

Chapter 96

Duncan and Karla stepped out of the hospital, seeking respite from the sun's intense rays. Duncan located a comfortable spot for them to sit under a canopy, positioned on a bench overlooking the front lawn.

"The sun is not good this morning," Duncan remarked, expressing his concern for the heat as they settled down.

Karla nodded in agreement, a hint of discomfort evident on her face. "It's scorching." She sniffed, acknowledging the scorching weather.

Duncan then took a moment to express his gratitude to Karla for her consistent visits to his mother. "Thank you so much for taking your time to visit my mother," he sincerely said, his appreciation apparent.

Karla's response was filled with warmth. "It's nothing. We are friends, so we should have each other's back," she replied, emphasizing their bond and the importance of supporting one another.

Duncan's brows furrowed in response, his gaze shifting to Karla, a hint of curiosity in his eyes. "Really?" he questioned, seeking further clarity or perhaps surprised by the strength of their friendship.

"Yup. Even if..." Karla rolled her eyes and pouted, revealing a hint of frustration. "You always stand up against me, and you don't consider me as much of a friend as I do... I still won't mind doing what I do for you."

Duncan found himself staring at Karla, captivated by her words and the genuine care she expressed. He couldn't help but admire her as he contemplated what a truly kind-hearted person she was, despite occasionally being annoying. Her unwavering support and selflessness touched him deeply.

Taking his eyes off her, Duncan responded sincerely, his voice filled with remorse. "I will try to treat you as much of a friend as you do. I'm sorry... I'm just not good with mingling."

Karla's question caught him off guard, causing him to pause and reflect. "But you go well with Abigail. Why?" she asked, seeking to understand what made his interactions with Abigail different.

As Duncan listened to Karla's words, he could discern a subtle undertone of sadness intertwined with disappointment in her voice. Her emotions were evident as she spoke, revealing a mix of longing and a tinge of regret.

"I don't know, but..." Duncan's voice trailed off, suggesting uncertainty and introspection.

"Maybe it's because you connect well with her," Karla continued, her voice tinged with resignation. "It's fine though. I don't mind you treating me less. Just don't...push me away." Despite her disappointment, she expressed a willingness to accept this situation, only asking Duncan not to distance himself emotionally.

Duncan, unsure of how to respond, simply nodded in acknowledgment. His silence conveyed his struggle to find the right words to comfort Karla or address the complex emotions she had expressed.

Sensing Duncan's reluctance to delve further into their personal dynamics, Karla took a deep breath and shifted the conversation to a different topic. "How's the search going with Peterson? You've found anything to nab him with?"

Duncan shook his head, indicating that he hadn't made any breakthroughs yet. "Nothing yet." His response conveyed a sense of

frustration and determination as he admitted to the ongoing challenges in tracking down Peterson. "But, for the meantime, I'm shifting my focus to something else," Duncan muttered, his voice filled with a hint of determination and a touch of secrecy.

Karla, sensing his change in direction, couldn't help but feel curious about his new endeavor. "What's that?" she asked, her curiosity piqued.

Duncan cast a quick glance at Karla, his eyes reflecting a mix of emotions, but he chose to remain silent. He had made a decision not to disclose his newfound revelation regarding his father's death, at least for now.

"I can help you with Peterson in the meantime while you focus on your new issue," Karla offered, her willingness to support him evident in her words.

Duncan hesitated for a moment, contemplating Karla's offer. He understood her dedication to their cause and her genuine desire to assist him. However, he felt a need to protect Karla from the weight of his personal struggles.

"No, Karla," he replied firmly, his voice filled with a mix of gratitude and concern. He paused briefly, collecting his thoughts. "Despite your tight schedule, you come to visit my Mom regularly. That alone is huge for me," Duncan expressed, his voice filled with appreciation and gratitude.

"I don't spend much time. Sometimes an hour, and sometimes less than that," Karla replied, perhaps downplaying the time she devoted to visiting Duncan's mother. She seemed to underestimate the impact of her visits, but Duncan was quick to reassure her.

"It all still counts, Karla," Duncan insisted, his voice firm yet gentle. He

wanted to make sure that Karla understood the value of her presence, regardless of the duration. "About Peterson, don't worry about him. I will get something concerning him soon that I will use against him."

"Duncan, I can help..."

