

Love from My Dominant Boss

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“Anna Garcia, do you have to speak to me in such a sarcastic way?” I could sense that he was stifling his fury at the moment as he hissed at me.

“Mr. Shaw, it’s after office hour now. If there’s nothing urgent, I hope you don’t call me again and disrupt my private time. Thanks for your understanding!” Oblivious to Michael’s anger, I answered coldly.

I was reluctant to have anything to do with him. When snippets of how he put me in hot water in the office flashed across my mind, I was boiling with anger again.

“I know about your family matters,” Michael uttered slowly when I was about to hang up.

I stiffened momentarily before I lashed out at him, “Michael Shaw, are you investigating on me? I have nothing to do with you now. Why are you still doing that to me?”

I was enraged, thinking of how he tried to meddle with my family matters. We have nothing to do with each other anymore. Why is he still investigating my family conditions? What is he intending to do now?

“Huh! Investigate your family situations? Do you think that I’m so free and have nothing to do? Anna Garcia, don’t you think that you are thinking too highly of yourself?” he snorted.

“If you didn’t do that, how would you know about my family matters? Michael Shaw, please bear in mind that there is nothing between both of us now. Can you please set me free and stop interfering with my life?” I refuted.

Michael’s words did not make any sense to me. I was convinced that his findings were obtained via the investigations. It was as if my privacy was unveiled and exposed to others, causing me utter discomfort. To me, it was a privacy invasion when Michael mentioned my family matters.

“Anna Garcia, don’t jump to conclusions without any evidence. It’s your mother! She gave my secretary a call and requested to speak to me just now!”

I was dumbfounded and at a loss for words instantaneously. It was out of my expectation that my mom would make the move to call him!

My goodness! She seems to have no sense of shame and is willing to do anything for Steven! She doesn't even know Michael in person. Just because Michael has given us one hundred thousand to settle our financial crisis before, she shamelessly called him to ask for money again!

Right that instant, I had lost the courage to hold my head up. I had owed him a lot all this while. Now that my Mom asked for his help so daringly, I felt totally humiliated.

"I'm sorry for misunderstanding you. I have to apologize to you on behalf of my mom. Sorry for causing you trouble. Don't take her words seriously," I apologized sincerely to him, suppressing my displeasure toward my mom.

Feeling awkward to face Michael, I intended to hang up right away. It seemed he could sense that I was about to do so. He said in a commanding tone, "Anna Garcia, don't hang up first. Listen to me, I'm the only person who can help you now."

My heart skipped a beat and I was touched at that very moment. Even so, I came to my senses within seconds and rejected coldly, "Mr. Shaw, you don't have to do that. You and I are merely boss and employee. I really hope that you don't get involved in my family matters again."

"Anna Garcia, I'm volunteering to help you. Mind your manners!" There was a bellow of rage from the man on the other end of the line. I had seemingly infuriated him again by rejecting him.

"I don't need your help. If there's nothing else, I will hang up first," I blurted out the words and hung up hastily. His offer was simply irresistible to me. Thus, I was fearful that I would change my mind and accepting his financial aid again.

My previous affair with him was all for money. Now that it had finally come to an end, I did not wish for history to repeat itself.

After hanging up the phone, it took me a long time to cool myself down. It was undeniable that Michael's words had spurred my emotions.

At the same time, I was pissed off with my mom for being shameless. She seemed to have lost her mind as she was trying to save Steven by all means. How dare she contacted Michael to borrow money from him when she is clueless about his actual identity? Did she think of me before making the call? Has it ever occurred to her how I would face Michael from now on?

Everything between Michael and I seemed to be linked with money. To make things worse, my mom called him impulsively to borrow money again. In his eyes, I must be a scheming woman who would tangle with him just for the sake of money.

Alone in my bedroom, the utter frustration was driving me insane. I had called almost everyone on my contact list. To my disappointment, they gave me all sorts of excuses to not lend me money. No matter what, I could not blame them for that.

