



Chapter 42

Duncan's lips parted into a big smile and nodded. He knew he was going to get the contract. He was just waiting for the news.

"I just got a call from them and they are looking forward to seeing you again. They didn't believe me when I told them that you were the CEO of Walton Group of Companies."

"Why tell them that?"

"Sorry, sir, I was so excited when I got the news and I blurt it out, but I told them not to reveal it to even the press, they promised."

"It's fine. I'm sure when I take off this outfit and return to being the worthless son-in-law of the Lennart family, Duncan South, then no one will recognize me."

"I think so too, sir."

"Congratulations, Duncan." Abigail congratulated and she couldn't stop herself from reaching out to him and hugging him.

"I'm so proud of you, you know."

"Thanks, Abigail. You helped me a lot and gave me the necessary information." While Duncan appreciated Abigail, he kept stealing glances at Karla who made no reactions or attempts to chirp in. "I think it would have been hard if Lisa had represented the company. You know, I met my wife...I mean Zinnia Lennart while I was heading to give my presentation at the appointed time and she was swelling with pride. She didn't recognize me. I am sure she's celebrating her unconfirmed victory now. Coming back to Lisa, if she was the one that had seen me earlier,

she was going to suspect I looked familiar."

"Oh my goodness, your look changed, and seeing you now, I wouldn't recognize you as the same guy I first saw that night. You look different and...charming."

"Thank you." Duncan chuckled and shifted his gaze to Babette. "Thanks for your steady assistance too, Babette. I do appreciate having you by my side."

"Thanks, sir," Babette said, smiling sheepishly as she looked away, pinching her earlobe.

Karla, who patiently waited for an acknowledgment, sighed as Duncan gave her a long glance before he instructed Babette. "Uh, please fix an appropriate date when I can meet them in the company like they asked for, Babette."

"Okay, sir."

"Thank you, and I want the whole media in the city to know that we got the deal. Let the news go viral and wreck the hearts of my adversaries."

Abigail giggled softly as he glanced at her and winked while Babette nodded, getting ready to do as he said.

"Is that all, sir?"

"Yes, Babette."

"I'll get that done as soon as possible. Excuse me." Babette slightly nodded and left.

Abigail tilted her head and stared at Karla behind as Babette left the

room. When Karla opened her mouth to speak, Abigail quickly spoke, forcing Duncan to take his eyes off Karla.

"Duncan, you did it as you said. This is a big win."

"I'm just starting. Nothing is yet to happen."

"Wow, okay. I just want to..."

A phone rang, causing her to stop talking as Duncan glanced at the telephone, thinking it was it.

"I guess it's my phone," Abigail muttered as she took her phone from her purse. "Oh, it's an important call. Excuse me." She eyed Karla, smiling as she walked past her, leaving the room before answering the call.

Then Duncan shifted his focus to Karla who said nothing but stared woolly at him before he spoke, taking a step toward her.

"I got the contract, Ms. Partner."

"I heard Babette clearly," Karla said, slightly rubbing her temple with her fingertips to distract herself a bit. "Congratulations, Mr. Walton."

"Thank you even though you said it a bit late." Duncan pulled a sort of stern look as he peered into her eyes as if searching for something.

"What?"

"Mm mm."

"So what's with that look? You don't look excited now unlike a minute earlier."

"I am excited."

"Great then. I will take my leave now." Feeling dejected for not getting an acknowledgment, she spun to leave.

As he watched her reach the door, Duncan quickly said, "Are you really leaving now on your own accord?"

Karla stopped as she grabbed the doorknob and sighed before contemplating turning around.

Duncan quietly walked up to her and said, "You know, it's actually because of you, Karla."

Karla's eyes narrowed as she turned to meet his gaze, not understanding what he meant. "What do you mean?" She asked.

Duncan took some steps back, nodding. "The papers you gave me, I really didn't look at them but when I was done with my presentation, I had to give it to them and it impressed them."

Her pupils went huge in a euphoric manner. "Really?"

