

### Chapter 16: Evan's Plan

Wendell was driving out from his home in the evening when he noticed the mansion across from theirs had the gates opened and a car was driving in. It would not have surprised him, except the house had been empty for about nine years. Only caretakers come and go during weekends.

"Hmmm." Wendell said, "The Campbells are back?"

At the thought of the Campbells, Wendelle sneered. He remembered their daughter had this crush on Evan back in high school. She became so jealous of how Shantelle and Evan were close that the same girl tried hurting Shantelle. 16

Recalling the past, Wendell scoffed as he drove away, heading toward Evan's office.

His friend needed him.

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"Did you find her?" Wendell asked. He passed on a glass of liquor to Evan and said. "Rough day, huh?"

This time around, they were all in Evan's office. Sean and Wendell had arrived earlier. Evan came an hour

after.

Since Nicole's escape, Evan barely had rest. He was driving back and forth, speaking to the authorities while making sure every private transport company was aware of who they were going up against should they let Nicole Lively flee the city.

"No, not yet," Evan responded as he took the glass. He gulped it all down and said, "But she isn't going anywhere!"

With the help of Evan's connections, especially Wendell's family, the police searched for Nicole. The borders were secured, and the airport had been warned. Nicole could only hide, but she wasn't leaving Rose Hills.

"Where is Keith?" Evan asked, seeing his other friend missing.

"He left town last week after you had an argument with him," Sean revealed. "He'll be back."

Evan nodded. When Nicole was first admitted due to being supposedly raped, he quarreled with Keith on the phone. Now, with how everything was unfolding, Evan was the one who needed to apologize to Keith.

With a nod, Evan replied, "I'll speak to him when he arrives."

"Damn, man. The chick digs you to the point of obsession," Sean suggested with a smirk.

"Not funny, Sean," Evan said as he sat on one sofa seat. Evan's office had a mini living room set up. It was connected to his private room, where he sometimes rested.

"Has your investigator returned with Nicole's profile?" Wendell sought.

Evan groaned and replied, "In a day or two. The investigator went to Lockwood to check her family's background. Whoever her family is, they will pay the price for crossing me!" 8

"Don't worry, Evan. Once she is caught, my father won't let her off too," Wendell revealed.

The group of friends chatted, all while covering Nicole's manipulative ways. The three could not believe such a woman existed!

"She has an ID, right?" Sean sought.

"Of course!" Evan replied. "I, at least, checked if all her identifications were valid back in Lockwood, and they were! She had a bank account under her name. There was no reason for me to suspect her identity."

"She would not get the librarian job if she did not

have proper documents to show," Wendell also pointed out.

"We can speculate all evening, but I supposed we will find out soon enough," Sean suggested.

With a sigh, Evan said, "I can't fucking wait!"

"On a side note, our neighbor is back in town," Wendell suddenly said.

"Who?" Sean asked.

"Remember the high school cheerleader who was head over heels for Evan?" Wendell reminded.

"Oh, Melody Campbell? How could I forget? She pushed Shanty into the road! Shanty nearly got hit by the school bus." Sean asked. "I remember. Didn't her family leave town before Melody finished high school?"

"Correction," Wendell reminded. "She was expelled!"

"I remember my father imposed a business ban against the Campbells too," Evan said out of the blue. "They had no choice but to leave the city."

Evan shrugged and reminded, "You know how my old man adored Shanty."

There was silence in the room before Sean suggested,

"Actually, Evan. Back in high school, it wasn't just your father. You valued Shanty too."

"Yeah," Wendell echoed. "You always had that smile when she would rush towards you at school."

"Shantelle... Shantell," Evan said under his breath. The thought of his ex-wife somehow relieved him of his current stress. "Yes, we were close, but I was young - we were both young back then. Also, I was gone from Rose Hills for too long. I guess time changes you. Time makes you forget." 5

"It's just a shame, Evan. Because if you had not returned to Rose Hills with Nicole, maybe," Wendell implied. "Maybe you and Shanty would have hit it off... naturally. No forced marriage; you probably ended up dating and married voluntarily." 4

Silence fell upon them. Evan wound up resting his head on the sofa's back. His mind wandered back to the days when he was young.

The image of the young Shantelle running across the school grounds popped into his head. Every after her dismissal, she would run to the high school grounds to say goodbye to Evan. There were also times when Doctor Scott would ask Evan to drive Shantelle home. Their families were that close. The Scotts entrusted Shantelle to the Thompsons, and Evan's parents

cherished her.

When Evan was in college, he rarely returned to Rose Hills, but he remembered a few occasions when he and Shantelle met. Each time he saw her, she became more and more of a lady, no longer that youth who was like a sister to him.

Thinking of what Wendell said, he was also reminded of how Shantelle became so insecure because of Nicole, and how she was so jealous.

Inwardly, he cursed at Nicole. He shut his eyes, calling her name silently, 'Shanty. I'm sorry. I'll make it up to you, I promise. I'll take you to Paris, just like I said.' 10

Opening his eyes, Evan revealed his plan, one that had been on his head since he last saw Shantelle. "I have been thinking of this for some time... I want to... reestablish that closeness I had with Shanty." 11

He sucked in a breath and added, "First, I need to ensure Nicole is behind bars."

Sean's mouth fell to the floor, whereas Wendell nodded approvingly.

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Earlier that day, in Warlington, Shantelle had started

her first day in medical school.

She took a picture of herself from the front lawn of the building and posted the photo on her social media account. Shantelle never had to worry about Evan finding out. She had her account in a private mode, and Evan never had a personal social media account. He always said he never had the time. 6

On her wall, she posted: [It wasn't long before I said goodbye. Today, I say hello. The past is done. It's time to move on. If anything I have learned in life, it's the fact that it goes on. Live it!] 11

Her friends were quick to like her post, giving her words of encouragement.

Shantelle smiled as she walked into the building, but just as she was about to enter her first class, she received a notification on her phone. There was a comment from a man, and it read: [You'll never know. I might just be... "Hello."]

It was Keith Henderson, Evan's friend. 11

She could not believe her eyes. She did not even remember when Keith had followed her on social!