. "I'm on my way," he assured her.

With that, he ended the call and braved the storm once more.

The rain was relentless.

Returning to his car, he found the interior had become a casualty of the downpour. Yet, by some miracle, the engine roared to life without a hitch.

An hour of battling the tempest later, Mark was at Cecilia's doorstep.

The servant, a mix of surprise and relief, greeted him, "Mr. Evans, you must change!"

Ignoring the plea, Mark strode with purpose toward Edwin's bedroom. "Let me see Edwin first," was all he said.

The servant trailed behind Mark.

Upon entering, Mark's eyes met with Edwin, sprawled on the bed, his little face flushed.

A thermometer was perched at the bed's head.

Scooping it up, Mark placed it under the boy's armpit, his voice edged with concern. "How high did his fever get?"

"39 degrees Celsius," came the heavy reply.

A lump formed in Mark's throat.

He wiped his hands, his touch as gentle as a feather when he reached for Edwin's forehead. Maybe it was the coolness of his hand, but Edwin seemed to find solace there, nuzzling closer the moment he opened his eyes.

In a weak, warbling tone, Edwin whispered, "Great uncle."

Confusion knit the servant's brows.

With a tender chuckle, she corrected, "Edwin, sweetheart, you're mistaken. This is your father."

But clarity didn't return to Edwin's eyes.

Nestling his face into the cool cradle of Mark's hand, he murmured again, "Great uncle."

A pang of sorrow struck Mark's heart.

Despite grappling with his turmoil, he summoned every ounce of gentleness, caressing Edwin's feverish brow before easing the thermometer from its hold.

The verdict was as feared: 39 degrees.

Swiftly, he applied a cooling patch to Edwin's fiery forehead, beckoning the servant for a glass of tepid water.

With the storm raging, venturing out was a fantasy.

A doctor's visit, an impossibility.

Arriving had been a feat in itself; no cars braved the streets, the subway had surrendered to the tempest.

Water arrived, glass cradled in anxious hands.

Eyeing his sodden attire, Mark requested a bathrobe. Once changed, he nestled Edwin close, his hand a comforting rhythm on the child's back. "Let's get that medicine in you before you sleep, champ."

In his haze, Edwin barely registered the movement.

Mark gently placed the pill against Edwin's lips and observed as he swallowed it.

Water followed, guiding the medicine on its vital mission.

But as Edwin settled back, the harsh truth remained; medicine wasn't a magic wand. Fever ebbed and surged, playing cruel games with the little boy.

In his worst moments, Edwin sought solace in Mark's steadfast presence, his small hand finding his, calling him "great uncle" in his delirium. It tore at Mark, each hot, restless shift. Compelled by worry, he fetched a warm towel, dabbing away at the heat that seemed to radiate from Edwin's every pore.

Time crawled; thirty minutes saw the fever relent, if only just.

But it clung stubbornly above 38 degrees.

The night stretched on.

Sleep was a stranger to Mark. Instead, he renewed his vigil every thirty minutes, the damp towel his constant companion. His own body protested, weariness seeping into his bones, but he paid it no mind.

The servant, witnessing his silent struggle, offered softly, "Let me take over, Mr. Evans. You need to rest."

Mark shook his head, declining the offer.

He was resolute, determined to nurse Edwin himself.

By some miracle, Edwin's fever dwindled.

Mark was spent. He didn't even summon the energy for a shower, drifting to sleep precariously at the bed's edge.

Dawn peeked in.

The rain had bid its farewell, and the city seemed renewed in its wake.

In the hush of the children's room, the father and son's breathing melded in harmony.

Stirring to consciousness, Edwin studied the figure beside him.

Mark's rhythmic breathing signaled slumber.

Close as they were, Edwin could discern the shadow of new growth on his father's face.

Mark lay still, a testament to his exhaustion.

A realization dawned on Edwin. Had his father kept vigil all night?

His lips pressed together in contemplation. Though lingering resentment resided, for now, he cast it aside, his heart softening towards Mark.

Edwin's fingers brushed against Mark's hand.

The sudden heat startled him.