Duncan interrupted her before she could finish her sentence. "I know, but... I don't want you getting involved," he said, his voice carrying a note of protectiveness. He wanted to shield Karla from the potential dangers and complications that might arise from their pursuit of Peterson. "Just stay out of it, Karla."

"Gosh." Karla's frustration became evident as she hissed and rose up from her seat. "You're a problem, Duncan," she exclaimed, clearly exasperated by his reluctance to accept her assistance and his determination to keep her at arm's length.

Lifting his gaze to meet hers, Duncan arched a brow, seeking clarification. "What do you mean?" he inquired, genuinely puzzled by her statement.

"You don't always want me to get involved, but it's the opposite with Abigail," Karla expressed, her voice tinged with a mixture of frustration and hurt. She pointed out the disparity in Duncan's approach, highlighting that he seemed more open to involving Abigail in certain matters while being hesitant to include her.

Duncan, sensing Karla's disappointment, responded with a hint of annoyance, feigning irritation as he rose from his seat. "Can you stop dragging Abigail into every normal conversation we try to have?" he asked, his tone carrying a touch of exasperation. "I actually told her to not get involved in this too."

Karla, seemingly unconvinced, added a pointed remark, questioning Duncan's intentions. "Oh, and you're not going to go meet her again for help, right?" Her words betrayed her concern about the dynamic between Duncan and Abigail, implying that she suspected Duncan might turn to Abigail for assistance despite his claim of not involving her.

"Karla..." Duncan attempted to interject, starting with Karla's name, likely intending to address her concerns, but she cut him off.

"You shouldn't look down on me all the time," Karla asserted, her voice filled with a mixture of frustration and vulnerability. "It sucks, honestly."

"What's your problem?" Duncan questioned, his tone slightly defensive, as he sought to understand the source of Karla's frustration.

"You're my problem, Duncan," Karla responded, her voice carrying a mix of exasperation and resignation. She expressed her earlier statement once again, indicating that Duncan himself was the cause of her concerns and frustrations. Karla let out a frustrated sigh and reached for her purse, signaling her intention to leave. "Just forget it. I'm off," she declared, her words indicating a sense of resignation and a desire to distance herself from the situation.

Duncan watched as Karla hurriedly made her way to her car, got in, and drove off. He stood there, contemplating the exchange that had just taken place, a mix of emotions swirling within him.

As he turned to leave, his eyes caught sight of something glinting on the grassy ground. He bent down and picked it up, realizing it was Karla's bracelet. The sight of it reminded him of her sudden departure and the unresolved tension between them.

Just as he was about to put the bracelet away, his phone buzzed, signaling

a new message. It was from Karla. Curiosity piqued, Duncan took out his phone and read the message.

"Kindly send my regards to Mrs. Sarah."

The message was a reminder of Karla's genuine care for his mother and her consistent visits. The message carried a sense of finality as if Karla wanted to convey her well wishes and maintain some semblance of connection despite their current conflict.

Tucking the delicate bracelet into his pocket, Duncan took determined steps as he made his way inside the bustling hospital.

Meanwhile, Karla, feeling a mix of frustration and worry, found herself on the side of the road after reaching the highway. She let out an exasperated groan and released her pent-up frustration by punching the steering wheel. The sound reverberated through the car as she slumped back into her seat, resting her head against the headrest.

"What's wrong with that Duncan?" she muttered to herself, her voice filled with a hint of confusion. "Always shoving me aside. What am I going to do now?" The weight of Duncan's actions and his tendency to handle things on his own weighed heavily on her mind. She felt a strong desire to assist him, to be by his side during challenging times.

Lost in her thoughts, Karla stared ahead at the open road through the windshield. The idea of collaborating directly with Abigail without Duncan's knowledge seemed tempting, as it could provide Karla with a way to contribute and help Duncan without feeling sidelined.

But she knew that forging ahead without Duncan's approval could strain their already fragile relationships, but perhaps it was a necessary step to prove their loyalty and commitment.

After carefully considering her options, Karla made up her mind on what to do next. With a resolute expression, she started the car and drove purposefully towards the Imperium Hotel. The engine hummed softly as she navigated through the city streets, her determination driving her forward.

Once parked in front of the prestigious hotel, Karla reached for her phone and dialed Abigail's number. As the call connected, she could detect a hint of surprise in Abigail's voice as she answered, "Who's this...?"

"It's Karla," she replied, her voice steady and composed.

