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Just when I thought that Michael was going to leave me high and dry, he suddenly wrapped an arm around my waist and flashed me a faint smile.

"Sorry, I went a bit too crazy that night. Are you feeling better now?"

A layer of sensuality blanketed his face, and his voice was so tender that I almost melted into a puddle.

Undeniably, I spaced out for a moment when such a handsome man gazed at me with tenderness etched on his face.

But as soon as I registered the meaning of his words, my face instantly flushed bright red.

Good heavens! How could he be so blunt!

"Uh... Ah, I'm much better now."

I chuckled embarrassingly. His eyes were so profound that I didn't quite dare look into them again.

"I'll take care not to hurt you again next time."

He reached out and tucked my long hair behind my ear, looking at me with all the gentleness in the world.

For some inexplicable reason, his touch flustered me, and my face went red.

Huh? What did he just say? Next time? There won't be any next time, okay? I've given you my first time, yet you're talking about the next time?

Inwardly, I cursed him out, but in front of Justin and Mabel, I had to feign an expression of bliss.

At that moment, I could clearly see the change in Justin's expression. Fury seemingly colored the look in his eyes as he stared at me.

Mabel, on the other hand, was incredulous when she saw me nestled in Michael's arms, her gaze teeming with suspicion.

"Anna Garcia, are you saying that he is your man?"

Michael was far above Justin both in terms of financial capability and looks. Although Mabel had no idea of his identity, she could tell from his aura alone that he was in another league altogether.

"Why? Are you regretting the fact that you seduced Justin instead of him?"

With a sneer on my face, I looked at her coldly.

Justin's expression changed, but he took two steps forward.

"Mr. Shaw," he greeted deferentially.

"What's the ruckus about, Mr. Xenakis?" Michael inquired placidly, casting a glance at him.

Justin threw me a look, but his expression turned awkward upon hearing Michael's question, probably not quite certain how he should answer it.

I was now in Michael's arms. While I had no inkling of Justin's feelings at that very moment, I was imbued with glee.

"N-Nothing much. It was just a personal matter. How come you are free to visit the mall today, Mr. Shaw?"

Probably feeling somewhat self-conscious before Michael, Justin immediately changed the subject.

"Do you know this man, Justin? Is he really Anna's boyfriend?"

Mabel had always been a prideful person, so she probably felt chagrined upon seeing Justin bowing and scraping before Michael. Immediately, she strode over to us.

"What's wrong with you? There's no way he's her boyfriend! I've never even heard her mentioning him," she continued.

She pointed at Michael before shifting her gaze to me, her face contorted with envy.

Not only was Michael more good-looking than Justin, but he also had a far superior aura. For that reason, she was naturally disgruntled to see that he was my man.

"That's enough, Mabel!"

Justin tugged at her arm, his brows scrunched together deeply.

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"Why are you tugging at me? I'm only speaking the truth! I am dead certain that Anna is still in love with you! I bet she's just resentful at getting dumped, so she simply found a man to act as her boyfriend!"

"Zip it, Mabel!" Justin snapped the moment her words fell.

His voice seemed to be threaded with a hint of ire.

"You actually snapped at me, Justin? Do you still harbor affection for Anna? Do you not love me anymore?"

Mabel's gaze instantly turned aggrieved, and tears shimmered in her eyes as though she had been greatly wronged.

At the sight of her pitiful expression, the corners of my mouth turned up in a sneer. Well, well... She truly loves playing the victim, huh? Maybe it's this expression of hers that entranced Justin. After all, men love women who are weak, fragile, and delicate. Conversely, I'm not that kind of woman.

Dropping his hand from my waist, Michael sauntered over to Justin.

After taking a look at Mabel, he remarked mockingly, "Mr. Xenakis, I think your taste in women needs to be improved!"

Whoa! I didn't expect him to be so harsh, considering his taciturn demeanor. I could tell that Justin was completely mortified.

At his humiliation, indescribable glee flooded me.

"I've got something to do, so please excuse me, Mr. Shaw."

Justin was an egotistical person, so Mabel's shrewish outburst earlier embarrassed him greatly. After saying that, he left while dragging Mabel along.

"See? Any man Anna finds is better than a cheating scumbag like you!"

Natalie simply had to have the last word before they left.

When they had disappeared from sight, I could no longer keep up the act, and the smile on my face faded.

Glancing at Michael, I hesitated for a moment before walking over to him. "Thank you for playing along with me just now."

"Tell your friend to leave first. I've got something to discuss with you," Michael stated coldly after throwing a glance at Natalie beside me.