I was rendered helpless and on the brink of tears.

When I heard the sound of the knob twisting and the door opened, I knew that Natalie had reached home.

She knocked on my door and yelled excitedly, "Anna, I bought a lot of fresh strawberries on the way home. Come out and have them with me!"

"Alright, I will come out in a while." After replying her, I took a deep breath and forced a smile in front of the mirror. Natalie has had enough to worry about me. I mustn't let her sense anything amiss.

When I stepped out of my room, Natalie was already sitting with her legs crossed on the couch in the living room, savoring the strawberries.

"Anna, these strawberries are fresh and juicy. Come and try one!" Natalie waved at me and handed me a big strawberry innocently.

Natalie was a typical glutton and optimist. No matter what she had encountered, she would be able to put everything disgruntling out of her mind after enjoying a meal. I was envious of her ability to cheer up speedily. How I wished I could cheer myself up as easily as her. If I were an optimistic person like her, I would not be worried sick at the moment.

I took the strawberry given by Natalie, yet I was not in the mood to enjoy it. At the moment, any sumptuous food was tasteless to me. What was more, I was preoccupied with my family's financial crisis. Thus, I had no appetite for anything.

While enjoying eating her strawberries, Natalie sensed something awry about me. She knitted her brows in bafflement.

"Anna, are you alright? Is anything troubling you?" Natalie stopped munching and asked me with great concern.

"I-I... nothing actually. I'm just not in the mood."

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I thought I had kept my feelings well-hidden, but Natalie was always the first to notice whenever I was in a bad mood.

“This is about your family, isn’t it? I bet you gave in again, didn’t you?”

Natalie was so smart that she figured it out without me saying anything. After all, my family matters were the only things capable of stressing me out.

Seeing as she had already guessed it, I decided to not keep it from her and said helplessly, “Nat, I know it’s best if I just ignore it, but... they’re my family, and I can’t bring myself to be so heartless toward them. My parents would be so upset if anything happened to Steven.”

I sometimes hated myself for being so soft-hearted as Steven probably wouldn’t have turned out like this if I stood firm back then.

Natalie gave me a pitiful look and grumbled, “Your parents are taking advantage of your filial piety. That’s why they always count on you to solve every little problem. Honestly, I don’t understand them at all! You’re both their children, yet they treat you and your brother so differently. Is it really just because of your genders?”

“You know how it is, Nat. Patriarchy is a very serious problem in the village, and every family there practices it. If my brother would just get himself a proper job and work hard like he’s supposed to, I wouldn’t have to work my butt off like this!” I said with a helpless sigh.

Although I had gotten used to the patriarchal ways of my parents, Steven gambling away all the money I sent them took a huge toll on me over the past few years.

My parents would always have me pay off his gambling debts. It wasn’t that bad when he first started out, so I was still able to afford them. However, his gambling addiction worsened over time, and I found myself no longer able to pay them anymore.

“I feel really bad for you, Anna. I really want to help you out, but... Well, you know how much a regular office worker makes, right?” Natalie said regretfully.

I knew she was sincere about lending me a hand, but Steven owed way too much money for her to be of any help.

"It's okay, Nat. You've helped me out a lot over the years we've known each other for."

Natalie was always the first to come to my aid whenever I found myself in trouble, so I was grateful to her even if she couldn't do much this time.

"Here, take my card, Anna. It's not much, but it'll have to do for now. As for the remaining amount... Well, I'm sure we'll figure something out!" she said while handing me a bank card from her wallet.

"No, these are your savings. I can't take this money!"

I refused her offer as I knew she didn't have a lot of money left for herself, and I couldn't possibly pay her back anytime soon either.

"All right, then. Just let me know if you ever need it, okay?"

Natalie chose to respect my decision and not force the money on me.

The next morning, I saw Yuval's car parked outside my residential area when I left for work.

I assumed it was over between us as it had been a few days since he last contacted me, so I was quite surprised to see him there. Feeling curious, I walked over to his car.

