Cecilia's back slammed against the wall, sending a twinge of pain through her.

But Mark was mere inches away, his kiss scorching her lips.

They had been enjoying a harmonious relationship in recent days, and the week-long separation had left them both yearning for each other's company.

The kiss seemed to stretch on endlessly.

Feeling the kiss intensify, Cecilia delicately leaned her head against Mark's shoulder, her cheeks flushed. "We can't stay here too long. Edwin and Olivia are still outside. We're parents now, you know. We need to be cautious."

Mark clasped Cecilia's hand, gently massaging it as he softly asked, "Do you still have menstrual cramps?"

Cecilia had been experiencing them since giving birth, so he was still worried about her.

Still blushing, Cecilia murmured, "I'm fine."

Then she urged him towards the door.

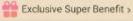
Pressing his body closer to hers, Mark exhaled, "I've missed you."

He kissed her once more before leaving the room.

Inside the cloakroom, Cecilia's cheeks remained a vivid shade of red.

When Mark emerged, he found Edwin staring intently at him. With a composed demeanor, Mark patted his son's head and said, "I'll treat you to seafood later."

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Overjoyed, Edwin hoisted a bag and announced, "I've got my sister's feeding bottle and snacks."

Olivia, trailing her brother, enveloped him in a hug from behind.

With nary a hint of irritation, Edwin pulled her in front and advised, "Be good, now."

Olivia clung to his arm, orbiting him as they walked.

Freshly composed, Cecilia emerged. Mark scooped up Olivia and took Edwin's hand.

Cecilia grabbed the car keys, and the family of four exited the hotel room, only to find an unanticipated guest in the lobby.

It was Elaine.

Slim and dressed in a sultry black slip dress, Elaine looked alluring but Cecilia just couldn't help wondering if she was feeling cold.

As soon as she spotted Mark, Elaine approached. "Cecilia, I never got the

1.9%

chance to apologize for the misunderstanding last time. How about dinner on me tonight?"

Elaine extended a hand to touch Olivia and cooed, "How adorable!"

Before either adult could respond, Edwin interjected sharply, "Don't touch my sister."

Cecilia was stunned.

Her son had always exuded a gentle disposition.

Visibly startled, Elaine found Edwin's fierce gaze unsettling.

You little brat...

Elaine was convinced that once she won Mark over, these children would be irrelevant.

And these kids might have a stepfather soon.

Mark interjected, "Miss Shaw, we're in the midst of a family outing. We prefer not to be interrupted."

Elaine's expression darkened.

Unfazed by Elaine's presence, Mark ushered the children into the car and opened the passenger seat door for Cecilia, assisting her as she settled in

The car roared to life, and they drove in silence for some time.

Suddenly, Mark took Cecilia's hand in a gentle grip.

She glanced at him, and he softly asked, "Are you upset?"

With a smile, Cecilia responded, "I'm not at the point of being angry yet."

She used to feel jealous often, but a conversation with Rena had shifted her perspective. She believed that no matter how many women vied for her man's attention, as long as he remained loyal to her, there would be no cause for concern.

Smiling back, Mark released her hand, "You're incredibly gracious."

Cecilia snorted lightly.

The episode was quickly forgotten as Mark drove to Yarmose's coastal area. The open-air market bustled with fresh seafood stalls and barbecues, emanating irresistible aroma.

Previously, Mark had held a prominent position and seldom had the opportunity to visit such places.

25.5%

Now, he could go out with Cecilia and the children, relishing the sea breeze and indulging in delectable cuisine. It was a novel experience for

He thought of getting an ice-cold beer but Cecilia interjected, "Don't have that."

Instead, she poured a glass of water and held it in front of his face.

He glanced at his wife and took it. As he drank, Olivia angled for a sip. In turn, he fed her half a glass of water and a small bowl of seafood risotto.

In the distance, torches ignited, signaling the start of a local festival.

The atmosphere was effervescent.

After dinner, Mark gave Olivia a piggyback ride while holding Cecilia's hand.

And Edwin frolicked in the sand.

At intervals, Edwin chased the waves and Olivia begged to be set down. Obliging, Mark patted her playfully.

Cecilia rested her head on Mark's shoulder, tightly gripping his arm.

At this time, she felt an intense sense of happiness.

She whispered, "I wish every day could be like this."

Mark wrapped his free arm around her waist and smiled. Looking up, she questioned, "Why don't you object to me coming to shoot dramas?"

"Because you're destined to be a star," Mark replied without hesitation.

Softly, Cecilia countered, "I don't aim to be a star."

This was merely a modest aspiration. What she truly desired was...

Mark turned to her, giving the impression that he might pose a question, but instead, he leaned in and tenderly kissed her lips.





The waves lapped gently at the shore.

In the distance, Edwin waited as his parents kissed.

And Olivia shielded her eyes with her chubby hands.

The moment was serene, idyllic, and utterly romantic. Cecilia felt that today was the best time of her life.

She leaned close to Mark and whispered her deepest desire, "What I wanted the most was to be your wife."

Mark enfolded her in a tender embrace.

After a long hug, Olivia punctuated the moment with a sleepy yawn.

When they returned to the hotel, the clock had already struck midnight.

The children were so exhausted from their day at the beach that they fell asleep as soon as they arrived, their feet still sandy.

Cecilia considered waking them for a shower.

"Let them sleep. They rarely get to have days like this."

Switching off the light in the kids' room, he led Cecilia back to the master bedroom. Gently guiding her onto the sofa, he kissed her deeply. When they finally broke apart, her eyes, misty with emotion, met his. 'You said you didn't want to," she reminded him softly.

Mark chuckled. "Maybe the seafood put me in the mood."

He would have continued, but given that she was on her period, he didn't want to push her.

Instead, he lay beside her on the sofa for some quiet conversation.

Cuddled in his arms, Cecilia admired Mark's visage.

His features were refined yet strong, usually gentle but intimidating when angered.

"Aren't you swamped with work?" she asked softly.

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Eyes closed, he began caressing her back. "There's a lot to be done, but I couldn't help myself. I missed you."

Taking a tender bite at his chin, Cecilia murmured, "I've missed you too."

She'd already decided that, after wrapping up her current project, she'd step back from acting. Whether she won awards or not didn't matter. She would focus on simply endorsements and fashion engagements. She wanted to nurture her family, to care for Mark.

Though often said as a joke, the reality was that Mark indeed wasn't getting any younger, and neither was she.

She understood that love required sacrifices, not whimsical actions.

But she chose not to share these thoughts with him just yet.

Contemplating this, Cecilia began to feel a slight drowsiness creeping in. When Mark tried to coax her into taking a shower, she resisted, unconsciously adopting a child-like tone. "Uncle Mark, I'm so sleepy. You're so lenient with Edwin and Olivia, but so strict with me," she murmured with a pout.

Leaning in, Mark gave her a teasing nibble.

"That's because they don't share my bed."

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