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"There's nothing to discuss between the two of us. Please excuse me if there's nothing else."

For some reason, I couldn't help feeling flustered every time I locked gazes with his dark and profound eyes. It just felt as though I might get sucked in anytime.

Taking Natalie's hand, I made to leave. I only went wild with him that night because I was tipsy. But now that I wasn't under the influence of alcohol, I didn't have the guts or temerity to speak with him any further.

"Um... I'll leave the two of you to talk. I suddenly remembered that I've got something to do, so I'll be leaving first, Anna."

However, Natalie had the opposite thought. After saying that, she shook off my hand and walked away, leaving me there alone.

Just when I was about to take off, Michael suddenly grabbed my wrist.

Dragging me to a corner of the stairs, he pinned me against the wall.

We were so close that I could sense the masculine aura radiating off him. I was intoxicated that night, so besides knowing that it was him, I was oblivious to everything else. Now that I was interacting with him at such a close distance, my heart was pounding wildly.

"M-Michael, what are you doing?"

His gaze was pinned on me intently. Feeling inexplicably flustered, I wanted to flee, but my legs felt as though they were shackled to the ground and simply wouldn't budge.

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"What's your relationship with Justin Xenakis?"

Finally, Michael spoke, but the look in his eyes was interrogative as he stared at me.

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Hearing the name "Justin Xenakis," my heart inexorably clenched. Nonetheless, I had already scraped through the most unbearable period, so I could conceal my anguish well.

"I don't have a relationship with him. We're strangers."

In the past, he was the most important person to me, the man I was going to entrust the rest of my life to. However, we're now merely strangers.

"Do you think I'd believe that, Anna Garcia?"

His gaze turned cold as he looked at me, and his voice was stained with a hint of anger.

At his words, my heart skipped a beat. How did he know my name? I don't think I've ever told him that!

"How did you know my name? Did I tell you?" I asked softly, looking up at his riveting eyes.

"Do you think it's difficult for me to investigate someone? Also, the woman with Justin Xenakis earlier mentioned your name."

He retorted in a deep and sensual voice. With a frown on his face, he eyed me as though I was an idiot.

"I... I've got to go. It's a pure coincidence that we met again today. Also, thank you for your help just now."

Having said that, I whirled around to leave. Alas, Michael pinned me against the wall again. Propping both hands on the wall, he leaned toward me and enveloped me in his embrace.

At that very moment, I could clearly sense how fast my heart was beating. After all, his handsome countenance was merely an inch away from me. It would be bizarre if I didn't feel anything at all in the face of such a handsome man.

Nonetheless, I felt that it was only because I was unaccustomed to having contact with a man other than Justin. During the past seven years I had been with him, I had kept a distance from the opposite sex. Thus, I was presently inept at dealing with men.

"Ah, you wanted to leave just like that?" he said in a deep and alluring voice as he slowly closed the gap between us.

Every single syllable out of his mouth was tugging at my heartstrings, and my heart couldn't help hammering.

"W-What do you want from me?"

As he drew increasingly close, I didn't even dare to breathe.

"Well? Are you playing hard to get?"

His gaze abruptly turned cold, and the interrogative tone in his voice grew all the more distinct.

I was initially a tad flustered, but the fury within me instantly surged upon hearing his question. What the hell does he mean by that? I'm not playing hard to get!

"I don't understand what you're saying. I'm sorry, but I've got something to do, so I've got to leave."

I forcefully pushed Michael's arm away before I stalked off.

Gah! He's definitely not right in the head. When did I play hard to get? What on earth was he talking about?

I thought he wouldn't allow me to leave so easily, but surprisingly, he didn't stop me anymore.

Never had I felt so desolate as I trudged along the street by myself. The scene that had transpired at the mall earlier remained lingering in my mind. I didn't know how I could forget Justin completely and no longer feel any pain from his betrayal.

When I returned to Natalie's house, she started hounding me with questions about Michael as soon as I stepped across the threshold.

"Quick, tell me everything! What's your relationship with the man we bumped into at the mall today? Was he the one you spent the night with the other day?"

She was an incredibly smart person, so she actually guessed the gist of it without me saying anything.

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At Natalie's repeated interrogation, I had no choice but to admit that Michael was my one-night stand.

"Anna, I think Michael Shaw is quite a decent choice. You'll definitely be better off with him than the scumbag, Justin."

Probably hoping that I would get over my breakup sooner, Natalie started planting rotten ideas into my mind.

