

## Chapter 32: Evan's Number One Rule

"Mommy, who do I look like?" Lucas repeated.

"Who else do you look like? You are the one and only most handsome kid in Warlington International School, Lucas Scott!" It was Keith who replied. "Sometimes, you don't have a look-alike because you are simply unique."

"Come on, tell me. Who is the hottest kid on the block?" Keith added. Lucas wound up chuckling. He said, "Silly uncle, Keith."

Keith kept at it, complimenting Lucas and pointing out his unique qualities that the boy's initial inquiry had been forgotten. From across Keith, Shantelle mouthed, "Thank you."

The Scotts had a lovely dinner with Keith. Eleanor offered to wash Lucas for the evening while Shantelle had a brief chat with Keith on the patio of their home.

They were both drinking tea when Keith noticed Shantelle's silence. She acknowledged his words but was looking distantly.

"Are you thinking about telling Lucas who he looks like?" Keith asked. Shantelle hummed as she massaged the back of her neck. She sipped her hot tea and gently put the cup on the table. She said, "Oh, god. It's gotten so complicated. I don't know the easier way to deal with this."

She had thought about it shortly after giving birth to Lucas, but over time, Shantelle had drowned herself in her studies and doctor's fellowship program, and the idea kept slipping away. When she finally had her residency, her time became more constrained.

Her time as a doctor was valuable, and adding Evan into the equation was another potential strain she did not want to handle. Unfortunately, it was different now. Lucas was becoming more aware of the absence of a father. What am I going to do? She sighed and suggested, "If I tell Evan, he may come here and find out about you -"

"Right, or he may not care entirely," Keith suggested. Shantelle fell silent. She gave no facial reaction to suggest how she felt about Keith's statement, but she replied, Right. That would make things a whole lot easier."

"Shanty," Keith said. He leaned closer and looked into her eyes. "I've been with you – supported you throughout your endeavors – you and Lucas, and I will continue to do the same. No matter what happens, I will be here for you."

He gasped and said, "But you know how I feel about you, right? Will you ever give me a chance to be with you? Don't I have a place in your heart other than just being your friend?" Shantelle blinked. It wasn't the first time Keith had brought up his feelings for her. It wasn't the second time, either. Apparently, she was the same person Keith had been in love with all these years. Talk about the irony of love.

She did not have to consider his feelings. After the experience with Evan, she had long understood that love could not be forced. Shantelle could not bring herself to love Keith.

After a moment of silence, Shantelle said, "Keith. You are a great person, and I thank you for all the help you have given me and my family."

She put her hand where her heart was and explained, "However, I had promised myself to love only Lucas. I will only pour my heart out to my son and no one else. I love my parents, naturally. I care for you as a friend, but I don't see myself being with another man romantically."

"If anything, I've learned that relationships hinder me from achieving my goals in life." She smiled and said, "You could say I am committed to my son and married to my career."

"Keith, please don't hate me," Shantelle said. "But someone else deserves your love. It isn't me."

"Damn, what happened to Shanty? She has become cold-hearted," Keith remarked playfully. He ran his hand against his chest and suggested, "You are missing out on the good stuff."

Shantelle smiled. This was what she appreciated about Keith. Despite being rejected, he always found a way to turn the situation around. She chuckled and answered, "Keith, you have known me since I was young, yet you are giving me the wrong incentive, I'm not into hot stuff."

"Mommy! It's time for bed!" Lucas came out onto the patio, hopping at the idea of Shantelle putting him to bed.

"Oh, Uncle Keith! Are you going? Can I borrow your phone? I want to show mommy the game I installed on your phone?" Lucas said in his direction.

"Ah, the one from the last time," Keith recalled before he fished for his phone and opened it. He gave it to Lucas then after.

"Here, Mommy? I want to install this game on my tablet," Lucas said while showing Keith's phone. Shantelle controlled whatever apps Lucas had on his tablet. It always required a passcode, one that only Shantelle knew.

"Oh, daily facts, huh? Nice!" Shantelle smiled and said, "Sure, I'll install it. Good choice. Widen your knowledge. Return the phone to your uncle Keith."

"Yey! Yey!" Lucas was so excited that he carelessly returned Keith's phone by throwing it in his direction. "Uncle catch!"

