

Chapter 473 The True Essence Of Loyalty In Love

The glow from the kitchen light bathed the room in warmth.

When Cecilia lifted her eyes to meet Mark's gaze, they shimmered with a vulnerability that struck him as innocent.

In that instant, Mark felt as if he were glimpsing the Cecilia of years past.

She used to be so fragile, quick to seek his comfort at the slightest sign of distress, calling him 'Uncle Mark' as she clung to him. His heart melted at the memory, and his eyes softened in response.

Zoey, ever the perceptive woman, sensed the palpable tension and tactfully exited the room, leaving Cecilia and Mark alone in the intimate kitchen setting.

With tender care, Mark guided Cecilia to a chair. He gently unwound the makeshift bandage from her injured finger, and then skillfully reapplied a fresh one.

Each time the bandage tightened, Cecilia would suck in her breath involuntarily.

Catching this, Mark met her eyes and murmured in a sultry, raspy voice, "Just a minor cut, and yet you're flinching as if it's more. You make these sounds during our intimate moments, too. You're trying to make me worry, aren't you?"

Cecilia felt her cheeks grow hot.

She considered offering a sassy comeback, feigning indifference but feared it would ruin the moment.

She didn't want to break the spell.

Even though his words were cheeky, Mark's touch was unmistakably



gentle.

Once her finger was securely bandaged, Mark caressed her cheek and said softly, "Rest now. I'll take care of dinner."

He proceeded to unbutton his jacket, revealing a dark blue shirt and tailored, iron-grey trousers that accentuated his lean, muscular form.

Mark had barely taken two steps when Cecilia wrapped her arms around his waist from behind.

Pressing her face against his back, she began to fidget with his belt.

Although Mark knew she was only craving for an intimate hug, he playfully scolded, "The children are waiting for their meal. Let me cook, and I promise to attend to you later. No more mischief, okay?"

Cecilia thought he was being cruel.

But she had no intention of letting him go.

The pair sidled up to the kitchen counter, Cecilia clinging to Mark as though she were a baby koala. Her playful antics while he was trying to cook almost made it impossible for him to focus on the task at hand.

Turning his head, he whispered suggestively, "Or maybe I should attend to you first?"

In response, Cecilia playfully bit his back, darkening the hue of his dark blue shirt.

Shaking his head with an affectionate sigh, Mark chided, "You're such a big baby. I bet Edwin will outgrow you in a few years' time."

Unfazed, Cecilia tightened her grip on him and whispered, "I just want to hold you right now."

Mark felt a surge of happiness so intense it almost disoriented him.

Despite their recent reconciliation, he hadn't dared to hope they could ever return to their former closeness. He hadn't dared to wonder if Cecilia could still love him as she once had.



But in that moment, her love felt unrestrained and passionate.

While he had some inkling as to why she'd taken up cooking, he chose not to voice it.

She wanted to cook for him.

Mark was accustomed to handling tensed situations. It honed his ability to control his emotions effectively. Focused on finely chopping vegetables, Mark asked softly, "You never did answer my earlier question. What prompted you to take up cooking all of a sudden?"

Cecilia's thoughts drifted to Elaine and the unpleasant words she'd spoken.

She didn't like it.

Still silent, she continued to stand behind him.

Mark's eyes were gentle. Sensing her mood, Mark remained quiet too, concentrating on his culinary tasks.

Finally, Cecilia broke the silence. "I didn't decide to cook because of what people said. I just wanted to do it for you."

Mark paused in his chopping.

Tenderly patting her hand, he said, "I understand. But Cecilia, I want you to pursue what truly makes you happy. Whether you aspire to act or become a super star, don't limit yourself because of one setback. I'm more resilient than you think."

Gently caressing his abdomen, Cecilia whispered softly, "I don't want to be a super star. I just want to be with you and the kids. But what can I do? I'm not as resourceful as Rena. She runs her business from home and still manages to cook amazing meals. I feel so inept in comparison."

Mark wore a subtle smile.

What was going through her mind?

Yet, he found her petulance endearing, and he enjoyed their conversations all the more for it.



His voice melded softly with the rhythmic sounds of vegetables being sliced on a cutting board.

"You don't have to do everything for I'll take care of you.

Rena knows what she wants and she's working hard for it. You need to live your life the way you want. You don't have to compare yourself with anyone else. You're just you. Even if you don't know how to cook, what does it matter?"

A mix of embarrassment and irritation surged through Cecilia as she sharply pinched his belly.

Mark merely smiled. "You're such a big baby."

After putting the kids to bed later that evening, they made passionate love.

With that, the issue was settled.

For now, Cecilia had shelved any thoughts of learning to cook.

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The following afternoon.

