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Love from My Dominant Boss Chapter 126 - 130

I did not go to work the next day and took a few days off. Normally, I would never apply for leave unless there was an emergency. After all, I would be earning less if I did not work.

However, that was an exception. My face was still swollen. I did not want to be the center of attention in the company, nor did I want anyone to find out that I had been taken to the police station. After all, that was not something to talk about openly.

Natalie took a few days off as well, presumably sharing my sentiments. The two of us stayed in her house to rest and recuperate. During that time, Yuval sent me food every day. Of course, he brought Natalie's portions as well.

After three days, the wound on my face was finally less visible. Only then did I return to work. The moment I stepped foot into the building, Millie came forward to pester me, questioning where I had gone for the past few days. I came up with a random excuse, saying that I was unwell and rested at home for a few days.

As I was chatting with Millie, Michael showed up. Millie and I quickly rushed to our seats and made it look like we were working hard. After being berated and criticized multiple times by Michael, I was not looking forward to feeling the wrath of his anger anytime soon.

"Anna, bring the proposal I asked you to redo into my office."

Just as I thought Michael had ignored us, his low magnetic voice traveled to my ears. I looked up from my desk, only to see his icy expression staring back at me.

I gulped. A shiver ran down my spine as I shot Millie a helpless look before picking up the documents and headed into Michael's office.

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That proposal had been rejected by Michael countless times before. It had reached the point where I no longer knew what else to add to the proposal, nor how else I could amend it. I had absolutely run out of ideas, feeling like a machine under operation.

“Here’s the proposal you wanted, Mr. Shaw.”

I placed the documents gently on Michael’s desk and informed him flatly.

Michael peered at me wordlessly and started to skim through it.

He had barely glanced at it before tossing the proposal on the desk. “Redo it!”

Michael hurled the same word at me again, not even wasting his breath on another word.

His reaction was well within my expectations. Hence, I was not angered. Even I was not satisfied with the proposal myself, much less someone as picky and detail-oriented as Michael. In fact, it would have been shocking if he had approved the proposal.

Without a word, I picked up the proposal from his desk and made my way to the door. Before I could leave, he called out to me.

“Is this your attitude at work, Anna Garcia? Your designs have been rejected, yet you don’t even bother asking about the reasons? Don’t you want to know what you should amend?”

Michael’s anger underlay his cold voice. Recently, he had been reprimanding me almost every day that I had gotten used to it. Thus, I did not think much about his words.

“Mr. Shaw, if you had wanted to tell me anything, you would have spoken up long ago and would not have waited for me to ask. Since you did not wish to tell me, it’ll be superfluous and a waste of time even if I were to ask you. If that’s the case, it would be better if I don’t ask you.”

He had rejected my proposals so many times but had never told me what went wrong. All he said was that my designs were not innovative enough, which was of no help at all.

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My retort caused Michael to go stiff for a second before his eyes flared up in rage.

“Wow, why have I not noticed that your self-awareness is rather high now?”

His words were laced with satire. Then, he stood up and walked towards me with a cold-eyed stare.

“I have always known my limits, and I have been following your orders when amending the proposal, Mr. Shaw.”

There was no way for me to step out of line when it came to that man. Every time I butted heads with him, there were never good endings on my side.

“If you’re so obedient, why didn’t you obey me when I asked you to be my girl?”

Michael narrowed his eyes at me. The expression on his handsome face darkened.

This question again? Why must he always bring this up?

“Mr. Shaw, this question has nothing to do with work. I’ll only listen to your orders if it’s regarding my job. If there’s nothing else, I’ll be going.”

Nothing good ever came out of that topic. All I wanted to do right then was to leave his office. Arguing with Michael would be pointless, and I was not in the mood to waste my time. Even though Michael seemed carefree and mischievous, his serious face could make anyone shudder.

With the documents in my hand, I prepared to leave. However, as I walked past his shoulders, I felt a strong grip on my wrist.

Enraged, I turn around with a glare. Before I could open my mouth, Michael suddenly flung me towards his desk and pressed his body against mine.

“Don’t even think of leaving if I have not dismissed you, Anna Garcia! Don’t you forget who’s in charge here!”

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Michael was on top of me. Our breaths mingled as we glared at each other, our faces tensed. His breath felt hot on my skin as he thundered in his usual domineering manner.

