

Chapter 452 Mark Was So Angry

Mark gazed at Laura.

She was hurting, yet her didn't shed tears.

A wave of sadness washed over him as he wondered, if she wouldn't talk, would she allow herself the release of tears?

With a tender gesture, he reached out and brushed her hair softly with his fingertips.

Laura's eyes, bright and intense, met his.

Peter had left the tricky situation to his wife. Bursting into the ward, what he saw was a silent exchange between the two.

He harbored deep affection for Laura.

He was aware that, despite being taken in by him, her thoughts often wandered to Mark.

Removing his glasses, Peter dabbed at the corners of his eyes discreetly.

Some bonds were simply irreplaceable.

Regaining his composure, Peter gave Laura a gentle pat and cleared his throat. "What's this? Aren't you glad to see your Uncle Mark?" he inquired.

Silence was her response.

Instead, her hands danced in the air, conversing in sign language.

Thank goodness, Peter and his spouse cherished Laura enough to embrace her world of silence, learning to communicate in her language.

Peter turned to Mark, his voice breaking the quiet. "She's expressing joy. She's... truly over the moon."

Mark's emotions welled up, a sob catching in his throat.

He managed a nod, but awkwardness shaded his features soon after. The conversation shifted to Laura's condition as they engaged with the doctor.

Having reviewed the X-ray, the doctor shared, "It's a tad complex, yet nothing we can't tackle."

Seeking confidentiality, the doctor beckoned Mark aside. Laura's eyes, twinkling, followed him.

Mark caressed her hair once more before following the doctor to his office.

Knowing well Mark's close ties with the Fowlers, the doctor extended his hospitality, offering a glass of water.

Mark's gaze held stories untold.

Settling into his chair, the doctor mulled over his words before speaking with a reassuring smile. "Her physical injury is manageable. However, mending her psychological scars is a tougher mountain to climb. I've been told her silence stems from emotional trauma. What delayed her treatment?"

Mark's face was a canvas of stoicism.

His thoughts drifted to darker days. Days colored by Paul's demise, Cathy's unyielding nature, and Cecilia's suffering.

In a hushed tone, Mark confessed, "Life hasn't been kind to this little one. She's weathered many storms. I blame myself for not living up to my duties."

Well-versed in Mark's dynamics with the Fowler family, the doctor understood the depth of his involvement. He was privy to the tale of Mark forsaking his own wedding for the sake of this child.

The doctor scribbled down a treatment pathway, but then paused, pondering before softly adding, "Now's the prime time for her therapy. Delay it, and relearning speech later will be her Sisyphean task, long and fraught with struggle."

"I'll discuss it with her," Mark agreed, determination in his voice.

Handing over a business card, the doctor offered a lifeline. "Here's the contact of my mentor's close colleague. He's a big shot in this field, often

overseas. Should you seek guidance, ring him up and mention my referral."

Mark accepted the card, expressing his gratitude before exiting the doctor's office.

He didn't head straight back to the ward.

The corridor was a silent companion.

Drawn to a window at the corridor's end, Mark embraced the gusts of summer heat that swept in. The warmth unsettled him, yet he needed this moment of discomfort to clear his head.

Later in the day, Laura was scheduled for minor surgery.

He phoned Cecilia, advising her not to hold dinner.

His voice softened with regret. "We had plans for the weekend. I am so sorry."

Cecilia, now more at ease than before, was in the midst of meal prep with Zoey while keeping an eye on Olivia.

"I'll keep the kids and Zoey company. Don't worry about coming home," she reassured him gently.

A smile touched Mark's lips before concern crept in. "How's Edwin? He seemed upset when I left. Keep an eye on him, Cecilia. I'll also have a chat with him later."

She agreed with a nod, her gaze finding Edwin engrossed in a book under a tree's comforting shadow.

Their conversation wrapped up, and she ended the call.

Concerned about Cecilia's spirits, Zoey decided to lead both Cecilia and Olivia to check out her vault, a world of shimmering treasures.

Jewels adorned with pearls and emeralds made a grand appearance.

Each piece seemed to outshine the one before.

Cecilia had her fair share of beautiful things, but what woman could ever say no to more?

Olivia, not really seeing the charm, draped herself in a lengthy string of green beads.

Rubies and sapphires were her choice next.

Their hues were vivid, almost painting a rainbow.

Adorning herself in these sparkling jewels, she smiled goofily.

Zoey, with a playful reprimand, asked, "Why the sudden shift to a pint-sized outlaw?"

Understanding Zoey's kindness, Cecilia responded, "Please, keep them. They carry too hefty a price tag."

But Zoey didn't stash them away.

Rather, she presented even more treasures, leaving Cecilia torn between tears and laughter.

However, Cecilia's amusement soon faded.

Fifteen minutes later, they went back to the yard, only to discover Edwin was nowhere to be found.

Edwin had been lost in a book there moments ago.

