

Chapter 82

"What are you doing?" Duncan finally managed to ask, his voice filled with a mix of bewilderment and gratitude.

Karla's focus remained on her task as she spread the ointment carefully, her touch gentle yet purposeful. "I'm taking care of you," she replied softly, her voice carrying a hint of tenderness.

Duncan found himself at a loss for words as he watched Karla's attentive and caring actions. He hadn't expected this level of care from her, but he couldn't deny the comfort it brought him. The tension within him slowly dissipated, replaced by a sense of warmth and appreciation.

As Karla finished applying the ointment, she carefully placed the small sterile adhesive bandage over the blister, ensuring it was secure. She took a step back, her eyes meeting Duncan's with a gentle smile.

"There," she said, her voice filled with satisfaction. "That should help protect it and prevent any further irritation."

Duncan's lips curled into a grateful smile. "Thank you, Karla," he whispered, overwhelmed by her thoughtfulness and the depth of their connection.

Karla returned his smile, her eyes shining with genuine care. "You're welcome, Duncan," she replied softly. "Always remember that I'm here for you."

"I don't need you to be here for me always. I think it should be the other way round," Duncan muttered, implying that he felt more capable of providing assistance or support to her.

"Whatever," Karla dismissed his statement. "I think you should drop by the hospital later in the day too to receive proper care."

"Look at you talking like you're my wife," Duncan gave a somewhat sarcastic remark. At that moment, Duncan's thoughts shift to his wife, Zinnia, and he realizes that Karla's behavior is the opposite of what he experiences in his relationship with Zinnia. This comparison highlights the contrast between the two women and their respective roles in Duncan's life.

Following this realization, Duncan lifts his gaze to look at Karla directly, and he stares down at her as he observes her closely and tries to gauge her reaction.

In response to the sudden intensity of the situation, Karla, feeling a bit awkward, steps out from between Duncan's legs and positions herself by his side.

As Duncan touched the bandage on his lips, he tried to alleviate the perceived awkwardness of the situation. His gesture was meant to signal his discomfort, but it also served as a way to draw attention to the bandage.

He frowned as he said, "You're sure this won't come off?"

Sensing his unease, Karla gently intervened by slapping his hand away, cautioning him not to touch it.

And she brought her face closer to his own. With one hand on his face, she held him steady while she used her other hand to readjust the bandage, ensuring it was properly stuck in place. Their proximity heightened the tension between them, and Karla could feel her heart beginning to race.

Whispering softly under her breath, Karla reassured Duncan, "It's adhesive, it won't come off." Her words were intended to alleviate his concerns, but as their eyes met, a wave of emotion swept over her. The intensity of their connection made her heart beat faster, and she found herself captivated by the moment.

As Duncan's gaze lingered on Karla's lips, a moment of anticipation hung in the air. Sensing the growing tension, Karla became acutely aware of their proximity, causing her to gulp nervously and quickly smack her lips together, breaking the charged atmosphere.

Just as Duncan was about to speak, the door swung open, abruptly interrupting the moment. Both Duncan and Karla instinctively averted their attention to the newcomer, Abigail. Abigail's eyes widened in surprise as her gaze landed on Duncan and Karla's proximity.

"What are you doing?" Abigail questioned, her voice laced with astonishment as she walked up to the desk where they stood.

Karla, undeterred by Abigail's entrance, straightened up confidently. "I was treating his wound," she responded, her voice steady and composed.

Abigail's surprise was evident as she directed her gaze to the corner of Duncan's lips, where the bandage was clearly visible. The sight of the bandage confirmed Karla's explanation and left Abigail momentarily lost for words, her thoughts racing to comprehend the situation that had unfolded in front of her.

Duncan, aware of the need for clarification, decided to provide more context to prevent any misunderstandings. He spoke up, explaining, "I got a tear on my lip due to Peterson's punch last night."

Abigail, still processing the situation, expressed her surprise. "You never

told me about your encounter with Peterson at the bar last night," she remarked, her voice tinged with a mix of curiosity and concern. Her gaze then shifted towards Karla, and her tone became slightly accusatory. "And I didn't notice any wounds on you when we met last night..."

Karla, feeling a sense of frustration and some underlying emotions, interrupted Abigail's line of thought. She asserted, "That's because you don't genuinely care. You're just pretending to be concerned about him."