He got out of the car and opened the door for me when he saw me approaching.

While getting into his car, I couldn't help but wonder if he had come to break up with me or if he was okay with my family.

Yuval started the car after getting into the driver's seat, and the atmosphere felt a little tense as I wasn't sure of his intentions.

After a few minutes of silence, I looked at him and asked, "Um... So, why did you come to see me today?"

"I had a lot of cases to deal with in the past two days, so I was in court most of the time. I'm sorry I haven't had the time to contact you. I hope you're not mad at me," Yuval replied, his tone as gentle as always.

Judging by his tone and attitude, he doesn't seem like he wants to break up with me... Well, I can't say for sure, though. After all, the situation with my family isn't something that most people find acceptable.

"I see... I thought you didn't contact me because you weren't okay with my family."

Yuval claims he was too busy with work to contact me, but I know my family situation must have played a huge part in it too. I bet he gave it a lot of thinking ever since I told him about my family, so he must know the burden he would have to bear in the future if we get married.

"It's true that the situation with your family is a tricky one, but I believe that marriage is between the two of us. Of course, that doesn't mean we'll ignore the problem. I just think that we should keep our involvement to an appropriate level, that's all."

Although Yuval didn't plan on breaking up with me, I could tell he wasn't too comfortable about the situation either.

"Yeah, I get what you mean. I know it's not a good idea to get too involved with them, but... every time my mom calls me, I just can't bring myself to refuse her..."

Yuval and I had the same thought in mind. I had told myself that I wouldn't help them this time, but hearing Mom's cry softened my heart instantly. They were my family, after all.

"All right, enough talk about this depressing topic. We need to get to the root of your brother's problem if we are to solve it."

Yuval dropped the topic when he saw how uncomfortable I was.

"Mom said they would break Steven's legs if he couldn't pay up today. I'm worried that they'll actually do it."

The deadline to pay up was tonight, but I couldn't even fork out ten thousand.

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Noticing how anxious I was, Yuval reached out and held my hand as he comforted me, "Don't worry. I doubt they have the guts to do that because

it would constitute assault and battery, which can result in some pretty serious legal repercussions.”

“Really? They won’t?”

Yuval was a lawyer and knew the legal system like the back of his hand, so I felt a little relieved after hearing what he said.

Still, Steven owed them more than a hundred thousand this time, so it was hard to say how far those men would go.

Yuval tightened his grip on my hand and said with a firm look in his eyes, “Stop worrying so much. Your frown is so deep that you look like an old lady right now!”

“Thank you.”

His words of reassurance worked like a charm, and I flashed him a faint smile in response.

I was actually very grateful to Yuval. Even if he wouldn’t be able to fully accept my family’s problems, the fact that he chose to stay with me this time proved how big-hearted he was.

“There is no need to thank me. I am your boyfriend, after all!”

The look on my face grew awkward the moment I heard him mention “boyfriend”. We had known each other for a few months, but it felt like we were friends instead of lovers.

Maybe I just haven’t adjusted to it... Yeah, that’s probably it!

Yuval left after dropping me off at work, and I made my way to my desk with a heavy heart.

Millie came running over before I even sat down and asked excitedly, “Anna, who was that guy who dropped you off just now? Is he your boyfriend?”

I had never told anyone at work about my boyfriend and had brushed off their questions whenever anyone asked about it. That was probably why Millie felt so shocked when she saw Yuval send me to work.

“Yeah, that’s right.”

I felt awkward calling Yuval my boyfriend, but I did it anyway because he was big-hearted enough to stay with me despite the situation with my family.

“What does he do for a living? He looks pretty rich!”

If Millie and Natalie had one thing in common, it was how nosy they were. Millie was determined to find out everything she could after hearing me call Yuval my boyfriend.

“He’s a lawyer.”

I kept quiet after saying that as I didn’t want to discuss too much about Yuval at work.

“That’s nice! How about you bring him into the office next time so we can all assess him for you?”

