

Love from My Dominant Boss

Chapter 61

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It was obvious from Natalie's expression, that she did not believe my words.

"Anna, we're best friends. I don't wish for you to hide anything from me," she said solemnly.

In the face of her genuine concern, I felt tempted to tell her everything that happened between Michael and me but ultimately decided not to. She would only chastise me for the shameful things I had done. "Natalie, you're thinking too much into this. There's really nothing going on between us. As you said, we're best friends. Why would I lie to you?"

Contrary to my calm facade, my insides were panicking like wildfire. I tried my best to stay composed under her watchful gaze so as not to give myself away.

After a long while, she sighed resignedly. "I won't force you to tell me if you don't want to. I only have one piece of advice for you—know your boundaries. If you're serious about Yuval, then don't get too close to Michael anymore."

From her advice, I could tell she had more or less figured out my relationship with him. "Thanks, Natalie. I appreciate it."

That night, as I lay on my bed, my mind kept replaying what Michael did to me during the day. Why did he pull me away from Yuval? Was he jealous or simply possessive? Thinking about it only made me more frustrated.

I shook my head resolutely. I needed to stop thinking too much into his behavior. I already decided, the most important thing now was to settle down with someone compatible. Besides, there was clearly no future between Michael and me. Very soon after, I fell asleep.

Over the next few days, I went to work as usual. Michael on the other hand seemed to have completely vanished; I received no calls from him. There were even a few instances where I was tempted to call him. During those times, I had to remind myself not to act so shamelessly. With how things ended between us, there was no reason for me to invite trouble for myself.

In fact, I did not receive any calls from Yuval as well. His silence made me worry that I had lost him as a potential marriage candidate. Truth be told, I was more concerned with the hassle of finding another decent man rather than not being able to go on more dates with him.

I picked up my phone, hesitating whether to give him a call. The last time I met him, he had suggested that we tried dating. Some time had passed since then, and there was still no news from him. Was it because of what happened with Michael the other day?

As my thoughts spiraled, my heart beat with great trepidation. I took a few deep breathes and mustered the courage to call him. On the other end of the line, Yuval was slightly taken aback to hear my voice. He did not expect me to initiate a call.

“Mr. Lambert, are you free to meet up with me?”

Every second felt like an hour as I waited for his response. “Sure. I’ll meet you at the same cafe as before.”

That went smoother than I expected. I had assumed from his lack of communication, that he had lost interest in me. Hearing how quickly he agreed to meet up, I felt a weight off my shoulders.

After the phone call, I tidied myself up before making my way to the agreed location. By the time I arrived, Yuval was already waiting inside. Perhaps due to the nature of his job, including our past three meet-ups, he wore different sets of suits. His dress code exuded an air of formality.

I took the seat opposite him and ordered coffee for both of us. He had a faint smile on his face.

“Mr. Lambert, sorry for leaving so urgently the other day. Something cropped up.” My voice got softer as I recalled how absurd it was to be dragged away by Michael in front of him.

“Ms. Garcia, can I call you Anna instead? Since we’re dating now, Ms. Garcia sounds a bit too formal.” He smiled.

“Of course. I’ll feel more comfortable this way too.” Frankly, I was not entirely on board with the idea of getting too intimate with Yuval, but he was right. Since we were dating, it was only right he called me by my first name.

“Anna, I have a question to ask?”

I nodded. “Go ahead.”

"T-That person who pulled you away the other day, is he really your boss? Both of you seem close." He looked at me earnestly.

I was taken aback by his question. Lawyers sure caught on to things really fast.

I averted my gaze before explaining, "Of course! He's just my superior at work. What else can we be?" I did my best to conceal the guilt gnawing at me. I can't let him know about us.

"But... I'm getting the feeling it's not just a simple superior-subordinate relationship."

He was clearly not convinced by my explanation. "Mr. Lambert if you can't trust my words, I suggest we end things here. We're probably not suited for each other."

Regardless of how valid his questions were, I disliked being doubted. This whole situation was making me angry.

Before, Michael too had interrogated me with the same pair of doubtful eyes. Why must I be stuck between them?

Perhaps I came off a bit too harsh. Yuval panicked while saying, "Anna, please don't misunderstand my intentions. I'm not doubting your words! It's just that we're working towards marriage, so I wanted to get to know you better."

Seeing how hard he was trying to mend the situation, I guessed he was serious about dating me; I probably checked off all the boxes Yuval was looking for in a marriage partner.

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Although not entirely effective, his words did anguish my anger quite a bit. I sighed. "I won't deny that there's chemistry between us. But, I'll be upfront with you, I hate being doubted. I have my morals as well. Since I've decided to date you, I won't get myself involve with other men."

Strictly speaking, I was still in a friends with benefits relationship with Michael, but I had decided to end it. Moving forward, I would build my own life and so he would simply be my boss at work.

“Anna, that’s a relief to hear. I promise I’ll treat you well,” he said excitedly.

I forced a smile. Although I wished to maintain my relationship with Yuval, that episode just now worsened my impression of him.

I believed that time was the key to solving my current resistance towards him. As long as we go on more dates, I would at some point return his feelings. Yet, beliefs and actions need not always be aligned. That evening, I found myself finding excuses to turn down his invitation for movies after our dinner.

Back at home, I could not avoid being bombarded with questions from Natalie. It was only after I recounted my whole conversation with Yuval that I was able to retreat back to my room.

Over the next few days, Yuval seemed to be working hard on his promise of treating me well. He was especially proactive and would at least make one phone call a day to check on me.

Even though his actions did not in any way touch me, at the very least I was sure he would make a great marriage partner. Settling down with him was the best choice.

Michael on the other hand had not contacted me since that day. I presumed this signified the end of our relationship.

Just like that, I spent the rest of the next days peacefully. Every day, it was the usual routine of working and calling Yuval. Despite my best efforts, I still felt nothing towards him. And ever since we switched to video calls, he became even more excited.

After spending so much time with him, I was certain he was a mature and dependable man. Despite us dating for some time, he continued to respect my boundaries and did not behave inappropriately. Perhaps due to my past trauma, I found men who got physical early into the relationship, repulsive.

The day before, I found Natalie sat brooding in the living room. She did not even greet me.

I walked over to her side. “What’s wrong?” I hugged one of her arms.

It was rare to see her in this state. She was usually an optimistic and jovial person.

"I suspect John's not really in love with me." She looked at me, her expression somber.