Abigail, taken aback by Karla's direct accusation, took a step forward, her expression turning serious. "Excuse me?" she replied sharply, her voice conveying a mix of surprise and defensiveness. The tension in the room escalated, as the three individuals confronted each other, their emotions and thoughts intertwining in this unexpected confrontation. 1

"You're excused. By the way, I just stated the truth," Karla responded defiantly, her words laced with irritation. Her frustration with Abigail's presumed insincerity was evident.

Abigail, now irked by Karla's remark, decided to challenge her further. "Then I dare you to repeat it," she retorted, her voice tinged with a mix of defiance and annoyance.

"I'm not afraid of a pathetic pretender like you..." Karla began to respond, her voice filled with disdain, but before she could continue, Duncan intervened. He stood up and reached out to hold Karla's hand, a gesture meant to calm the escalating situation. Karla shifted her gaze to Duncan, momentarily distracted by his presence and the touch of his hand.

Duncan took a deep breath, preparing to address the mounting tension when his phone suddenly rang. He retrieved it, and as he saw the caller ID appear on the screen, a mischievous smirk formed on his lips.

"Peterson," he muttered under his breath, his smile crooking.

Abigail took a step forward and observed Duncan's smile. "Won't you answer the call?" Abigail asked, her curiosity piqued, causing Duncan to turn his attention towards her.

"It's Peterson calling," Duncan replied, meeting Abigail's gaze.

The significance of the call seemed to register in Abigail's mind, and she responded with a somewhat cryptic statement, saying, "That's good..."

Karla, sensing there was more to the situation, interjected before Abigail could continue, her curiosity getting the better of her. "Why is he calling?" she inquired, her tone laced with confusion.

Duncan took a moment to collect his thoughts before responding. "I took away everything he had," he admitted, his voice tinged with satisfaction and his desire for revenge boiling.

Karla was confused, so she asked, "What do you mean?"

Abigail, seizing the opportunity to shed light on the matter, revealed, "He had all of Peterson's money wiped out from his bank account."

The revelation left Karla stunned, her surprise evident in her voice as she asked, "What? Why would you do that, Duncan?" Her confusion and concern mingled together, seeking an explanation for Duncan's actions and the implications they carried.

"Actually, Peterson..." Abigail began to say, intending to provide some insight into the situation, but she was abruptly interrupted by Karla.

"I'm not asking you," Karla dismissed Abigail's attempt to explain, her

tone dismissive and assertive. "You're not Duncan, so stay out of this."

Abigail, clearly taken aback by Karla's response, retorted with a touch of sarcasm, "I beg your pardon." She rolled her eyes, a gesture of annoyance apparent on her face. "Watch your tone."

Karla, undeterred by Abigail's attempt to assert herself, continued to challenge her. "And if I don't? What are you going to do?" Her voice carried a hint of defiance. "You know, why don't you just leave now, Abigail? After all, you are Abigail Waclaw, the city's number one accomplished businesswoman. What will people say when they find out that someone like you is wasting your time seeing a man?"

"What? You!" Abigail, feeling her patience wearing thin, began to approach Karla, her expression reflecting her growing displeasure. The tension in the room reached its peak as the confrontation between the two women escalated, their emotions running high.

Sensing the escalating tension and the potential for a scene, Duncan quickly intervened by taking a few steps forward, placing himself between Abigail and Karla. He reached out, gently holding Abigail's hand, and guided her towards the door, aiming to defuse the situation and prevent any further conflict.

"Please ignore Karla, Abigail," Duncan urged, his voice filled with a mix of apology and desperation. He recognized the need to diffuse the tension and maintain some semblance of peace.

Abigail, still visibly taken aback by Karla's words, attempted to voice her thoughts, but Duncan interrupted her, his tone filled with sincerity. "I apologize on her behalf, and I would appreciate it if you... kindly leave now."

"What?" Confusion and disbelief washed over Abigail as she chuckled in disbelief, struggling to comprehend the situation. "I should leave because of her?" she questioned, her voice tinged with a mixture of surprise and frustration.

Duncan, realizing the impact of his request, pleaded with Abigail, "Please, Abigail. Just..."

Before he could finish his sentence, Abigail held up her hand, signaling her understanding. "It's fine. I understand," she said, masking her anger to keep her self-esteem. With that, Abigail left, concealing her true emotions as she made her exit.