Millie couldn’t really get a clear view of Yuval from the window all the way up here.

“Oh, I almost forgot... I have to deliver some documents to Mr. Shaw. Excuse me...”

Not wanting to discuss Millie any more about Yuval, I grabbed a folder and walked toward the CEO’s office after saying that.

Upon arriving at Michael’s office, I took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

“Come in.” Michael’s unique, cold voice came from inside.

I opened the door and entered, only to have him grab me by the arm and pin me against the wall as he closed the door.

“What the hell are you doing, Michael? You almost scared me to death!” I shouted at him angrily in response.

Michael simply stared me down coldly and emotionlessly as he said, “As if anything in this world could possibly scare you.”

“Stay away from me!”

I placed both hands on his chest and tried to push him away.

“Considering how close we used to be, I’d say we’re quite far apart now,” Michael said ambiguously as he kept me pinned.

I pushed against him with all my might, but he didn't even seem to budge.

"What are you saying? You're literally inches away from me right now! How can you call this far apart?"

His lips are almost touching mine for goodness' sake! If he calls this being far apart, then what on earth does he consider to be close?

"Exactly, I'm not pressing against you yet. The distance between us used to be negative, remember? A part of me going inside you? That's what I call being close to each other!"

Michael's words made me burn bright red instantly. How on earth can a man say such shameless things so casually? He may not mind talking about the stuff we did in bed, but I do!

"Don't talk to me about sex, Michael. We're no longer in that kind of relationship."

For some reason, hearing him casually bring up our sexual history made me really mad.

Noticing the look of anger on my face, Michael then let go of me without saying anything further and made his way toward his desk.

Feeling relieved after putting some distance between us, I walked up to him and placed the folder on his desk.

"This is my latest edit, Mr. Shaw. Please have a look and let me know if there are any issues with it."

I tried my best to sound as formal as possible while suppressing my dissatisfaction toward him.

Michael skimmed through the files and said, "The overall structure of this proposal is all right. You may proceed to come up with a more detailed one."

I let out a huge sigh of relief when I heard him finally approve of my proposal.

"Understood, I'll get to it right away," I replied as I picked up the folder and began making my way out of his office.

"Hold on!" Michael's voice came from behind.

I paused in my tracks and looked at him in confusion.

“Is there anything else, Mr. Shaw?”

He kept quiet and walked up to me before handing me a check.

“Here’s two hundred thousand. You can use it to solve the financial crisis your family is facing right now,” he said, sounding as indifferent as ever.

Two hundred thousand...

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Forking out two hundred thousand was a piece of cake for someone like Michael, and it was incredibly tempting to accept his offer as I really needed the money.

However, my ego and pride forbade me from doing so. I knew very well that I should not use any more of his money.

“Thanks for the offer, Mr. Shaw, but you can keep your money. I’ll figure something out on my own,” I said coldly and quickly left his office before he could respond.

Why would Michael still want to give me money? Is he doing it to repay me for our previous sexual relationship? Or is there some other reason?

My mind was all over the place as I returned to my desk, and I shook my head to empty all those thoughts.

I was a little out of place at work the entire day as I had yet to gather enough money, nor did I know how things were going back at home.

I couldn’t tell if those men were only trying to intimidate my family like Yuval said, but wouldn’t actually have the guts to carry out their threats.

After spending a very stressful day at my desk, I was the first to leave the office after work.

I made my way back to Natalie’s and was pacing about frantically in the bedroom. I wanted to call home and check on things, but I couldn’t bring myself to tell Mom that I didn’t have the money ready.

At that moment, my phone began ringing, and I answered it when I saw my mom’s number on the caller ID.

"Hello, Mom."

"Anna, when will you be transferring the money over? Those guys just called us and demanded that we pay up in an hour or Steven would be done for!"

Mom was so anxious that it sounded like she was crying.

"I'm sorry, Mom. I still don't have the money."

I felt guilty when I heard how anxious my mom sounded.