Shaking my head in exasperation, I lamented her impressive imagination inwardly.

We only had a one-night stand, and there's nothing going on between us. Besides, we're from different worlds. He's a big shot who can shake up the entire city with a flick of his hand and has assets all over the country. Everyone knows that he's an invisible tycoon though he keeps a rather low profile.

"It's impossible between Michael Shaw and me, so don't let your imagination wander."

After saying that, I headed back to my room to rest.

"He's Justin's immediate superior. Didn't you see how Justin bowed and scraped like a commoner to royalty when he saw him today? Ah, just the thought of you dating him feels gratifying!"

Natalie's comment halted me in my tracks. For a brief moment, I was indeed tempted. Admittedly, I wanted revenge against Justin, for anger and hatred blazed within me whenever I saw him with Mabel.

However, it was only a fleeting thought that was gone in the next moment.

Michael Shaw and I have no interaction at all, nor do I have any idea why he was at the bar that day. Oh well, perhaps rich people have their own troubles as well. Anyway, that's none of my business. The most important thing now is to get into the right mindset again and find another job!

My previous workplace was too far from Justin's office, so I handed in my resignation letter. Initially, I was planning to find a suitable job at a nearer place after getting married.

Alas, not only did the wedding fall through, but I also lost my job. I was probably the most pathetic woman in the world, having sacrificed everything for the sake of a scumbag...

Another two days went by, and I gradually got over the breakup with Natalie's persistent counseling. It finally dawned on me that it wasn't worth feeling anguished over a jerk who betrayed me.

In the past few days, my life became peaceful once again. I felt that I was ready to start afresh.

On this particular day, I woke up early in the morning and washed up. As I was going for an interview, I changed into a formal dress before applying light makeup to appear more presentable and competent.

I majored in copywriting, so I was going to attend an interview with an advertising company.

When I arrived at the biggest advertising company in Avenport, I stared at the towering building. Sweeping my gaze from the bottom to the top, a sense of dizziness assailed me.

Previously, I was working in a small advertising company, so my bonus was meager even when my performance was outstanding. I knew that I would only have better prospects if I made it in a bigger corporation, and that was why I chose to interview with this company.

There was only one flaw, though—Justin was also working here. Initially, I didn't want to choose this company, but for the sake of my future, I endured the revulsion of having to work with that jerk in the future and came here for an interview.

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I knew that Michael owned this advertising company, but since this was just his side business, I did not expect to see him here. The chances of meeting that busy man were close to none.

My focus then was to get this job and rise through the ranks. I had to stop mopping around and carve a future for myself.

With my qualifications and experience, I was confident that I could get into any regular company. But this was Joyful Success Advertisements we were talking about. They had some of the industry's best employee benefits. Naturally, the hiring process was rigorous as well, so there was no saying whether or not I would be hired.

After the interview, I felt slightly out of sorts. For just a side business, the company was massive. Never had I expected to see thousands of employees working here.

Instinctively, I recalled Michael's face. Despite only being in his early thirties, he already had tons of assets under his name. I simply could not phantom how rich he was. He's probably the richest guy I've met in my entire life.

But that was none of my business. I had but one goal, which was to get hired here.

As I walked down the streets, I prayed fervently that I would get accepted. However, my prayers were cut short as a car started honking repeatedly from behind me. The sounds would have irritated anyone nearby.

"Anna Garcia!" It was a voice I would recognize even in the depths of hell.

While pretending not to hear him, I increased my pace. I never wanted to see this scumbag ever again.

"Anna, stop right there!" With just a few strides, Justin was already in front of me, looking displeased.

"What are you doing? Get out of my way." I shot him a steely look.

"I have something to ask you." There was a hint of anxiousness in his voice.

"How unfortunate. I have nothing to discuss with you." Our relationship was over, and there was no need for me to answer him.

Who the hell does he think he is to order me around?

Then, I went around to get past him.

Before I could walk any further, he grabbed my arms tightly. "What's your relationship with Mr. Shaw? Why were you being so chummy with him at the mall the other day? Also, what did he mean when he said he would be gentler the next time? Did you sleep with him?" Nearing the end, Justin was practically shouting, anger written across his face as though he was the one who had been cheated on.

I smiled coldly before rebutting, "Is my relationship with Michael or whether I slept with him any of your business? Don't you think you're meddling too much?" From the moment he betrayed me, we were already strangers.

"Did you or did you not sleep with him? Since when did you become such an easy woman? Was the innocent side you showed me a lie all along?" His accusive eyes were filled with rage as they bored into mine.