

## Chapter 112

Karla's thoughts tumbled in confusion, torn between the pressing issue with Duncan and the sudden appearance of this mysterious figure. She hesitated for a moment, her hand hovering over the doorknob, contemplating whether to address Duncan's threat or confront the unknown person before her. The room filled with an uneasy stillness as she grappled with her options, knowing that her decision would have far-reaching consequences.

But as the person turned on the fluorescent bulb, its bright light flooding the previously dim-lit restroom, Karla heaved a sigh of relief. It was then that she recognized the figure standing before her—it was none other than Xia, a friend and colleague. In her state of panic, Karla had failed to take a proper look earlier, and the dim lighting had triggered her xenophobia, causing her initial fear and confusion.

"What are you doing here...?" Xia began to ask, her voice filled with a mix of surprise and curiosity.

However, before she could finish her sentence, Karla placed a hand on her lips, signaling Xia to remain silent. Understanding the urgency in Karla's actions, Xia nodded and maintained her silence. With a determined expression, Karla walked up to Xia, her mind racing to find a solution to the immediate predicament. Just as she was about to formulate a plan, Duncan's voice intruded once again, breaking through the door with a renewed sense of impatience.

"Karla, you've got 60 seconds to come out, or I'll come in. Don't take this as a threat," Duncan's voice echoed, his words laced with a mix of frustration and concern.

Karla's heart skipped a beat, realizing that time was running out, and she had to make a decision quickly. She locked eyes with Xia, silently conveying her trust and seeking support in this critical moment.

Taking a deep inhale, Duncan channeled his mounting frustration, his impatience evident in his actions. He began a relentless countdown, his voice reverberating through the hallway as he stomped his feet on the tiled floor, creating a sense of urgency. "Karla... 1... 2... 3," he counted, each number punctuated by the forceful thud of his steps.

The countdown continued, reaching 5 before Duncan paused briefly, pressing his hand against the door, hoping to catch any faint sound that might give away Karla's presence. His brows furrowed in concentration as he strained to listen, his frustration deepening when he heard only the sound of a rushing tap, suggesting that someone was using the sink.

Growing more exasperated by the second, Duncan resumed his counting, his voice growing louder and more forceful with each number's pronouncement. "6... 7... 8... 9, 10," he declared, his tone filled with a mix of determination and impatience. He tightened his grip on the doorknob, ready to force his way in if necessary, his frustration reaching its peak.

Just as Duncan's hand closed around the doorknob, the door swung open, catching him off guard. He couldn't believe his eyes as Xia walked out, dressed in feminine clothes that actually belonged to Karla. His bafflement was evident as he tried to process the unexpected turn of events unfolding before him. He found his voice, albeit with a hint of confusion, and addressed Xia, seeking clarification.

"Hey, uh, you are Xia, right?" Duncan asked, his tone reflecting his bewilderment. Xia nodded in response, her expression calm yet guarded.

She closed the door behind her, creating a sense of privacy within the bustling surroundings.

Duncan's confusion deepened as he tried to make sense of the situation. "So, it's you in there?" he inquired, his voice tinged with a mix of surprise and uncertainty.

Xia nodded once again, confirming his suspicion. "Yes, Duncan. It was me. Why were you knocking like that and calling out to Karla?" Her voice held a hint of curiosity as if she was genuinely interested in understanding his motives.

Duncan's brows furrowed as he considered Xia's words. "She's in there, right?" he asked, a flicker of hope in his voice. He secretly hoped his assumption wasn't wrong.

However, Xia shook her head, dispelling his assumption. "No, she's not. You think she wouldn't have come out if she was in there?" Her words carried a note of skepticism, challenging Duncan's initial belief.

Realization dawned on Duncan as he absorbed Xia's words. He stared at the closed door, his mind racing to process the new information. The intensity of his knocking and the urgency in his voice suddenly seemed misplaced, and a sense of regret washed over him.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you earlier," Duncan apologized, his voice laced with sincerity. He realized the gravity of his actions and the potential disruption they could have caused.

Xia, although still reserved, accepted his apology with a measured response. "It's fine. Just please, don't do it again. We're in a public space, and if you continue behaving this way, people might consider you mad, and it could disturb the peace of the hotel," she cautioned, her words

carrying a touch of concern for both Duncan and the surrounding environment.

"Noted," Duncan replied, understanding the significance of Xia's words. He felt a twinge of regret for his behavior and realized the impact it could have had on others. "I shouldn't be here. I'll leave now," he stated, expressing his intention to rectify the situation.

With a sigh, Duncan turned and left, his presence fading from the scene. Xia waited for a few seconds, ensuring that he had indeed left the hotel premises. Peering through the glass walls, she confirmed that he had hopped on his bike and driven off. Assured of his departure, Xia let out another sigh and made her way back into the restroom.

Inside, she found Karla leaning against the lavatory, her posture reflecting a mix of exhaustion and apprehension.