Looking into his eyes, my heart pounded faster as I started to panic. Even so, I refused to back down. I had always been weak in front of this man that I scoffed at the lack of courage to defend myself.

“You’re crazy!”

I hollered in his face and attempted to shove him away but to no avail. He stayed on top of me, not moving an inch.

“What are you doing, Michael? This is an office! What if someone barges in?”

The memory of me being sexually harassed in the office by that b*stard Conrad still burned in my mind. I was boycotted and targeted after a colleague caught him in the act, even though it was not my fault. No one was willing to talk to me for weeks, and I was not going to let history repeat itself.

Moreover, Conrad was just a department head who was old and ugly. Even then, my colleagues had treated me like an eyesore and a shameless prostitute.

With Michael, a prince charming to many ladies, pressing on top of me, I was sure to have a bounty on my head if we were caught in the act by someone.

“If you dare resist me one more time, I will not hesitate to f*ck you right here in my office!”

Michael completely disregarded my protests. He seemed unfazed by the possibility that someone might interrupt us suddenly.

Isn't he the one who doesn't want anyone to know about our relationship? What's going on now? Why isn't he threatened by what I just said ?

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“Have you no shame at all, Michael? We’re in your office! If someone sees us, our relationship will be out in the open! By then, you won’t even be able to keep it under wraps!”

I glowered at him as I continued struggling to break free from under him. His tyrannical arrogance was growing increasingly obvious. I had not noticed it at first, which was why I thought we could become normal again once the whole fiasco was over. However, it was starting to seem like it was all just wishful thinking on my side.

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“So what if someone sees us? Even if that were to happen, they would only think you are the one who seduced me, wouldn’t they?”

Michael’s lips curled upwards into a triumphant smirk, his eyes gleaming.

No wonder he was not worried. He had already taken that into account. Michael truly was getting more and more despicable.

“What on earth do you want, Michael? Will you only be satisfied after you’ve forced me to resign? What exactly have I done to offend you to make me your punching bag at work?”

I was furious. It was no secret that Michael was trying to make things difficult for me. Even though I was the one who suggested to break things off between us, which probably hurt his ego, I had become nothing but an employee with no power against him. There was absolutely no reason for him to be targeting me in everything I did.

“Did I say I want you to resign? Can’t you handle this bit of stress, Anna Garcia? Are you admitting defeat already?”

Michael frowned slightly, scrutinizing me. Displeasure flickered in his gaze.

“Is there anyone who wouldn’t admit defeat in front of you?”

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I let out a dry laugh as I stared at him with contempt. He had already played me like a toy to this extent. What else could I do besides surrendering? The man in front of me was the famous Michael Shaw while I was just an ordinary woman. There was no other choice for me except to concede.

“Get out!”

Just as I thought he was going to lecture me further, Michael bolted upwards and hollered at me to leave.

Startled by the roar, I was dumbfounded by his sudden change in demeanor, unable to register what just happened. Only a second ago, he was still talking to me nicely. I truly could not make sense of the person in front of me. That man was dilemma personified.

Once I regained my senses, my heart was pounding so hard I feared it would jump out of my throat. Even so, I swallowed the panic I was feeling and feigned a calm demeanor. I refused to show my weakness in front of Michael.

Standing up straight, I grabbed the documents on the desk and strode out of his office.

Michael’s recent horrible attitude towards me played in my mind. Not only was he singling me out and taunting me at work, but he was also disrupting my private life. I felt nothing but exhaustion. I’ve had enough.

What did I owe him in my past life for him to treat me so terribly? Why can’t he give me just a little bit of freedom? What else must I do for him to let me go?

With reddened eyes, I returned to my seat. The more I thought about it, the more frustrated I got. It was not long before my tears started rolling down.

Millie looked up from her seat opposite mine. Upon noticing my disheveled look, she furrowed her eyebrows. Sympathy was written all over her face.

“Anna, are you okay? Why are you crying? Did the CEO scold you again?”

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Millie knew that I had been targeted by Michael for the past weeks as well. Seeing me exiting Michael's office with an upset look, it was normal for Millie to immediately assume that I had been scolded.

Knowing that Millie had noticed me crying, I hastily wiped off the tears with the back of my hand and blew my nose while forcing out a smile.