Mom got even more anxious after hearing my reply, and her tone was filled with reproach as she said, "What? What do you mean you don't have the money? Didn't you promise me you'd get it? What will Steven do now?"

I knew she was only acting that way out of fear and desperation, so I didn't blame her even if it made me very uncomfortable.

"Mom, I really want to help, but there's only so much I can do. I don't have much on me, and I've already borrowed a lot from my friends, so none of them are willing to lend me any more money now."

Most of them knew how my family was like, so they wouldn't lend me any money even if they could afford to. I understood that very well and had given it my best effort, but this was really all I could manage.

"Excuses! I bet you want them to hurt Steven, don't you? That's why you never intended to help him to begin with! I can't believe I raised such an ingrate! So, this is it, huh? You're just going to abandon your family now that you're all grown up and successful?"

What? Mom thinks that I'm deliberately choosing not to help them?

"It's not what you think, Mom! I really am trying to help, but I just don't have that much money! If there really is a way, I would definitely go for it!"

I was incredibly upset with what Mom said, but I tried my best to explain myself anyway because I didn't want her to think I was unwilling to help Steven.

"This is unbelievable! You f*cking ingrate! I will never forgive you if anything happens to Steven!"

I felt my heart ache when I heard Mom's heartless words, but she hung up on me before I could say anything further.

Mom has pushed all the blame on me... Why can't she be a little more understanding? She has never considered how difficult things are for me! As much as I hate how frivolous Steven is, he is still my brother, and there is no way I wouldn't help him if I could!

Tears rolled down my cheeks as I squatted down on the floor and hugged my knees with my face buried in my arms.

Mom probably sees me as an enemy now... Knowing her, it's completely possible that she would never forgive me for the rest of her life should anything happen to Steven. Right now, all I can do is pray that he will be all right...

Natalie heard me crying and knocked on my bedroom door before coming in.

She quickly helped me to my feet when she saw me crying on the floor.

"What happened, Anna? Why are you crying?"

Not wanting her to see me like this, I wiped my tears dry as I said, "It's nothing."

Natalie too, has become rather depressed lately because of all my negativity. I shouldn't let my problems affect her mood.

"You wouldn't be crying like this for nothing! Come on, we've been besties since forever! You know how well I know you!"

I wasn't the type who would show my negative emotions easily, so me insisting that I was fine with tears down my face wasn't going to fool Natalie.

"I'm fine, really. I was just dealing with my family. My mom gave me a call just moments ago and said some really hurtful things. That's all," I explained with a forced smile.

What Mom said left me feeling like crap, but having Natalie by my side cheered me up quite a lot.

The look on Natalie's face grew cold when she heard that my mom had called. "I knew it had something to do with your family! Your mom was pushing you for the money, wasn't she?" she said sympathetically.

I kept quiet, so Natalie took my silence as a confirmation to her guess. Mom would never call me unless she wanted money from me, and Natalie knew that all too well.

“Hey, you tried your best to help, but this is simply beyond your capabilities. I’m sure your mom will come to understand that someday. Come on, let’s just forget about this and move on.”

Natalie chose to drop the topic when she saw how upset I was.

Will Mom really be able to understand? I bet she’ll just blame everything on me like she always does, but that’s okay because I’m used to it anyway. However, I am worried about what the debt collectors would do if they don’t get the money...

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“Natalie, do you think they’ll really break Steven’s legs? My parents value his life over their own, so they’ll definitely lose their minds if anything happens to him!”

Natalie gave me a pat on the shoulder as she comforted me, “I think he should be fine. I mean, what else can they do if your family doesn’t pay up? Kill him? Don’t worry, Anna. Your parents aren’t dumb, so I’m sure they’ll know to call the police if those men try to hurt him.”

What Natalie said made sense, and I felt a lot better after hearing it.

“It’s getting late, you should get some sleep. I’ll wait and see if my mom calls again. She said those men would be collecting the money in an hour, so I’m really scared that something bad might happen.”