Did John really do something to betray her? During my meal with him the other time, I had heard him speaking with another woman on the phone. Although I questioned him, he had reassured me that he only had eyes for Natalie. That was why I did not mention anything to her.

"What made you say this?" I looked at her nervously. If she mentioned anything about him two-timing, that would make me guilty for not telling her about that phone call.

"Anna, if you really love someone, won't you want to share everything with him? Won't you want him to understand everything about you?"

Her question made me recalled the foolish me of the past. I was at the beck and call of whatever Justin wanted. It was not an exaggeration to say, I would have even offered him my heart if he so wishes. I hid nothing from him.

I replied seriously, "You're right. Love means wanting the other party to know everything about you."

"Since we've been dating for some time, I had suggested that we meet his parents. But, John rejected and said it wasn't the right time yet. I think he's hiding something from me."

If John was serious about their relationship, he would have agreed to let Natalie meet his parents. His actions were saying otherwise. Thinking about this only made me angrier.

I thought he would have learned his lesson after I caught him cheating the other time. Seems like I had thought too highly of him. "Natalie, what will you do if he wants to break up with you? Or even worse, what if he's cheating on you?"

Although it was only a passing thought, I was tempted to tell Natalie what I knew about John. In the end, I decided against it because I was afraid she may not be able to handle the truth.

Despite her boisterous and easygoing attitude, like me, she was not one to accept her partner cheating on her.

"If that really happens, it would be a living hell for me! Anna, does John not love me? Why doesn't he want me to meet his parents?" Natalie grabbed my hands frantically.

Her question put me on the spot. I knew that John was not serious about her, but the truth would only hurt her.

“Natalie, I think you should focus on work instead. It’s not healthy for you to devote all your energy into a relationship. At the end of the day, if this doesn’t work out, you’ll be the one suffering.” I decided to save this information for the next time after her relationship with John cooled down.

“But what’s the point of a relationship if we don’t give our all? Is that still true love?”

Despite my good intentions, Natalie did not see eye to eye with me on this topic.

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I was even more anxious when I realized how serious Natalie was about her relationship. This was her first love. The first time a person fell in love was always the deepest. I wondered what would happen if she knew that John was having an affair with another woman.

“Well, don’t think about it. If your relationship reaches a certain level, he will definitely take you home to see his parents.”

Although I knew full well that John had no intention of spending the rest of his life with Natalie, I did not want to say anything that would make her feel worse seeing how sad she already was.

Hearing my words, Natalie’s mood improved. I continued to console her for some time before she went back to her room to rest.

When I returned to my room, thinking of what Natalie told me tonight, I felt a little anxious. I wondered if I should tell her about the intimate call between John and another woman I had overheard before.

After struggling for a night, I finally decided to figure out what was going on first. How did John feel about Natalie and if he ever thought about spending the rest of his life with her.

If he was playing with Natalie’s feelings, I would not let him go unpunished.

I had already given John a chance before but he did not cherish it. Natalie was my best friend. I could not just watch her get hurt.

The next morning, while Natalie was taking her bath, I retrieved John's number from her mobile phone.

I waited until Natalie went to work. Then, I called John's number on my mobile.

"Hello, who is this?"

John's voice from the other end of the line sounded sluggish. I guessed he was still in bed.

"I'm Anna Garcia, Natalie's good friend. Do you remember me? We have met before."

I spoke in a plain voice as I had no liking for John after hearing what Natalie told me last night. I really had lost even the slightest liking for him.

"M-M-Ms. Garcia, why are you calling me out of the blue? Is there anything I can do for you?"

The moment he heard that it was me, his tone became anxious. Perhaps this was because he remembered I discovered the betrayal of his relationship with Natalie.

"Mr. Young, are you free to talk now? There's something I need to talk to you about."

The more anxious he was, the more suspicious he became. John knew that I was not as naïve as Natalie and so, whenever he spoke to me, he was cautious.

"Okay... where shall we meet, then?" John hesitated for a while before agreeing to meet me.

"I shall send the venue of our meeting to your mobile phone. We meet in an hour's time." After replying him simply, I wanted to hang up the phone.

Just before I could hang up, a lady's voice was heard from the other end of the line. I could hear it very clearly so, obviously, she was beside John.
"Who are you talking with?"

My heart felt cold. Immediately, I understood what was going on and I was filled with anger.

I had wanted to ask John who the woman was but a beep sounded from that end showing that John had hung up on me.

I looked at the phone angrily. Thinking about the woman's voice on the phone just now made me even angrier. John was really a scumbag!

He pretended to be dating Natalie but he was embracing another woman in bed. This man was no different from Justin.

The more I thought about it, the angrier I became. I really wanted to call John and scold him but I held back my anger. After all, it would feel much better to scold him face to face.

I held back my fury, composed myself and headed to the café for our meeting.

John arrived only half an hour. I was already irritated from the start. At this instant, I wished I could give him two tight slaps across his face. During our phone conversation, we had agreed to meet in an hour's time. John was more than half an hour late.

The character of a man was questionable if he made a woman wait for so long.

"Ms. Garcia, I'm sorry I'm late. There was a traffic jam."

John sat in front of me, looking rather anxious.

I gazed at him coldly. "Mr. Young, don't you know that it is ungentlemanly to make a lady wait? Do you always make Natalie wait when you have a date with her?"

Presumably, he did not expect me to use this questioning tone with him and his countenance changed. There was a look of embarrassment in his eyes. "Ms. Garcia, I'm really sorry. I did not come late on purpose. The traffic was really bad."

John looked into my eyes and apologized again solemnly. Even though there was sincerity in his eyes, I could also detect a sense of guilt.

"I believe you're late not because of the traffic but rather because you had to pacify the woman in bed with you?" I stared into John's eyes and spoke this sentence emphatically. Before I hung up the phone, the woman's voice had reached my ears clearly.

The previous time, I had heard John speaking on the phone to another woman but I was not sure if he had betrayed Natalie but this time I was certain.

Angrily, I glared at John, questioning him with my eyes. I was waiting for him to explain himself, wondering what excuse he would make up this time.

Flustered, he looked away, obviously feeling guilty.

“M-M-Ms.... Garcia, this is no joking matter. How could there be another woman in bed with me?”

John refused to admit it but his flustered expression was a sign of guilt.

He would not admit it even though I had heard it so clearly. I sneered and looked at him with disdain. “Before I hung up, I heard clearly a woman talking to you. Do you still want to deny it now?”