Alarmed, Edwin noted the fevered flush on Mark's face.

His intention to call the servant halted as the door swung open.

Cecilia's voice echoed with concern. "How's Edwin? Is Mark still here?"

As the servant stirred a pot of light yet nutritious soup, she chimed in, "The boy's fever broke. Mr. Evans has been by his side all night. Last night's rain was fierce, and I noticed he had a cut on his forehead."

Cecilia hastened inside.

Edwin, though wan, looked rejuvenated.

Cecilia enveloped him, relief evident.

Eyes brimming with worry, Edwin whispered, "Dad's running a fever. He's burning up."

Frozen, Cecilia processed the revelation.

Rushing to Mark's side, she noted his damp hair and the bathrobe he wore.

A mix of fear and concern, she laid her hand on his forehead, confirming Edwin's claim.

The servant interjected, "He braved the storm last night. He must've caught something. It's unfortunate. Mr. Evans has always been frail. What if..."

Edwin's face drained of color.

Trembling, he clung to Cecilia's leg.

Composure regained, Cecilia dialed 911. "Harmony Apartment. We need an ambulance."

Next, she reached out to Peter, urging him to alert Mark's physician to meet them at the hospital.

Having orchestrated the necessary steps, her strength waned.

With wobbly legs, she leaned against the bed, her touch lingering on Mark's heated brow.

Silent in his determination, Edwin fetched a towel, dabbing away the moisture from his father's form.

His resolute actions weighed on Cecilia's heart.

In a soft call, she said, "Edwin."

Eyes glistening, Edwin's voice broke. "Will my great uncle be okay?"

"He will," Cecilia whispered, tears streaming down her face.

Soon after, the ambulance sirens signaled its arrival.

Cecilia made the decision not to allow Edwin to accompany them, asking the servant to tend to him and Olivia instead.

By the time she got to the hospital, Peter was already there, and the medical team was prepped and waiting.

Mark lay pale and motionless on the emergency stretcher, caught in a semi-conscious state.

His primary doctor quickly assessed him, frustration evident. "Given his condition, he should have been more cautious. He could've lost his life."

Peter nervously wrung his hands.

As Mark underwent examination, Cecilia, with a vacant stare towards the overhead lights, confided in Peter. "Mark faced that storm just to be with ailing Edwin."

It wasn't until she followed the paramedics downstairs that Cecilia

noticed Mark's damaged car.

She tried to imagine Mark's perilous journey through the downpour. Despite his naturally cautious nature, his commitment to Edwin had driven him.

He had wanted to dispel Edwin's doubts about his affection, even at personal risk.

Recollections of Mark's poignant words flooded her thoughts. "I'm not the young man I once was, Cecilia. Time is fleeting."

With a shaky exhale, tears slipped from her eyes onto the sterile floor.

She whispered to Peter, "You think I didn't treat him right, don't you?"

Caught off guard, Peter sighed. "It's complicated, Cecilia. No one else would understand Mr. Evans the way you do, but also, he wouldn't have held on to anyone the way he has with you."

Peter connected with Cecilia during the prolonged wait.

"How is Laura's leg?" Cecilia inquired gently.

"She's on the mend. She'll be back on her feet in a few months," Peter replied.

Cecilia gave a slight nod. "Could you get her a gift for me later? A toy or something. Just... don't let her know it's from me."

Peter looked conflicted.

Over the years, he had seen the ebb and flow of right and wrong, and he wondered if he should have refrained from calling Mark that day.

Their wait felt interminable.

Finally, the door to the examination room swung open, and the doctor stepped out. "He's got acute pneumonia. It could be mild or severe. You need to get him admitted right away."

Peter immediately went to make the necessary arrangements.

Soon after, Mark was transferred to a VIP room.

After prescribing the necessary medication, a nurse started an IV for Mark. Spotting Cecilia, she advised, "Monitor him closely over the next 48 hours. If his fever exceeds 39 degrees, alert us immediately."

Cecilia acknowledged with a nod.

Once the nurse set up a heart monitor for Mark and exited, Cecilia took a seat beside him, tenderly smoothing out the lines on his forehead.

