

A Favor 51

Chapter 51

The three of us headed toward the bar, each step taking us deeper into the crowd. My gaze swept the room, recognizing old friends and familiar faces. Before long, I spotted Leona standing with her date—a man who clearly didn't have her attention.

Her focus was locked on Winona and me, scrutinizing every detail. I gave her a calm nod and a smug smile. That was all it took for her to turn away and disappear back into the crowd. The small victory made me chuckle, and I turned my attention back to Winona and my mother.

Keeping Winona close felt right, especially with the way some men in the room were looking at her. Maybe it was possessive, but I wanted it to be clear she was with me, so no one got the wrong idea.

Of course, the performance was mainly for Leona's benefit. She needed to believe I was fully committed to Winona. That meant being just as affectionate as I'd been when Leona and I were together—sending a clear message to everyone.

And if I was honest with myself, part of me simply hated the idea of another man getting close to Winona. Those jealous streaks didn't do me any favors, but I couldn't ignore them.

All I wanted was to get through the night without causing any trouble.

With drinks in hand, we began weaving through the crowd toward our table. Every so often, I could feel Leona's gaze burning into my back, but I forced myself to ignore it. Davidson barely let go of me from the moment we arrived, and I found myself quietly enjoying his attention—even if we were only pretending for one night. For once, I felt wanted.

“So, when did all this start?” Mrs. Briggs asked, her curiosity unmistakable.

“It’s only been a few weeks,” Davidson replied evenly.

Relief washed over me. I was grateful he answered, because lying to his mother would’ve been harder than I’d imagined. As we moved through the crowd, friends and acquaintances paused to chat, introducing themselves and exchanging quick words with Davidson and his mother.

“It’s good to see you with Davidson tonight, Winona. You bring a little more class than his usual companions,” Mr. Quinton said with a sly smile.

Davidson returned a relaxed smile, willing to let the evening roll on.

When we finally found our table, we settled in beside three other guests. The moment we sat, Davidson draped an arm around my shoulders, drawing me a little closer. I glanced at him from the corner of my eye.

Seeing him tonight, I realized just how handsome he was. Maybe I’d never really stopped to notice how perfectly his features fit together—his sharp jaw, the small scar beneath his chin, a few freckles scattered over his left cheek. Everything about him felt effortlessly captivating.

I looked away, embarrassed at the thought of being caught staring. Davidson was already absorbed in conversation with someone across the table, but I felt someone else's attention on me. When I looked up, I found Mrs. Briggs watching me with a mischievous glint.

Confused, I held her gaze as she leaned in, her words meant only for me.

"So you call this casual?" she asked.