Mark sat in his office. He signed off on a document and passed it to his secretary. "Any commitments for today?"

After pondering for a moment, the secretary answered, "You have a dinner event tonight, though it's not essential."

"Please cancel it for me then."

Mark capped his pen, grabbed his coat, and stood up, ready to step out for something special.

The item had been air-freighted from Ypsila.

He'd received a phone call earlier that morning.

Closing the office blinds, Mark turned to his secretary, "I won't be returning to the office today."



His secretary noticed his uplifted mood and smiled. "Mr. Evans, are you planning to meet with Miss Fowler?"

A faint smile crossed Mark's lips.

He offered no denial.

Descending the stairs, Mark found his driver already waiting. He stepped into the car.

The limousine proceeded to tail the security vehicle, one in front of the other.

The driver peered into the rearview mirror. "Mr. Evans, where should I take you?"

Mark told the driver the address.

With a deft maneuver, the driver redirected the vehicle.

Twenty minutes later, they arrived in front of an elite salon. The establishment's manager was already standing by, poised to welcome them.

The manager graciously held the door open for Mark.

"Mr. Evans, the VAR piece you've commissioned is ready. Would you like to have your wife try it on, or..."

Mark followed her inside, his tone casual. "I'll take it with me now."

The manager nodded approvingly. "Certainly. If any adjustments are needed, you can bring it back for alterations."

She personally went to retrieve the dress.

The brand behind this dress was one of prestige, serving only the European royal families. That Mark was able to acquire such a piece was truly noteworthy.

Handing Mark an elegantly designed large box, the manager smiled.

Upon opening the box, Mark laid eyes on an intricately crafted white



dress adorned with embroidered feathers.

He'd spent an entire week choosing before he found the perfect gown.

Back in the car, Mark couldn't resist pulling a small box from his pocket.

It was a 12-carat pink diamond that he had just acquired recently, encircled by smaller floral diamonds.

Soft yet stunning, it was the perfect for Cecilia.

Mark wore a gentle smile, which was abruptly interrupted as the black limo came to a sudden halt, causing him to lurch forward and strike the seat in front of him. A wave of dizziness washed over him.

Mark's expression tightened.

The driver was quick to interject, "Mr. Evans, I can assure you this was unforeseeable. A woman has just run out in front of the car. I'll step out to investigate."

Something didn't feel right to Mark.

Exiting the vehicle, he followed the driver, only to pause in bewilderment.

It was Elaine who had thrown herself in the car's path.

The contrast was stark. Gone was the lustrous, well-kempt woman he once knew. Her appearance was haggard, her once-shiny hair now dry and lifeless. But what shocked him the most were her legs.

She was now limping and unable to walk properly.

Mark observed her in silence.

Slowly picking herself up off the ground, Elaine locked eyes with him.

She stared at the man she had once revered.

Her lips quivered as she finally broke the silence, her voice filled with a question she could no longer contain...

The driver impulsively kicked Elaine and spat out, "Are you out of your mind? Sleep-walking in broad daylight, are you? You ask Mr. Evans 'why'?"



You have no right to even ask such things. Do you understand?"

Mark shot the driver a glance, and the latter immediately felt a twinge of embarrassment.

"Get back in the car," Mark ordered.

The driver had always been intimidated by Mark, but in this moment, he mustered the courage to speak. "Mr. Evans, you shouldn't betray Miss Fowler. She's been genuinely good to you."

"What are you even talking about? Get in the car," Mark snapped.

Scratching his head, the driver complied.

Just then, a group of men hurried over. It seemed they had been searching for Elaine. Upon seeing Mark, they whispered frantically, "Mr. Evans, our apologies. We lost track of her, leading to this unfortunate incident."

They then moved to take hold of Elaine.

"Wait a minute," said Mark lightly.

The men paused, puzzled, but hope flashed in Elaine's eyes. Taking a few faltering steps forward, she said eagerly, "Mr. Evans, I'll do anything for you, just say the word."

"Including cooking for me?"

Mark responded, his tone icy.

Elaine's face blanched. She found herself at a loss for words.

Studying her, Mark spoke up calmly. "Miss Shaw, we've never had any meaningful connection. I never professed any feelings for you. Yes, I had my wild years, but if anyone has the right to take this issue with me, it would be Cecilia. It's none of your business."

Elaine opened her mouth to speak but ultimately said nothing.

Mark lit a cigarette, letting it smolder in silence.

Casting a glance at her damaged leg, he offered a wry smile. "My people



Chapter 473 The True Essence Of Loyalty In Love

are rather merciful. They only broke one of your legs. Yet you still dare approach me?"

It was a moment of grim realization for Elaine.

She understood now that she should never had provoked this man.

