

## Chapter 23: Never Coming Back

Two buttons on Evan's shirt were undone. He had difficulty breathing and had to open part of his shirt. He could not believe his eyes. A new doctor was now occupying doctor Scott's clinic!

"This can't be happening." Evan raked his fingers through his hair and looked around. Seeing several secretaries walk by and others entertaining patients, he asked, "Does anybody know where Doctor Scott moved? Anybody?"

"Anybody?!" He asked again. Then, his gaze fell on the secretary across Doctor's Scott's previous clinic. He walked inside the room and asked the woman, "You! Do you know where Doctor Scott moved? What about his secretary? Do you know how I can reach her?"

"I'm sorry, Mister Thompson, but Eana did not say where they were moving," the woman said. "Eana was still here last week, finalizing documents for Doctor Scott, but I believe she also left town."

Eana was Doctor's Scott's long-time secretary. Evan was convinced she would know everything. He asked, "Do you have her number? Please. I need to call her."

Evan got Eana's number, and he quickly made the phone call. He called three times until Eana ultimately answered. Evan said, "Eana, this is Evan Tho -"!

The next thing he heard was a busy tone. When he tried calling again, his call went to voicemail. It was clear to him that Eana had blocked his number too. From where he was, he tried calling William and Eleanor Scott, but it was the same. All his calls would only route to voicemail.

Desperate to find answers, Evan went to the hospital's administration building. From there, he spoke to the hospital head. "Doctor Jacob, did Doctor Scott resign?"

"Yes, he gave only one month's notice. It was a struggle on our part, but he was very adamant about moving," Doctor Jacob responded.

"Do you know where they had relocated?" Evan sought. Doctor Jacob sighed. He responded, No, Mister Thompson, but even if we knew, that information is private – "

"Don't you know me? I am Evan Thompson!" Evan raised his voice, making the doctor shake his head.

"I know you very well, Mister Thompson. I know your family's power and influence in this city, but you forget I am also a professional doctor. I know what is wrong and right. I know I cannot freely give you information about Doctor Scott!" Doctor Jacob said.

"Although we honestly do not know. Doctor Scott said he needed to take his daughter out of Rose Hills." Doctor Jacob shrugged and concluded, "So, he left="

"But what about his patients?" Evan asked calmly this time, knowing that he could not threaten Doctor Jacob.

"From what I know, some were referred to a new doctor. I don't have the full knowledge," Doctor Jacob replied. "I'm sorry, Mister Thompson, but that's all the information I can give you. Doctor Scott and his family have left the city."

The rain poured over Evan as he left the hospital with nothing. He could not think straight. Just when he had admitted how he missed Shantelle, he learned she had already left the city!

“Mister Thompson! Mister Thompson! Get in the car, Sir!” He heard Howard call his name from behind, but it took seconds to come back to his senses.

Eventually, Evan turned on his heel and lazily entered the car. While inside, his eyes landed on the box containing the white gown he had bought for her birthday.

Will he ever see Shantelle in this dress? Will he ever see her again? Was this for real? Many questions played in his head as Howard drove away. Evan said in his head, ‘Shanty, did you want to leave me?’

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The Shantelle that Evan knew would never leave him. The Shantelle that he knew would do anything for him. How did she find the courage to leave Rose Hills?

Evan still could not accept it. “Sir? Can I take you to the villa?” Howard asked. “You need to change. You are completely drenched – ”

“No,” Evan answered. “Take me to UC MED University.” There was one last hope, and that was where Shantelle completed her degree. Doctor Scott was one of the founders of the school. Evan was convinced that. Doctor Scott would never give up on his shares. If he did, selling them in just a few months would be close to impossible.

Half an hour passed, and Evan arrived at the university. He went straight to the dean’s office to get answers. Upon arriving, he met with professor Arya Dewan.

He wasted no time and asked where Doctor Scott had relocated. However, to his dismay, the professor gave him the same answer. “I’m sorry, Mister Thompson, but we don’t know. Doctor Scott did not tell anyone where he was relocating. Even if we knew, we would not share this information with you -”

“But, his shares. Surely, he still has his shares,” Evan pointed out. Professor Dewan was frowning in her chair. Not only did Evan soak her sofa seat with his wet clothes, but the information he sought was something she honestly thought the man would know.

The professor sucked in a breath and revealed, “Mister Thompsom, Doctor Scott easily sold his shares. Your father bought all of his shares.”

‘What?’ Evan was beyond shocked. His parents bought Doctor Scott’s shares at the university. It only meant one thing; his parents knew Shantelle was leaving. They knew they were moving out of the city, yet they never told him! TO From the university, Evan asked

Howard to bring him to the old Thompson mansion. His heart was filled with bitterness, knowing his parents knew all along. He thought, ‘ How long have they known?’

The entire drive, Evan was trying to hold back his emotions. He was angry. He was sad, and he was in pain. Oddly, his heart was aching from the news. He was upset that his parents did not tell him, and he was mad at himself for he knew this was all his fault.

“Evan, what have you done? What have you done?” He asked himself as he threw his head back.

It did not take long for Evan to arrive at his parent’s home. He briskly walked inside and found his parents having tea on the patio. Evan was catching his breath when he asked, “Did you know?”

“What is it, son?” His father, Erick Thompson asked. “Did you know the Scotts were leaving? Is that why you bought Doctor Scott’s shares at the university?” Evan sought. “Why? Tell me why, father?!”

“Why?” Erick asked back. “It was the least I could do. I felt guilty because of the divorce. Since they did not want the alimony, I could at least make it easier for William to leave.”

“But.” Evan moved closer as he inquired, “But why did you not tell me she was leaving?!” Clara, Evan’s mother, gazed at her husband. Seeing him silent, she directed his gaze to Evan and asked, “Why does it matter, Evan? You and Shanty are already divorced.”

It was as though Clara was reminded of the last day Shantelle came to bid goodbye. She was teary-eyed, and her voice broke in and out as she described, “They cut ties with us, Evan – over thirty years of friendship gone to waste. William decided it was best to cut all relations with us. He concluded it was best to take Shantelle away from here to forget everything.”

“Evan, it was no secret how Shantelle was brokenhearted with the divorce. You knew she loved you very much,” Erick explained. “William will do anything to make Shantelle heal, and that can only happen if she forgets you. Forgetting you means forgetting about Rose Hills. William said... they were never coming back.”

Suddenly, Evan found it hard to breathe. He felt wetness in the corner of his eyes, one he never knew he was capable of having.

“What’s wrong, Evan? Isn’t it better?” Erick asked. “Isn’t this what you always wanted? Shanty has finally left you alone.”