"I'm okay. Just that my proposal has been rejected again. I'll just continue amending it."

I did not want anyone else to know about the incident in Michael's office earlier.

"Don't be too upset, Anna. I looked through your designs yesterday and I thought it was good enough. Huh... who knows how high the CEO's expectations are now... If it were before, your proposal would have been accepted ages ago."

Millie pursed her lips in slight annoyance upon hearing my answer. Even so, traces of sympathy could still be found on her face.

It's not that Michael's expectations are high. He just wanted to make things difficult for me, taking his personal anger out on me during work. That's very unprofessional of him.

Obviously, I did not dare to voice out those thoughts. Besides, if I had said anything, my relationship with Michael would no longer be able to be kept under wraps.

"Thank you, Millie."

I flashed Millie a small smile before turning my attention to work. My brain cells started working as I tried to come up with a new design. I refuse to believe that I could not think of ideas that Michael would approve of.

For the rest of the day, I stared blankly at the computer screen. Before long, it was past office hours. After my colleagues had gone home one by one, I started gathering my things to leave.

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The second I stood up from my seat, my phone started ringing. Peering at the phone screen, I recognized the landline number on the caller ID. My eyebrows inched closer to each other. What now?

“Mom? Why the sudden call today? What happened?”

After picking up, I went straight into topic.

“Anna, have you gotten home from work?”

Mom’s gentle voice traveled from the other end of the line.

“I was just about to head home. Why did you call?”

As far as I could remember, Mom would never ring me up unless something happened. A phone call from her was a sign of impending troubles.

“Anna, there’s something that I don’t know how I should tell you...”

Noticing that I was being straightforward, Mom paused. After a moment of silence, her voice sounded once more.

“Just tell me. I still need to go home from work.”

From the way Mom was beating around the bush, I was already expecting bad news. The first thought that crossed my mind was that she was calling for money. I held back a sigh. As much as I did not want to hear her request for cash, I could not hang up on my own mother.

“It’s about Steven. Two days ago, Steven went gambling again. This time, he lost up to a hundred over thousand. The creditors had already come knocking on the door.”

As she was speaking, Mom’s voice was starting to crack. I could sense her panic even through the phone.

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However, hearing the news that Steven went gambling again, a familiar wave of rage pulsed through my veins. "Mom, if you're calling me so that I'll pay off his debt, my answer is a firm 'NO'. I have no more money. All of my savings had been spent on Dad's operation. There's not even a penny left in my account!"

Gambling, gambling, gambling again!

And every time he gambles, I'm the one who has to clean up after his mess. Enough is enough!

I had lost count of how much money I had spent on clearing his debt, money that I had earned after years of working and toiling. I was just a normal working adult. It would be impossible for me to spend all my money on that younger brother who was a deadbeat.

"Don't say that, Anna. At the end of the day, Steven is your biological brother. You can't be so cruel to turn a blind eye to his troubles. The creditors had already found him in our house. Just help Steven out, he really is penniless right now. He can't pay this off."

Mom started to panic upon hearing that I refused to help. She sounded as though she was on the verge of tears.

Even though Mom had always been biased towards Steven ever since we were young, she was still my mother, who raised me for over twenty years. The thought of her crying was heart-wrenching.

Nevertheless, a few hundred thousand was not a number that I could just pull out of my pocket. I did not have the money nor the ability to help them. I felt drained to the core. There was no way I could help this time.

"Mom, I'm just an ordinary white-collar worker. Can you not put me in such a tight spot? I really don't have that amount of money. I barely have enough to pay for my meals. How am I supposed to help Steven with his debt? Can you please put yourself in my shoes and be considerate about my situation for a change?"

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To me, a few hundred thousand was an astronomical amount. As of then, I barely had enough money to pay for food. How was I supposed to clear off Steven's debts?

Just because I work in the city did not mean I had huge pay. I was just a normal employee working my tail off for a paycheck of less than ten thousand per month. Furthermore, I had paid off Steven's debts countless times for the past few years. Besides, I had given up all of my savings for Dad's heart stent surgery. My pockets had already been crying over all these expenses.

"Anna, you can't just leave him out to die. Those men had already threatened to break Steven's legs if he failed to settle the debt by next week. Steven is the only one in our family that will carry on the family name. He can't end up with a broken leg!"