No matter how John denied it to my face, one fact was certain and that was he had betrayed Natalie.

Just like me, Natalie was being cheated on by her boyfriend. In this instant, I was not just angry but my heart was aching for her more than anything else.

I knew how painful it was to be cheated by a man I loved. I did not want Natalie to suffer the same cruel fate but John was a real scum who was even worse than Justin.

“Ms. Garcia, I know what I did was wrong. I was just being foolish. Can you keep this a secret from Natalie?”

When John saw that his effort to conceal the truth was futile, he admitted it but his next sentence made me feel like whipping him.

He had betrayed Natalie and he wanted me to keep her in the dark. How could he do such a thing?

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“Don’t tell Natalie? Are you trying to make me your accomplice?” I sneered as I stared at John and asked him coldly. I really could not understand how he could ask me to keep it a secret. How shameless of him.

“Ms. Garcia, I know it was wrong of me but I did not mean to do it. I was just an infatuation. I will turn over a new leaf. I promise you this will not happen again.”

Seeing that I had no intention of helping him, John’s expression became even more flustered. Desperately, he started making promises but I would not believe him anymore.

“The previous time, you told me the same thing, promising me that it would not happen again. It’s just a few days since that incident, John. That time I told you I would not allow you to do anything that would hurt Natalie.

When I said the last sentence, my countenance turned icy cold and when I looked into his eyes, I got angrier.

“Ms. Garcia, I was lost and I did not appreciate what I have. Please help me one more time. I’ll treat Nat well and never cheat on her. Will you please?”

As John spoke, he held my hand emotionally and looked at me with pleading eyes.

I looked at him with disdain as I withdrew my hand forcefully. Apparently, this John was worse than Justin who admitted cheating on me the moment I discovered his infidelity. John was caught red-handed twice and yet, he shamelessly pleaded with me to keep this a secret. Obviously, his was far shameless than I thought.

“This time I will not help you to lie to her. I’ll tell her you have betrayed her and ask her to see what type of scoundrel you really are!”

I stood up abruptly and glared at John angrily. Mindless about the people around looking at me, I raised my voice.

The café was quite crowded and when those around us heard what I said, many turned their eyes in our direction. Most of them were looking at John.

I had spoken very clearly and everyone understood what John had done. Many looked at him contemptuously and disdainfully.

John felt the eyes of everyone on him. Initially, he had felt guilty but when he saw the contemptuous looks of those watching him, he glared at me angrily.

"Anna, what do you want? This is between me and Natalie. It is none of your business!"

John's attitude changed abruptly. He was sincerely begging me just now to keep Natalie from knowing about him but now he was furious at me.

This type of man is incorrigible and if Natalie were to carry on with him, she would certainly suffer.

"Natalie is my friend. Her business is my business. You have cheated and betrayed her. I will not let you go on doing this. A scoundrel like you does not deserve Natalie's love at all!"

Natalie was a simple kind-hearted girl. It was so tragic for her to experience first love with such a scumbag like John!

How could a scum like John deserve all that Natalie had given to him?

"It is not up to you to decide what I deserve or don't deserve. Natalie loves me too much to give me up. Even if she knows that I am unfaithful to her, she will still stay with me!"

John stood up abruptly and glared at me combatively with a triumphant expression on his face.

John knew how deeply Natalie loved him and that was the reason why he cheated on her without fear. He did not worry even if Natalie knew about his true color.

Furious, I picked up the cup of coffee nearby and threw the contents straight onto his face. "Bast*rd!"

"Anna Garcia, what are you doing!"

With coffee splashed on his face, John wiped himself hurriedly with tissue. At that moment, he was rather shocked at my action and wanted to leave right away.

"A scumbag like you deserves to be taught a lesson like this!"

I glared at John coldly and with that, I strode off without turning back.

On the way back to Natalie's, my mood became worse. I was determined that John was a scumbag by nature and a leopard could never change its spots. I should not have given him a chance the last time and today he had made me furious.

How could Natalie have chosen such a scum who was worse than Justin? Someone who could say just anything with no shame.

I took out my mobile phone and found Natalie's number. At this moment, I wished I could tell her about this matter straightaway. I wanted her to know how bad a scumbag John was.

After hesitating for a long time, I did not call Natalie's number. She was still at work. It would be better to tell her about this after work. If I told her now, she would not be in the mood to work.

I had taken the day off to talk to John. So I went back to Natalie's and sat in the living room alone. Even then, I still felt angry from the episode earlier.

The phone in my hand rang suddenly. Thinking it was another call from Yuval, I picked up the phone a little irritably and did not want to answer it but when I saw the name of the caller on the screen, my heart beat fiercely.

It was not Yuval but Michael.

My heart was beating wildly and for a moment, I could not describe how I felt. Michael had not contacted me for a long time and here he was calling out of the blue. My emotions which had taken a long while to calm down was now disturbed again.

The ringing continued and I wanted to ignore it but finally my emotions got the better of me and I accepted the call.

"Hello."

After answering the call, the words got stuck in my throat and I could not say anything more.

"Where are you now?" From the other end of the line, came Michael's low sexy voice which I had not heard for several days and I trembled again.

"I'm at Natalie's place." Nervously, I held the phone in my hand and asked cautiously.

Ever since the time Michael nearly took me by force, I had felt something against him even though I could not help but miss the man sometimes. Yet, what happened that day was quite unacceptable.

"I want to see you. I'll go and fetch you in twenty minutes." His voice came over the line again, stunning me.

“What do you want to see me for?”

My heart jumped to my throat and I asked rather anxiously but the reply I heard was a busy tone. Michael had hung up before I could finish speaking. That was rather ungentlemanly.

I frowned and could not help but mentally curse him over and over again in my mind. I felt excited even knowing well that he and I should no longer see each other.

I dropped my phone on the couch and hurried to get changed. Then, I put on some light makeup.

After twenty minutes, Michael called again. I was excited but answered his call while pretending to be calm.

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“I’m here, so come out!”

Before I could say anything, Michael’s voice drifted over the moment the call connected.

And as soon as he finished saying that, the disconnect tone sounded.

At that, I glared at my cell phone irritably. What the hell is wrong with him? Every time he calls, he never gives the other person an opportunity to speak! Ugh! What a jerk!

Irked by his attitude, I inwardly decided not to do as he ordered. Oh well, he can just wait there since he didn’t even bother to let me speak before hanging up the phone!

However, I always had no backbone when it came to Michael. About five minutes later, I started growing antsy. He’s the kind of person who hates waiting for someone else, so he might leave if I continue tarrying.

