

Chapter 26: The Playboy's Backstory

[Sometimes, when things don't work out the way you planned, something better is coming. It may be difficult to believe where you stand; often, redirection is a helpful intervention. This is a gift, and I know it. Love and kisses to my girl, Shanty! I'll see you in a week.]

Shantelle smiled, reading Karise's post on her profile. Soon, her other friends left comments.

[I don't care if I am broke. I'll see my girl, too] Felice said. Below, Felice, her other friend, Celest, remarked. [I am far more broke, but Karise will pay for my ticket. I love you @Karise! See you soon, beautiful Shanty!]

It made Shantelle smile altogether. Shantelle was leaning against the wall outside the classroom of her last subject of the day, going through her friend's plans of flying out to Warlington. She sucked in a breath, and after putting her phone back inside her bag, she caressed her growing belly.

Two weeks ago, during her birthday, she had told her parents about the pregnancy. It broke their heart because plans were changing now with a new life taken into the equation. However, like the loving parents they were, they accepted the circumstance. Her father began making phone calls, assessing how she could get through medical school faster despite falling pregnant. 4

Shantelle walked out of the school, confident. She knew she could overcome her endeavors with her friends' and family's support. One day, she will become one of the best thoracic surgeons.

One day. Arriving outside the gates, she was stunned to see Keith Henderson. She looked around and realized the driver her father had hired was nowhere to be seen.

"I told your father I would send you home. I am leaving Warlington and don't know when I'll be back. I thought I'd say goodbye," he said. "Not forever, though."

Then he gave that sexy smirk that made Shantelle shake her head. "I'm keeping the baby," Shantelle revealed as they sat in the bench park.

Keith had decided to make a stop at where it all unfolded; the Warlington Park. He had bought her camomile tea from the coffee shop while he had an espresso.

She saw him nod, and his shoulders lifted and fell for a second. He replied, "It's the right thing. I hoped that you had pursued medicine right after graduation."

Shantelle lightly laughed. She answered, "When I finished college last year, I thought I spend more time with him, you know. Then, a few months later, I discovered that Nicole was back in town. So all that plan of taking medicine went down the drain. Back then, I could not allow Nicole to have her way. 8

"I was following Evan around, secretly checking his phone, going to his office, and making excuses like bringing him lunch – among other things." She chuckled and revealed, "I even went to one of Evan's client meetings at The Hillview restaurant, thinking he was meeting with Nicole."

Shaking her head, she revealed, "He lost that client because of me, and that's when we started arguing, really, really bad."

"I did stupid things for love, all of which lead me to this day. Can you believe it?" She said. Her statement wasn't meant to be a question, but an affirmation of her mistakes. However, Keith replied, "I know precisely what you mean. Love can make you do outlandish things."

“Wait, what is that statement? Why do you talk about love, Mister Henderson?” She nodded and suggested, “I doubt Mister Casanova has ever been in love.”

Keith chuckled and responded, “Shanty, you should know, every playboy has his backstory.” Shantelle laughed entirely. She snorted as she answered, “Really now? I’m all ears.” For seconds, Keith just looked at the bystanders in the park. Eventually, he revealed, “I started to like this girl when I was twenty-three. She is younger than me, but unfortunately, she was in love with another man.

“I tried to turn up in front of her, looking sexy, the boy next door type, the hot shot businessman, but nothing. Not a single version of me attracted her. She never saw me,” he said. “Around two years ago, she broke my heart completely.”

“What happened? Did she reject you?” Shantelle asked. “You could say that,” Keith replied. “Oh, was that why you left town for two months without talking to anybody? I remember that. Evan was cussing about it all week,” Shantelle said.

“He was cussing about me during your honeymoon?” Keith asked with a frown. “Yeah, something to do with the children’s hospital in Lockwood,” Shantelle said, lifting her brow.

“Oh, that.” Keith sneered. “Well, I took care of those insurance claims when I returned. Evan was being theatrical.”

There was an awkward silence that stretched between them. Shantelle never recalled Evan saying something about Keith liking a girl. She turned to him, asking, “Is it someone I know?”

Keith chuckled. He ran his fingers through his hair, and, without looking at her, he answered, “No. Not really. Maybe in time, I will introduce you to her. I don’t know yet if that time will ever come.”

“So anyway, that’s when I started – ” Keith frowned, trying to find the right words. “Serial dating?” Shantelle said before laughing. “I’m pretty sure you dated back then, but I admit, the number of women’s hearts you had broken doubled, if not tripled, in the past two years.”

“I wanted to forget her. I know I’ll never have a place in her heart, but I know my methods were wrong,” Keith said in the end. “The idiotic things we do for love, right?” Shantelle just laughed. She remarked, pointing to him with her hand, “This doesn’t suit you at all, Keith.”

Keith chuckled with her and said, “Laugh all you want. You wanted my backstory, so I gave it. How dare you ridicule me?”

The two continued to laugh and chat as they finished their drinks, but after some time, Keith received a call. From the corner of Shantelle’s eyes, she saw it was Evan’s name on his screen. She quickly looked everywhere, not wanting to appear affected.

Keith got up and walked toward a tree, the same trunk he had punched the last time when he learned she was pregnant. After two minutes, he returned, saying, “I have to go, Shanty. I’ll take you home?”

Shantelle nodded and said, “Need to go back to Rose Hills?” “Nah. Not yet. I need to fly out to Lockwood and meet everyone there,” he said. Then, noticing her curiosity, he explained, “Evan won the bid for the Lockwood National Park.”

“Ah,” Shantelle said. “That means one thing, he will buy the Lockwood Children’s Hospital.” “Yes,” Keith acknowledged. “It’s his biggest humanitarian project.”

Shantelle smiled as she got up. She expressed, “I may hate Evan for breaking my heart, but I must admit that he can be such a philanthropist.”

Keith nodded in agreement. He remarked, “He took a business risk – a big one, but it’s for charitable reasons.”

“But you are also generous, Keith. I know that you offered insurance coverage to those poor children in Lockwood,” Shantelle said.

Keith paused, as if he was thinking. Then he smiled and answered, “Yes, that’s right, Shanty, we can talk more about my humanitarian projects. You might just... fall in love with me.”

Shantelle laughed. She replied, “What a sudden shift!” “Can I tell you a little secret?” Keith said as they were walking towards his car.

“What?” Shantelle asked. “I have always thought that single moms are hot!” He teased and winked at her. Shantelle chortled hysterically. She replied, “Your lines won’t work on me, Keith.”

“Really? But I wasn’t aiming for your heart. I was aiming for your smile,” he answered, making Shantelle smile from ear to ear.