

## Chapter 478 You Should At Least Meet Her

Upon hearing the sentiment, Mark's lips lifted into a soft smile.

Edwin was not interested in relationships?

He found it hard to believe.

Surely, every guy had a soft spot for captivating girls as they matured.

Recollections of the Smith family's daughter crossed Mark's mind; he toyed with the idea of teasing Edwin with the engagement. However, remembering the two kids hadn't formally met, he let the thought pass.

With a deep breath, Mark skimmed through the papers strewn on his desk.

After a thoughtful moment, he voiced his concern. "You haven't spoken to your mom about your plans, right? Discuss it with her after she returns from fetching your sister. But Edwin; I'd prefer if you didn't pursue your studies overseas just yet."

Years ago, there were moments when Mark was absent from Edwin's life.

Time had flown, and Edwin had grown into a young man. Since he chose to finish his study in Duefro, both Mark and Cecilia cherished their limited time spent with him.

However, Edwin was determined.

It was a trait Mark appreciated.

Edwin was about to voice his thoughts when the distant rumble of an engine interrupted them.

Mark signaled a dismissal with a gesture, and Edwin made his exit. Gazing after Edwin, Mark's expression held a depth of unspoken emotions.

Outside, a pink Cullinan gleamed under the sun.

As it halted, Edwin delicately swung open the rear door, revealing a young girl.

Dressed elegantly, the eight-year-old beamed at the sight of him.



"Edwin!" Olivia greeted with sheer joy.

With ease, Edwin scooped up his sister into his embrace.

Olivia wrapped her arms around him, planting a tender kiss on his cheek.

"You're much bigger than I remember," Edwin whispered, a hint of amusement in his tone.

Olivia's laughter was the answer.

Finally, she hopped down, and the two siblings greeted Cecilia. Edwin extended a hand, aiding her with the lavish bouquet she held.

The trio's reunion was evident in their warm chatter, having been apart for a fortnight.

As they settled in, Edwin broached the topic of his future aspirations with his mother. Cecilia, engrossed in her flowers, paused upon hearing the news.

"I promise, I'll visit at least twice annually," Edwin reassured. "It's just six or seven years abroad."

Cecilia arranged the flowers in the vase, lost in her thoughts.

After a moment, she murmured, "When you chose to stay in Duefron, I was supportive. It's close, and your grandparents and uncle are there to look after you. We could visit anytime. But leaving the country for years? Edwin, your father's years are advancing, and so are Zoey's."

Words escaped Cecilia as she distractedly fiddled with the vase's rim.

Edwin grasped the underlying sentiment.

The weight of Mark's age pressed on him; it spurred his urgency to mature. Being the heir to the Evans legacy, the responsibilities had always lain on Mark's shoulders until Edwin was ready.

Edwin yearned to shoulder these responsibilities sooner.

But voicing such sentiments wasn't easy for a 16-year-old.

The room's mood grew tense, an unfamiliar sensation for them.

Olivia sensed the shift and gently pulled on Edwin's sleeve. He responded with a reassuring pat on her head. "It's okay," he said softly.



Not wanting to upset Cecilia further, Edwin offered her a tissue. She declined, and he hesitated before suggesting, "Should I get dad to comfort you?"

Cecilia's reaction was a mix of embarrassment and mild irritation.

Edwin, with a light nudge, directed his sister, "Fetch dad, let him know mom's upset."

Olivia quirked an eyebrow and asked, "Should I tell him you made mom cry?"

Edwin smirked, crouching to meet her level. "Say what you must."

With a peck on her mother's cheek, Olivia darted out.

Soon, she found herself at the study's threshold.

Upon entering, she caught Mark discreetly wiping his eyes. This sight struck Olivia; she'd never seen this side of her carefree dad before.

Hesitating, she lingered by the door.

Mark noticed Olivia, collected himself, and beckoned her closer.

She nestled against him, dabbing away his tears, her voice barely above a whisper. "Mom's upset too. She'll miss Edwin. Dad, will you miss him too?"

A soft chuckle escaped Mark.

Lifting Olivia, Mark grappled for the right words.

His heart yearned for Olivia's perpetual innocence.

Sensing his hesitance, Olivia wrapped her arms around him and whispered, "I'll miss Edwin too."

Mark felt a pang in his heart.

The idea of Edwin being way for years weighed on him.

In the grand scheme of things, how many six-year spans did one have? Especially for him and Zoey?