“Gah! You’re really weak that you can’t even stand your ground in such a trivial matter, Anna!”

After having scoffed at myself while pointing at my reflection in the mirror, I then left the house.

When I reached the community gate, I was greeted by the sight of a silver Cadillac sports car dead center of the gate. Oh, he hasn't left despite having waited for such a long time! I breathed a long sigh of relief.

I didn't understand it myself, but a smile bloomed on my face the moment I glimpsed Michael's car.

I sauntered over to the passenger side, but I didn't get in right away.

Michael was dressed in a black suit that rendered his already aloof countenance even grimmer against the black background.

A pair of huge sunglasses sat on his face, so I couldn't see the look in his eyes.

"Is something the matter that you wanted to see me?"

I tried my best to sound calm and unruffled as I looked at his perfect profile.

"Get in!"

Michael frowned and stared at me in chagrin when I didn't get into the car after dallying for such a long time. His voice was cold without a hint of emotion.

"Where are you planning to take me?"

Recalling the incident back then, I couldn't help backing a step away. I'm not getting into the car if he's planning to force himself on me again this time. I'm not that stupid.

"When did you become so garrulous, Anna?"

Michael whipped off his sunglasses and pinned his jet-black eyes that glinted with annoyance on me. All at once, I could tell that he was incensed.

In all likeliness, my repeated wariness and refusals had infuriated him.

"I've always been so garrulous. It's just that you've never noticed it before this. It's the weekend today, Mr. Shaw, so what exactly is the matter that you suddenly sought me out?"

I cut straight to the chase since I didn't want to yak with him. I knew that I should make it clear to him that our relationship was over since I now had a boyfriend.

Although I was reluctant to do so, I naturally couldn't maintain an improper relationship with him as I was currently dating Yuval. Indeed, I sounded shameless and despicable, having been friend with benefits with him. Nonetheless, as long as I had made up my mind to date someone, I would treat him wholeheartedly no matter my feelings toward him.

"Get in, and we'll talk. If you continue tarrying, I don't mind carrying you in. I don't think you want others to know about our relationship in such a public place, do you?"

Michael merely looked at me indifferently. No sooner than his threat fell did I know that I was going to compromise again.

Argh! It's always a piece of cake for him to strike my Achilles' heel!

Livid, I shot daggers at him. In the next second, I relented and got into his car.

Starting the car, he drove slowly without saying a single word. A daunting silence hung in the air.

"Mr. Shaw, why exactly did you ask me out today? If there's nothing, please let me out. I've got something important tonight."

It was already afternoon, so Natalie was getting off work soon. I was determined to tell her the truth about that scumbag, John, tonight so that she wouldn't be in the dark anymore.

Considering her innocence, she might not suspect that John was cheating on her. For that reason, I had no choice but to reveal his true colors to her. Otherwise, it might take forever for her to discover his infidelity, and I was worried that it would be too late by then.

"Something important? Do you mean you're going on a date?" Michael's deep and apathetic voice drifted into my ears. His tone was mocking, so I swung my gaze at him indignantly.

"I don't think I need to report my activities to you, Mr. Shaw. We made a deal not to interfere in the other's personal affairs, remember?" I reminded coldly while staring at his profile irately.

Jeez, I really can't figure him out now. Back then, he was the one who proposed not to interfere in each other's personal affairs and to keep our relationship a secret from others. But what is he doing now? He dragged me away right before Yuval, and now, he came to Natalie's residential community to look for me in broad daylight. Is he no longer afraid that others will learn about our relationship?

While he's not a celebrity, he's still a renowned public figure in Avenport. As such, he'll definitely make the headlines tomorrow if we're photographed by reporters.

"I don't need you reminding me of that, Anna!"

The moment my words fell, Michael's expression darkened even further, and his eyes blazed with anger.

"Then, just say whatever it is you've got to say. I really have something to do tonight."

He was always so overbearing that I never once had the upper hand before him. At times, I felt truly rankled that I chickened out every time I glimpsed his wrath.

"Have you really decided to date that lawyer named Yuval Lambert?" Michael asked after a brief silence, his expression frosty.

Upon hearing Yuval's name, my heart jolted, and I shot a furious look at him. "Did you investigate him, Michael Shaw?"

While it was a question, I was dead certain that I had never mentioned Yuval's name before him. Since he knew Yuval's name, the only possibility was that he had investigated him.

"So what if I had?"

Speaking in a placid voice, Michael nonchalantly glanced at me. However, I could distinctly sense the fury concealed within his gaze.

"How could you do that? What right do you have to investigate him?"

Although I had long since surmised it, the rage within me built into an inferno when I heard him admitting to it. It's my business to date Yuval, so what right does he have to investigate him? What's his relationship with me that he feels entitled to do so?

"Anna, are you reproaching me?"

Michael slammed on the brakes before staring at me with rage blazing in his eyes as he awaited my reply.

I knew that he was pissed off, but I no longer cared at that moment. He provoked me first, after all. And while I was mild-tempered, I had my limits as well.

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“Yes, I’m reproaching you! What has my relationship with Yuval got to do with you? You had no right to investigate him!” I again castigated Michael loudly while shooting daggers at him.

Admittedly, I have feelings for him. However, it doesn’t mean that he has free reign to interfere in my life! I had already decided to date Yuval, so I was naturally enraged that Michael investigated him.

“Don’t challenge me time and again, Anna. There is a limit to my patience!”

Michael’s face was grim, and his gaze glinted with anger as he stared at me.

“Stop the car. I’m getting out!”

To me, his current attitude was rather unreasonable; I had no idea what exactly he wanted. We agreed on an amicable parting, but everything he had been doing recently truly made my blood boil.

His handsome countenance was terrifyingly chilly, and he acted as though he didn’t hear me. Not only didn’t he stop the car, but he even accelerated.

At that moment, I noticed that he seemed to be heading to his house.

“Where are you taking me, Michael? I said I want to get out!”

I kept banging against the car door but to no avail. Right that very moment, I was seized by the urge to curse him out.

Argh! He’s really backing me into a corner here. I truly regret agreeing to his stipulation for the sake of two hundred thousand. My life would certainly be peaceful if I hadn’t agreed back then. But then again, he only gave me the money because of that stipulation. If I hadn’t agreed, he probably wouldn’t have given it to me.

“Anna, you’re the first woman to be in such a hurry to sever ties with me. And I guarantee you that you’ll also be the last!”

