

## Chapter 474 Happy Birthday, My Black Rose

When Mark spoke, his breath warmed Cecilia's ear, tickling her.

Cecilia glanced at him, her eyes heavy with unspoken thoughts, understood only by those involved.

Mark wrapped his arms around her, guiding her into the bedroom.

Inside, black long-stemmed roses blanketed the room.

Each one, air-freighted from far away, bore dew on its petals, their dark beauty a stark contrast.

A light blue box sat on the white bed sheet.

Drawn to it, Cecilia ran her fingers over the flowers and then the box, her voice dropping. "Did you prepare all these?"

Mark embraced her from behind, brushing her long hair aside.

He then murmured in her ear, "Every time you wear my black shirt after we're together, you remind me of these black roses."

His words overwhelmed Cecilia.

Yet, she adored them. It was something any woman would.

Resting against Mark's chest, she allowed his kisses for a moment. "Is the dress all you got for me?"

Mark's laughter was light. "There's more to come."

Cecilia turned, draping her arm over his shoulder.

"Help me change."

Mark noticed the kids peeking through the door. It wasn't the best moment, but he couldn't deny her request.

He shut the bedroom door.

A song filled the room.

In the soft light, Cecilia's nakedness was framed by long, black curls cascading down her waist, leaving Mark utterly enchanted.

His gaze lingered on her.

Though slightly shy, Cecilia didn't shy away.

Gently, Mark dressed her in the couture dress, its fabric embroidered with pure white lace.

Finally, he crouched to slip on her high heels. Cradling her delicate foot, he kissed it tenderly. Cecilia, biting her lip, teased, "Mark, what sort of fascination is this?"

Looking up, Mark met her gaze with intensity.

As he fitted her shoes, he teased back, "If I were into that, would you indulge me?"

Cecilia playfully rubbed her other foot against his neck.

"You wish," she said with a mock huff.

Mark smiled gently as he whispered in her ear, "Happy birthday, my very own black rose."

Cecilia gazed at the handsome man before her. His physical appeal had always captivated her, and right now, she was completely smitten.

She feigned discontent, though.

"Since when did I become your black rose? I don't think it sounds good. Don't call me that again."

Mark's smile lingered, his eyes unable to leave her.

To him, Cecilia shone brightly at the moment.

"Let's go out," he suggested.

Holding his hand, Cecilia replied softly, "Let's go cut the cake."

The atmosphere was perfect. As they headed out, Mark pressed her against the door for a long, slow kiss that left them both yearning for more.

Mark then gently caressed her face and opened the door.

Edwin was busy inflating balloons, but Olivia was nowhere to be seen.

Mark's brow furrowed slightly. "Where's Olivia?" he asked.

Olivia's sweet voice floated from the kitchen. "Daddy!"

Mark hurried to the kitchen, only to stop in shock.

Olivia sat at a small table, her face smeared with buttercream, half of the cake conspicuously absent. She had clearly enjoyed a significant portion of it.

Panic struck Mark as he remembered the ring hidden inside the cake.

He frantically checked the cake with a fork but found nothing.

Turning to Olivia, who was contentedly licking her lips and patting her full belly, he realized the urgency of the situation.

Scooping up Olivia, he instructed Cecilia, "Get her a coat. We need to go to the hospital now."

Cecilia was bewildered.

Nobody was hurt. Why the hospital on her birthday?

Mark, struggling to maintain composure, explained, "Olivia swallowed my proposal ring. Thankfully, she wasn't choked. We need to see if the doctor can retrieve it."

Anxiety gripped Cecilia, and even Edwin, feeling responsible, decided to

follow, ensuring his sister's safety.

This birthday was proving to be anything but ordinary.

In the car, Mark held Cecilia's cold hand, trying to reassure her. "Don't worry. It's going to be okay."

Cecilia, while concerned, didn't blame him.

She looked down at Olivia, who, full and content, had fallen asleep in her arms, occasionally licking her fingers even in slumber.

Arriving at the hospital, Olivia remained asleep.

The ultrasound revealed the blurry image of the costly pink diamond.

The doctor, noting Mark's gaze and Cecilia's elegant attire, seemed to grasp the situation.

He adjusted his glasses and declared, "I don't recommend removing it surgically.

The only option now is to let it pass naturally.

I'll give her something and we wait for a while. And then, you'll have to search for the ring in her waste."

The thought alone made Mark feel uneasy.

Nonetheless, Mark insisted, "I'll handle it."

The doctor, suppressing a chuckle while writing a prescription, added, "It's fortunate the ring didn't harm her digestive system. She could've been choked on it, you know. Speaking of which, learning the Heimlich maneuver might be wise for future emergencies."

Mark nodded, thanking the doctor.