Throughout the entire time, Mom did not believe me when I said I was tight on money. She seemed to be living under the illusion that I was made of money. However, there was no way I could not hand over a few hundred thousand within a week.

Even if I could, I had no desire to hand them the money. Year after year, every time I helped Steven settle his debts, he would promise to stop. However, it would not be long before I receive another call asking for money. I truly was too exhausted to even bother anymore.

"Mom, there's nothing I can do this time. I have help Steven paid off his debts for so many years that there's hardly any money left on me. There is absolutely no way for me to even spare a penny right now. If they really want to break his legs, let them. A few hundred thousand for a leg seems like a good bargain."

I lashed out at Mom in anger, deciding that I would not provide any help that time round. After all, if I continued spoiling Steven, he would never learn his lesson. Even if I could help him this time, how long more do I have to carry this baggage in the future?

In the beginning, the amount of his debts started out with ten or twenty thousand, which slowly increased to forty or fifty thousand over time. Suddenly, the amount had snowballed to over a hundred thousand, and his behaviors seemed to have worsened. I had my own needs, and I did not want to spend all my money on paying off debts that were not even mine!

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“How could you say that, Anna? Stevie is your brother. How can you let someone break his legs? Do you still see him as your brother?”

Mom was infuriated by my words. I could even detect hints of accusation in her tone.

“What else can I do? Since he brought this upon himself, he should be the one to solve it. Can you guys not ask me for help every time something happens? I’m not omnipotent. I can’t solve every single one of your issues every single time.”

The wrath in my heart flared up even higher at Mom’s accusations. I had done and sacrificed so much for the family for so many years, yet all she could see was the fact that I refused to help them this time and even had the audacity to blame me.

“Anna, I know these few years had been hard on you, but please help us. I am begging you. Please help your brother out this time, will you? I promise he won’t gamble ever again. After this incident, he will sure learn his lesson.”

If it were any other day, Mom would snap at me if I ever made a single negative remark about Steven. However, even after the horrible things I had said, Mom was able to keep her calm just so that she could beg me for money. Perhaps she thought that I would relent.

A lump formed in my throat. I had not expected Steven to hold such a high position in Mom’s heart. On the contrary, she had never really cared for me.

The more Mom tried to defend Steven, the heavier my heart felt. I was only human. I longed for my mother’s love as much as anyone else. Unfortunately, Mom could only see Steven and not me.

I was her biological daughter too. Yet, she had never called, or to check up on me and see how I was doing; or if I need any financial aids.

She had never called me out of genuine concern. Not even a single phone call that did not revolve around asking for money. Not even once.

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"I'm sorry, Mom. I can't help you with this. There's still something I have to do. I have to go now."

With that being said, I hung up before Mom could say another word.

The second I ended the call, my phone started ringing again. To no one's surprise, it was Mom. I knew she refused to give up, but I had decided that I would play no part that time round.

Without hesitation, I switched off my phone, afraid that I might change my mind if I continued wallowing over the matter.

Even though I had rejected her plea outright, my eyes still reddened. After all, it was still a phone call from Mom. I would be lying if I said I had hardened my heart.

Nevertheless, as I took my future into consideration, I decided to not do anything for Steven. I wanted him to have a taste of his own medicine in hopes that he would learn his lesson and abstain from gambling in the future. Besides, I think no one would really dare to break someone's leg. They probably just wanted to scare my family.

I raised my head and took a deep breath before picking up my bag. As I turned around to leave, I caught sight of Michael's silhouette.

He was standing at his office door, staring at me with a tight frown.

"What happened?"

Before I could leave the office as planned, Michael spoke up. His tone was filled with concern.

"Nothing much. Just something from home. If there's nothing else, I'll be going now."

Not wanting to reveal anything else to Michael, I scurried off.

To my relief, Michael did not try to stop me. With the chaos with my family at that time, I did not wish to deal with him further.

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As I got downstairs, I caught sight of Yuval waiting for me some distance away.

I had intended to take the subway for some quiet time to myself. However, since Yuval had come to pick me up, I had no reason to reject his offer to send me back with the fact that we were dating.

Not to mention, Yuval was a lawyer. Perhaps I could consult him about Steven's situation.

