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"Sure. Please, do continue." Although my gut instinct was telling me that nothing good would come out of this, I still kept my tone as pleasant as possible.

It never crossed my mind that I would lose control and rage at him the next moment.

"Anna, if you can think it through and agree to my previous request, I'll let you have as many leaves as you want. Even if you can't come to the office for a whole month, I would still instruct the accounting department to pay your monthly salary. How does that sound? Are you willing to give it a second thought?"

My face fell the moment I heard his disgusting words. At the peak of my fury, I rejected him at once without sparing any thought and snapped at him, "I would never accept it!"

What a repulsive man! How dare he says this to me! Is he trying to make me curse at him?

"I'm going out of my way to give you a chance here, Anna, don't get on my nerves. Before you turn down my offer again, have you thought about the consequences? It's a piece of cake for me to fire anyone. Do you still want to continue working for this company?" Upon hearing his threat, I could not hold back my rage any longer.

"I didn't do anything wrong. What right do you have to fire me? Are you doing so just because I'm reluctant to spend the night with you? It's really a great shame for Joyful Success to have such a shameless employee like you to tarnishes the company's reputation!" I yelled at him.

As a hard-headed woman, I could never accept being threatened by others. After being threatened by Conrad so many times, I finally had had enough. Even though the threat of being fired loomed over me, I was determined to lash out at him.

Conrad was seemingly dumbfounded at the other end of the line. He never expected that I would have the audacity to yell at him. After he recollected himself, he bellowed,

"Anna Garcia, how dare you yell at me! Do you believe that I can get you fired right this moment?"

I rolled my eyes and sneered, "Is that so? It's really my misfortune to have such a repulsive superior like you! Apart from looking old and unsightly, you're even a pervert who likes to target young ladies! Don't you have any self-awareness or sense of shame? In what world would a woman be willing to sleep with a disgusting and repulsive man like you?"

Now that things had come to this, I decided to be true to myself and I couldn't care less that I had just burned my bridges.

It doesn't matter how rich he was because just the thought of touching that old and perverted man could give me nausea, much less asking me to sleep with him.

"How dare you say that I'm a repulsive man? Anna Garcia, from tomorrow onwards, you don't have to come to the office anymore. You are fired!" the man blasted, infuriated by the utter disdain in my tone.

"I won't leave without any formal notification from the HR department. I will still go to the office as usual tomorrow morning!" I enunciated every single word coldly and hung up right away.

Now that I had vented out all my frustrations, I was finally able to cheer up and heaved a sigh of relief. After all the contemptuous words from my colleagues and the never-ending work from my ill-minded superior, it had long since become unbearable to me.

I glanced obliquely at Michael, who was seated motionless beside me. To my surprise, there were not the slightest bit of changes in his expression, it was as if he had turned a deaf ear to my phone conversation.

What's with him? With his intelligence, he should be able to guess what Conrad was asking for based on our argument earlier. So why is he not reacting at all?

Does this mean that he doesn't mind at all? I was upset at the thought but upon further consideration, I could understand why he wouldn't care. After all, we were just partners in bed.

After cooling my head off, a wave of anxiety started to well up within me as I was suddenly regretful of my impetuousness for blurting out all the words a while ago. What if I'm really fired and asked to leave at once tomorrow?

Panic-stricken, I knitted my brows and wondered if I should rectify the situation by giving Conrad another call to take back my words. After all, having this job was really important to me.

I took out my phone and stared at Conrad's phone number hesitantly. Just when I was in a dilemma on whether I should give him a call to make an apology, Michael finally broke the silence. "Where's your imposing aura a while ago? You're starting to worry only now? I never knew you were such a coward, Anna Garcia."

At the sight of Michael who was smirking at me, I retorted, "Are you happy seeing that I'm in this kind of situation? I might get fired right away tomorrow and become jobless. Is that what you're expecting?" The anger I was feeling exacerbated the moment he threw his mocking words.

I glared at him. Even if we are just partners in bed, it was still wrong of him to add insult to injury.

In the next moment, he frowned and glared at me coldly. "Anna Garcia, you'd better watch your mouth and mind your manners. Do I sound like I was happy about it? Are you venting your anger at me now?"

As an omnipotent man, he must have gotten used to others buttering him up all the time. I bet I was the only woman who had the guts to talk to him like that.