Cecilia, watching Mark, saw him now not just as her partner, but as a dedicated father, deeply concerned for Olivia's wellbeing.

The doctor handed over the prescription, a reminder of the unexpected turn their day had taken.

The doctor, glancing at the sleeping Olivia in Mark's arms, couldn't resist gently pinching her cheek.

"You really look like your father," he commented, and then turned to Edwin, noting the familial resemblance there too.

After moving Olivia to a ward, Mark handed her to Cecilia before heading out to retrieve the medicine.

Returning, he meticulously mixed the powder into hot water, stirring carefully.

Olivia, waking up to the unpleasant smell, initially resisted.

However, Mark's tender coaxing and gentle kisses eventually persuaded her to drink it, much like she would her milk.

Cecilia, observing this, felt an immense admiration for Mark.

She suddenly realized she was still in her dress, feeling a chill.

Mark, attentive as ever, offered his coat. "Put this on," he suggested.

Clad in Mark's coat, Cecilia sat opposite him, her gaze fixed on Olivia. Breaking the silence, she hesitantly asked, "After she goes, do we really have to sift through it, piece by piece, for the ring?"

Mark merely glanced at her, his expression unreadable.

Edwin, bringing over a basin, commented matter-of-factly, "Olivia's going to use this later."

Olivia, looking at her family with large, innocent eyes, soon drifted back to sleep after finishing her medicine, leaving the adults fraught with anticipation.

In her slumber, Olivia dreamed she was a rabbit encountering a big, menacing wolf.

In her dream, she danced for the wolf, believing her fluffy cuteness would charm him.

Yet, the wolf, professing his love for rabbit meat, left Olivia waking in a

Awakening, she began to relieve herself, her face turning a deep shade of red.

Olivia was clearly aware of the unpleasant odor accompanying her task.

The basin was soon half-filled with the unpleasant result of her actions.

Mark, Cecilia, and Edwin watched, their expressions intense with anticipation.

Once done, a bashful Olivia sought refuge in her father's arms.

Mark, breaking his usual fastidious habits, donned gloves and, with a metal fork, began his unenviable task of searching through the contents of the basin.

His efforts were rewarded about ten minutes later when he unearthed the pink diamond ring, which he thoroughly washed under a faucet.

Despite the cleanliness, a lingering odor seemed to stick.

After cleaning up, Mark removed his gloves, yearning for a cigarette as a form of relief.

As the smoke curled upwards, his eyes moistened upon gazing at the diamond.

Cecilia, entering the room and immediately recoiling from the smell, saw the clean ring in Mark's hand.

"I found it," he said softly.

Cecilia approached, delicately picking up the ring.

"It's beautiful," she admired.

Mark said in a hoarse voice, "I'll buy you a better one."

Without saying anything and just cleansing the ring further with hand sanitizer, Cecilia then slipped it onto her ring finger.

Despite the day's chaos, she felt an overwhelming sense of happiness,

a testament to Mark's love and dedication.

Mark, unable to bear the lingering smell, suggested, "Let's go home. This is too much."

He extinguished his cigarette as Cecilia glanced down at her ruined couture dress, yet feeling an unexpected contentment.

"Mark, despite everything, today is really special and I am really happy," she murmured.

Mark responded with a tender kiss, "I'm glad you're happy, but we should head home. The kids need a shower. You need one too."

Mark then made mental notes to also wash his car to help him completely forget about this embarrassing night.

Cecilia's laughter rang through the room as she playfully wrapped her arms around Mark's waist. "I don't want a shower," she protested, her eyes sparkling with mirth. "This dress is too beautiful; I can't bear to take it off."

Mark responded with a tender, teasing smile, gently pinching her nose. "Mrs. Evans, you'd look stunning in anything, or nothing at all," he whispered with an affectionate chuckle.

By the time they all arrived back at the apartment, the clock had struck 11 p.m.

They found the dinner they'd left behind cold and uninviting.

Thinking on his feet, Mark contacted the servants at their villa, requesting a fresh, warm meal be prepared and delivered to their current abode. In the meantime, he saw to it that both children were bathed, their laughter and playful splashes echoing in the bathroom. After ensuring the kids were clean and comfortable, he indulged in a long, relaxing bath himself.

Cecilia, meanwhile, slipped out of her elegant haute couture dress, folding it carefully. She decided to have it professionally cleaned and laundered, preserving its beauty and the memories of the day. In its place, she chose a long, flowing dress, its simplicity and comfort perfect for unwinding after the eventful day.



Cecilia was determined to preserve the dress.

Sitting at the dinner table, she was greeted by the aroma of steaming hot food.

Central to the spread was a bowl of noodles, painstakingly prepared by Zoey.