Duncan nodded, a smile dancing on his lips as she stared at him in astonishment.

"You saved me. Thanks." With that, he pulled her into a hug.

"You really appreciate my help?"

"Yeah." Duncan let go of her, lifting his brows. "You doubt that?"

"Hm, no. But maybe you can give me something again as an appreciation."
"

"Sure. What is it?"

"Uh, maybe a kiss," she blurted. His eyes lit up, forcing her to blink.

"A kiss?" Duncan asked, almost loudly and Babette who just walked widened her eyes.

Seeing Babette, Karla got embarrassed and vigorously shook her head in objection. "No, I was kidding." She laughed strangely, glancing at Babette as she waved her hand. "That's just the title of a movie and I meant to ask if you'll get me a ticket to watch it at the Cinema this weekend."

"Oh. A movie. That's fine. Babette, please tell Jack to get me a ticket for..."

"Oh, no no no," Karla abruptly stopped him and giggled in embarrassment. "I just remembered that I got a ticket last night.

"Is the movie a blockbuster?" Babette curiously asked.

"I don't think so. You would not have watched the movie."

Abigail suddenly walked in, asking, "What movie?"

A line appeared between Karla's brows as Abigail stared at her inquisitively.

"I heard you guys talking about a movie. A blockbuster? Is it? Tell me."

"Ms. Waclaw, it is 'Kiss'," Babette said before Karla could have a chance to stop her.

Abigail squeezed her eyes shut and flicked it open the next second in bafflement. "Kiss?"

"Uh, that's the title of the movie."

"It's a new release, I guess," Duncan added.

"I guess it's a romance movie judging by the title - Kiss. What do you say about us going to watch it at the Cinema, Duncan...?"

"No! It is a horror movie and I am sure Duncan doesn't like horror movies."

"How can you tell? Pff, I hate horror movies anyway."

"Well, I love horror movies," Duncan revealed, making Karla chuckle. "Your certainty was wrong about my choice of movies, Karla."

"Okay. Though, I love horror movies."

"Whatever. But, thanks once again, Karla."

"Huh, why thank her?" Abigail asked, trying not to sound a bit jealous for no reason.

"She saved me. Like I said, I almost flopped. She came over there and handed me some important papers just a few seconds before I was to go in to make my presentation. Luckily, I took it and after I was done with my presentation, I had to give the papers to them and that impressed them," Duncan explained, his gleaming as he stared at Karla which made the pit of Abigail's stomach twitch.

"Thank you, Karla," he said sincerely, a mix of relief and gratitude evident in his voice. "I don't think I would have secured the deal without those papers. You really saved the day."

Karla smiled, her dejection utterly gone.

"You're highly welcome," Karla responded.

"Well, sir, I have done what you asked for. The whole media house in the city now knows about your success. The news will be on TV stations in no time from now."

"Good. I can't wait to go home and see the shock in Zinnia's face."
Duncan slipped a hand into his pocket as his lips went crook when he smirked.

Later in the day, In the grand living room of the Lennart mansion, Zinnia sat majestically on a plush cuddle chair, her head gently twirling as she savored the rich aroma of wine in her glass. Seated beside her was her mother, Laila, engaged in a lively conversation, their voices mingling with the soft music that played in the background. This moment of tranquility and contentment was punctuated by a sense of anticipation, as Zinnia eagerly awaited news that would confirm her successful deal.

Zinnia had delivered a remarkable presentation earlier in the day, leaving her feeling confident and accomplished. The weight of her efforts and preparation had settled upon her shoulders, and she reveled in the satisfaction of a job well done. The prospect of securing the deal had filled her with excitement, and she could hardly contain her eagerness to receive positive news.

"I think in less than an hour, our company will get the news that I have secured the deal. I'm feeling so great right now, mother."

"Oh, I am proud of you, my dear. I am certain you turned their heads with your incredible presentation."

"Yeah. They even praised me and felt honored to see my presentation."

"That is fantastic."