Michael’s low and terse voice rang out. He turned to look at me with a dangerous gleam hidden in his eyes.

My heart lurched, and I couldn't quite grasp the meaning of his words. Truly, he had been acting vastly out of character lately.

I didn't want to argue with him, so I kept urging myself to calm down. Since he saved Dad by giving me two hundred thousand back then, I must keep my temper in check.

"What exactly do you want, Michael?" I inquired mildly, doing my best to sound calm as I gazed at his profile.

"Listen here, Anna. You're my woman, and I'm the only one who can propose ending our relationship from now on," Michael asserted domineeringly.

While doing so, he didn't even deign to spare me a glance. Instead, he continued speeding on the road.

I was already suppressing my anger, so I almost blew my top upon hearing that.

"So, am I supposed to be friends with benefits with you for the rest of my life if you don't break off our relationship forever?" I demanded anxiously, staring at his profile while stifling my mounting panic.

"Half a year, then. I'll end our relationship after half a year. Besides, I'll compensate you when we break up."

Michael slowed the car, and his voice was no longer as indifferent as before.

Hearing that he would compensate me when we broke up, my brows furrowed. Honestly, I felt insulted.

Indeed, I deliberately seduced him for two hundred thousand back then, but I had no other choice because of my father's illness.

But now, he seemed to have cemented me in the ranks of a gold-digger. I might be unbothered if it were anyone else, but for some inexplicable reason, I was perturbed when such words came from him.

"I don't need your money. I only asked you for two hundred thousand because my father needed it for his treatment back then. But not now."

I regarded his profile with a frigid expression, my voice tinged with a hint of anger.

“That’s your choice. But as I said, our relationship is to continue for another half a year.”

With his face devoid of expression, Michael glanced at me and again repeated the stipulation he proposed earlier.

Well, half a year is indeed not a long time, but I’ve already decided to date Yuval now. What should I do about Yuval if I were to agree to his stipulation? I’ve finally found a suitable man whom I don’t mind marrying. So, if I don’t contact him for half a year, he might have long since gotten married!

“What should I do about Yuval, then? What if he has gotten married half a year later?”

I looked at him conflictedly. I didn’t want to agree to his stipulation, but for some reason, I didn’t want to decline it either.

“That’s your problem. Anyway, let me tell you this, Anna. My woman must be chaste!”

Michael was a very possessive man. In the past, he had warned me more than once that his woman must be chaste. And now, he was reminding me of that again.

Hah! He must be worried that I’ll sleep with Yuval. But even if he didn’t say that, I wasn’t planning on doing so, at least not before getting married.

“What if I say no?” I retorted, eyeing him in annoyance.

“Anna, you know I must have a way to ensure that you say yes. Do you want to try me?”

Surprisingly, my demurral didn’t antagonize Michael. Instead, his lips curved into a sneer. At his confident expression, panic struck me.

As I stared at his face, I was inexplicably unnerved. From my understanding of him thus far, he was an extremely crafty man. Since he said that, he definitely had a way to ensure that I complied.

I wanted to counter his threat imperiously, but it was glaringly obvious that I hadn’t the guts to do so.

At my silence, Michael’s lips curved into a smug smile. Turning to me, he looked at me with triumph in his gaze. “You have no room to refuse, Anna.”

Fury blazed within me, but I could merely glare at him since I couldn't object.

Nonetheless, Michael wasn't the slightest bit bothered. He continued driving, and in no time, the car came to a stop in front of his mansion.

Trailing behind him, I entered the mansion. I had been here once, so I was familiar with the place. But... why did he bring me to his house in the middle of the day?

"Why did you bring me to your house, Michael?" I couldn't help asking as I stared at his back.

"Why do you think I brought you to my house? Of course, it's to have some fun between the sheets! Anna, don't tell me you've forgotten our deal just after a few days?"

When we had gone into the living room, Michael blatantly looked me up and down, his gaze blazing with intense desire.

His words reminded me of how he almost forced himself on me the previous time, causing a sliver of aversion to well within me.

"It's broad daylight now. Are you really that desperate that you want to do it right now?"

It's the middle of the day now, and we're at his house to boot. Most importantly, there are two housekeepers at his house! So, they'll definitely hear us if we truly do the deed!

Love from My Dominant Boss

Chapter 67

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"Is there a certain timing to have fun between the sheets?"

Michael turned to me with a quirked brow, his voice colored with suggestiveness.

As I clocked the burning desire in his eyes, my heart jolted, and I promptly averted my gaze.

"But there are other people in your house. Aren't you afraid that they'll hear us?"

"This is my house, so what if other people hear us? But well, if you're afraid that they'll hear you, you can keep your moans to yourself."

Michael's lips curved into a smirk. In the next moment, he stalked over with his profound gaze pinned on me.

His eyes were as profound as a bottomless whirlpool that I couldn't help being drawn in.

"M-Michael..." I started stammering even as I instinctively backed a few steps away.

Without giving me an opportunity to speak further, he bent and scooped me up. Then, he swiftly strode toward the second floor.

The moment we arrived at the master bedroom, he placed me on the huge bed. Right after, he mounted me and pinned me underneath him.

Lying on the bed, anxiety swamped me as I gazed at his handsome countenance a mere inch away. Although it was no longer my first time, my heart inexorably went into overdrive every single time.

"Before half a year has passed, Anna, your body belongs to me alone!" he proclaimed in a deep voice, leaning close to my ear.

Upon hearing that, my brows furrowed. I was just about to counter, but he had already captured my lips before I could even open my mouth.

His kiss was exceedingly possessive. At that very moment, he appeared rather frantic, his previous gentleness gone without a trace.

Abhorring such a frenzied kiss, I pushed at him in aversion. Alas, my resistance seemed to be making him all the more wilder.

He kept kissing me, his lips traveling to my neck and further down. Soon, he got impatient and ripped my clothes off me.

At that, I glared at him irately. Ugh! How could he be so savage to rip my clothes? What on earth am I going to wear after this?

With my mood entirely ruined, I wanted to shove him away. However, he didn't give me the chance to do so, roaming his hands all over me and igniting my desire to a fervent pitch.

Surprisingly, he wasn't as anxious as before. This time, he was extremely patient, teasing me relentlessly as he admired my response.

It was broad daylight then, so he had no problems seeing my every single reaction to his touch clearly. As I looked at him with glazed eyes, I could make out the smirk playing at his lips, so I averted my gaze in embarrassment.

