

Chapter 67

Duncan, caught up in the ambiance of the bar, took a final glimpse at Peterson as he approached. Peterson's footsteps seemed to synchronize with the melodic, calming song emanating from the speakers, causing Duncan to unconsciously sway his head in rhythm. Taking a sip from his drink, Duncan's gaze inadvertently landed on a girl, and he unintentionally winked at her. However, instead of reciprocating the gesture, the girl frowned in response.

In the midst of this interaction, Peterson reached Duncan's side and tapped him on the shoulder. His tone carried a hint of anger as he questioned Duncan's decision to keep his presence at the bar a secret. "Hey, I can see that you've been here for a while, but you deliberately chose not to inform me. Why?" Peterson asked, his frustration evident. However, despite Peterson's inquiries, Duncan remained silent, paying no attention to him. He continued to smile and enjoy his drink, seemingly indifferent to Peterson's growing irritation.

Duncan's silent and dismissive demeanor only exacerbated Peterson's annoyance, further fueling his frustration.

The bartender, observing the unfolding situation, was taken aback by Duncan's seemingly obliviousness to Peterson's presence. Noticing Peterson's escalating anger, the bartender felt compelled to intervene, assuming that Duncan was simply unaware of being addressed.

Approaching Duncan, the bartender spoke up in an attempt to bring his attention to Peterson. "Sir, there's a man behind you who is trying to get your attention," the bartender said, hoping to bridge the communication gap.



However, Duncan's gaze remained fixed elsewhere, causing the bartender to retreat and attend to another customer who had just appeared at the bar. While serving the newcomer, the bartender couldn't help but steal occasional glances at Peterson, silently praying that he wouldn't unleash his frustration in a disruptive manner.

Meanwhile, Peterson momentarily contemplated forcefully grabbing Duncan by the nape to gain his attention. However, he stopped himself, realizing the futility of such an action. Instead, he took a step forward and positioned himself by Duncan's side, hoping that proximity would compel him to acknowledge his presence.

As Duncan caught a glimpse of Peterson from the corner of his eye, he abruptly ceased his rhythmic head movements and deliberately adopted an expression of feigned obliviousness. Turning his head to face Peterson, he put on a façade of surprise. "Oh, Peterson Rogers, you're here?" Duncan said, his tone laced with a hint of sarcasm.

Gritting his teeth, Peterson managed to maintain his composure but his frustration was palpable. "I was here," he replied, his voice tinged with annoyance.

Seemingly unaffected by Peterson's irritation, Duncan responded with a nonchalant tone. "Oh, oh. I never knew," he retorted, feigning innocence and disinterest.

Exasperated by Duncan's dismissive behavior, Peterson's frustration grew, and his voice began to rise. "Then why didn't you call?" he demanded, almost yelling.

Duncan, however, was quick to assert his boundaries, issuing a warning to Peterson. "Excuse me? Mind your tone," he cautioned, his eyes

narrowing as he glared at Peterson. Pointing at him with a dismissive expression, Duncan made it clear that he would not tolerate being spoken to disrespectfully.

Duncan maintained his assertive stance, refusing to engage further with Peterson's attempt to diffuse the situation. "Don't talk to me anyhow," he reiterated, his tone firm and unwavering.

Observing Peterson clenching his fist, Duncan could sense the frustration and helplessness emanating from him. Despite his own irritation, Duncan recognized that Peterson had sought him out with the intention of seeking assistance with the problems he was facing. This realization tempered Duncan's response, and he momentarily softened his demeanor.

Peterson, recognizing the need to rectify the situation, swallowed his anger and mustered up the courage to apologize. "Um, Duncan, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to sound rude," he admitted, his tone sincere and remorseful.

Duncan, finding a hint of amusement in Peterson's apology, chose to remain silent. Though inwardly pleased by Peterson's lack of further argument, he refrained from responding verbally. Instead, he allowed the silence to linger between them, content with the fact that Peterson had acknowledged his mistake and opted for a more conciliatory approach.