I shifted my gaze and avoided looking at him as I swallowed my frustrations. I know I have no right to lash out at him, but what if I really lose my job? It wasn't easy for me to join Joyful Success...

Seeing that my attitude had softened, Michael did not continue to put me in a tight spot. Nevertheless, I could not get rid of the utter uneasiness I felt whenever I was by his side.

His lips curved into a seductive smile as he scanned me from head to toe. However, I doubt he was able to see anything since I was wrapped tightly with the blanket.

"Since your clothes have yet to dry, why don't we take the time to do some other activities?"

I was stupefied the moment I heard his words. For a moment, I couldn't quite wrapped my head around what he was trying to say.

"W-What kind of activity?" Intimidated by his subtle gaze, I gulped and descended into stammering incoherence.

"What kind of activity do you think we can do? Anna, do you really not know, or are you just faking it? There's no need to pretend to be innocent in front of me," he added placidly.

Pretend to be innocent? So that's how he thinks of me?

"Let me make myself clear, I'm not faking it, and I have no need to fake it! After all, we are just partners in bed. What's the point of me faking to look innocent?" I looked at him coldly and rebutted.

"Well, Since you're not faking it, be more sporting then. Let's go upstairs now and continue with our session last night." He snorted with a sudden grim look on his face.

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He continued to gaze at me till I lost the courage to look him in the eyes. Seeing that, he softened and his lips lifted into a seductive smile. At that very moment, his flawless countenance became exceptionally captivating. Mesmerized by his stunning look, I could barely shift my eyes away from him.

"Since you can't take your eyes off me, you can scrutinize me to your heart's content when we're in bed later!"

Hearing that, my brain turned to mush. When I came to my senses again, I was already in Michael's arms. He lifted me effortlessly and strode toward the staircase, ignoring how all the maids were gawping at us.

Once we were back in his room, he placed me down on the king-sized bed and tugged at the blanket that was wrapped around my body. Startled, I tried to grip the blanket.

Michael's hands stiffened as he glared at me with great displeasure. He uttered, "Anna, What are you doing? Are you rejecting me?"

"We had too many rounds last night. I just think that it's better to take a good rest today. After all, debauchery is harmful to your health. You're still young. What if you start to encounter problems with your body functionality at this age?" I smiled awkwardly and avoided having any eye contact with him.

Initially, I was only trying to talk Michael into changing his mind and let go of me. But as I stared at his face that was turning grimmer by the second, I finally realized just how wrong my words must have sounded.

Aghast at the man's eyes which were blazing with growing rage, I shuddered and the smile on my face froze.

"Anna, do you mean to say that I'm not good enough in bed? Did I not satisfy you last night?" Michael snarled at me.

Needless to doubt, I was digging my own grave by insulting his pride daringly. After all, no man could take negative comments related to their skills in bed without getting angry. The case was especially true for Michael who was such a prideful man. As he approached me with eyes burning with rage, I started panicking.

I'm doomed! Did I just offend this man again? What's the matter with me lately? Why do I keep saying things that would offend him? Urgh... I only have myself to blame.

I looked at Michael warily and tried my best to explain, "I don't mean that. You're undoubtedly good in bed. I'm just concerned about you. I mean, excessive sex can't be good for your... thing, right? You're still young and will surely need this asset of yours for a long time to come. It'll be a shame if something were to happen to it."

Putting on a bright smile, I hoped that my words could at least ease his exasperation.

"Do you think you have the qualification to judge how good I am in bed? I bet you will know better after a few more sessions with me!" He scoffed.

My words did not manage to appease him at all. With a grim look on his face, he stretched out his hand to tug at my blanket again. Being a woman, there was no way my strength could beat his. With a yank, he effortlessly flipped open the blanket that was wrapped around my body.

"Michael, wait!" I yelped as I struggled frantically.

Michael pinned me under him swiftly, turning a blind eye to my struggles. I had thought that he was just trying to scare me for provoking his pride a while ago. I never expected that he really meant to take me.

My goodness! I can't believe he is still as energetic as ever after so many rounds last night! He is even thinking of having another round now!

"Do you think that I'm joking with you?" His face was inches away from mine and I could feel his hot breath against my skin.

"Michael, get off me! I don't want to do it!" I grimaced and shoved his shoulder.

Without replying to me, he simply entered me right away without any foreplay, causing me discomfort. Is he really that desperate?

"You have no right to go against my will. Just close your eyes and enjoy this moment," was the only reply he gave me before continuing his motion.