I took a seat in Yuval's car. The conversation with Mom was still playing in my mind. Even though I had said I would not bother, I could not help but feel my heart softened. I scoffed, berating myself for not standing firm on my ground. It was no wonder that I was being pushed around by my family.

Frustrated, I frowned. As much as I did not want to think about that situation, the phone call refused to leave my mind. A sudden wave of helplessness washed over me.

"Are you alright, Anna? You seem to have something on your mind. Did something happen?"

Despite focusing on the road, Yuval could tell that something was amiss. He turned to look at me, concerned.

Upon hearing his question, I wanted to dodge the question out of reflex. However, I could not hide the problems of my family from him forever. After all, we were dating and might get married. He had the right to know the problems with my family.

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"Yuval, since we have talked about marriage when we entered into this relationship, I feel that I shouldn't keep mum about my family problems. After all, we need to get along well with each other's family after getting married."

"Just tell me whatever is in your mind. We need to get to know more about each other before that, don't you agree?" Yuval said as he looked at me gently.

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I was caught in a dilemma, racking my brain to explain to Yuval about my complicated family issues. Gosh! I wonder if he will be able to accept it after I tell him later!

I finally broke the silence and mustered up my courage to tell him about the phone call from my mother earlier on. Apart from that, I described to him the complicated circumstance at home.

In an instant, Yuval knitted his brows and was rendered speechless. The atmosphere became tense gradually due to the utter silence between us. I was clueless about what was playing in his mind, but I would not be surprised if he could not accept my complicated family situations. Moreover, I had a feeling that our relationship might come to an end soon.

My family was just like a bottomless pit. If Yuval intended to spend the rest of his lifetime with me, he would have to be prepared to be a gold mine in order to fill it up.

Even though he was making good money with his profession, he was still not a billionaire. On top of that, the heavy burden of my family might drag him down as well.

I forced a smile and said casually, "It's alright. My family issues are complicated indeed. You can just be frank with me if you can't accept it. I won't mind it. Even if we can't be a couple, we can still be friends."

I could actually predict Yuval's reaction and guess that he would not be able to accept my family. At our age, we had looked past romance and had the tendency to take more things into consideration before making the decision to settle down with someone for the rest of our lifetime.

"Anna, don't get me wrong. I'm just a bit overwhelmed after you pour out everything to me. Can you give me some time to think it through?" Yuval explained apprehensively.

I was grateful to him for being understanding and did not criticize anything in my face. Catering to my self-esteem, he was considerate and did not choose to make a decision on the spot.

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“No problem. If I were you, I guess I would request for a breakup right away without a second thought.” I smiled self-deprecatingly. Even though he did not comment on anything, my instinct told me that our relationship had started dying away.

Later, he offered to send me back to Natalie’s place as usual. He sped off right after I got out of his car. Before that, I managed to catch a glimpse of the grimness on his face.

Feeling dejected, I dragged myself into Natalie’s house and slumped onto the couch in the living room. All this while I had treated Yuval as an ideal future spouse. I was indignant at the thought that my plan to get married to him would be ruined due to my family issues.

Nonetheless, I knew that sooner or later I would need to tell Yuval about the problems. It was actually more practical to let him know earlier. In other words, if he found out that we were not suitable for each other, we could break up earlier, other than wasting each other’s time. I tried to console myself, yet I could not ease my frustration at the sudden loss that I was likely to sustain.

When Natalie came back, she sensed the sadness in me at once and approached me in bewilderment.

“What’s the matter with you? You look as if something is bugging you. Is it related to your work?” Natalie sat next to me and asked in great concern.

“Yeah, kind of. Yet, I’m even more frustrated with my family matters. Steven is gambling again. He is in debt of more than one hundred thousand this round,” I replied wearily. The moment the large sum came into my mind, I could feel my temples start to throb again.

Natalie was aware of how I had tried to settle Steven’s debt all this while. She furrowed her brows again and gasped, “What a big sum! Steven is really brainless. Imagine how much you have spent to pay off his debt all along! Yet, he never changes and turns over a new leaf!”

“I have basically given up hope that he can mend his ways! My Mom called me today and asked for money again. Even though I made myself clear that I would not help

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Steven this round, I'm feeling uneasy now. Oh, Natalie, what am I supposed to do?" I mumbled helplessly.

