

## Chapter 421 The Ultimatum

Mark was shocked.

Edwin was missing?

Recognizing Cecilia's emotional turmoil, Mark said softly, "I'll call the driver."

Cecilia's response was somewhat cold.

She said, "I've inquired about it. The driver got stuck in a traffic jam while taking Edwin to kindergarten. When the car reached the kindergarten gate, the driver dropped Edwin off and left. Mark, I've never objected when you took Edwin to your place, as he is your son too. However... You can't keep neglecting him for the sake of others. He's just a five-year-old child. He needs his father."

Cecilia choked back sobs as she continued, "I don't care where you are right now. Please come with me to find Edwin."

Before hanging up, Mark called her name in a hoarse voice, "Cecilia!"

Cecilia stayed silent for two seconds and finally ended the call.

Mark, standing in the hospital corridor, felt a chilling sensation.

Earlier, when he had received the call from the villa, informing him that Laura couldn't speak anymore, he asked the driver to take Edwin to kindergarten, but Edwin had refused.

Edwin clung to his father's legs and silently begged...

Mark's eyes welled up with tears as he raised his head.

At that moment, Peter approached, holding a test report.  
"The issue might be serious. She..."

In a hushed tone, Mark told Peter, "You stay here."

Peter was taken aback.

Mark suppressed his emotions and explained, "Edwin is missing."

The test report in Peter's hand slipped to the floor...

Edwin came from a prominent family.

Both the Fowler and Evans families had deployed all their connections to search for Edwin. However, after half a day, there was still no sign of him.

Waylen was at the police station, cooperating with the police.

Mark and Cecilia scoured all the places where Edwin might have gone.

As dusk fell, the situation grew even more dire.

Mark pulled over and bought a sandwich for Cecilia.

She had been answering numerous phone calls. She felt drained and slouched back in her seat with teary eyes.

Mark urged her, "I know you must be hungry. Please, try to eat something."

She looked at him with cold, resentful eyes.



Mark had never seen her like this before.

Handing her the sandwich, he said with difficulty, "Cecilia, let's find our son first."

Cecilia asked, "Where are we going to find him, Mark? Tell me, where can we find him? It's getting dark, and Edwin is afraid of the dark."

As she spoke, Cecilia leaned back in her chair and wept.

She couldn't bear to stay in the car any longer.

She opened the car door and ran into the brightly lit and bustling street.

"Edwin!" She cried out.

Her tears glistened in the lamplight, making her look incredibly vulnerable.

Mark embraced her from behind.

"Please calm down, Cecilia."

"How can I calm down?"

Suddenly, a resounding slap echoed in the dark night.

Cecilia slapped Mark across the face.

She was much younger than him. She had always been obedient to him, but today she had slapped him.

The air turned deathly silent.

Mark was of high status.

Apart from Zoey, nobody had the audacity to slap him.

Mark was in a daze as he stared at Cecilia.

In that moment, she was no longer the naive girl who knew little of the world. She, like him, was a parent, and since he had not been a good father, she had every right to unleash her anger on him.

Mark did not lose his temper. He gently grabbed her hand and tenderly stroked it.

"Eat something first, and then we'll continue searching for him."

"I can't eat."

Cecilia pushed him away and staggered forward. She was consumed by worry for Edwin, fearful that something terrible might have happened to him.

The night grew completely dark.

She ran through countless streets as if she were in a frenzy.

Mark hugged her from behind. "Cecilia."

Cecilia gazed at Mark and said in a trembling voice, "There's one place I haven't checked. He must be there. He must be."

They got back into the car.

Half an hour later, the car came to a stop in a dark, narrow alley.

The concrete was pocked with holes.

The electric lines crisscrossed like spider webs.

The dilapidated building's walls seemed as though they

could collapse at any moment.

Mark's heart ached.

Had Cecilia and Edwin been living here for two years while he wasn't even aware of the existence of his own son?

The corridor was pitch dark, and mice scurried about, but Cecilia seemed oblivious as she sprinted to the fourth floor.

In the darkness, a small figure sat on the floor outside an apartment.

It was the place where Cecilia and Edwin used to live.

The child sat there, head drooped as if asleep.

Cecilia, her voice trembling, called out, "Edwin?"

The child didn't respond. Cecilia squatted and gently touched his head.

It was burning.

"He's got a fever!" Her voice wavered.

In a rush, Mark scooped up his son and felt the heat radiating from Edwin's forehead.

"We should get him to the hospital."

He hurried downstairs, and Cecilia followed.

Half an hour later, Edwin lay on a small bed with an IV drip attached to the back of his hand.

The doctor explained that Edwin had caught a cold, hadn't eaten for a while, and had imbalanced electrolytes.



