

Chapter 34: New Patient

“Happy Anniversary, grandma & grandpa!” Lucas greeted, carrying a cake early in the morning into the dining room. Behind him was his mother, Shantelle. “Happy Anniversary, mom and dad!” Shantelle greeted.

Both Shantelle and Lucas kissed William and Eleanor on the cheek. Shantelle then gave an envelope to her father, saying, “As promised, your anniversary trip!”

“Anniversary, trip?” Eleanor’s eyes widened in surprise. She turned to William, asking, “Had you known all along? So that’s why you took a two- week leave?”

“Three weeks,” William corrected. “ And yes, I could use a vacation. It had been so long.” ca “I don’t know if I can. Who will take care of Lucas?” Eleanor said with a worried expression on her face. Shantelle felt guilty altogether. It was because of Lucas that her parents gave up on taking breaks. She went on several years straight, focusing on her studies and residency, that her parents had to see through Lucas’ needs.

“Mom, I can take care of Lucas, please. Then, the maids can attend to him if I have an emergency surgery.” Shantelle combed Lucas’ hair with her fingers, saying, “He isn’t a baby anymore.”

“Right, I’m not a baby,” Lucas said back. “You deserve a vacation, mom. Besides, the tickets have all been paid for,” Shantelle insisted. “It’s a two-week Antarctica cruise. You can’t miss out on all the whales and penguins!”

“Whales? Penguins? I wanna come! I want to come too, mommy!” Lucas expressed, and they all laughed.

“Honey, you can’t. You have school, and mommy has a lot of work.” Shantelle pinched Lucas’ cheek and said, “Please, don’t leave mommy behind. We will go together, one day.”

“Promise?” Lucas sought. Shantelle raised her hand and answered, “Promise. One day. Now, let’s hurry up with your breakfast. I’m taking you to school today.”

“Really?” Lucas asked in surprised, his eyes sparkling. “Yes,” Shantelle replied. “My work starts at five. In fact, I’ll be taking the night shift until your grandparents return.”

“Yay! Mommy is taking me to school! I’m going to introduce you to my friends, mommy!” Lucas exclaimed, and he excitedly ate his meal.

After breakfast, Shantelle and Lucas prepared for school. They left soon after, with the family driver taking them.

Being a busy doctor, while sometimes working for two days straight, taking Lucas to school was a rare moment, and Shantelle knew she needed to cherish each opportunity.

Heartbeats later, the mother and son arrived at the school gate. Shantelle gave Lucas some last-minute reminders. “Be good, play, but don’t overdo it.”

She kneeled in front of her son and suggested, “Learn, make friends and be happy.” Lucas chuckled. He hugged Shantelle and said, “I will. I love you, mommy.”

“I love you,” Shantelle said, hugging her son back. When Shantelle stood up, Lucas’ classmate greeted him, “Lucas! Is that your mommy?”

Lucas nodded, and the girl who came up to them said, "She is so pretty!" Shantelle smiled at the little girl. Then, the same girl pointed to her parents and said, "That's my mommy and daddy! They dropped me off before going to work."

"Lucas!" Another friend of Lucas greeted. A young boy with a darker complexion asked, "Where is your grandma?"

"My grandma is going on a vacation, Adrian. My mommy brought me to school, instead," Lucas happily responded and proudly held Shantelle's hand. He added, "She is a doctor!"

"Cool!" The boy named Adrian said. "I wanna be a doctor too!" "It's almost time, Adrian. Go inside," a man behind them said.

Adrian then pointed to the man and told Lucas, "That's my daddy. He builds things. He's great! We play cars together, and he teaches me basketball.

"Oh. That's nice," Lucas said, and immediately, Shantelle saw how the smile on his face faded. It appeared to her that Lucas purposely waited for his classmates to go inside the school. After which, he asked, "Mommy, why don't I have a daddy?"

Shantelle choked on her spew. She forced a smile and took a deep breath. For a moment, she looked away. Then, she returned her regard to Lucas. She said, "I'm sorry, Lucas. I'll tell you about your father soon. Not now. You still need to go to school."

"So, I have a daddy? When are you going to tell me?" Lucas asked. "This weekend," Shantelle said.

"Let's talk about it this weekend, okay? When you are not in school."

"Okay, mommy," Lucas said. "I can't wait."

He smiled and waved goodbye before he rushed into the school building. From there, Shantelle saw how he entered his classroom, which fortunately was just on the first floor. "Evan," Shantelle said the name she had avoided all these years. 'How am I going to tell him?'

What worried Shantelle the most was the possibility that Lucas would only get hurt. Evan could be married to Nicole by now, maybe even have his own kids. Having an illegitimate child would be the last thing that he needed. With a sigh, she wondered, 'What if he rejects Lucas? How can I protect my son from the pain?'

"Doctor, Shant?" Shantelle turned to find one of her mentors, the veteran thoracic surgeon, Doctor Hale. "Doctor Hale, good afternoon," Shantelle greeted back. She was just about to aid the Emergency room when he found her.

"You probably already know that I am taking your father's responsibilities while he is away," Doctor Hale said. "But with my current workload, I was hoping to get some help."

"I'd be happy to help, Doctor Hale. What can I do?" She offered. "Two things." Doctor Hale raised his forefinger and said, "You could help evaluate incoming patients and assign doctors. Or, you could be on top of the organ transplant list and coordinate with The Organ Center."

"Right," Shantelle said. Within the city, Warlington Hospitals was the only transplant facility. Her father, in particular, could recommend a patient to be moved up to the waiting list, depending on the patient's condition. "I'll coordinate with The Organ Center."

“Okay, then, Doctor Shant. Thank you for the help,” Doctor Hale said. “If you need anything, I’ll be in my office.”

Doctor Hale watched as Shantelle disappeared into the hallways. Then he returned to his office. Just in time, his secretary walked in, carrying several documents. She placed three folders on his right side of the desk and revealed, “ 11 We have admission requests from three hospitals today. These are not only high -profile clients, but they require immediate surgery.”

“Thank you,” Doctor Hale said. “This one,” said the secretary. She placed the folder to his left and added, “ This child is applying for charity.”

Doctor Hale first reviewed the charity case. The patient was a six-year-old girl with a hole in her heart. He approved the admission, knowing Shantelle was good with kids. She would never let a child be deprived of medical care.

After that, he studied the other patients’ profiles and medical conditions. For the patient with lung cancer, he set the folder aside and said, “Assigned to Doctor Park.” Another patient required brain surgery, and he gave it to another doctor.

The last patient was an older man who needed a heart bypass surgery. A hiss left Doctor Hale’s lips. Only Shantelle was good with this procedure and had led the same surgery three times this year. During her residency, Shantelle had assisted over thirty bypass surgeries.

Business-wise, the patient could also pay the full deposit required for the surgery. Thus, Doctor Hale approved the patient’s admission and assigned it to Shantelle. He placed the patient folder on the pile of approved lists. The name of the patient was Erick Thompson.