It took a long time before Michael finally let me go.

Panting as I lay in bed, I could see the satisfaction in his eyes as he gazed at my naked body while standing beside the bed.

"Anna, I will let you off today. You'd better polish your skill for the next round. You still fail as a bed partner by lying solely in bed without any initiative." He grinned subtly at me.

"If you're not satisfied with me, you don't have to choose me as your bed partner. After all, nobody forces you to," I mumbled and turned my flushed face away.

"Pfft! Then who was the one moaning enjoyably and pleading with me not to stop just now? Yet, you dare to say that nobody forced me! Anna, it seems that you're really good at twisting the facts."

I was utterly embarrassed as he snickered at me.

When we were both indulged in our passionate throes in bed earlier, I was actually trying hard to hold myself back from being responsive. Nonetheless, he was too good in bed, and I could not stop myself from responding.

My cheeks were burning hot as blood rushed to my face. I hastily pulled up the blanket to cover my body and turned away to avoid his penetrating gaze.

When my clothes had finally dried up at noon, I put them on without hesitation and dashed out of his house.

By the time I reached home, Natalie was still in the office. After taking a shower, I stood in front of the mirror to take a look at myself. At the sight of the countless hickeys all over my body, I could not help but let out a deep sigh. Is he crazy? I can't believe he left all these hickeys all over my body!

Apart from sustaining muscle pain all over my body, my eyes started to feel heavy as I wasn't able to sleep at all the night before. I started yawning as I dragged myself back to my room. The moment I flung myself on the bed, I drifted off into a deep sleep.

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When I woke up at night, Natalie had already come back. Her eyes widened in shock upon seeing me walk out of my room.

"Why are you back so early today? Don't you have to work overtime?"

I stretched and yawned while answering her. "I took the day off today."

"You took the day off? Holy sh*t. Is the sun rising from the west or something?"

Natalie gaped at me in utter disbelief.

I hummed in confirmation but remained otherwise silent. Noticing the gloomy look on my face, Natalie started eyeing me suspiciously.

"You didn't come home last night. Where'd you go?"

My expression stiffened upon hearing Natalie's question, and I replied somewhat guiltily, "I was working overtime."

"Working overtime? Why are you lying? Who the hell works overtime for the entire night? Tell me the truth. Did you..." Natalie trailed off and raised her brows meaningfully.

Although she didn't finish her sentence, her question was very obvious.

My face instantly flushed red when Natalie figured out what I had done the previous night. I began fidgeting on the spot, unable to meet Natalie's eyes because of the guilt that I was feeling.

"What on earth are you thinking about? I really was working overtime. I'm hungry. Let's eat now."

The guilt in my voice couldn't be mistaken. With that, I ignored Natalie and quickly went to set up the table.

Sometimes, Natalie was too smart for her own good. If Michael started looking for me too frequently, I wouldn't be able to keep our relationship a secret from Natalie anymore. I couldn't help but worry if she would look down on me if she found out about our deal.

Halfway through our meal, Natalie whipped her head up and looked me in the eye, asking me with a solemn expression, "Anna, why do I have the feeling you've been hiding something from me recently? Are you facing some kind of trouble?"

Guilt flickered in my eyes at her question.

"Why are you asking this all of a sudden?"

"You seem dispirited lately, and you're working overtime every night. You're acting weird, Anna. Besides, it doesn't make sense that such a large company like Joyful Success would need their employees to work until so late at night."

Natalie put down her cutlery and peered at me with a probing gaze.

Indeed, I had been working overtime for more than a week, and it was rare for any company to have its employees work overtime for so many days in a row. Hence, it was only normal that Natalie grew suspicious.

However, I didn't want others to know that I was being taken advantage of by Conrad. Knowing Natalie's temper, if she knew that I was being harassed and exploited by my superior, she would probably go to my office with a kitchen knife in hand.

"You're overthinking things. Work has been busier than usual lately, so I've been working overtime to meet deadlines," I said against my conscience, then quickly bowed my head to continue eating.

"Is that really what's going on?"

Natalie continued scrutinizing me, as though she didn't believe me.

"Of course. Alright, stop worrying about me. Anyways, I'm done eating, so I'm going back to my room now. I have to wake up early for work tomorrow."

Afraid that Natalie would insist on getting to the bottom of this, I darted toward my room right after saying this.