Discomfited, I then turned my face away to hide it from his gaze. After all, having a man scrutinize my every expression at such a time was truly mortifying.

As though realizing my shyness, the curve of Michael's lips deepened, and mirth crept into his eyes.

No doubt, most men relished the sight of a woman moaning under their ministrations since it would be immensely gratifying to their egos. In that, Michael was no exception.

By then, I was already squirming impatiently. When I saw that he didn't seem inclined to begin, I glowered at him in chagrin.

Damn it, he must be deliberately torturing me today! He knows full well that I can't take much teasing after having abstained for so many days, yet he deliberately dragged out the foreplay. Never had he been so patient when we did it often in the past!

Seeing my restlessness, smugness showed in Michael's eyes.

Leaning close to my ear, he murmured, "Hmm? Are you getting eager for me?"

"Hurry up if you're going to do it, Michael! You're purposely tormenting me!"

Realizing that he was deliberately teasing me, I shot daggers at him. My voice was tinged with a hint of disgruntlement.

Nonetheless, my voice sounded weak to my ears since I was then aroused by his touch. As such, it seemed as though I was enticing him instead.

"Anna, you were resisting me earlier, yet you're now eager for me?"

His voice was so tender that one would melt into a puddle. He wasn't at all angered at my outburst, for his mesmerizing smile remained on his lips as he caressed my face with his other hand.

"Are you going to do it, Michael? If not, let go of me!"

"Beg me. I'll satisfy you if you beg me."

As his long and slender fingers brushed across my face, it didn't feel hot but tingly.

When I heard him telling me to beg him, the rage within me surged to the forefront at once.

"You're a pervert, Michael Shaw!" I snapped coldly, glaring at him furiously.

Hah! He actually wants to be beg him? Why should I?

"Aren't you eager to have me right now? I'm the only one who can satisfy you, Anna," he asserted with a dark look in his eyes.

The more he spoke, the hotter my fury blazed. He's truly a pervert! Argh! He's really shameless to demand that I beg him!

"Michael, you've gone too far this time! I have my dignity as well!"

While I always chose to compromise with him, I still had my dignity. And begging him was something I would never do.

As soon as my words fell, Michael's expression darkened significantly. His gaze blazed with barely constrained anger as he stared at me.

"Will you say the same thing if it's Yuval Lambert?"

He was staring right into my eyes, sounding interrogative as he said that.

I had no idea why he suddenly mentioned Yuval, but fury instantly engulfed me upon hearing that.

"What do you mean by that, Michael Shaw?"

What does our relationship have to do with Yuval? Although I've decided to date him, we've never done anything intimate, not even holding hands, much less sleeping together!

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“Is there still a need for pretense in front of me, Anna? Before you get acquainted with Yuval Lambert, you were very enthusiastic in bed with me. But now that you’ve got another man, you’re starting to resist, huh?”

Michael’s voice was cold, and the desire in his eyes had long since vanished without a trace. At that moment, I couldn’t discern any emotion from his eyes as he stared at me.

At his repeated mentions of Yuval, the wrath within me skyrocketed. What the hell is wrong with him? How has Yuval offended him? Besides, nothing happened between me and Yuval, so he has no right to disparage me like that!

“Michael Shaw, let me tell you this. My relationship with Yuval isn’t as filthy as you think. We’re dating with the goal of marriage, unlike my friends-with-benefits relationship with you!”

I looked at him in derision while glowering indignantly.

Regardless of whether I have any feelings for Yuval, the fact remains that we’re dating for marriage and not for pleasures of the flesh! Plus, he’s really a gentleman. It’s almost a month since we got acquainted, but he has never crossed any lines with me.

“Oh, you’re defending him now, huh? Anna, don’t you forget that you’re still my woman for half a year starting today!”

Men had always been possessive creatures, especially when two men were fighting for the same woman. They would never back down as their domineering nature reared its head.

Despite my ire, I had no retort since I indeed agreed to his stipulation earlier.

At my silence, he threw me a look before he again started stimulating me. However, my arousal had largely dissipated after our row just now, and I didn’t feel much anymore despite his roaming hands then as my mood had been wholly ruined.

This time, he was no longer as patient as before. He merely did some foreplay perfunctorily and went straight to intercourse.

“Stop it, Michael! Stop!”

Placing my hands against his chest, I wanted to push him away, but he simply pinned me like a massive boulder and refused to move.

Conversely, my resistance had him going increasingly wilder.

And so, I was forced to endure his frenzied thrusts. No matter how painful it was for me, he didn't slow down the slightest bit. At that moment, I finally realized that I was only a tool for him to satiate his desires.

Despite having known each other for such a long time, he had no feelings for me. The only reason he sought me out was nothing more than to satisfy his physical urges.

About half an hour later, he was finally done.

"Are you done with me? If so, I'm leaving."

Enduring the pain at the juncture of my thighs, I sat up and straightening my clothes. Right then, I didn't want to see him for even a second longer.

"Are you in such a hurry to leave because you want to go and meet Yuval Lambert?"

Michael remained sprawled on the bed without stopping me, but the words out of his mouth enraged me once again.

He had been bringing up Yuval time and again ever since we met today, irritating me greatly. Damn it, what has my relationship with Yuval got to do with him? Why the hell is he harping on it?

"That's none of your business. I won't forget our deal."

Not wanting to argue with him anymore, I stood up after saying that coldly.

I wanted to leave after putting on my clothes, but the buttons on my shirt had been ripped off, causing my shirt to gape open.

Thus, I had no way of leaving when I was barely decent. Recalling Michael's frenzy back then, I grew all the more incensed, and I even wondered whether he did it intentionally.

"Aren't you in a hurry to leave? Why are you not leaving?"

Sitting up, Michael stared at me with a smirk, his eyes gleaming triumphantly.

"Do you think I can leave like this? Michael Shaw, was it deliberate on your part? How am I supposed to leave when my shirt is now barely in one piece?"

I plopped onto the edge of the bed. Irritation inundated me as I looked at the missing buttons on my shirt that could barely cover me up.

“Who would be able to have so much self-control when inflamed with passion? Just take the initiative to strip next time, then I won’t be doing any damage to your clothes.”

Instead of getting angered by my censure, Michael wore a smile on his face.

“Ugh! Why are you smiling? How am I supposed to leave in such a state?”

As I shot daggers at him, I was seized by the urge to strangle him. He was so rough with me earlier, yet it’s as though he has forgotten all about it now! How utterly capricious!