Unfortunately, instead of Keith's hand, it landed on an open pitcher of water the maid had earlier set, in case Keith and Shantelle needed any. The phone sank to the very bottom of the pitcher. Keith's eyes widened. Shantelle's heart raced.

"Oh, F -" Keith covered his mouth with his hand and fished the phone quickly. Keith promptly opened his phone, taking out the sim card while Shantelle ordered the maid to fetch a towel and a hair dryer. After minutes of trying to revive Keith's phone, they all surrendered, and their shoulders fell in dismay. "It's no use. It's dead." Keith scratched his head, adding, "I'm dead."

"Let's try your sim," Shantelle offered. She inserted his sim card into her phone, but sadly it was useless. "I'm sorry, uncle Keith. You can have my tablet instead." Poor Lucas was teary-eyed, feeling guilty.

"Hey, buddy. It's just a phone." Keith called Lucas and soothed his back, saying, "I can get a new phone."

Of course, he was hiding the fact that his phone had vital contact information, which he could not immediately get a hold of now since he was traveling to Europe the next day.

“Really, it’s that easy?” Lucas sought. “Yes, it’s that easy,” Keith assured him. He made a mess of Lucas’ hair and said, “So don’t feel sad. I will get a new phone, but uncle Keith may be unreachable for a day until then.”

Shantelle had asked Lucas to wait for her in his bedroom. She first walked Keith out of the house, saying, “I told you, you should get two phones.”

“It’s hard enough when I keep traveling around the country,” Keith reasoned. “But after today, I probably will. I will call my assistant to request a new business phone, and I’ll get a temporary one from the hotel. It’s not a problem.”

“I’m sorry, Keith,” Shantelle said with regret. “No need to worry. On the bright side, I won’t get bothered by phone calls tonight. Gotta thank Lucas for that. Sweet rest!” He winked at Shantelle, saying, “Goodnight, Shanty. See you in a month or two.”

Meanwhile, in Rose Hills, Evan Thompson was still in his office at nine in the evening. He had asked some of his executives to work overtime. He wasn’t in the mood to go home early. He wanted to work and work until his body gave in to exhaustion.

His assistant James walked in and reported, “Sir, your last appointment is Miss Dones, the new head of finance for the shipping lines.”

Evan groaned. He yelled, “Didn’t you tell her to have her assistant report instead? Doesn’t she know the number one rule?”

It wasn’t like Evan to be upset, but when it came to breaking his number one rule, his mood always turned sour.

“Sir, I swear I have told Miss Dones a hundred times, but she insisted that she wanted accuracy in her report, and thus, she would rather do the report herself,” James replied nervously. Evan’s nose flared in irritation. He coldly answered, “Fine. Tell her to report by the door.”

When Miss Dones entered the office, she smiled at Evan. Her eyes gleamed excitedly, seeing Evan for the first time since she joined the company. She walked up to Evan, but he stopped her, saying, “Stay by the door. Report by the door!”

The door was around twelve meters away from Evan’s desk. Miss Dones had to raise her voice to be heard. Still, she put up a smile and began, “Mister Thompson! I am pleased to inform you that expenses have dropped since my takeover of the finance department!”

It took ten minutes for the female executive to finish her report. When she was done, she felt like she had lost her voice altogether.

“Give the document to James, and I’ll review it later,” Evan instructed. “Oh.” Suddenly, Miss Dones pushed her coat back, revealing her cleavage. She said, “I can just give this to you.”

She walked so fast that Evan did not have the time to call James in. “Stay there, Miss Dones. Stay!”

Despite Evan’s warning, the woman did not retreat. Worst, upon reaching Evan’s desk, she appeared to trip, falling to the floor and whimpering. “Um... I hurt my leg!”

Evan first ordered James inside. He got up from his seat and found his way in front of Miss Dones. The woman looked up at him with puppy eyes and stretched her hand. She did not miss flaunting her breast and looking helpless. “Can you help me, Mister Thompson? Please?”

James walked in, and Evan glared at his assistant. He ordered, "James, what did I tell you? This woman broke the number one rule! Fire this woman! Now!"

Six years ago, Evan Thompson implemented his number one rule. He made all his employees understand this and sign an agreement with their contract. His number one rule was that no woman outside his family could come near him within ten feet.