

Chapter 101

Karla was a young woman with a vibrant personality and a quick sense of humor. She had a contagious laugh that could brighten up any room. Her eyes sparkled with mischief as she chuckled, caught off guard once again by Duncan's unexpected compliment. It seemed to take her by surprise, but she couldn't help but find it amusing.

"But that doesn't mean you're not a duckling," Duncan teased, a mischievous grin forming on his face. However, Karla didn't take the teasing in a good stride. She frowned, showing a hint of annoyance at his playful comment. It seemed like he had crossed a line, and she didn't appreciate it.

Sensing her discontent, he decided to let go of her, realizing that he had pushed her buttons a bit too far. He shifted the topic, saying, "Anyway... You are welcome, Karla."

Confused by his sudden change in tone, Karla questioned, "What?"

"Don't bother to say thank you?"

She shook her head, finding his behavior rather egotistical. "Geez, you're so full of yourself," she said, laughing softly. "I wasn't going to thank you since I'm not happy with you."

Karla folded her arms, leaning back, signaling her dissatisfaction with the situation. There was still an underlying tension between them which stemmed from the altercation they had earlier.

"Are you still angry with me over our altercation this morning?" he inquired, genuinely curious about her feelings.

Rolling her eyes, Karla nodded, confirming that she was indeed still upset with him.

Duncan started with a dismissive tone, saying, "Alright. Listen, you've got no right to be angry..."

Karla, not willing to let him finish his sentence, cut in with a sharp remark. She arose, her body language showing her frustration. "You're cocky," she interjected, her voice filled with annoyance. It was clear that she found his attitude aggravating. She waved her hand, struggling to find the right words to express her dissatisfaction. "You could have simply apologized now but..." She trailed off, unable to articulate her thoughts and emotions fully. It seemed like she felt he had missed an opportunity to make amends.

Realizing that the conversation was going nowhere, she decided to change the topic abruptly. "Anyway..."

"I will take you to your house. Let's go." At that moment, Duncan took charge and decided to take her to her house. Without further discussion, he grabbed her hand, assuming a level of familiarity that she found questionable. They walked together towards the car, his grip on her hand implying a sense of control.

"You shouldn't keep grabbing my hand like I'm a kid," Karla protested, her voice laced with defiance. She was pretending not to be comfortable with his actions and wanted to assert her independence.

In response, he retorted, "Maybe you're actually one," his comment dripping with sarcasm and condescension. It was a remark designed to provoke her and further escalate the situation.

Frustrated and angered by his words, Karla mouthed a profanity under

her breath, expressing her disdain. She then silently sat in the car, making it clear that she was not interested in engaging in any further conversation with him.

Duncan entered the car. "Put on your seatbelt this time, ignorant lady," he instructed smirkingly, his tone filled with a mix of superiority and amusement. Karla glanced at him, her expression a mixture of annoyance and resignation. It seemed like his comment was just another attempt to provoke her.

Resigned to the situation, Karla reached for her seatbelt and fastened it securely, ensuring her own safety. As she did so, her phone beeped, indicating a new message. The notification flashed at the top of her screen, catching her attention. She cast a cautious glance at Duncan, who was now focused on the road, and realized that the message was from Abigail.

Feeling a sense of intrigue and curiosity, Karla quickly opened the message. The text on the screen read, "I'm waiting for your feedback. What are you up to?"

Karla tucked her phone back into her purse. Taking a deep breath, she contemplated her next step of action.

"Take me to the Imperium hotel," Karla requested as Duncan started the car, indicating her desired destination. Duncan's eyebrows lifted in surprise as he turned to look at her. "Imperium hotel?" he repeated, seeking confirmation.

Karla nodded, a determined expression on her face. "Hm."

"That's Abigail's hotel..."

"I know, you don't have to ring that to me."

Aware of the connection between Abigail and the Imperium hotel, Duncan couldn't help but express his curiosity. "Why do you want to go there?" he inquired, his tone tinged with intrigue.

"It's none of your business," Karla replied firmly, her voice leaving no room for further questioning. She was adamant about keeping her motives to herself, not wanting to disclose her intentions to Duncan.

Duncan's reaction was a mixture of annoyance and insistence. "Hell yes, it is," he retorted, his frustration evident. "If you don't tell me, then..."