Once back in my room, I breathed a long sigh of relief. As I lay in bed, I began stewing over what would happen at the office the next day. I won't really get fired, would I?

Worry began gnawing on my chest at the thought of this. I should never have said those things to Conrad on the spur of the moment. I must've well and truly offended him.

Even if he didn't fire me, he'd make sure my life in the office was a living hell. Conrad was a very spiteful person. Now that I offended him, he was undoubtedly going to make it his mission to pick on me at every turn.

Sighing in resignation, I shut my eyes and told myself to stop fretting over this matter as it would only make me more frustrated. I'll find out the exact situation when I go to the office tomorrow.

When I arrived at the office the next day, my colleagues looked at me with gleeful looks on their faces. I had no idea why they always singled me out like that when I didn't do anything to offend them. I couldn't help but wonder if it was because two of my colleagues saw me being forcefully hugged by Conrad, and that was why all of them were looking down on me.

Although their sarcastic remarks and contemptuous gazes during this period of time made me very uncomfortable, I refused to let them get to me. Ignoring all of them, I settled down directly behind my desk and threw myself into work.

Everyone around me began whispering among themselves. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but seeing as they would peek at me from time to time, I could guess that their topic of discussion was probably related to me.

"Anna, you're here."

Millie Scott, the only person here whom I was on good terms with, greeted me.

"Mm-hmm."

I nodded at her with a smile. Millie was the only colleague I could get along with in the office, and she was also the only one who didn't mock me as the others does. Apart from that, she would sometimes help me out with some of my work.

"I thought you weren't coming here for work anymore."

Millie's desk was opposite mine. At that moment, she was craning her neck to look at me over the divider as she asked in a hushed tone.

"Why wouldn't I?"

My brows furrowed in confusion as I asked back in a similarly soft voice.

"Don't you know? Mr. Skeete was furious when you didn't come in for work yesterday. He said you broke the company's regulations because you were absent without applying for leave. He announced on the spot that he was going to fire you. That's why everyone thought you weren't coming here for work anymore."

Millie looked at me with pity in her eyes, but I also detected a hint of helplessness in her voice.

Upon hearing what she said, anger surged within me. I obviously already called Conrad to apply for leave yesterday. How dare he accuse me of skipping work? He's clearly telling lies about me just so he has an excuse to fire me.

I suppressed my rage and calmly explained to Millie, "I already called him yesterday morning."

Although it was useless explaining to her alone, I still didn't want to be misunderstood like that.

"Anna, I think Mr. Skeete is intentionally targeting you recently. I also heard the others saying that you tried to seduce Mr. Skeete, but failed and angered him instead. That's why..."

Millie left the rest of her words unsaid, but I understood her meaning perfectly well.

A sneer formed on my lips. These people sure have a knack for jumping to conclusions. Did they personally see me seducing Conrad? I mean, I feel sick just by looking at that old and ugly man. Why would I seduce him? How absurd!

"Millie, do you believe what they said? Do you believe that I tried to seduce Mr. Skeete?" I asked Millie with a grave expression.

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"I don't think you're that kind of person, Anna. That's why I didn't spread those rumors like the others did. But some of them said they saw you entering his office and hugging him..." Uncertainty flickered in Millie's eyes as she spoke timidly.

Even though she was doubtful, the fact that she didn't immediately believe those rumors about me was enough. At least there was one person who was on my side.

"I didn't try to seduce him. Mr. Skeete was the one who wanted to take advantage of me. I slapped him out of instinct. That's why he wants revenge and keeps making things difficult for me here."

When I thought about how Conrad kept making my life difficult these days, unprecedented rage burned in me. Since we already had a falling-out, I decided to tell everyone what a hypocrite he was.

"So that's what happened. Mr. Skeete definitely went over the line! How could he take advantage of a female employee? I really don't understand how someone like him managed to become a supervisor!"

After listening to my explanation, Millie believed me and even felt aggrieved on my behalf.

"Millie, remember to just keep this to yourself. If others catch wind of this, you might also get on Conrad's bad side."

Although I wanted to clarify this matter once and for all, I didn't want Millie to be the one to do it. After all, she was the only colleague I got along with in the office. The last thing I wanted was to drag her down with me.

"Anna!"

Just when Millie was going to tell me something, Conrad's unpleasant voice interrupted us. I was already disgusted by him, so hearing his voice made me even more nauseated.