Karla was clad in Xia's pair of pants and suit jacket, her temporary disguise serving as a means to avoid detection. Xia broke the silence, informing Karla that Duncan had indeed left the scene. A wave of relief washed over Karla as she processed the news. She shook her head, a mixture of disbelief and gratitude evident on her face.

"Phew, that was close," Karla muttered, her voice tinged with lingering anxiety. The realization of the near encounter with Duncan weighed heavily on her mind. "Why didn't Abigail inform me earlier that he was here?"

Xia, ever composed, responded simply, her eyes fixed on Karla. "I'm sure my madam tried to," she said, implying that Abigail had attempted to relay the information to Karla.

With the immediate danger averted, both Karla and Xia decided to switch

back to their own clothes. They swiftly exchanged garments, reverting to their familiar appearances. As they stepped out of the restroom, their eyes met with Abigail, who approached them with a visibly worried expression.

"Did Duncan see you?" Abigail inquired, her concern palpable. Karla shook her head in response, a small yet significant gesture that brought a sigh of relief to Abigail.

Karla's frustration was evident as she confronted Abigail about the lack of information. "Why didn't you tell me sooner that Duncan was here? You saw my message, right?" she asked, her voice tinged with annoyance and impatience.

Abigail, appearing exasperated, couldn't hide her annoyance as she responded to Karla's question. "Check your phone, Karla. I kept calling you the very minute he left my office," she retorted, rolling her eyes for emphasis.

Karla's expression softened as she realized her mistake. "Oh, I guess I didn't know because I had put my phone on silent," she admitted, a tinge of regret in her voice. She quickly realized that her oversight had caused the delay in receiving the important information.

Turning her attention to Xia, Abigail sought an explanation for her actions. "Xia, what happened?" she inquired, wanting to understand the sequence of events.

Xia, who had been waiting for an opportunity to speak, chimed in. "I was in the restroom at the right time when Karla rushed in," she explained. "While Karla was occupied, I quickly changed into her clothes and came out. My intention was to create the impression that Duncan mistook me for Karla."

Abigail raised an eyebrow, impressed by Xia's quick thinking. She let out a sigh of relief as she praised Xia for her quick thinking. "Good job, Xia. I got stuck in the elevator when I was trying to stop Duncan," she acknowledged, grateful for Xia's resourcefulness in her absence.

Xia's expression shifted to concern as she noticed Abigail's state. "Miss, are you okay? Should I call a doctor?" she asked, her worry evident on her face. Karla couldn't help but admire Xia's genuine care and concern for Abigail.

"I'm fine, Xia," Abigail reassured her. "Just get the engineer to check all the elevators in the hotel. We don't want anyone else getting stuck."

Xia nodded, taking note of Abigail's request. She bowed respectfully and swiftly left to fulfill her task, leaving Abigail and Karla alone in the office.

As they entered Abigail's office, Karla couldn't contain her curiosity any longer. "Was it Duncan who overheard your conversation with me earlier?" she asked, her voice laced with worry.

Abigail nodded solemnly. "Yes," she confirmed, her expression revealing a mix of frustration and concern.

Abigail settled into her seat, visibly relieved but also contemplative. "It was hard to pull up lies and act in front of Duncan, but I'm glad I managed to do it," she admitted, taking a moment to collect her thoughts. The weight of the situation was evident in her voice.

Curiosity tugging at her, Abigail turned her attention to Karla. "Why did you run when you saw him? You could have met him and told him you wanted to spend the night here," she questioned, her voice tinged with a hint of confusion.

Karla's response was curt and firm, leaving no room for further inquiry. "I don't want to see him and don't ask me why," she replied, her tone indicating a desire to move past the topic.

Recognizing Karla's resistance, Abigail decided not to press further. Instead, she shifted the conversation to a matter of greater importance. "Peterson has a journal that could bring down the Walton Group of Companies," she revealed, her voice carrying a sense of urgency. "He's planning to hand it over tomorrow and secure a hefty price for it."

Karla's reaction was immediate and filled with disdain. "That's shit," she spat, her voice laced with anger. The revelation seemed to strike a nerve with her, revealing a deep-rooted dissatisfaction with the turn-ups.

Karla's expression turned serious as she lowered her face, a determined look in her eyes. "This is what will happen. We have to follow Peterson to that location again," she stated firmly, outlining her plan. The gravity of the situation was evident in her tone.

"Alright. I'll let Duncan know about the next move now." Abigail, ready to inform Duncan, reached for her phone, but she was unexpectedly halted by Karla. Confusion crossed her face as she looked at Karla, waiting for an explanation. "What?"

"You're not going to tell Duncan anything," Karla stated resolutely, her voice leaving no room for argument. "We need to finish what we started."

Abigail, taken aback by Karla's directive, hesitated for a moment before reluctantly nodding. She let out a sigh, realizing that Karla had a different approach in mind. Uncertain about the details, she looked at Karla and asked, "He, why are you telling me all this?"

Karla met Abigail's gaze, her eyes filled with unwavering determination.

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"Because we're going together," she declared, her voice resolute. The seriousness of her statement caused Abigail's jaw to drop in surprise.