“Don’t leave, then.” Getting out of bed, Michael slipped on his shirt gracefully. Then, he turned to me. “I’m hungry, so go and cook something.”

“What did you just say? Cook? Why should I cook for you?”

I rolled my eyes at him and remained seated on the bed without twitching a muscle.

Why should I now cook for him when he wrecked me just now? Am I that cheap that I’ll still fall over myself to please him?

“You can choose not to do so, but you won’t be having any dinner either. You won’t be able to leave today, anyway.”

When he said that, he had already dressed. He then left the bedroom without a backward glance, leaving me in the room alone.

I waited for a long time, but he never came back.

Don’t tell me he’s really planning to starve me? At that thought, apprehension gripped me. I was so livid at John this noon that I hadn’t even had lunch. Thus, I’m going to expire if I skip dinner as well!

At that moment, I stole a peek at his dressing room. Then, I got to my feet. After a furtive glance at the door to ascertain that he hadn’t yet returned, I sneaked into the dressing room.

I initially thought that it was merely a tiny space, but I then realized that it was enormous after stepping foot in it. In fact, it was even more spacious than the bedroom.

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Chapter 69

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The clothes hanging in the dressing room were all suits and shirts. Even the shoes in there were almost all black leather shoes.

Well, well... almost all his clothes are suits. In fact, I don't see any casual clothes at all.

I randomly snagged one of Michael's white shirts and promptly put it on.

My shirt wasn't fit to be worn anymore, so I could only make do with his shirt. After all, I couldn't possibly go about his house in my birthday suit.

His shirt was very big, so it fell to mid thigh on me. While it appeared rather odd, it was far better than my torn shirt.

When I went downstairs, Michael was sitting in the living room with his legs crossed elegantly. As I looked at him from afar, I could sense the innate regality he exuded.

Hearing my footsteps, he glanced over his shoulder. The moment he saw that I was wearing his shirt, his alluring brows creased deeply.

Gazing into his eyes, I suddenly remembered that he had mysophobia. Could it be that the look in his eyes now is of reproach because I'm wearing his shirt?

"My shirt is torn, so I have no choice but to wear yours temporarily. But don't worry, for I'll definitely wash it before returning it to you," I hastily explained, looking at him anxiously.

I was rather diffident since I took it without his permission.

Despite that, he was still eyeing me up and down. I couldn't fathom his thoughts, and precisely for that reason, I felt all the edgier.

"You know what, I'll change out of it right away."

Hanging my head, I spun around to go upstairs and change out of the shirt after saying that morosely.

How stingy! Is this necessary when I just wanted to borrow his shirt for a while? It's of no consequence to him!

When I was about to reach the staircase, Michael's voice drifted over. "Just leave it on since you're already wearing it. I didn't say anything."

His voice was placid as he spoke. Whirling around, I looked at him in delight as an inexplicable thrill shot through me.

"Why are you still standing there? Hurry up and cook! Or are you waiting for me to cook?"

As I started walking over to Michael, his voice rang out again.

Stopping short, I threw him a disgruntled look before grouching, "Why must I cook when you've got housekeepers?"

Michael regarded me impatiently. "You're really mouthy, Anna! The housekeepers have the day off, so you go and cook!"

Since he had said as much, I had no excuse to refuse anymore.

Heaving a sigh, I dragged my feet to the kitchen.

When I reached the refrigerator in the kitchen, I opened it, only to be greeted by bare shelves that held only tomatoes and eggs.

"Say, do you not eat usually? There are too few ingredients in the fridge," I said to Michael in exasperation after glancing at the ingredients in the refrigerator.

"I rarely eat at home since I'm entertaining clients almost every day," Michael, who was drinking coffee in the living room, answered nonchalantly upon hearing my question.

At his reply, I speechlessly curled my lips. He's entertaining clients almost every day? I wonder how his perfect figure came to be when he's not eating properly every day, I grumbled inwardly.

However, I was also at a loss right then. What can I cook with a few tomatoes and eggs? I can't be making scrambled eggs with tomatoes for the two of us, can I?

After wracking my brains in the kitchen for what seemed an eternity, I finally decided on my signature dish – noodles.

When I was swamped with work in the past, I used to cook noodles since I didn't want to spend too much time and effort on cooking.

After making scrambled eggs with tomatoes, I then cooked two bowls of noodles and carried them to the dining table.

As I slipped off the apron, I uttered mildly to Michael, who was reading in the living room, "Alright, dinner is ready."

Upon hearing my voice, he put down the book in his hands and strode toward me.

With the corners of his lips tilted into a faint arc, he looked particularly captivating.

But when he reached me and glimpsed the food on the table, his face fell.

"Anna, is this all you cooked for dinner after spending hours in the kitchen? You only cooked one dish?"

He gaped at me incredulously while pointing at one of the bowls of noodles, his voice filled with disbelief.

"Why are you still asking when you can clearly see for yourself? I didn't want to cook such a simple fare either, but there's literally nothing in your fridge," I griped, pursing my lips.

Then, I shifted a bowl to my front and poured half of the scrambled eggs with tomatoes into the noodles.

Seeing that, Michael's brows scrunched even deeper, and he eyed me with disdain.

"What are you doing, Anna? Is this sow feed that you mixed everything?"

What? Sow feed? How dare he say that? I bustled about in the kitchen for hours, yet he said the food I cooked is like sow feed? He has really gone overboard!

"Michael Shaw, what did you mean by that? You should've just told me if you didn't want to eat instead of wasting my time!"

Despite the abysmal fare, I prepared it with much care. For that reason, chagrin flooded me when he scoffed at the food.

"Is it me who doesn't want to eat or you who deliberately sabotaged me? How am I supposed to eat when this is all you cooked for dinner?"

Crossing his arms, Michael stared at me in vexation.

In response, I furiously shot him a glare. Not wanting to bicker with him any further, I sat down and started eating.

I hadn't even had lunch after bustling about all day, so my stomach had been growling ages ago. As such, I was already content having a bowl of noodles with tomatoes and eggs.

When Michael saw that I had started eating, he continued regarding me with his brows deeply knitted together and contempt on his face. But after a few minutes, he started wavering upon seeing my relish.

Sitting down across from me, he stared at the remaining scrambled eggs with tomatoes as though contemplating whether he should eat.

"It doesn't taste as awful as you imagine. Try it if you don't believe me," I urged with a raised brow.