I stood up and looked at Conrad, who was approaching me, with an indifferent gaze. His beady eyes were filled with rage.

I waited until he stopped in front of me before asking in a monotonous voice, "Can I help you, Mr. Skeete?"

Upon seeing Conrad walk up to me, the other employees returned to their seats and cast furtive glances at me, clearly waiting for a good show.

"Who allowed you to sit here? Didn't I already tell you that you're fired?"

Conrad planted his hands on his hips and scowled at me.

Having already expected this, I pinned Conrad with an icy gaze and retorted, "Oh? But I don't recall you telling me that, Mr. Skeete."

If it were in the past, I might have had some scruples, but now that Conrad and I were on bad terms, I had nothing to fear. Since there was no way out of this mess, I was going to clear my name and tell everyone what a degenerate Conrad was before I left the company.

"So you're denying it? Allow me to jog your memory, then. When you called me to apply for leave yesterday, I already told you that you're fired. How dare you still come here?"

I had successfully provoked Conrad by feigning cluelessness because he spoke loud enough for everyone in the department to hear.

"Mr. Skeete, are you admitting that I called you yesterday to apply for leave? Then why did you tell everyone that I skipped work for no reason? Don't you think you're shooting yourself in the foot now?"

I sneered at Conrad. Although I no longer harbored any hope of staying in the company, I was sure as hell going to prove my innocence before leaving.

Upon hearing what I said, everyone looked to Conrad as one, clearing realizing that he was intentionally smearing my reputation.

When Conrad felt so many pairs of eyes on him, his expression changed subtly, obviously beginning to feel guilty. However, he was the head of the department, after all. Hence, he still looked self-assertive even after I exposed him.

"So what if you called to apply for leave? Since I didn't approve it, it means you skipped work. You're already fired, Anna. You have ten minutes to pack up and leave!"

Conrad was adamant about firing me this time. What little guilt he displayed just moments ago had vanished completely.

My anger spiked because I knew he was after my blood. Recalling the condition he had suggested over the phone the previous day, a sarcastic smile took residence on my lips and I spoke in a frosty voice. "Did you reject my leave application because I didn't agree to your disgusting condition? Is that it? It's a shame Joyful Success has a department head like you. You're an absolute disgrace to such a good company!"

"Stop spouting nonsense here, Anna! One more word and believe it or not, I'll call security on you!"

Panic was sprawled on Conrad's face, as though worried that I would reveal what he did to me.

"What? Are you scared that I'd tell everyone that you wanted to sleep with me but I rejected you?"

Conrad's flustered expression brought me great satisfaction. I was no pushover. Even if I didn't have the power to change anything, I wasn't about to let Conrad off that easily. I wanted everyone to know the truth as well as what a wretched person he was.

"Stop making up stories! This is the office. How dare you make such vulgar claims! Why did the company even hire someone like you?"

There was apparent guilt lining Conrad's features, but he still wanted to shift all the blame onto me. Only true scum like him could act so righteous when slandering others.

"You know perfectly well whether or not I'm making up stories. And only you know exactly what kind of person you are!"

I met Conrad's gaze head-on, refusing to show any trace of weakness.

"Security! Get this person out of my sight!"

My words had well and truly triggered Conrad, and he directly called for security.

I knew he was behaving like this because of guilt. He was afraid everyone would believe me if I continued speaking. If that happened, he would lose his authority here.

A single command from Conrad had two security guards rushing in.

At the sight of them, a smug smile flashed across Conrad's face, and he ordered loudly, "She's making a scene here. Throw her out this instant!"

The security guards' jobs were to maintain order in the company. Since Conrad was a department head and this was a direct order from him, the two guards immediately

approached me. Judging from their demeanor, it seemed like they were about to get physical with me.

"Anna..."

Millie shot me a nervous glance, and I also discerned a trace of pity in it.

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I flashed a small smile at Millie and said, "You're the only one here who treated me like an equal. Thank you for that, Millie."

Even though Millie and I weren't that close, I already regarded her as my friend because she never once looked down on me or ridiculed me.

The security guards flanked me and grabbed my arms, ready to drag me out. However, being thrown out was an absolute insult to me. As such, I shot Conrad a vicious glare and broke free from the guards.

"I can walk on my own!" I snapped.

Then, I snatched up my bag and was about to walk out when I heard a mild commotion.