I had been in a dilemma ever since I received the phone call from my mom. Since she was pleading with me to help Steven, I did not have the heart to ignore him. Nevertheless, I could foresee that Steven would stir up bigger trouble next round. Besides, I could not afford to settle such a large sum of debt!

"Anna, take my advice. Just let your brother settle his own problem this round. Even if you manage to pay off his debt this round, I bet he won't be grateful to you as well. Do you think you can keep helping him when something similar happens again next round?" Natalie stared into my eyes and tried to talk me into ignoring Steven's debt.

"But, he's still my brother. I can't just turn a blind eye to it." I knew that Natalie was very concerned about me, yet I could not make up my mind.

"Anna, I hope you can try to stay firm this round. Even if you help to pay off his debt again, he might end up owing a bigger sum next round. Gambling is just like the black hole in the universe. No matter how wealthy you are, your money would be gone within seconds," Natalie advised me again. She was worried that I would be soft-hearted and taken advantage of again.

"What should I do then?" I asked Natalie in bewilderment. Even if I saw eye to eye with Natalie, I worried that I would feel bad for ignoring Steven's problem this round.

"I think that you shouldn't help him again. You have worked so hard to earn every single cent. Furthermore, you don't have much money left now. Thus, it's impossible for you to pay off such a large sum. You should just let him learn a lesson this round," Natalie advised me again patiently. I thought of giving it a try although it was challenging for me to do so.

"I get it. Thank you, Natalie." Deep in my heart, I really thought of doing so. Nonetheless, if Natalie did not try to advise me, I would not be able to talk myself into that.

I finally made up my mind not to help Steven again this round, no matter how my mom tried to plead with me. It was time to let Steven pay the price for his own deed. If not, he would never change.

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I was not solely thinking of myself, but for my family as well. Our family was not the prominent type, so we could not afford to let Steven spend extravagantly. I wished that he would lead a practical life and take up a proper job after this.

“You don’t have to thank me. As your friend, I don’t wish to see you burdened with your family matters every day. You have sacrificed a lot for your family.” Natalie gave me a sympathetic glance.

“Oh yeah, there’s still one more thing.” I looked at Natalie and opened my mouth hesitantly.

“What’s that?” Natalie frowned and asked quizzically.

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“Yuval and I might break up at any moment.” As Yuval was introduced to me by her friend, I should inform her about our current condition.

Natalie was startled and asked anxiously, “Why? You are in a stable relationship with him at the moment, aren’t you? Why did you talk about breakup all of a sudden?”

“I have told him about my family condition. Since I’m planning to get married to him, I mustn’t keep it from him. He will know about it sooner or later too,” I explained to Natalie the reason I told Yuval everything.

If Yuval and I ended up having a breakup because of my family conditions, it would be quite a disappointment. Nevertheless, he had the right to make his choice. It would be inappropriate to drag him down by being secretive to him.

“Anna, why are you so impulsive? You shouldn’t have told him about that now!” Natalie looked at me disapprovingly.

“Well, he will get to know about it sooner or later. I can’t hide it from him forever too. If I didn’t choose to tell him earlier, it’s still kind of deceiving too. It’s unfair for him if he only

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found out after we got married. After all, he has the right to make a decision.” I smiled bitterly.

Natalie was apparently feeling desperate on behalf of me. Even so, it was undeniable that I had a problematic family. There was no way for me to sweep it under the table.

“I didn’t mean that you have to hide it from him forever. Yet, it’s still not the right timing to tell him about it. You should have held it till your relationship with him stabilizes. When your feelings toward each other are nurtured over time and better developed, I’m sure he will be able to accept it better by then.” Natalie let out a deep sigh and shook her head.

“Anyway, there’s no point to cry over spilled milk. The decision lies in his hands now. It’s up to him whether he still intends to continue seeing me.”

Undeniably, Natalie had a point. Nonetheless, there was no turning back for me at the moment. On top of that, I did not wish to be deceitful in a relationship.

“Anyway, I just hope that he won’t disappoint us by making the decision to break up with you. If he does that because of your family condition, it implies that he’s not worthy for you.” Natalie patted my shoulder gently and comforted me.

We decided to drop the subject and put the frustrating matter out of our minds. After having dinner with Natalie, I went to bed right away.