Hearing that, he eyed me dubiously. A long while later, he decided to mix the eggs and tomatoes with the noodles as I did.

At the sight of his capitulation despite his disdainful expression, my mood inexplicably took a turn for the better.

Michael took a forkful of noodles and stared at it for a long while before opening his mouth and tentatively trying a bite. Perhaps it was truly not as bad as he imagined, for he soon started eating with gusto.

He ate faster than me, yet his movements were no less elegant. It was his first time eating my cooking, and for some inexplicable reason, a sense of warmth suffused me.

The corners of my lips lifted slightly. Subsequently, I lowered my head and resumed eating silently. In no time, both our bowls were empty.

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Chapter 70

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I washed the bowls and put them away while Michael sat at the dining table with his gaze locked on me.

Walking over to him, I stared at him. After a moment's hesitation, I murmured, "Why don't you drive me home now that we'd both had dinner?"

In truth, I didn't want him to drive me home at all. Nonetheless, I didn't want people to look at me speculatively either as I traversed the streets in his shirt.

"Did I say you're allowed to leave tonight? Stay the night here and leave tomorrow."

I initially thought he would agree to drive me home, but to my surprise, he wasn't planning to let me leave at all.

"No. I still have to go to work tomorrow morning. Besides, I have something important to tell Natalie tonight."

I must tell Natalie about my conversation with that scumbag, John Young, today. I won't allow her to be hurt any further. That scumbag isn't worthy of her love at all, so I've got to expose his true colors as soon as possible so that she won't be fooled anymore!

"I'm also going to the office tomorrow, so I'll drive you. As for whatever you want to tell Natalie, just tell her tomorrow night."

Although I was anxious to tell Natalie about the matter, Michael wasn't at all bothered, showing no signs of relenting.

Livid, I frowned and glared at him furiously. Jeez, he's always so domineering, not allowing others an opportunity to decline at all!

"Michael Shaw!" I called out his name in frustration, wanting to argue further.

"That's enough. Why are you in such a hurry when it's not a matter of life and death?"

His gaze turned aggravated upon seeing that I was in such a hurry to leave, no doubt growing testy at my insistence.

"But I really have something very important to tell her!"

I looked at him anxiously, hoping that he would have a crisis of conscience and allow me to leave.

However, reality proved that I regarded him too highly. He didn't give a fig whether I had anything to do, for he only cared about whether I was going to stay the night.

“Do you believe that I’ll take you right here and now if you dare say another word, Anna?”

Frowning, Michael gazed at me in annoyance.

Getting to his feet, he stalked toward me. All at once, panic struck me, and I swiftly backed away.

Despite my impatience to leave, the aversion within me grew when I recalled his high-handedness toward me that afternoon.

Once again, I chose to compromise. Inwardly, I resolved to tell Natalie about John tomorrow.

Therefore, I stayed at Michael’s mansion that night. And in the middle of the night, we inevitably ended up in a tangle of limbs.

That was precisely why he asked me to stay the night. After all, my relationship with him was only limited to the physical sense.

When I woke up early the next morning, he was no longer sleeping beside me. That was the first time we ever spent the entire night together.

For some reason, there was no awkwardness despite it being my first time sleeping with a man next to me. On the contrary, I slumbered deeply.

However, a sliver of disappointment crept into me upon seeing that he was long gone while I was still lying on the huge bed in his bedroom.

Putting on his shirt, I went downstairs. By then, the housekeeper had already prepared breakfast.

When the housekeeper saw me descending the stairs, a flash of surprise flittered across her eyes. But immediately after, a smile bloomed on her face. She was up in years, so it probably took her no time to figure out what I did with Michael last night.

At the comprehension in her eyes, my face flushed from embarrassment, and I hurried over to Michael.

Sitting down across from him, I started eating breakfast. Nevertheless, I was uneasy with the housekeeper standing at the side.

After eating a few bites, I all but lost my appetite. At that moment, I only wanted to leave as soon as possible.

Fortunately, Michael was going to the office today, so I wasn't worried that he would continue keeping me here. He was the CEO of a huge corporation, after all, so he couldn't be lazing around every day.

"Please drive me home now. I've got to hurry back and change. Otherwise, I'm going to be late for work," I couldn't help reminding him even as I watched him slip on his jacket elegantly after having finished breakfast.

"I'll drive you to the office. I've already prepared an attire for you, so go and change," Michael ordered mildly, pointing at a box on the couch.

At that moment, his expression was so calm and unruffled that it was bereft of emotion. He looked like an entirely different person from the passionate man in bed last night.

He was as wild as a beast between the sheets but cold as ice during other times, switching between two extremes.

Staring at the box on the couch, I hesitated for a moment before taking it.

Since he wasn't planning on driving me home, I had no choice but to change into whatever he prepared for me. He left me no room to decline the offer.

In the box was a light green dress. The fabric felt silky smooth and comfortable.

Hmm... this looks like a high-end dress. Oh well, that makes sense. He's a CEO, so he probably won't be able to bring himself to buy something cheap by the roadside.

I went to the bathroom and changed into the dress. It fit me perfectly as though tailored for me. Surprise flooded me that he knew my size. After all, our relationship wasn't so intimate that we discussed such a thing.

When I descended the stairs after changing, a glimmer of marvel flashed across Michael's eyes as he stared at me. His lips curved into a faint arc.

"Not bad. This dress suits you well."

Michael's scrutiny remained on me, his gaze filled with satisfaction.

"How much was this dress? I'll pay you back."

Despite knowing that the dress was definitely costly, I decided to pay him back.

Honestly speaking, I was the kind of person who usually loathed mooching off others. Besides, the dress was from him, and our relationship made it so that I couldn't quite bring myself to accept any gifts from him.

"It's a gift from me, so I won't be asking you to pay me back," Michael countered coolly with an arched brow.

"No, I insist. Our relationship is merely that of friends with benefits, so you don't need to give me any gifts."

Delight imbued me upon hearing that the dress was a gift from him, but I simply couldn't accept it because of our relationship.

"Anna, you're certain you want to pay me back?"

His face darkened at my repeated demurrals, and his gaze was stained with a hint of ire.

"How could I allow you to spend money on buying me gifts when we're not dating? Well? How much was this dress?"

"The price is in the box, so see for yourself."

His expression was dour, and his voice had also turned much colder.

Ignoring whatever he might be thinking, I opened the box again and glimpsed a receipt. But the moment I saw the price indicated on it, I almost had a heart attack. Regret swamped me for having insisted on paying him back.