Right then, an employee who was closest to the door exclaimed, "Mr. Shaw is here. Oh my God! I can't believe he's here in our department!"

Mr. Shaw? Michael?

I panicked as the first person who came to my mind was Michael. For some inexplicable reason, my heart started beating wildly in my chest.

Why is Michael here? Could it be because of me?

Michael was dressed in a full black suit which complemented his tall figure. He strode in with his signature icy expression and unreadable obsidian eyes. His chiseled face was

gorgeous yet unapproachable, and his intimidating aura effectively kept people a distance away from him.

This was the first time I saw him look so serious. His commanding presence was much stronger than usual. I couldn't deny that this man was born to rule.

There were two secretaries trailing behind him with equally serious expressions.

My heart was still pounding erratically as my eyes followed Michael's every move.

Conrad was also momentarily stunned. When he finally regained his senses, he scurried over to greet Michael.

As he stood before Michael, he broke into an ingratiating smile and asked cautiously, "What brings you here, Mr. Shaw? Is there something I can do for you?"

Michael glanced at me casually before questioning, "What's going on here?"

My heart skipped a beat when our eyes met, but it was only a fleeting moment because he shifted his gaze the next second and didn't look at me again.

His eyes when he looked at me was without emotion as though I was merely a stranger to him. Although I knew Michael didn't want anyone to know about our relationship, his impassiveness still made me feel disappointed.

At the end of the day, we were merely bed buddies. Apart from that, there were no emotions involved. To him, perhaps I was only a tool to fulfill his sexual appetite.

Conrad panicked further upon hearing Michael's question.

"Do I need to repeat myself?"

Before Conrad could formulate a response, Michael's brows drew together slightly, and his gaze on the former turned frosty.

"No, no. I heard you." Sensing Michael's murderous aura, Conrad swallowed with difficulty before continuing, "A female employee said something inappropriate in the office, so I ordered security to escort her out."

Conrad was obviously tense when he said this. After all, it took courage to lie before someone as intimidating as Michael.

"What did she say that was inappropriate?"

Michael glanced at me again, and there was a hint of demand in his tone.

He shifted his gaze back to Conrad, pinning him with a glacial look.

Under his threatening gaze, Conrad's face grew grimmer with each passing second. I could clearly see the beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

"W-Well, her name is Anna Garcia. She deliberately came into my office and behaved indecently. Now she's throwing false accusations at me in front of the whole department. I honestly don't know who gave a small employee like her the guts to do something like this," Conrad stammered out.

I had to admit that he was skilled at distorting the truth. He was, after all, an experienced old geezer. Without this skill, he wouldn't have become a supervisor in the first place.

"How could something like this happen? Such people need to be taught a good lesson, lest they tarnish the company's reputation," Michael said in a flat tone before directing his gaze at me.

When I couldn't get a read on his emotions, I instantly panicked. Does he believe what Conrad said?

But he clearly heard our conversation over the phone yesterday. Why is he saying something like this now? Does he want me to leave Joyful Success too?

As my thoughts ran wild, I looked at Michael nervously, trying to figure out what he meant.

Conrad, on the other hand, was smiling triumphantly upon hearing what Michael said. He sneered at me and looked as though he was certain I was going to be fired from the company one way or another.

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath to stifle my disappointment. Michael's words had greatly upset me, but words failed me. Since he already put it that way, I could only leave on my own accord.

Just after I took the first step, Michael's voice sounded once again.

"But Mr. Skeete, before you fire this employee, I have one more thing to say."

What he said caused me to pause in my stride and look at him in confusion.

"What else can I do for you, Mr. Shaw?"

Michael had made his stance clear earlier, so Conrad was no longer flustered like before.

Michael shot him a cursory glance before beckoning his secretaries. A document file was immediately handed over to him.

"It has recently come to my attention that you've been doing many things that are damaging to the company." Michael's voice was disconcertingly neutral.

Seeing as Michael had mentioned him by name, Conrad's plump figure visibly stiffened and he asked in a panicky voice, "Mr. Shaw, what do you mean by that? Have I done something wrong?"

He passed the document to Conrad and demanded coldly, "Your department seems to have a very high budget, but a detailed investigation has shown that it's impossible for each project to cost that much. Care to explain where the extra money has gone to, Mr. Skeete?"

Conrad shuddered violently, and perspiration coated his entire forehead. His rotund body began trembling uncontrollably, obviously from fear.

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"Mr. Skeete?"