As Zinnia shifted her attention, she reached out to the remote control and changed the television station, seeking a brief distraction to ease her anticipation. To her surprise, the screen flickered to life, displaying a breaking news segment. Zinnia's eyes widened as she absorbed the headline that popped up on the screen – the Walton Group of Companies had secured a colossal deal worth 200 million dollars, thanks to the brilliant presentation delivered by their CEO.

A mix of emotions washed over Zinnia, momentarily overshadowing her complacency. She couldn't help but feel a twinge of disappointment, her hopes momentarily dashed by the news of another company's triumph. The realization that she had not clinched the deal she had worked so hard for momentarily dampened her spirits.

"No!" Zinnia jerked to her feet, dropping her glass as she glued her eyes to the television, and just then, one by one, family members began to gather in the living room with Ma'am Luna, their curiosity piqued by the unexpected turn of events. They were taken aback as the newsreader happily revealed the company that got the big deal which top most companies in the city had their eyes on.

"This is impossible. The deal was supposed to be mine!" Zinnia cried. Her heart sank as she absorbed the news of not getting the deal. A whirlwind of emotions churned inside her, leaving her feeling upset and utterly disappointed. The weight of failure bore down on her, and she struggled to comprehend the situation.

Seeking solace and understanding, Zinnia turned to her Grandma, hoping she would hear her out. However, her hopes were shattered when her Ma'am Luna responded with a sudden, unexpected slap. The sting of the slap reverberated through Zinnia's cheek, leaving her both physically and emotionally wounded.

As Zinnia looked around, she found Lisa and her mother, Bella wearing smug smiles while covering their mouths. It was clear that they were reveling in her misfortune, taking pleasure in her downfall. The combination of physical pain and their expected pleasure intensified her inner turmoil.

"You let me down once again, how could you?!" Ma'am Luna groaned.

Struggling to hold back her tears, Zinnia clenched her teeth, determined not to let her emotions overpower her. She could see the happiness gleaming in her brother, Marcus' eyes, a painful reminder of the divide between them. It felt as if her failure had given them a sense of satisfaction, compounding her anguish.

Speechless and wounded, Zinnia tried to express her thoughts, her voice trembling with a mix of frustration and sadness.

"I thought I had secured it..." she managed to say, her words filled with disbelief and self-doubt. But before she could finish her sentence, her Grandma's hand met her cheek once again, delivering another painful blow, forcing Laila to step forward, wanting to intercede for Zinnia.

The physical and emotional pain overwhelmed Zinnia, leaving her momentarily stunned. The repeated slaps from her Grandmother were not only a form of punishment but also a crushing reminder of her perceived inadequacy. At that moment, she felt a deep sense of betrayal and disappointment, struggling to comprehend how her own grandmother could treat her with such cruelty.

Zinnia's cheeks burned from the physical impact, but the pain she felt within her was far deeper. She was left with a mix of anger, sadness, and a profound sense of isolation. The weight of her family's judgment and

rejection bore down on her, making her question her self-worth and abilities.

As she stood there, speechless and wounded, Zinnia found herself grappling with a flood of emotions. She knew she had let herself down, but the harsh treatment from her family only intensified her inner turmoil.

"I am so disappointed in you. I am even ashamed to call you my granddaughter now. You're a total failure."

"Why fail us, Zinnia?" Bella asked with a concerned voice as she walked up to her. "I thought you had everything under control?"

"Just shut up," Laila said to Bella, almost yelling. She turned to her mother with clasped hands. "Mother, don't be mad at Zinnia. I am sure my daughter did her best but..."

Before she could finish talking, her cheek met the hot hand of Ma'am Luna. The resounding slap she received made her stumble back as everyone's eyes widened in disbelief.

 **Gem Lynne** author

"Hello guys, hope you enjoyed this chapter. I really don't know but I'm certain some of you got yourself rolling on the floor after seeing Ma'am Luna slap Zinnia and her mother. Both deserved it. 🤔🤔..."

 18