The Fowler family arrived, with Juliette breaking into tears and Korbyn expressing concern for Edwin. After a while, Korbyn pulled Mark aside.

He said, "Mark, I won't hold last time's wedding incident against you. You and Cecilia simply weren't meant to be. She isn't right for you. But you must take full responsibility for what happened today."

Mark replied in a hoarse voice, "Yes, it's all my fault."

Korbyn's eyes welled up.

Actually, he didn't want to engage in lengthy conversations with Mark. After all, it wasn't only about Mark and Cecilia; both Edwin and Rena were also in a difficult position.

However, Korbyn felt sympathy for his daughter.

Korbyn contemplated for a while during the way there and eventually said, "You're Rena's uncle and Edwin's father after all. You and Cecilia should maintain a friendly relationship as family in the future. It would be good for both of you."

Mark's lips trembled.

Korbyn also felt sad.

He pat Mark on the shoulder and said, "I wasn't against you two being together because Cecilia liked you. I couldn't sway her. Her mother introduced many accomplished young men to her, but she turned them all down, for you. In the end, it still didn't work out between you two."

Korbyn was genuinely saddened by the situation.

He refrained from saying much and headed to the corridor to have a smoke.

Shortly after, Waylen and Rena arrived.

Rena was heavily pregnant. Waylen had initially tried to dissuade Rena from coming, but she insisted on coming to see Edwin. Observing him on the drip, Rena was deeply concerned.

Rena stayed with Edwin for a while and then excused herself to use the bathroom.

Unbeknownst to her, Cecilia was in the bathroom as well.

Upon seeing Rena, Cecilia cried out, "Rena!"

Rena closed the door.

Cecilia had always been close to Rena. She leaned on Rena's shoulder and sobbed softly. "All these years, I never regretted my choices. But when Edwin disappeared, I truly wish I had never met Mark."

Cecilia lamented that if she hadn't fallen for Mark when they first met, she wouldn't be suffering like this today.

Rena understood Cecilia's thoughts.

Cecilia had made up her mind to leave Mark this time. Rena felt saddened, but she couldn't dissuade Cecilia.

Rena ran her fingers through Cecilia's hair and said softly, "Your own happiness is the most important."

In fact, Cecilia didn't have to worry about the financial burden of raising a child alone.

If she wanted a divorce from Mark, is that would make her happy, so be it.

Cecilia wept.



She thought she was weak for breaking down when things went wrong, but Rena saw her as courageous.

Cecilia had waited for Mark for years, loving him deeply.

But she was now willing to let go of her feelings for him.

Edwin suffered from a fever all night.

The doctor made frequent visits to his ward.

The others eventually left while Mark and Cecilia stayed by their son's side.

At four in the morning, Cecilia remained seated, quietly watching over Edwin, refusing to rest despite Mark's urging.

In the morning, Cecilia began to freshen up.

As she bent down, someone hugged her from behind.

Her body stiffened slightly.

She used to love Mark's touch, but now she detested it. She didn't push him away, but instead asked coldly, "What are you doing?"

Mark pressed his face against her slender back and said in a slightly pained voice, "Cecilia, let me make it up to you and Edwin."

In the past, he had always wanted to know about Cecilia's life during those two years, but she had refused to share. Seeing where she had lived with his own two eyes the previous night had shocked him.

Cecilia came from a privileged background.

She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.



Yet, because of him, Cecilia had to suffer in such a run-down place.

His heart ached.

Cecilia put away the towel, straightened up, and turned to face him.

She smirked.

"Make it up? What do you intend to compensate us with?

A villa, some jewelry, or a wedding that held little significance in your life?

Mark, my family has all those things.

Even if we don't, I can earn a living and provide Edwin with a good life on my own. I didn't stop you from taking Edwin to bond with you because he likes you, and you are his father. But what have you done for him?

So what Cathy's daughter can't speak?

Couldn't you have taken Edwin to kindergarten before going to the hospital? Couldn't you see how disappointed your own son was?

No, you saw it.

You just... You just don't love him that much."

After saying that, Cecilia smiled faintly and continued, "Mark, you shouldn't have resigned. You were perfectly suited for that job. You are not a family man."

Cecilia pushed him away and tried to walk out.

Mark felt deeply saddened.

She didn't make it out the door.

Mark suddenly had her body pinned to the door. He grasped her wrists with one hand, leaned over, and kissed her as though he were possessed.

She resisted, refusing to open her mouth.

Mark pinched her chin, forcing her to do so.

He kissed her passionately, his tongue delving into her mouth, hoping that the kiss would rekindle her affection for their past.

But Cecilia felt nothing but disgust.

Mark's strength surpassed hers, and she couldn't break free, so she stopped struggling.

She allowed him to kiss her.

The aftermath of their kiss left her skin flushed.