After a minute that felt like hours for Peterson, he couldn't take it anymore. Just as Peterson reached his breaking point and was about to confront Duncan for deliberately keeping him waiting without an apology, Duncan cleared his throat, capturing Peterson's attention. Shifting his gaze to Peterson, Duncan finally acknowledged him and posed the question, "So, how may I help you, Peterson?"



Caught off guard by Duncan's sudden change in demeanor and willingness to address the situation, Peterson felt a mixture of relief and surprise. Glancing away, he realized that, for the first time in his life, he didn't regret refraining from taking immediate action. He understood that if he had acted impulsively, things may not have turned out well for him, and he certainly didn't want to cause a scene in the bar.

Taking a moment to collect himself, Peterson mustered a composed response. "Well, Duncan, I've been dealing with some problems lately, and I thought you might be able to offer some guidance or advice," he explained, his frustration momentarily subsiding as a glimmer of hope emerged. He hoped that Duncan's change in attitude signaled a willingness to lend a helping hand.

Peterson, determined to express his suspicions, continued his conversation with Duncan. "I know you likely have a hand in my recent failures, Duncan," he asserted, his tone tinged with accusation.

Duncan, feigning ignorance and acting visibly annoyed, responded with a question, attempting to deflect Peterson's accusation. "What do you mean?" he asked, as if unaware of the events Peterson was referring to.

Unfazed by Duncan's response, Peterson pressed on, recounting the misfortunes that had befallen him. "I lost my job the same day you threatened me," he began, his voice filled with frustration. "I lost my chance of securing a big deal, and now, I'm almost losing what I've worked hard for. It's hard to believe that all of these are just mere coincidences. I believe you played a part in all of it."

Duncan, adopting an air of nonchalance, dismissed Peterson's accusations. "Pardon? I only threatened you," he replied, his voice tinged with sarcasm. "And don't you think it's just a mere coincidence that

things started going wrong for you after that?"

Peterson shook his head, unwilling to accept Duncan's explanation. He felt deep in his gut that there was more to the situation than mere coincidence, and he remained steadfast in his belief that Duncan had a role to play in his recent string of misfortunes.

Feeling the strain in his legs from standing, Peterson twitched his nose as he suggested, "First, Duncan, let's go over to my seat and talk properly. My legs are almost aching."

Staring back at Peterson, Duncan hesitated for a moment before standing up and glancing around the bar. Peterson thought he wanted to oblige his wish. However, as he took a step forward, attempting to lead the way to his table, Duncan's response abruptly halted any movement.

"I'm going nowhere," Duncan retorted, his voice firm and unwavering. He maintained his position, refusing to accommodate Peterson's request. With a dismissive tone, he added, "And if you can't inconvenience yourself for a moment, then get out of my face."

Peterson furrowed his brows, his expression a mixture of disbelief and disdain. He stared at Duncan, feeling a deep-seated hatred for him intensify. The refusal to even consider a small gesture of accommodation only reinforced Peterson's negative perception of Duncan.

As Peterson and Duncan exchanged intense stares, a strange coincidence seemed to unfold in the bar. The previously lively atmosphere quieted down, almost as if the entire bar was holding its breath, sensing the tension between the two men.

Taking a step back, Duncan retreated to the safety of his bar stool, perched atop it as he waved dismissively at Peterson. His voice carried a

hint of annoyance as he spoke. "Please leave my sight if you have nothing to say," Duncan commanded, his words laced with a clear desire to be rid of Peterson.

Peterson, unable to maintain his composure any longer, felt his anger flare up once again. "Duncan, you're disrespecting me," he retorted, his voice edged with frustration. In his desperation to gain some semblance of control, Peterson sought to remind Duncan of his own significance. "Do you even know who I am?"

Duncan's gaze remained steady, his expression unchanged. With a touch of bitterness in his voice, he responded, "Yes, I know exactly who you are. You're a man who slept with my wife, causing me to lose so much. And now, you have the audacity to come to me, thinking I can help you. That's who you are, Peterson Rogers."

The exchange between the two men crackled with tension, as their history and grievances hung heavily in the air. Some of the bar patrons, sensing the palpable animosity, watched in hushed anticipation, unsure of what would transpire next.