Anxiety also gripped Cecilia.

The two women, assisted by their servants, scoured the villa's every nook and cranny for Edwin but to no avail. Finally, Zoey declared, "We need to ring Mark immediately. Nothing is more crucial than finding his boy. He needs to join the search."

With her fingers quivering, Cecilia reached for the phone and dialed Mark.

Her voice betrayed her fear.

"Mark, we can't find Edwin."

In the hospital, an icy jolt shot through Mark's heart.

His son was missing?

Phone in hand, Mark exited the ward. Despite the chaos brewing inside, he

took on the role of the rock for Cecilia. "Stay calm. Have you looked through the villa's security footage?"

Through her tears, Cecilia replied, "I'm on it. He dashed out on his own."

The screen showed Edwin, stepping through the black, intricately carved door.

He rounded a corner and then, just like that, vanished.

A heavy dread settled in Mark's chest.

Battling his inner turmoil, he instructed, "Get my mother to watch over Olivia. I'm heading to the police station. If you can get there before me, please do. We need to review the nearby surveillance."

In this moment, Mark stood as the pillar of strength.

And Cecilia, she would heed his guidance.

So, both of them set off in the direction of the police station, making a call to Waylen en route to pull every string they could.

Upon his departure, Mark ran into Peter.

Learning of Edwin's disappearance, Peter didn't hesitate to tag along.

Once in the car, Mark phoned Cecilia. "Remember the last time Edwin bolted? He headed to that apartment. Check there first. We'll touch base soon."

Cecilia agreed, her voice steady yet fraught with concern.

Mark's car pulled away from the hospital at a cautious pace, the urgency palpable yet controlled.

Meanwhile, a taxi halted at the hospital entrance, and a little boy emerged.

Backpack slung over his shoulders, he scampered toward the in-patient department.

He searched intently, floor after floor.

At last, in a VIP ward, he found who he was searching for.

Laura was a sight to behold.

She bore the best of Cathy's features, her skin rivaling Olivia's porcelain perfection.

Currently, Laura, encased in plaster, leaned against the bed's headboard, lost in her drawing.

Her sketchbook was nearly full.

In it, a wedding dress, the epitome of elegance, took shape under her crayon, modeled by a stunning woman...

Laura's hand, guided by a heart full of dreams, moved diligently.

Peter and his wife had always assumed the woman in Laura's drawings was Cathy since Cathy loomed large in Laura's memories. But Laura never told anyone it was Cecilia she was sketching.

Laura understood Mark's marriage never happened because of her.

Cecilia never even got to wear her wedding gown.

Forever crafting stunning wedding dresses in her sketches, Laura dreamed of becoming a designer. She harbored the hope of presenting Cecilia with one of her designs someday.

That way, she thought, Cecilia wouldn't hold a grudge against Mark.

When Edwin spotted Laura from the doorway, his gaze also fell upon the wedding sketches. A fierce anger ignited in his eyes.

He mistook the woman for Cathy as well.

Marching up to Laura, Edwin did something he'd never done before--he lost his temper and ripped her sketchbook apart.

That sketchbook was a collection of Laura's artistic endeavors, spanning two years.

Now, it was nothing but scraps.

They fluttered down, landing on the pristine bed, amidst Laura's hair, and over her body.

She stared, bewildered, at the little boy before her.

His skin was perfect.

His hair, a rich brown.

His features? Echoes of Mark's.

Almost instantly, Laura pieced together who he was. With a complexion as white as a sheet, she bent down, trying to gather the torn fragments...

But Edwin, a mix of guilt and resentment in his tone, demanded, "Why are you always around?"

Laura's face lost what little color it had left.

Just then, Lina, arms laden with fruit, walked in. She took in the scene with the two children and looked about, bewildered... Where had Mark and Peter gone?

Lina, doing her best to soothe Edwin, reached for her phone to call her husband.

Lina kept her voice down, querying, "Why's Edwin here? The kids seem to be at loggerheads."

This revelation was a weight off Peter's shoulders.

After the call, Peter turned to Mark, his words rushed. "Edwin's at the hospital. How'd he wind up there?"

Mark figured Edwin must have overheard his phone chat.

In a flurry, he looped back, ringing Cecilia to relay the news.

Relief washed over Mark.

Then, he made a beeline for the hospital.

In the room, Lina busied herself tidying the floor, while Laura sat on the bed, lost in thought.

Edwin was a mix of remorse and resentment.

Mark entered, approached Edwin with measured steps, and planted himself before the boy.

Edwin lifted his gaze to meet Mark's.

With a voice rough with emotion, Mark asked, "Why'd you lash out like that?"

Edwin's lips tightened. "You expect me to say sorry to her?"

Mark reeled.

His heart twisted... Sure, Edwin was in the wrong, but wasn't Mark the real cause?

For a beat, Mark was stumped.

He yearned to guide Edwin right, but guilt shackled his words.