The warmth of their entwined bodies grew intense.

Suddenly, Mark pulled away.

Holding Cecilia in his arms, he buried his face in her neck, his voice strained. "Cecilia, you're unwilling to react at all? You truly won't allow me to make amends for you two?"

"No." Her voice quivered.

Mark didn't release her.

He simply held her close, absorbing her warmth.

He suddenly recalled something.

That New Year's Day several years back, he had brought



Cecilia a gift, something girls her age loved.

Someone confessed his love to Cecilia at the Fortune Square.

Behind them, fireworks illuminated the sky.

Her face had been so youthful and radiant at the time, and her eyes had shone with affection when they locked onto him across the crowd.

Now, she was a mature woman.

But between them... Things had come to this point seemingly of no return.

Mark's voice quivered. "I don't want to let you go."

Cecilia turned away and replied, "I don't care."

Just as they were conversing, a commotion erupted at the door. Zoey had rushed over from Czanch.

She was irate about Mark's behavior.

Her beloved Edwin was seriously ill. How could the father still have the heart to torment his wife?

She landed two hot slaps on Mark's cheek.

His face immediately turned red.

After the slaps, Zoey ignored Mark and went to see her grandson.

She said to Cecilia, "Don't worry. I'll make sure he doesn't trouble you anymore. He's a scoundrel. He deserves to be alone for the rest of his life!"

Cecilia's eyes brimmed with tears.

Cecilia held Zoey in high regard.

Zoey was a capable woman, and with her support, Mark couldn't even approach the ward. He could only wait outside, accompanied by Peter.

Luckily, Edwin's recovery was swift.

Three days later, he was in good shape again.

However, Edwin refrained from mentioning his runaway episode. The adults were afraid of upsetting him and avoided discussing the topic.

Also Edwin no longer referred to Mark as 'dad.'

Mark touched Edwin's head and asked, "Why don't you call me 'dad' anymore?"

Edwin suddenly said, "I was quite happy when you were still my Great-uncle Mark."

During that time, Edwin had been the most important child to Mark. Each time Mark saw Edwin, he showered him with attention, arranged for their meetings, and spent the whole day playing with him.

Edwin stated frankly.

Mark's eyes welled up with tears.

Mark stepped outside for a cigarette. As he exhaled, the smoke dissipated into the air with the wind.

A young girl, holding a doll, gazed at Mark from afar.

She had a lovely face, albeit with a hint of shyness.

Laura was in the same hospital as Edwin, but Mark hadn't



visited her in several days.

She had secretly gone to the upper floor today.

Laura overheard Mark having a heated argument with an attractive woman. The dispute appeared to revolve around Laura. Because of Laura, Mark's wedding with the woman had been called off, and it seemed they were headed for a divorce.

Laura had contemplated leaving.

However, she knew that Mark would eventually find her, leading to more arguments between Mark and the woman.

Hence, Laura was obedient and didn't make a sound.

She wondered if her absence would lead to fewer disputes and help Mark cease his distraught smoking.

Laura slowly turned around.

She returned to her ward and scribbled a message on a piece of paper.

"I don't want to be treated anymore. I want to go home."

The servant was aware that something had occurred within Mark's family, so she refrained from bothering him and promptly took Laura out of the hospital.

Since the age of six, Laura had never uttered another word.

On the day Edwin was discharged from the hospital, Cecilia packed up his things.

The driver was waiting downstairs.

Mark had just gotten off from the company.

As he observed the things she was carrying, he gently suggested, "Go to my place and stay there for a while."

Cecilia shook her head.

Mark understood her thoughts, so he refrained from pressuring her. "You can go to your parents' place then. Edwin will be taken care of."

Cecilia shook her head again.

Standing by the window, she said softly, "Mark, I want to start a new life."

Mark was puzzled by her words.

Cecilia glanced at the car parked outside and said in a hushed tone, "I've hired two dependable people to assist me in taking care of Edwin. I will plan my own life. If you want to see Edwin, you can make an appointment one week in advance."

Mark clenched his fists.

He grasped her intention. She not only desired a divorce but also custody of their child.

If he wanted to visit, he would only see Edwin, not her.

Mark approached her slowly.

Staring at her slender back, he asked hoarsely, "Can't we care for our child together?"

Cecilia turned to face him.

She said firmly, "Mark, sign the divorce papers. It's over between us."



"Cecilia..." Mark tried to control his emotions.

"No matter what I do, it's useless, isn't it? In the end, you'll leave with our son, won't you? For the sake of our past, please forgive me for this once!"

"This has nothing to do with forgiveness."

After a brief pause, Cecilia continued slowly, "I just don't want you anymore."

Mark's forehead bulged with veins.

Cecilia was lost in thought as she looked blankly at the man's features, so similar to Rena's.