Peterson became aware of some of the bar patrons' stares, their eyes fixed on him and Duncan as they engaged in a tense conversation. Recognizing the potential for a heated argument, Peterson made a conscious decision to refrain from escalating the situation any further. He understood that engaging in a verbal battle with Duncan in a public setting would only draw more attention and possibly create unnecessary tension and also soil his name in the mud if anyone recognizes him.

As Peterson felt the weight of the patrons' gazes, he silently composed his thoughts. "I'll get back at you later, Duncan. Just wait till I get to the top again," he whispered to himself, determined to prove his point and regain his position.

Realizing the need to prioritize his own well-being and emotional restoration, Peterson acknowledged that succumbing to Duncan's nonsense was a temporary compromise he had to make. It was a strategic move to diffuse the tension and focus on rebuilding himself before pursuing any further confrontations.

Duncan, sensing Peterson's change in demeanor, glanced at him briefly but decided to continue sipping his drink, perhaps intrigued by the shift in their interaction.

Peterson, mustering up the courage, spoke to Duncan once again, this time with a more conciliatory tone. "Duncan, I'm sorry for what I said," he admitted, recognizing the importance of extending an apology in order to find common ground.

However, Duncan, still harboring the resentment from their previous exchange, curtly responded, "Apology not accepted."

Peterson took a deep breath, understanding that appeasing Duncan would not be an easy task. Despite the rejection of his apology, he persisted, acknowledging the necessity of Duncan's assistance. "Okay," he replied, his voice filled with sincerity, "I still need your help, please."

The ball was now in Duncan's court, and Peterson hoped that by displaying humility and vulnerability, he could appeal to Duncan's sense of compassion and willingness to cooperate.

"Peterson Rogers, I don't think I can help you."

"I think you can."

"Really?"

Peterson's expression remained earnest as he responded to Duncan's skepticism. "Yes, you might be in the right position to help me," he reiterated, confident in his assessment

Duncan's doubt was evident, and he wanted to understand why Peterson believed he had the ability to assist him. An inquisitive look appeared on Duncan's face, prompting Peterson to provide more context.

With no reason to withhold information and recognizing the need for transparency, Peterson revealed, "I called Babette. You know her, right?"

Duncan shook his head, indicating his lack of familiarity with Babette. The mention of her name seemed to pique his curiosity a bit but he didn't show it in his expression, and he awaited further explanation from Peterson.

As Duncan looked away, Peterson sensed a shift in the atmosphere. He realized that his attempt to engage Duncan with the mention of Babette had been perceived as a mind game. Understanding that his strategy had backfired, Peterson made a mental note to approach the conversation more cautiously moving forward. 1

Believing that Duncan was being honest about his lack of familiarity with Babette, Peterson decided to provide more information to support his request for help.

"Well, the young woman is the Manager of The Walton Group of Companies," Peterson began, his voice steady. "The company I used to work for, Vast Group Company, is actually one of the subsidiary companies under The Walton Group. I was on the verge of being promoted when, for reasons unknown to me, I was abruptly and unexpectedly fired."

Duncan's response caught Peterson off guard. "Why tell me your pathetic situation?" Duncan questioned, his tone filled with a mix of disbelief and perhaps even a touch of disdain.

Peterson maintained his composure, outwardly unaffected by Duncan's cutting remark. He understood that Duncan's response was a reflection of his own frustrations and skepticism. Peterson took a moment to collect his thoughts before responding.

"I understand that my situation might appear pathetic to you," Peterson replied calmly, his voice laced with determination. "But I don't want my situation to worsen. Babette told me I offended someone bigger than me and that..."

"Oh, really?" Duncan interrupted with a mocking tone before bursting into laughter.

"So, Peterson, I thought you only step on the toes of helpless people and upset poor people like me, just like the way you took my wife and slept with her. I never knew you do offend people bigger than you."

Peterson's face tightened as Duncan's mocking tone and accusations cut deep. He felt the weight of Duncan's words but retorted, "I don't offend people bigger than me. I know my limits unlike you."

"I see, so you're not limited to sleeping with married women."

Peterson's expression remained composed, despite the escalating tension and the weight of Duncan's accusations.