

### Chapter 102

Some minutes later, Duncan skillfully maneuvered the car into the parking lot of the Imperium Hotel. As the engine hummed to a stop, Karla expressed her gratitude. "Thanks for the drive," she said, reaching for the door handle and preparing to exit the vehicle.

However, before Karla could step out, Duncan hastily opened his door and hurriedly joined her on the pavement. He reached out, gently catching her hand, causing her to pause in confusion. "What?" she asked, furrowing her brows.

Duncan took a deep breath, his expression a mix of concern and apprehension. "Karla... don't," he said, his voice filled with a hint of urgency.

She tilted her head slightly, puzzled by his cryptic words. "Excuse me? I don't get what you mean."

Scanning her appearance from head to toe, Duncan waved his hands dramatically, his tone insistent. "Don't ever go out like this."

Karla's confusion deepened, her brows knitting together. "I beg your pardon. I don't... understand."

Duncan sighed, his eyes fixed on her attire. "Karla, I mean it. Please don't dress like this."

Karla's gaze followed his, self-consciously examining her outfit. The confusion turned into a mix of surprise and frustration. "What's wrong with how I'm dressed?" she asked, her voice tinged with a hint of irritation.

Duncan hesitated for a moment before responding, his tone softer now. "Karla, I just... I worry about your safety. The world can be unpredictable, and the way you're dressed might attract the wrong kind of attention."

Karla crossed her arms defensively, her frustration mounting. "Are you saying that what I wear is an invitation for trouble? That I can't be safe if I dress a certain way?"

Duncan quickly shook his head, realizing his words had struck a nerve. "No, Karla, that's not what I meant. I know it's unfair, but unfortunately, appearances can sometimes influence how people perceive and treat you. I just care about you a little, and I want you to be safe."

Karla's frustration softened into a mix of understanding and exasperation. She unfolded her arms, her voice expressing her feelings. "Duncan, I appreciate your concern, but I believe that it's not my responsibility to change how I dress to accommodate others' judgments or prejudices."

Duncan's gaze softened, his grip on her hand loosening. "You're right, Karla. It's your choice, and I respect that. I apologize if I came across as controlling. I just worry about you, and I want you to be safe in a world that isn't always fair."

"The world has always been unfair, but that doesn't mean that I should shudder and live like a prisoner," Karla asserted, her voice filled with conviction. She stood her ground, unwilling to compromise her sense of freedom and self-expression.

Duncan, however, maintained a stern expression, his concern evident in his tone. "Next time... put on something that is less revealing," he said, his words carrying a warning undertone.

Karla's brows furrowed, and she crossed her arms in frustration. "What do you mean by 'revealing,' Duncan?" she questioned, her voice laced with a mix of curiosity and annoyance.

Duncan's gaze fell upon her cleavage, and unfortunately, his eyes lingered there for a moment longer than he intended. Karla noticed his gaze and, with a mischievous smile, waved her hand in front of him, playfully interrupting his stare. "Hello?!" she exclaimed, teasingly. "Were you lost?"

Caught off guard, Duncan quickly averted his eyes, coughing awkwardly. He regained his composure, attempting to brush off the uncomfortable moment. "Sorry, Karla. I didn't mean to... It is just that, well, your dress... it's revealing."

Karla's playful expression turned into a mixture of surprise and disbelief. She glanced down at her attire, which she considered tasteful and appropriate for the occasion. "Revealing? Seriously?" she retorted, her voice tinged with a hint of incredulity. "Duncan, there's nothing wrong with how I'm dressed."

"You see, you almost got me tongue-tied," Duncan admitted, his voice slightly flustered. He averted his gaze, unable to meet Karla's eyes. "That is why those morons wanted to catch you. You look irresistible."

Karla's cheeks flushed, taking his words as a compliment. She smiled shyly, feeling a mix of excitement and embarrassment. "Well, thank you," she replied, her voice filled with appreciation. "Anyway, thanks for the advice. Goodnight."

As she turned to leave, Duncan's hand shot out, grabbing her arm gently but firmly. "Just... wait," he said, his voice laced with urgency.

Confused, Karla turned back to face him, her eyes searching for an explanation. "What now?" she asked, her curiosity piqued.

Duncan quickly began removing his jacket, his movements swift and determined. "Just... wear this," he said, holding out the jacket to her.

Karla's eyes widened in surprise, her initial reaction one of resistance. "Hell no, I won't..." she started to protest, but before she could finish her sentence, Duncan closed the distance between them.

Ignoring the watchful eyes of the security guards in the parking lot, Duncan gently draped the jacket over Karla's shoulders, fastening it around her with care. He stepped back, his eyes lingering on her for a moment before he spoke, his voice filled with concern.

"You'll have every man in there turning their heads the second you walk in. Don't take the jacket off."

Karla said, shrugging in response. She muttered, "Ah, okay. I've heard you." She felt a bit flustered. "Goodnight."

Duncan couldn't help but notice the way Karla's fingers wriggled and her smile as he entered the car.

As he wound up the car window, Duncan found himself puzzled by his own reaction. "Damn, why do I care so much about her appearance tonight?" he thought to himself. "She's not even my girlfriend, and I am acting this way."

