

You Don't Listen

by Kristen Thomas Easley

Adam is going to kill me.

They're going to turn the phone off. Where is the money in our checking? Mortgage... groceries... \$400 at Beverage Warehouse?!? \$700 at... where? Oh right, that sample sale.

I need to bring expenses down. I can't run this house on Adam's salary. He doesn't get that. I'm the one who always has to find ways to cut.

We can't afford that vodka anymore. The cheap stuff is fine.

I need a drink. 3:30. Dammit.

What's on the VISA? Over the limit?!? How?

Adam going to kill me. He has his cell phone, he'll live.

*WAIT — the MasterCard... I paid on that. \$93 available! There — if I give the phone company \$100, they will keep it on, right? I can pay the rest next week, when Adam gets paid. Oh! * * *kiss * * * bless you. I can pay the electricity and phone next pay check and put mortgage off until the next check. I can float us. Adam won't know. Oh thank God!*

What time is it? 3:47. Adam says before 5 is too early. Maybe he should stay home with our daughters once in a while. Let's see him make it to 5 o'clock. It is Friday. I'll mix it with orange juice. He never notices.

I better check on Debra.

I need to see if the baby is awake first.

"There you are, my sweet love."

"Sssshhhh. Sshh. Sshh." You love your Mommy so much. You're just a little cuddle bum.

Just like your sisters were.

Before every other word was "NO", "I WON'T", "Why do I have to?" BECAUSE I SAID SO, that's why.

I love you, precious. You are going to be Mommy's little angel.

Is Casey still moping?

** * *knock* * **

"Casey? I'm coming in."

"Are you still pissed off at me? You are 15 Casey. You snuck out with that... that moron!"

"Yes he is a moron. He's too old for you."

"You knew you would be grounded. You brought this on yourself. You can stew in here all weekend if you want. Go ahead, tell your journal how awful your mother is. If you get pregnant at 15, your life will be over."

"Oh, yes you are. Don't lie to me."

"It's doesn't matter. You father and I told you to back off from him."

"Debra is none of your business. No! Don't roll your eyes at me. You never mouthed off liked that."

"Not that bad."

"Well, not at her age."

"Now you don't say anything."

"I just want you to talk to me, honey. That's all. I believe you. If you and that guy... "

"OK, OK, Tyler. If you say you and Tyler are not having sex than I believe you. I just love you so much. You know that, right?"

"You dad doesn't know you snuck out last night. If you SWEAR to keep to curfew, maybe you can not be grounded. Dad doesn't need to know about any of this."

"But you keep to the rules of this house."

I'll tell Adam it's a group of friends going out. He'll be OK with that.

* * *deep breath* * * * *knock* * *

"Debra? Debs? Oh hey, there. You still crying? Big girls like you don't cry this much. "

"Your eye hurts? Let's see. Oh, it's not anything. I can barely... I don't see anything. That? That's just a little dirt. There you go. No more tears."

"Hey! You know what would be fun? Do you want Mommy to put some of her make up on you? Some pink lipstick... and my glittery eye shadow? Yeah? OK, come on."

“This will be fun.”

“This is foundation. It... it makes your skin all smooth and pretty. Oh! Did that hurt? No, stay still, honey. I just need to cover up this purple... OK. You know, Mommy hates to get that mad at you, sweetheart. But I pick you up at preschool and all those mommies are looking at me because you hit someone? It makes me look like I am not a good mommy — when you were the one that hit. That's not fair, is it? And then we come home and you refuse to go to your room? You just sat there on the couch and wouldn't move? Even after Mommy asked you all those times. You don't listen to me. You never listen.”

“Here, purse your lips like... good.”

“Oh, you look so pretty. You know how much your mommy loves you? I am not going to tell Daddy how naughty you were today. No, I won't. I won't tell him anything and we will just pretend it didn't happen. He doesn't have to know, right? Mommy already took care of it. Look at you! So pretty. You can't even see that little patch on your cheek.”

“It still hurts? Mommy doesn't like to hit you honey. You need to listen to her”

“ You know what? Let's play a game. I bet Daddy doesn't even see it with this pretty make up on. Let's not show him unless he sees it? OK? Our little game.”

“You know who you look like? That pretty princess doll we saw at the store the other day.”

“Yes, the one with the beautiful white ruffily dress. How about you and Mommy go get you that doll tomorrow? Would you like that?”

“Well, it is expensive. 70 dollars is a lot for a doll. But you want it, right? And Mommy is going to get it for you. That is how much Mommy loves you. I found 70 dollars on my MasterCard and I saved it just for you. Ah, come here baby. You're welcome.”

“Look at that! It's 5 o'clock! Mommy is going to make some orange juice. Do you want some orange juice?”