Aware of Cecilia's aversion to scallions, Mark patiently removed them from her portion, exhibiting remarkable patience. As the clock chimed twelve, breaking the stillness of midnight, he leaned in, whispering, "Happy birthday, Cecilia."

Cecilia savored the noodles in modest, thoughtful bites.

Mark watched over her with a soft, affectionate gaze, as he served the rest of the noodles to the eagerly awaiting children.

Olivia delighted in the flavorsome meal. Once finished, she was gently ushered to the children's room by her brother, Edwin, who solemnly vowed to watch over her until she reached the age of eight.

"At eight years old, you'll need to start sleeping on your own," he informed her with a mix of earnestness and maturity before escorting her away.

Mark, watching this tender sibling moment, couldn't help but smile wistfully. "This guy. He's growing up too quickly," he mused aloud.

Later, after attending to a brief task in his study, Mark returned to find Cecilia emerging from the children's room. He inquired softly, "Are they asleep?"

With a gentle nod, Cecilia closed the door behind her.

In the hall, only a single wall lamp remained lit, casting a dim, warm glow that suffused the space with a cozy, slightly dreamlike ambiance.

Mark approached, his steps measured and calm.

Cecilia lifted her gaze to meet his. With a gentle grasp, he tenderly held her hand and bestowed upon her a kiss filled with affection.

The kiss, tender and full of shared history, was both anticipated and a





relief. Suddenly, she found herself gently pressed against the wall, lost in the moment. His hand tenderly caressed her waist, his whisper softly telling her how much he wanted her.

A blush tinged Cecilia's cheeks.

Her lips parted slightly, hesitantly murmuring, "Not here, please."

Mark, with a soft touch, brushed her lips with his own.

He gazed into her eyes, asking in a hushed tone, "Where would you prefer?"

Overwhelmed by his directness, Cecilia wrapped her arms around his neck, playfully suggesting, "Let's move to the bedroom."

Lifting her in his arms, Mark continued to kiss her, walking towards their bedroom.

The tension and worries of the night had dissipated, giving way to a night filled with romance and connection.

The bedroom door swung open and then shut behind them.

Cecilia found herself gently laid upon the soft bed.

The night evolved into a tender, loving exploration of each other. Mark reveled in the warmth and closeness, dedicating himself to cherishing and making her feel joyous and loved.

"Mark," she whispered, her quivering voice laced with emotion, as the intensity of their connection peaked.

In the aftermath, she rested her head on his shoulder, tears of deep emotion glistening in her eyes.

Breathing heavily, she uttered, "I love you."

Mark responded with a gentle intensity, his fingers threading through her hair, kissing her like crazy.

Their expressions of love and passion continued, each marking the other as theirs in a profound trance of affection and belonging.

Came dawn, Cecilia stirred within the cocoon of Mark's embrace.



A mild ache resonated in her body, a testament to the night's intensity, yet her heart brimmed with contentment. She snuggled closer within his embrace, inhaling the crisp, clean scent of him.

As Mark awoke and affectionately pulled her closer, his kiss was a promise of a new day.

Cecilia playfully resisted, but their shared laughter was cut short by the ringing of Mark's phone.

It was Korbyn.

Answering the call, Mark listened to Korbyn's urgent voice. "You two need to come back immediately. I don't care what you're doing right now; make your way here right this instance!"

Mark couldn't help but sense that Korbyn, somehow aware of the previous night's events, was intent on asserting some authority.

Korbyn's affection for Olivia was no secret.

It seemed he now sought to impart a lesson to both Mark and Cecilia.

After ending the call, Mark exchanged a knowing look with Cecilia.

Rising from the bed, he sighed and said with a sense of urgency, "Get dressed. We should head back."

Cecilia, looking slightly anxious, recalled how her father's affections had always been generously bestowed upon her.

Yet, his fondness for Olivia now took precedence...

Sensing her unease, Mark kissed her reassuringly. "Don't worry. I'm with you. Should your father decide we need reprimanding, I'll be right beside you."

Cecilia couldn't help but retort with a mix of humor and scorn, "Look at you! Once so formidable, now you're almost meek before my father."

Mark responded while softly caressing her waist, "I have my reasons. After all, I'm deeply in love with his daughter."

The reality of their life together, marked by the birth of their two children, loomed large in his heart.

Cecilia's frustration showed in a flushed face. "You're impossible," she chided, though her tone lacked true severity.

Mark's smile was tinged with a hint of affectionate resignation. "In all likelihood, your father probably just wants to see the kids and uses this as an excuse to make us come over."

Underneath it all, Mark harbored a more significant intent. He was planning to propose the marriage to Cecilia's parents, a gesture that signified his deep commitment and love for her.