Duncan let out a sigh, the weight of the situation and the strained dynamics between the three of them weighing heavily on his shoulders.

As he turned to chide Karla for her rude remarks towards Abigail, he was taken aback when Karla quickly approached him, her voice filled with concern. "You shouldn't have done that, Duncan. It wasn't right," she said firmly.

Duncan, almost brimming with anger, retorted, "What? Peterson slept with my wife, he humiliated me, and he even stole from me! He deserves to be called out!"

Karla sighed, trying to reason with him. "I understand that you're hurt and angry, Duncan. It's natural to want revenge, but we should handle this the right way."

Duncan's anger flared even more, and he snapped back, "No! Don't tell me what to do. You've got no right to do so." His frustration was palpable, and he struggled to control his emotions.

Karla remained calm, her voice gentle but firm. "Duncan, think about the consequences. What if you get caught? It could make things worse for you, and it won't solve anything."

Duncan paused for a moment, considering her words. He knew deep down that Karla was right, but his wounded pride made it difficult for him to admit it. Finally, he responded, his voice tinged with defiance, "I won't get caught. Peterson is the real thief here, not me." With that, Duncan walked back to his seat, his anger simmering beneath the surface.

Karla sighed. She wanted to ensure that his actions would not only serve his interests but also align with the broader objective of seeking justice and holding Peterson accountable for his illicit activities.

Her mind raced as she considered the implications. If Duncan's theory were true, it would be a significant revelation that could potentially expose Peterson and hold him accountable for his actions.

Abigail's expression reflected her inner turmoil as she grappled with the newfound knowledge. She knew that uncovering the truth would require careful planning, strategic thinking, and potentially involving others who could help expose Peterson's illicit activities.

Taking a deep breath to steady herself, Abigail locked eyes with Duncan, her voice filled with determination. "Duncan, if what you're saying is true, we have a responsibility to bring Peterson's actions to light. But wiping out his money may not be the most effective way to do it. We need to gather evidence, involve the right authorities, and ensure that justice is served."

Duncan stood his ground, his tone firm as he reiterated his desire for

Karla to respect his decision. "Don't interfere. I accepted you as my partner, but... respect my decision," he said, his voice tinged with a mix of determination and frustration.

Karla, taken aback by his insistence, sighed and acquiesced, though concern still lingered in her eyes. "Fine," she replied, her voice tinged with a hint of resignation. "Just think about what I saw, and please make sure you don't ever face a similar situation."

Duncan absorbed her words, feeling a mix of irritation and curiosity. He couldn't shake off the inconsistency in Karla's behavior, which had caught his attention. In an unexpected turn, he approached her, closing the physical distance between them until they were mere inches apart. His piercing gaze bore into her, searching for answers. "Why do you talk to me like this?" he asked, his voice laced with both confusion and a hint of vulnerability.

Caught off guard by his direct question, Karla stammered, "Huh?"

Duncan remained persistent, his gaze unyielding. "Sometimes you're calm, and you talk sensibly, but other times you act rashly and speak rudely to others. What are you?" His eyes locked onto hers, studying her every reaction, as he sought to uncover the truth behind her behavior.

Karla's eyes shifted away, a flicker of discomfort crossing her face. She struggled to find the right words to convey her internal struggles. "I... I suppose I'm a complex person, Duncan," she finally responded, her voice tinged with a mix of vulnerability and self-reflection. "Like everyone else, I have different sides to me. There are times when my emotions get the better of me, clouding my judgment. It's not an excuse, but it's something I'm working on."

Duncan's expression softened as he began to understand the complexity

of her character. At that moment, his plan of chiding her for being rude to Abigail vanished. He reached out, placing a gentle hand on her shoulder, bridging the emotional gap between them. "I'm sorry if I came across as harsh earlier," he admitted, his voice filled with sincerity. "I just... I don't want to make a mistake when dealing with Peterson. It's consuming me."

He didn't know why he apologized because it wasn't necessary but he felt it was.

"It's fine. Just know I'm here to help you, anytime."

Just then, Peterson called again. Duncan decided to answer the call this time.

"You imposter! Where's my MONEY?!" Peterson's voice boomed through the phone speaker, causing Duncan and Karla to chuckle as they sensed his anger.