I neither met Yuval nor received any calls from him in the following two days. It convinced me even more that my instinct was right. Our relationship was really coming to an end. Unexpectedly, I was feeling more relieved despite the disappointment of losing an ideal candidate as my future spouse.

In the evening, my phone rang again when I stepped out of the office building after work. I glanced at the name blinking on my phone screen instinctively. To my dismay, it was a call from my mom.

At the sight of her name, it crossed my mind that she must be calling me again regarding Steven’s debt. Even though I was reluctant to answer the call, I felt that I

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should grab the chance to talk it out with her so she would not rely solely on me again. I did not feel like helping Steven anymore after sacrificing for him numerous times. In addition, I really could not afford to pay off such a large sum of debt.

“Hello, Mom.” I answered the call and greeted placidly.

“Anna, no matter what, you must come to your brother’s rescue this round. This morning, the debt collectors were here again. They threatened to break Steven’s leg if we fail to settle the debt by tomorrow night. I really don’t know what to do now! We can’t let Steven end up having a broken leg! Anna, can you please try to help your brother again?” On the other end of the line, my Mom wailed as she pleaded with me.

My heart ached as she pleaded with me anxiously. After all, blood was thicker than water. I could not just turn a deaf ear to her, even if she tended to favor Steven, who was the apple of her eye.

“Mom, I’m not able to help Steven this round. I’m troubled by financial problems too...”

Even if I felt like helping him, I could not afford it. I am almost broke and did not have much money left. Where can I get such a large sum of money?

“Anna, can you please try to help Steven? He doesn’t even dare to come home now. After all, he’s still the only son in our family. If anything happens to him, how am I supposed to survive with your dad?” My mom broke into tears.

A wave of mixed emotions crept into my heart when I heard her sobbing. How could I have the heart to reject her? It’s sort of unfilial for me to do that.

“Let me try to look for a solution. How much are you still short of at the moment?” I softened and asked her.

Even if I myself was short of money at the moment, I did not have the heart to see my parents endure the stress. Dad still has heart disease. What if he has a heart attack because of this? I can’t take the risk and let it happen!

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Needless to say, Steven would not learn his lesson easily. I would not be surprised if history repeated itself later. Even then, I could not ignore him because of my parents.

I could hear my Mom heave a sigh of relief upon hearing my reply. "We are still short of one hundred and ten thousand. Anna, no matter what, you have to transfer the money to us by tomorrow night. We are in need of the money to save your brother," she reminded me desperately.

My mom's mind was occupied by Steven all the time. She did not even spare any thoughts on my current situation and how I obtained money to settle the debt.

I hung up the phone in exasperation and started to scratch my head. At the moment, I only had about less than one hundred with me. I could not think of any wealthy friends who could lend me the sum of money.

Scrolling the contact list on my phone, I almost called Natalie to try my luck and check if she had any ideas on the solution. Finally, I changed my mind not to trouble her again.

Natalie had helped me a lot all this while, so I should not make her life difficult again. Moreover, she was just a common wage-earner like me, and most probably could not afford to lend me the sum too.

I put my phone back into my handbag and took a cab back to Natalie's place. One hundred and ten thousand was indeed an overwhelming figure for me. My head started to throb again at how I could obtain the sum.

Back in Natalie's place, I spent time calling my ex-classmates one by one to borrow money from them. Nevertheless, after leaving school and started working, I seldom kept in touch with those close friends during my school days all this while. The moment they sensed my purpose of giving them a call, all of them gave excuses that they could not help me. It was highly challenging to look for someone who would be willing to lend me money at this critical time.

After making several phone calls, I grumbled and tossed my phone hopelessly on the bed. I was discouraged as I did not expect that none of my ex-schoolmates would be willing to lend me money. As another wave of helplessness swept over me, I was becoming more anxious.

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All of a sudden, my phone rang again. In an instant, my eyes sparkled with anticipation, hoping that it would be a call from an old friend who offered to lend me money. However, my heart sank when I saw Michael's name blinking on the screen of the phone.

What again? Right that instant, I did not have any mood and lacked the energy to deal with him. Fearing that the domineering man would put me in a tight spot in the office the next day, I answered the call reluctantly.

"Mr. Shaw, are you aware what time it is now? Is there anything urgent at this hour?" I could not resist but ask sarcastically. To me, he was my mightiest foe at the moment.

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