Peter, knowing Mark well, sidled up and murmured, "Sort it out at home. Take Edwin back first. He probably hasn't eaten. He's just a kid... Go easy on him."

Frustration simmering, Mark whisked Edwin away.

Peter chose to stay with Laura.

She clammed up, sitting there, a portrait of indignation, even after the rough treatment.

Peter fretted over her state.

In gentle tones, he offered, "I'll get you a new one, even prettier than before."

Laura stayed mute.

Her fists balled up, concealing a scrap of paper in her grasp.

It was a sketch of a red wedding gown.

She'd heard tales of how stunning Cecilia looked in red on what should have been she and Mark's wedding day.

But Laura had unwittingly thrown a wrench in the works.

Mark and Edwin headed home.

The ride was silent, Edwin brooding in the back seat.

Mark manned the wheel.

Right then, he was itching for a smoke.

As the light flipped to red, he stopped the car and tried to bridge the gap with his son. "You can't treat girls that way. Think about her situation. She got shoved down the stairs and broke her leg. Edwin, did I raise you to act like this?"

Edwin stayed silent.

Mark was at a loss with Edwin, yet he held back from sharp words.

Only when the car nestled into the villa and halted did Edwin murmur, "You never raised me or taught me anything."

With those words, he unlatched the door and hopped out.

Staring at the gaping door, Mark seethed.

He stormed out, the car door slamming behind him, bracing to confront Edwin once more.

But entering the hall, Mark froze.

There was Edwin, kneeling upright on the stairs, his small frame rigid, exuding defiance.

Olivia was pestering to play with Edwin.

He merely patted her, muttering, "Go over there."

Mark's laughter was tinged with ire.

Ah!

So Edwin was both headstrong and mindful of his sister.

Before Mark could get a word out, Edwin beat him to it. "I messed up. I'll take my lumps. But I'm not sorry."

Rage quivered in Mark's chest.

Damn.

Years ago, Mark, unbridled, would've spanked Edwin without a second thought.

But confidence eluded him now.

Just then, Zoey shuffled over, quaking. Spotting her cherished grandson on his knees, her worry surged, and she tried to hoist him up. But Edwin's stubbornness rooted him in place.

A hazy memory crossed Edwin's mind.

Laura's eyes, brimming with tears as he shredded her sketchbook.

She seemed on the verge of tears.

She was crying. So him kneeling seemed trivial.

Zoey, failing to budge Edwin, whirled on Mark, her words a heated rush. "What on earth did he do for you to treat him this harshly? By your logic, Cathy should've faced worse, many times over, right? Cecilia and the kids have weathered so much due to your past escapades. You fret over someone else's child; what about your own? Or are Edwin and Olivia not worthy of being your kids? Fine, I'll take them away now. We'll steer clear of you. But let's get one thing straight, Mark. You're no big shot now. Clinging to past glories, expecting others to prop you up? Nonsense! I'd be first to disown you."

Mark's smile was tinged with sadness. "Mom, you're misunderstanding."

"Then clarify, will you? We've barely managed to bring the family together. Cecilia's parents have been understanding, accepting her return to our home. What have you done as a father, as a husband? Sure, Laura needs support, but don't your own children need you? Cecilia is strong and considerate, but that's no excuse to neglect her."

Zoey scoffed after her piece.

"Mark, perhaps you're better off alone."

His smile deepened in bitterness.

Zoey felt a surge of satisfaction post-tirade.

She presumed Edwin shared her triumph. Fetching a stool, she settled

before her grandson, fanning him, her voice softer now. "What you did wasn't right, Edwin. But it's not entirely your fault you reacted that way."

She dabbed at Edwin's brow, resolute. "If you're set on kneeling, you won't do it alone."

Mark felt defeated by Zoey's barrage.

Indeed, Zoey disapproved of Edwin's actions; she recognized his mistake. But she'd chosen to berate Mark first, and he had buckled.

As Zoey consoled Edwin, Mark felt increasingly powerless.

Cradling Olivia, he mustered a sardonic tone, "Olivia, after such an earful, you must be exhausted. How about some milk?"

Zoey countered, "In this heat? Constant milk will cause her internal heat to rise."

Mark conceded with a smile, "You have a point."

He pondered momentarily, and then declared, "Alright, I'll prepare dinner just for the kids. Mashed potatoes and apple pie for Olivia, and seafood spaghetti for our stubborn young man. He's been kneeling so long; he needs to refuel... Hey silly boy, can you at least give a timeframe for your penance? I need to time the cooking so it's ready when you are."

Edwin remained mute.

"You see how upset he is?" Zoey chided.

With Olivia in tow, Mark headed to the kitchen. They'd barely taken a few steps when Cecilia returned.

Mark's gaze grew distant.

Olivia grasped her father's face, planting a kiss on his chin.

"Mommy back... Dad... Daddy... Daddy down..."