

A Favor To My Boss

Chapter 2:

“No, it’s not that. I need a favor. You’ve been working with me for two years, right?” he asked.

I nodded, keeping my eyes on him.

“We work well together, don’t we?” he continued, and I nodded again. “There’s a certain level of trust between us, right?”

“Yes, of course,” I replied, feeling the weight of what he was about to say hanging in the air between us.

“I need to ask you for a big favor,” he said, and for a second his voice trembled. He almost sounded nervous about what he was going to ask.

“A favor? What kind of favor?” I asked, torn between curiosity and confusion.

“I need you to be my date for Saturday’s gala,” he said, blurting it out as if he wanted to get it over with.

His date? Had he really just asked me to be his date? I sat there, stunned, not even sure I’d heard him correctly.

“Would I have to pretend to be your girlfriend? Why me? There are plenty of employees who would be thrilled to go with you,” I said, struggling to hide my shock.

“Exactly why I’m asking you. You’re not like the others. You don’t look at me the way they do. I need someone who won’t try to seduce me, someone who isn’t looking to end up in my bed by the end of the night. Just one night, Winona. All I’m asking is that you pretend to be my girlfriend so my mother will stop harassing me about it. Besides, Leona will be there with her husband, and I’m tired of showing up alone to these events. You know how people are. I know what they say about me behind my back,” he explained.

“You know she can’t stand me, right? I mean Leona,” I said. It was true—she’d hated me from the very first day. She’d even tried to get Mr. Briggs to fire me, and I never understood why. I was the only one who had never looked at him that way.

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“I know. In fact, that’s another reason I want you there. Seeing you with me will annoy her,” he said, a wry smile tugging at his lips.

“I never understood what her problem is with me. She’s always hated me, but I never gave her a reason.”

“She was jealous, Winona. She convinced herself you were the only woman who could pull me away from her, that I’d cheat on her with you,” he explained.

“Why would she think that? Anyone could see I loved her more than anything. I treated her like she was the only woman in the world. Why would she imagine I’d have an affair—with me, of all people, among all the other women in the company? I was never interested in you that way,” I said.

“Because you’re more beautiful and more elegant than anyone here. And we spent a lot of time together. You saw me almost as much as she did,” he replied, his voice dropping slightly.

I heard the tension in his words when he mentioned Leona. I would never understand how she could leave him after everything he did for her. Mr. Briggs gave her all his love and loyalty, and she still left for someone who wasn’t even half the man he was. I had nothing against her new boyfriend, but Davidson was on another level—not just in looks, but in every possible way.

“Anyway, would you do me the favor of coming with me to the gala?” he asked, clearing his throat.

“Mr. Briggs, I really don’t know if that’s a good idea.”

“Please, Winona. You’re the only person I truly trust here. It’s just one night. Can’t you do me that favor? Just for one night?” he pleaded.

I wanted to refuse, but there was something in his eyes—a mix of hope and desperation—that made me pause.

“All right. Just for one night,” I agreed quietly.

“Thank you, Winona. I owe you one,” he said, and the weight in his voice seemed to lift as he managed a small smile.

“Yes, you really do.”

“How about I pay you back with dinner?” he asked.

I gave him a questioning look, unsure what he meant.

“It’s just a thank-you. Nothing more. I promise.” He laughed when he noticed my hesitation.

“All right. Just tell me when and where,” I said, returning his smile.

“How about tonight at eight? Leonardo’s—that little Italian place?” he suggested.

“Sure. That works for me. I should get back to work now. Let me know if you need anything else, sir,” I murmured, standing up.

“I will. Thanks again, Winona.” He smiled warmly.

I nodded and left, heading back to my desk, knowing I still had a mountain of work waiting for me.

If anyone saw Mr. Briggs and me together outside of work twice in one week, it would only fuel the rumors. I just hoped agreeing to dinner wouldn’t complicate things even more around here.

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