Abigail's astonishment was evident as she asked, "How did you get my contact?"

A faint smile played on Karla's lips as she responded, "You're not the only one who knows how to acquire things illegally."

The revelation hung in the air for a moment before Abigail spoke again, her voice tinged with curiosity and caution, "You... What do you want?"

Karla's voice remained firm as she stated her intentions, "I want us to meet. I'm in front of your hotel. I'm heading into your office."

Without waiting for a response, Karla ended the call. She pocketed her phone and stepped out of the car, her footsteps purposeful as she made her way towards the entrance of the hotel. Confidence radiated from her as she walked through the elegant lobby, past the glimmering chandeliers and polished marble floors.

Making her way to the elevator, Karla pressed the button that would take her to Abigail's office.



Abigail sat in her opulent office, savoring a sip from her delicately crafted glass of exotic wine. The rich aroma filled the room as she relished the moment of tranquility amidst her busy schedule. However, her peaceful atmosphere was abruptly interrupted when Karla barged into the office without any warning. Xia, Abigail's loyal bodyguard, hurriedly followed behind, attempting to stop Karla's intrusion.

Karla's eyes locked onto Abigail, her gaze filled with determination and a touch of defiance. Ignoring Xia's presence, she directed her words towards Abigail. "Kindly tell your bodyguard not to touch me, or she'll see fire," Karla warned, her voice laced with an undercurrent of intensity.

Abigail, composed and unfazed by Karla's brash entry, maintained her poise as she addressed the situation. "You came without an appointment, Karla," she stated calmly. "And you disrespectfully walked into my office."

Karla shrugged dismissively. "Whatever," she retorted, her tone indicating her disregard for formalities. "Anyway, I have thought about your offer."

Abigail's eyes flickered with understanding, recognizing the significance of Karla's words. Gesturing subtly, she signaled for Xia to leave the room, allowing the two women to have a private conversation.

Xia hesitated for a moment, concern etched on her face, but ultimately she complied with Abigail's request. She stepped back, leaving the office and closing the door behind her.

As Xia left the office, Abigail stood up, adjusting her blazer with a sense of purpose. With a calm and composed demeanor, she turned her attention to Karla, her eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"So, what's up?" Abigail asked, her voice carrying a hint of eagerness. "Did you really think of my offer? I know you did consider it."

Karla's response was laced with frustration as she retorted, "Your confidence is what I hate, you know?"

Abigail's smile remained, her lips tugging slightly upward. "It's not overconfidence," she replied, her voice carrying a hint of playfulness. "I knew you'd come over."

Karla's irritation deepened, her brows furrowing as she confronted Abigail's attitude. "I really don't like your attitude, Abigail," she stated firmly, her voice holding a touch of defiance.

Abigail's eyes met Karla's with an air of understanding. "And that's why you don't go well with Duncan," she stated matter-of-factly, her tone carrying a hint of insight.

A moment of contemplation passed between them as Karla absorbed Abigail's words. The truth in them resonated within her, reminding her of the challenges she often faced in her fragile relationship with Duncan. Doubts began to surface, mingling with her conflicted emotions.

"You think so?" Karla asked, her voice a mix of curiosity and uncertainty.

Abigail nodded, her expression was sympathetic yet resolute. "Yup," she confirmed. "Anyway, what's your decision?" Her anticipation was palpable as she awaited Karla's response.

After a moment of contemplation again, Karla turned back to Abigail, determination flickering in her eyes. "You're right," she said firmly. "We can't wait for Duncan to come around. If we truly want to help him, we have to take matters into our own hands. Let's do it together."

A sense of unity settled between them as Abigail's smile widened as she sat back, her eyes sparkling with an air of excitement. Her gesture invited Karla to take a seat, indicating that she had something important to share.

"Good, now we have one purpose," Abigail said, her voice filled with determination. "To get Peterson down for Duncan."

Karla maintained a straight face, showing no interest in wasting any time. She leaned forward, her expression serious and focused. "What's your findings so far regarding Peterson?" she asked, her tone direct and to the point.

Abigail nodded, acknowledging Karla's no-nonsense approach. "You seem to know me a bit well," she replied, a hint of admiration in her voice. "I did my findings. I've uncovered something important."

The room grew silent as both women locked eyes, a silent understanding passing between them. There was a sense of anticipation in the air as Karla awaited Abigail's revelation.