Karla interrupted him abruptly, perhaps tired of the back-and-forth. "I'm going there to see Abigail," she blurted out, her words causing Duncan to peer at her intently. Her admission surprised him, and he was clearly taken aback by her straightforward response.

"Why do you want to see her?" Duncan asked, his curiosity piqued by Karla's sudden revelation. He wanted to understand the reason behind her desire to meet Abigail.

For a moment, Karla fell silent. It seemed like she was contemplating whether or not to share her reasons with Duncan. The atmosphere in the car grew tense as they waited for her response, the air thick with unspoken thoughts and emotions.

"No, I can't tell him anything. No, no," she thought silently.

"Tell me, Karla," Duncan asked, his curiosity getting the better of him. He wanted to understand the underlying reason behind her desire to see Abigail.

Karla let out a sigh, her frustration apparent. She shook her head, dismissing any assumptions he might have been making. "I'm not going

to skin her alive, Duncan," she clarified, her tone laced with a touch of exasperation. It seemed like she wanted to dispel any misconceptions he might have had about her intentions.

Duncan, feeling the need to defend himself, quickly interjected, "Why do you want to see her? That's what I asked. I made no accusations."

Karla seemed taken aback by his response. "What? Did I say I wanted to see her?" she questioned, her tone filled with obliviousness.

Duncan, now slightly puzzled, reminded her, "Hello? You did."

Karla paused for a moment, realizing the miscommunication. She nodded, accepting her mistake. "Oh, I meant I want to spend the night there. I don't want to see that annoying Abigail," she lied, hoping her words would be enough and convincing.

"Really?" Duncan asked, his confusion evident. He was trying to make sense of her change in explanation.

Karla nodded, affirming her previous statement.

Duncan couldn't help but express his bewilderment. "Why don't you want to go to your house?" he asked, genuinely curious about her decision to spend the night at the hotel instead of returning home.

"Because my cousin still stays with me," Karla explained, her tone conveying a hint of frustration.

Duncan, not fully understanding her concerns, questioned her response. "So?" he responded, seeking further clarification.

"Duncan, she's going to ask lots of questions if she sees me like this," Karla elaborated, her voice tinged with worry. "She might tell my father

without letting me know, and then he'll freak out and start calling me."

"You're lucky you've got a caring dad, Karla," Duncan acknowledged, his voice filled with a touch of envy. It seemed like he longed for the same level of care and concern from his own father.

Karla's response was one of mixed emotions. She looked away, not wanting to hurt Duncan by discussing her father's presence in her life. The topic seemed to touch a sensitive nerve within her.

"You should consider your father sometimes, Karla," Duncan stated, his voice gentle. It appeared that he wanted to remind her of the importance of family and the support they can provide.

Karla shifted her gaze to Duncan, her eyes wide with surprise and confusion. The words he just spoke caught her off guard, and she struggled to make sense of them. "What do you mean?" she asked, her voice tinged with a mix of curiosity and apprehension.

Duncan's grip on the steering wheel tightened, his knuckles turning white. He took a deep breath before responding, his voice a little strained. "Your father's relationship with you... it's not in a good place, Karla. There's tension, unresolved issues, and a lot of hurt. I'm suggesting that maybe it's time to consider mending that relationship, to try and put the past behind you and move forward."

Karla's heart sank at his words. The strained relationship with her father had always been a source of pain and disappointment for her. She pleaded with him, her voice filled with emotion. "Duncan, please, don't ask me to do that. You know how much it hurts."

Duncan held her gaze, his eyes filled with a mix of concern and empathy. "Karla, I'm not asking you to do anything, and I'm certainly not

compelling you to take my words as an order. I just hope you'll take some time to think things through. Sometimes, it's worth considering the possibility of healing old wounds and finding happiness with those who still care for us."

Karla's mind swirled with conflicting emotions. She understood Duncan's intention was coming from a place of concern, but the pain of her strained relationship with her father ran deep. She knew there were no easy answers or quick fixes. It would require careful consideration and a willingness to confront the past.

With a heavy sigh, Karla nodded slowly, acknowledging Duncan's perspective. "I hear you, Duncan. I'll think about it."

"That's more like it," he said, winking at her. She smiled.