While Karla continued to smile, Duncan quickly sent her a message, perhaps to convey his thoughts more clearly, and then drove off, trying to make sense of his emotions.

Heading into the hotel building, Karla checked the message on her phone and smiled. "Take off the wig. You look better with your ombre wavy hair," the message read. She thought it was an odd request but couldn't help but giggle as she walked into the hotel.

Her smile slowly faded as she stepped into the elevator, making her way to Abigail's office. Once there, she casually walked in, expecting a familiar greeting. However, Abigail, who was sipping from her glass of red wine, lifted her gaze and was taken aback by Karla, whom she barely recognized.

"Hey, who are you?" Abigail asked, clearly puzzled by the unfamiliar appearance Karla presented.

Taking off her wig, Karla let out a sigh and frowned. "Who else, Abigail Waclaw?" she replied, her voice tinged with a hint of annoyance.

"You, what's..." Abigail's speech faltered as she stood up, staring at Karla in disbelief. "Wait, is it really you, Karla?" she finally managed to utter.

"Yeahhh," Karla replied, a sense of amusement evident in her tone as she observed Abigail's shocked expression.

"Oh my world, you look completely different from earlier. I thought you were one of those classless bitches some guy has brought to hook up with in my hotel," Abigail blurted out, her surprise evident.

"Classless?" Karla asked, feigning annoyance. "Do I look like that now?"

"Yeah," Abigail replied bluntly. "Duncan won't even spare a glance at you looking like this."

Karla raised an eyebrow, slightly amused by Abigail's comment, but

chose not to respond.

"It's a good thing you're not going to retort," Abigail remarked, settling back into her seat. "So, what's the occasion? Why are you dressed like this? Did you get bored of life and decide to act a bit out of line tonight in some crazy club?"

"Only you can generate cheap thoughts," Karla replied dismissively, taking her seat. "I went to Night 101 to meet Peterson Rogers."

Abigail's curiosity was piqued. "Oh, so this is a disguise?" she asked, feeling fascinated by the revelation.

"Obviously. I am glad you are smart enough to realize that," Karla replied curtly, not willing to engage further in the conversation.

Abigail, despite her rising irritation, masked it with a smile before adopting a serious expression. "What did you do?" she asked, her curiosity evident.

Karla shrugged nonchalantly, holding up her phone. "I successfully met him, deceived him, managed to install spyware on his phone, and then made my escape."

Abigail's eyes widened in disbelief. "You did all that?" she exclaimed, taken aback by Karla's audacity.

"Yes, I did," Karla confirmed, a hint of pride in her voice. "Although I encountered some problems along the way. I almost fell victim to some lustful bastards, including Peterson himself."

Abigail's expression turned from shock to a mixture of surprise and understanding. "Oh, I see," she said, her tone changing. "You look seductive, that's why. I had wanted to warn you that the bar was unsafe,

but you hung up on me. Utter nonsense," she scoffed, clearly still annoyed at Karla's earlier action.

"So, what's the next step? You should tell me about your plan now, right?" Abigail inquired, eager to learn more.

"We will continue monitoring and gathering information on Peterson's activities," Karla explained. "That is how we will find out what he's up to."

"That sounds good. You made a wise move, I must compliment you," Abigail praised, acknowledging Karla's strategic thinking. Then, her gaze shifted to the jacket Karla was wearing, and her eyes narrowed in suspicion. "Is that jacket yours?" she asked hesitantly.

"No, it's not," Karla replied, her smile widening as she recalled Duncan putting on the jacket for her earlier. She found it amusing that Abigail had noticed.

"It looks like..." Abigail paused, her voice trailing off. "No, it can't be."

"It's Duncan's," Karla revealed, watching Abigail's surprise. Abigail became speechless. Finding her voice some seconds later, Abigail asked, "Oh, I see. But... How did you guys meet?"

Karla raised an eyebrow, sensing Abigail's curiosity. "You want to know?" she replied, a hint of taunt in her voice.

"Not really," Abigail denied, feigning an I-don't-give-a-fuck attitude, though her curiosity was evident.

"Well," Karla began, a smile playing on her lips. "He actually saved me from those guys in the bar. Then he complained about my revealing outfit and acted like a jealous boyfriend. Next thing I knew, he forcefully

put his jacket on me," she recounted, laughing softly at the memory.

Nodding, Abigail clenched her hands beneath the desk, the tension evident. Karla locked eyes with Abigail, relishing the moment of intrigue and curiosity between them.

After a moment of silence, Abigail looked away, drumming her fingers on the desk. "Duncan is such a gentleman," she commented, her tone softening. "He was caring too when I sprained my ankle slightly."

Karla rolled her eyes, maintaining her smile. "Whatever," she replied dismissively. She then stood up, her expression still playful. "I lied to him and told him I will be spending the night here."

Abigail raised an eyebrow, a hint of amusement crossing her face. "You can stay the night here if you want. You won't have to pay a dime. Consider it my hospitality."

"Spare me, Abigail. I don't need your hospitality," Karla retorted, her voice laced with sarcasm.

"Alright, proud miss," Abigail replied, her tone tinged with a touch of mockery.

"I will contact you when I have some vital information about Peterson," Karla stated, her smile fading slightly. With that, she turned and headed out of the office, leaving Abigail behind.