Yet, regardless of life's fleeting nature, Mark couldn't chain his son down.

Edwin had his own dreams to chase.





With newfound determination, Mark pressed a gentle kiss on Olivia's forehead, softly saying, "We'll always have our little Olivia by our side, right?"

Olivia's head bobbed up and down enthusiastically.

While she couldn't grasp Edwin's aspirations entirely, she recognized his longing to venture out. She wanted to back Edwin's choices and be there for their parents and grandma.

A playful idea struck her.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, she'd be Olivia.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, she'd fill Edwin's shoes.

Sundays? Well, a girl needed her rest.

Glimpsing Olivia's mischievous face, Mark was clueless about the whirlwind of ideas brewing inside her head. Holding Olivia closer, he teased, "Let's head to the kitchen. Let's see what your amazing dad can whip up today. With Edwin returning, I will make sure to prepare some of his favorites."

The thought delighted Olivia.

Mark's silent gestures spoke volumes; his culinary surprises whenever Edwin visited being a testament.

Together, they ventured to the kitchen, where the household staff were well-acquainted with Olivia's preference to be in Mark's embrace.

After Mark seated Olivia, he rummaged through the fridge, selecting choice ingredients.

In a matter of minutes, the kitchen was filled with the aroma of mouthwatering dishes.

As dinner approached, Edwin and Zoey joined them.

The air was thick with a myriad of emotions.

Despite Edwin's eagerness to discuss his overseas studies, Mark's subtle gestures kept him at bay.

Mark served a portion of fish to Edwin. "You've lost some weight since the last time you were here. Make sure to eat well while you're home." His gaze softened, "Your mom often wonders if you're eating right when you're away."



Edwin met his father's gaze as Mark gestured towards the fish, "Dig in."

Mumbling a thank you to Mark, Edwin's attention shifted to Cecilia, whose silence spoke louder than words. Her eyes glistened with unshed tears.

Zoey intervened, serving Cecilia some food, and playfully chided Mark, "Age seems to make you forget your wife. Focusing only on your son, are we? Remember, Edwin will forge his path, but Cecilia is forever."

Mark chuckled, conceding, "Point taken, Mom."

He then meticulously selected a fish piece for Cecilia, ensuring it was bone-free. "You've been so quiet tonight. Don't upset Edwin on his first day back. He cares about you more than you know."

Cecilia's gaze flitted between Mark and Zoey.

The two were undoubtedly in cahoots.

She couldn't stay mad, though; they were clearly trying to cheer her up. To shift the mood, she remarked, "I'm not feeling my best."

Olivia chimed in, "I'll give you a massage later, Mom."

The room filled with Mark's hearty laughter, and Edwin visibly relaxed.

Later that night, after chat with Edwin, Mark retreated to their bedroom. Cecilia, fresh from a shower, was engrossed in a science book.

Mark gently took it from her, glanced over it, and then handed it back.

Their eyes locked.

Mark, breaking the silence, remarked, "It's been a while since I've seen you this way. Does it really upset you?"

She held his gaze, finally confessing, "Of course, but I often find my thoughts lingering on you and Zoey."

Teasingly, Mark asked, "Hinting at my advancing age?"

After brushing her hair aside, Mark continued, "Mom made her stance clear during dinner. She's on board with Edwin studying overseas. We might miss Edwin terribly, but who'll shoulder the Evans legacy when I'm no longer at my peak? Everyone in our family counts on Edwin. His pursuit of greater knowledge and early success is commendable. We've been too protective



and hesitant, unlike my mother who sees the bigger picture."

Cecilia seemed lost in thought.

Mark's voice softened as he added, "Cecilia, Edwin is no longer the little boy we once knew. It's time we let him chase his dreams."

She replied softly, "I understand. It's just taking me some time to come to terms with it."

Chuckling, Mark added, "At least we have Olivia. She's so attached to home. I can't even imagine her leaving this house, let alone studying abroad. She'll always be by your side."

A smile finally tugged at Cecilia's lips.

Playfully, she retorted, "You've sealed your fate with that comment. Consider the study your bedroom tonight."

Feigning shock, Mark quipped, "How can you be so heartless, Mrs. Evans? Remember, there are things only your husband can provide."

Cecilia gently nudged him, her stern demeanor quickly softening.

"Enough of that. Go check on Zoey. While she tells us she's okay, I believe she's struggling the most with Edwin's departure."

After a tender kiss, Mark held Cecilia close.

