

## Chapter 22: The Scotts Moved

Evan was dressed in his best suit. He applied the perfume Shantelle always encouraged him to use. His hairstylist came to the villa and had his hair trimmed early in the morning. 'Shantelle would have already received her gown yesterday. I hope she liked it,' He thought in his head.

After Evan's haircut, he checked himself in the living room's mirror. When satisfied with his appearance, he dismissed the hairstylist. He grabbed the printed itinerary of the trip to Paris from his room and went down the stairs, ready to leave.

In the living room, he saw that the flowers had already arrived. Evan seized the bouquet and paced to the door when someone rang the doorbell at the villa's gates.

To Evan's surprise, his assistant, James, made an unexpected visit. He walked out of a car with a huge box in his arms, making Evan frown. It was in the driveway when Evan asked, James? What are you doing here?"

"Sir, I could not reach you last night, and I assumed you were resting, so I did not bother to call the landline. Sarah Kate boutique sent the gown to your office instead. They said." James frowned before informing, "They said Miss Shanty no longer lived in that address." Evan was stunned. He gulped and frowned. Soon, he asked, "What – what do you mean?"

"I don't know, Sir, but it was what the store manager told me. Whoever was in the house said that Miss Shanty had already moved," James said before bowing his head.

Silence fell upon them, but after a few seconds, Evan cleared his throat. "There there must be some mistake. That's their familial home. Doctor Scott loved that house so much. It was his father's home. He had just recently renovated it. They they must have delivered it to the wrong house."

While Evan said this, his heart was uneasy. First, it was the flowers, and now, the gown. 'Could the Scotts have moved? Impossible. Shanty would never leave without saying goodbye.'

Suddenly, the image of Shantelle leaving the villa flashed into his head. It was two months ago when he last saw her. He remembered how her last words gave him that feeling of emptiness. Back then, she said, " Goodbye, Evan."

He felt the sudden throbbing of his heart that he tried to convince himself. "I'll go there now. I'm sure it's just a mistake."

"Yes, Sir. I am sure," James reluctantly echoed Evan's words. "Do you want me to go with you, Mister Thompson?"

"No, go to the company. I need you there. Howard will drive me," Evan replied. "Put the gown in the car." "Everything, okay, Mister Thompson?" Howard, the Thompson family driver, asked.

For the last fifteen minutes, Evan took deep breaths and repeatedly bounced his left leg, all while Howard drove in the direction of the Scotts' residence.

"Everything is fine, Howard. I appreciate your concern. I am just a little nervous," Evan suggested.

"Do you mind hurrying up?"

"Certainly, sir," Howard confirmed. He understood. This was the first time Evan would see the Scotts after the divorce. Howard assumed Evan was worried about what Doctor Scott and his wife had to say to him.

It did not take long for Evan to turn up at the mansion. It was Howard who rang the gate's doorbell for Evan. Howard said, "Mister Evan Thompson is here to see Miss Shantelle Scott."

"Um, okay. I guess I better speak to Mister Thompson." Whoever it was on the other line simply allowed the gates to open, and Howard drove in.

Evan was unfamiliar with the voice. He wondered, 'Was it a new maid?' Maybe. He certainly hoped it was the case, for he could not fathom the restlessness of his heart. Something was wrong, and he sensed it.

When Howard parked by the mansion driveway, a middle-aged woman with black hair walked out of the house. Just as Evan exited the car with the flowers in his hand, the lady said, "Mister Thompson, it's good to see the face behind the name.

The lady extended her hand and said, My name is Kristine Jones. My husband and I are the new owners of this estate. Judging from your recent deliveries, you were not informed that... the Scotts have moved."

Evan froze in his stance. He could feel his grip around the flowers loosening by the second. He clarified, "Excuse me?"

"Mister Thompson, I allowed you into the property to inform you that the Scotts have moved. About two months ago, we bought this estate from Doctor Scott. We just recently moved since we were still preparing for the relocation ourselves," Kristine repeated.

"The Scotts moved.'

'The Scotts moved.'

'The Scotts moved.'

The words played in his head over and over again. In each second that passed, he felt his heart becoming heavier.

Evan's breathing sped. His chest was heaving seriously when he asked, "To – to where? Which community in Rose Hills?"

The lady gave Evan a polite smile and replied, "I'm afraid Doctor Scott did not inform us, Mister Thompson, but from what I know... they were moving out of town permanently. He clearly said they were leaving Rose Hills for good."

Yet again, the image of Shantelle saying goodbye played in his head. He recounted how she said those words, ' Goodbye, Evan." He recalled how Shantelle cried that night at the villa. "I'm going to miss you, Evan."

Seeing the reaction of Evan, Kristine offered, "I'm sorry, Mister Thompson, if this is bad news, but I can show you our deed of sale if you like -"

"Shanty!" Evan dropped the flowers on the ground and began to call her name. "Shanty! Shanty, please come out and speak to me. I'm sorry, Shanty!"

He barged into the house and looked around. The new homeowner had to follow behind him, saying, "Mister Thompson? They are long gone. Please, this is our property now."

Despite the lady's objection, Evan kept calling Shantelle's name, "Shanty, please! Shanty!" He called again and again. Evan went as far as checking Shantelle's room on the third level of the mansion, but he saw an empty room. There was not a hint of Shantelle left in it.

Kristine had to go to the study and bring the purchase contract to the property. After showing it to Evan, he finally conceded. She said, "Is this proof enough? I don't fully know your history with the Scotts, but I knew his daughter was your ex-wife."

"I understand that you are looking for her, and clearly, there were unresolved matters about your marriage. So, Mister Thompson, I will overlook your intruding into our home, but I hope this is the last time you come here without our permission," the new homeowner added. "Again, the Scotts have already moved."

"I – I'm sorry. It won't happen again," Evan faintly said before leaving the house. As he entered his car, he instructed, "Howard! To the St. Dominique Hospital! To Doctor Scott's clinic!"