Mark's smile thinned. "And the nonsense you spewed at Cecilia? It was beyond ridiculous. She cut her finger last night trying to cook, all because of your senseless words. You should know that I take her well-being very seriously, Miss Shaw."

Humiliation washed over Elaine, leaving her at a complete loss.

Mark looked down, his dark eyes inscrutable.

After a moment's pause, he softly said, "Send her abroad. Ensure she never returns."

Pulling out his checkbook, he wrote a check for ten million dollars.

It was enough, essentially, to seal Elaine's fate.

The men understood Mark's implication and assured him they would handle the matter appropriately.

As Mark turned back to his limo and grasped the door handle, Elaine snapped out of her stupor.

Realizing that Mark had reached the limits of his tolerance for her, she made a desperate dash toward the car.

"Mr. Evans, please show me some mercy. I won't appear before you or say anything to Miss Fowler ever again. Please forgive me this one time," she pleaded, tears streaming down her face.

Then, she was flabbergasted.

Her gaze fell upon the opulent small box scattered on the back seat. There was a stunning pink diamond ring and a couture dress from a famous brand.

Had Mark bought all these luxuries for Cecilia?



Elaine's lips quivered. She choked out a grotesque smile, saying, "You bought them for her. You bought them for her!"

She repeated the words like a mad mantra as she erupted into wild laughter.

In that moment, the harsh reality finally penetrated her delusions all at once.

While she had faced Mark's mercilessness, Cecilia had received all of his affection.

Taking a few shaky steps back, Elaine was filled with regret.

How she now missed Chandler, a man from a modest background, who had been genuinely good to her. He had always given her everything she asked for with hesitation.

And yet, in her obsession with Mark, she had actually believed he might love her in return.

Finally, she mustered the courage to ask, "Mr. Evans, is it that you despise me, or are you simply devoted to her alone?"

As the setting sun cast its glow on Mark, he looked dazzling.

As the car door closed, his voice emerged slowly, "She is the person I am fated to be with."

Even if Cecilia was not good enough;

even if she couldn't do anything;

as long as she wanted him, he felt like he possessed the entire world.

Love was eternally irrational. It was beautifully straight forward, free from an abundance of rules.

Elaine was stunned.

Those men accepted the money and executed Mark's instructions without hesitation.



Following Elaine's departure from the country, she would spend the remainder of her life in a psychiatric hospital.

This incident had a mild impact on Mark's mood, but he remained determined to orchestrate a surprise for Cecilia tonight.

During the day, Rena had summoned Cecilia to her place, and Edwin and Olivia were left at home with the servants.

Mark then arrived, giving the servants the evening off.

Although hesitant, one of the servants spoke her mind. "Mr. Evans, we earn a decent salary. We shouldn't neglect our duties."

Mark grinned. "Tonight is an exception."

Surveying the arrangements Mark had made, the servants caught on. They smiled and offered their blessings before leaving.

After ushering them out, Mark securely closed the door behind him.

The moment Mark turned around, Edwin locked eyes with him. "Dad, are you planning to propose to Mom?"

Mark playfully pinched Edwin's nose.

Lifting his chin, Edwin offered in a dignified tone, "I could help you, you know."

Olivia also scampered over, wrapping her arms around Mark's leg. "I can help too."

Mark bent down to kiss her.

Handing Edwin a large bag filled with black balloons and a pump, he instructed, "Blow these up then."

Edwin promptly got to work, inflating the balloons on the floor while Olivia cheered him on.

Mark placed a box containing the dress on the bed. Shortly thereafter, a florist arrived to adorn the apartment with black roses, even covering the pristine white bed with luxurious black rose petals.



An ultimate display of love.

Dinner was Mark's handiwork, complete with a small, delicate, blush-pink cake.

Next, he concealed the diamond ring inside the cake.

He just needed to serve Cecilia a slice.

Just imagine how surprised she'd be!

But he kept this a secret from the children, misleading Edwin into thinking it was merely Cecilia's birthday. Teasingly, Mark asked, "What present will you give your mother?"

Edwin pondered briefly before responding, "I'll give her my dad."

It struck Mark that his son had matured considerably.

Just as Mark was about to say something, the door swung open. Cecilia entered.

The apartment was awash in a romantic black motif.

Women always had a penchant for such romantic gestures.

Only then did Cecilia remember it was her birthday. Slightly irked, she said, "We should've invited my brother and Rena. The more, the merrier."

She eyed the sumptuous feast.

It looked delectable.

Mark gazed at Cecilia, who remained blissfully unaware. Yet, this naivete was what endeared her to him.

She had always been his Cecilia, his treasure.

He walked over, gently wrapped his arms around her thin waist, and said gently, "Go to the bedroom to have a look."