“Nah, I’m not tired. Besides, I can’t possibly fall asleep knowing how anxious you are. I’ll wait here with you,” Natalie said as she sat down beside me and put an arm around my shoulder.

Time ticked by, and two hours soon came to pass with no call nor text from Mom whatsoever. I felt somewhat uneasy as I glanced at the time on my phone.

Why hasn’t Mom called me yet? Did those men really let them off the hook so easily?

“Why hasn’t my mom called? It’s been so long now...” I mumbled to myself worriedly as I gripped the phone tightly in my sweaty palms.

"Maybe you should try calling her to find out what's going on over there. Who knows, maybe those men left after realizing they wouldn't be getting any money!"

Natalie grew anxious as well when she saw me panicking.

I nodded and dialed my mom's number on the phone, but it just kept ringing until I got to her voicemail.

That gave me a bad feeling in my gut, so I tried calling her a second time.

The call got through right as I thought it would go to voicemail again, and I could hear Mom's voice on the other line.

"Hello, Mom! How are things over there? Did those men leave?" I asked anxiously before she could say anything.

The next thing I knew, Mom was wailing loudly into the phone.

"What's wrong, Mom? What happened? Talk to me!"

Mom went silent for a brief moment all of a sudden, and the bad feeling in my gut intensified as I waited in suspense.

"They broke your brother's legs, and it's all your fault! Are you happy now, you f*cking ingrate? You're no longer my daughter!"

My heart felt like it was being squeezed by an iron grip when I heard Steven's legs were broken.

Oh, god... My parents must be devastated!

"Mom, how is Steven right now? Is he okay?" I asked frantically after regaining my composure, but Mom hung up on me without saying a word.

My phone slipped out of my hand and fell to the floor with a soft thud as my tears flowed uncontrollably.

Natalie had heard the whole conversation on the phone and gave me a distressed look as she asked, "Hey, Anna! What happened? Are you okay?"

"What do I do now, Nat? They broke Steven's legs! What am I going to do now?"

My mind went blank, and I grabbed Natalie's hand while my body trembled all over.

"Calm down, Anna! Whatever happened has happened, and panicking isn't going to help. We should focus on figuring out our next course of action."

Natalie patted me on the back of my hand as she tried to comfort me.

"No... The hospital... I have to go see him at the hospital!" I mumbled while reaching for my handbag and putting on my shoes.

We don't have any decent medical facilities in the village, so Steven must be in the city's hospital if his legs are broken!

"In that case, I'll go with you!"

Natalie tagged along out of concern for my well-being, and the two of us took a cab to the hospital.

"Sir, could you please go faster?"

I kept urging the taxi driver to go faster even though he was already speeding.

"Why are you in such a hurry, miss? I can't go any faster or I'll exceed the speed limit, and that's very dangerous here in the city!" said the taxi driver while glancing at me through the rear-view mirror.

"But I have to get to the hospital urgently! It's an emergency!"

I knew it was unreasonable of me to keep urging the taxi driver like that, but I just couldn't help it.

"Calm down, Anna. We're almost at the hospital, so it won't be long now."

Natalie grabbed me by the hand and motioned at me to calm down.

It wasn't easy, but I managed to keep my emotions in check, and we soon arrived at the hospital.

Having lost all sense of rationality from the fear and panic, I began checking all the wards in the orthopedic department one after another for my brother.

Fortunately for me, Natalie was smart enough to ask the front desk which ward Steven was in.

"Stop looking, Anna! Your brother is in ward 1201! Come on, let's go!"

The door to ward 1201 was shut tight, but I could hear Mom's cries coming from inside and hesitated to open the door as I was afraid of finding Steven in worse condition than I imagined.

"Go on in, Anna. You'll feel a lot less worried that way," Natalie said when she saw me stop in my tracks.

I took a deep breath and opened the door.

Mom's cries sounded much clearer as I entered, and I felt my heart ache when I heard her cry her heart out like that.