Their journey of love had spanned a decade, eight years of which they'd spent as husband and wife. Their bond was inexplicably deep, and Mark couldn't have been happier.

After a moment, he whispered, "I'll visit mom briefly, and then return. How about I bring some chilled watermelon for you later?"

She nodded appreciatively.

On this balmy summer night, Mark made his way to Zoey's quarters, winding through the garden corridors.

There, he found Zoey helping Edwin pack, all the while whispering words of guidance.

Joining them, Zoey asked, "Did you manage to calm Cecilia?"



He replied with a gentle smile, "She has a tender heart. A few comforting words did the trick. Cecilia and Edwin share a special bond, which makes this separation even more challenging for her."

Zoey slowly settled into her chair, taking a thoughtful sip of her tea. "Cecilia has endured so much," she remarked, her voice tinged with melancholy. "You've come a long way, Mark. It's a good thing you found your way back, otherwise you'll forever be in her debt."

Mark pondered Zoey's words.

With each passing year, her age was becoming more evident. Close to 90, the inevitable was approaching, intensifying Cecilia's worries.

Zoey, sensing his thoughts, gave his hand a reassuring pat. "Edwin has a bright future ahead of him, much like his uncle. It would be unjust to hold him back just because his grandmother is getting old," she advised.

Mark nodded in agreement, but Zoey remained silent, lost in contemplation.

After what seemed like hours, she broke the silence. "In a few days, take me to Duefron. Just the two of us. I want to visit Reina's grave; it's been too long."

Tears threatened to spill from Mark's eyes.

"Of course," he responded softly. "Once I sort a few things out, we'll leave immediately. Rest assured, Waylen has been quite considerate and made all the arrangements, and Eloise will check in on her from time to time."

Zoey's face softened. "Eloise has a heart of gold."

The night deepened, and Mark eventually took his leave.

Alone in her room, Zoey reflected on her life.

While fate had robbed her of precious loved ones, it had also graced her with blessings.

To Zoey, Cecilia wasn't just Mark's wife; she was a god-sent gift.

With Mark's once uncertain future now stable and Edwin ready to uphold the Evans legacy, not to mention the delightful presence of Olivia, Zoey felt a sense of completion.

Months later, in October, the sun glinted off the wings of a plane destined



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for Masrea at Duefron's international airport.

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On the ground, Mark, Cecilia, Waylen, and Rena watched as the aircraft soared into the blue expanse.

Cecilia struggled to hold back her tears.

Mark gently chided her, "We promised each other no tears, remember?"

Cecilia looked away, trying to regain her composure.

Waylen shot a disapproving glance at his emotional sister.

Cecilia was often emotional, and Mark always knew how to comfort her.

Their dynamics made Waylen want to chuckle, but a stern look from Rena made him hold back.

Rena then said softly, "Edwin and Leonel are studying abroad together. They'll watch out for each other. Plus, Waylen, you'll be visiting them every month or so for work."

Cecilia expressed her wish that Mark had an office in Masrea.

Mark, after a moment's thought, responded, "Maybe it's time to expand our business there."

After pondering for a moment, Cecilia chose to drop the subject.

Decades seemed to fly by.

One early morning in Duefron, within a luxury apartment, a phone buzzed persistently by the bedside.

The young man, bathed in the morning glow, revealed a physique sculpted to perfection.


His features tightened when he saw the caller ID. "Dad."

Mark, already dressed sharply for the day in his office, said, "Your mother and I will be in Duefron this Saturday. Get ready to meet the Smith family's daughter."

Edwin's expression darkened.

The topic of this arranged betrothal had been broached when he was 16. He

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hadn't minded then, but over the years, he'd pushed it from his thoughts. "Dad, we live in the 21st century. Parents shouldn't decide who their children marry."

Mark's tone chilled.

"This was agreed upon. Whether you like her or not, you will at least meet her. She might just grow on you. And Edwin, your mother wonders why, at 26, you don't have a girlfriend and haven't shown the slightest interest in meeting the Smith's daughter."

Wrapping a towel around his waist and approaching the window, Edwin retorted, "For the record, Dad, I am into women."

As he moved to end the call, there was a stir behind him. A delicate arm emerged from the blankets.

The young woman beneath shifted, her face half-hidden by dark tresses. Despite all the obstruction, one could easily tell she was beautiful.

The aftermath of their intimate night was evident on her skin.

The crimson marks on her shoulders was a clear testament to Edwin's attraction to women.



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