"Why do you keep putting me through this?" Cecilia's voice quivered.

Mark, though feverish, seemed to recognize her voice. He tried to focus, his eyes settling on a hazy figure.

It was Cecilia.

In a raspy voice, he questioned, "Are you shedding tears for me?"

"No," she whispered.

Mark, weariness permeating every fiber of his being, slowly reached out to touch her hand. "You've changed. You used to be so candid and vibrant."

Nestling closer to him, Cecilia murmured, "Times have changed, Mark. I'm not the young girl you remember."

"But in my eyes, you'll always be that same young girl."

Emotion welled up in Cecilia.

"You need to think sensibly. I could have called my father and brother and you didn't have to do this. Your health isn't great. What would happen to Edwin and Olivia if something befell you?"

Tears streamed down her face again.

Grasping her hand firmly, Mark finally voiced his thoughts, "Cecilia, I'm Edwin's dad. The rain was torrential last night. If I hadn't stepped in, who else would have? Your father's advancing in age, and your brother has four children as well as Rena to look after."

Cecilia looked on in shock.

Mark slowly turned to her, eyes filled with determination.

"Edwin is my son. It's my duty to be there for him."

Lost for words, Cecilia simply held Mark's hand, allowing him the peace to rest his eyes.

The ward door creaked open slightly.

A young boy with a cooling patch still on his forehead peeked in hesitantly.

It was Edwin.

His worry evident, Edwin had persuaded his sitter to bring him to the hospital, fearing for Mark's condition.

Overhearing Mark's acknowledgment of their relationship, Edwin's eyes shimmered with mixed emotions.

The servant motioned to let Edwin inside, but the boy shook his head, bolting away, only to collide with Peter.

Peter, taken aback, said, "You're still ill. Why are you here at the hospital?"

Lips quivering, Edwin remained silent.

Having encountered many children, Peter intuitively sensed Edwin's hesitance. Kneeling down to the boy's level, Peter comforted, "Your great uncle is okay."

"He's my dad," Edwin whispered, before darting away, the servant trailing behind.

Peter's gaze lingered on the boy, reflecting on Edwin's privileged lineage and the hardships he had faced, living humbly in a small rental space for years, where even a simple treat like milk tea was a luxury.

Returning to the ward, Peter found Mark restless.

Gently adjusting the blankets around Mark with a tenderness rivaling that of a spouse, Peter whispered, "Edwin was here. Even in his ill state, he wanted to see you. You need to recover quickly, for them."

Mustering the strength, Mark grinned. "You're quite the charmer, aren't you? And I hate you! Edwin and Olivia are just kids! And of course I am still young!"

Chuckling, Peter agreed, "Yes, you're still young."

Resting his head against Cecilia, Mark teased, "See, Cecilia? Peter sure has a way with words."

Though Cecilia realized they were jesting to lighten her mood, it only deepened her melancholy. Strong and resilient, she wanted to be Mark's pillar at times.

Silently, she exited the room to gather her thoughts.

Within the dimly lit ward, Mark confided to Peter, "I don't want her burdened with guilt. I'd give everything for Edwin."

Peter responded softly, "Edwin just recognized you as his father. As for you, playing the martyr might worry Cecilia more. She deeply cares about you."

Mark's voice was a whisper. "Peter, it's no act."

Edwin was Mark's flesh and blood; he would go to any lengths to protect the boy.

Peter comforted Mark until he fell asleep.

Exiting the ward, Peter found Cecilia engrossed in a call, likely with her film crew.

Eager to reassure her, Peter began, "When Mr. Evans is on the mend, you can continue your work. He'll be in high spirits when you return."

Cecilia shook her head determinedly.

She had sacrificed a coveted film role to stay in Duefron, prioritizing Mark's well-being, along with Edwin and Olivia's needs.

Mark had a point. As parents, their foremost responsibility was to their children.

Cecilia made her intentions clear.

After a thoughtful pause, Peter's face lit up with optimism. "Indeed, it's the best choice. With you by Mr. Evans' side, he's sure to recover swiftly."



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