

Friday Night Brides

Samantha Chase

One

“Seriously, babe. What were you thinking?”

For a minute, Becca could only stare. Was he joking? Had he been paying attention at all? “I...I thought you’d want to come and see the show. That’s why we agreed to meet here,” she said slowly. Unfortunately, she wasn’t sure who she was trying to explain it to—Danny or herself. “You’ve never come to one and...I don’t know...I just thought...”

He held up a hand to stop her. “Becs, look...I think you’ve got the wrong idea here. I’m not interested in going to some...bridal show. I mean...why would I?”

Her shoulders sagged and she gave him a patient smile as she reached for one of his hands. “Danny, this is something that’s really important to me. I’ve been doing this since...forever! I tell you about these shows all the time and it would really mean a lot to me if you came and saw me model.”

The loud bark of laughter was not what Becca was expecting.

At all.

“Um...Danny?” But when he continued to laugh, Becca pulled her hand away and began to nervously look around the parking lot. There weren’t many people around at the moment—a couple of the florist trucks were parked by the curb and the delivery guys were too busy moving flower arrangements around to notice Becca and Danny—and there was some hipster-looking guy standing on the sidewalk checking something on his phone.

Clearing her throat, Becca took a step back and glared. “I don’t see what’s so funny about this,” she said defensively, her arms crossing over her middle.

Danny McDowell had been Becca’s ideal guy since the tenth grade. Of course back in high school, he never paid any attention to her. When they’d run into one another at a club six months ago and Danny asked for her phone number, Becca thought she’d died and gone to heaven. She knew part of it was because she looked a heck of a lot better at twenty-five than she had at sixteen—she had more confidence and had lost some of the weight that haunted her all through high school. Just thinking about how excited she’d felt when Danny actually approached her still made her a little giddy.

As time went on, however, she sort of found herself finding all kinds of things that really irritated her about him. Things she never really noticed back in school—he was extremely self-centered, kind of a loud-mouth, and he never wanted to do anything Becca did.

For a while she thought she could let it go, but tonight’s show was important to her. Enchanted Bridal was celebrating their twentieth anniversary and it was something she had wanted to share with Danny. And she thought he’d want to share with her!

“Come on, Danny,” she began, “you know why this is a big deal for me. Mrs. James is like a second mom to me and Hailey, Angie, Ella, and I have been in every show since the beginning.

We're going to celebrate afterwards—cake and champagne and...it's going to be great." She reached for his hand and gave him what she hoped was a sexy smile. "I really want you there with me."

He sighed loudly and pulled his hand away before he walked around her and started to head back to his car. Becca frowned and went after him. The florist vans were pulling away and only the hipster was still around. When she caught up with Danny, she did her best to keep her voice down as she tried to figure out what was going on.

"Um...excuse me," she said. "But I'm standing here talking to you and you just walk away? What's going on, Danny?"

Stopping and spinning around, Danny raked a hand through his dark hair and stared down at her. He was easily six inches taller than Becca and normally it was something she loved, his looking down into hers. But right now, there was nothing sweet or sexy about his expression.

"Look, Becs," he began, and none too softly. "I really have no desire to stand around with a bunch of losers who are looking to give up the single life. It's a Friday night, for Christ's sake! I'm meeting the guys down at BJ's, I'm not hanging around while you parade around in a costume."

She took a step back as if he'd slapped her. "A costume? Danny, I model wedding gowns! This isn't some little game; it's a fashion show. A real fashion show!"

He snickered again. "Come on...you're kidding right?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" she demanded.

"Becs, you are no model. I mean...look at you. You're short, you're not thin and...well..." he waved his arms around to pretty much indicate her entire body. "You're just not model material." He shrugged. "The only reason you're in these shows is because you're friends with Hailey. There's no way anyone would actually choose you to be a model. Come on, blow this thing off and come to BJ's with me. I'll even let you win at darts."

Cars were starting to pull into the parking lot and for all the open space, Becca felt very closed in. "I'm not going anywhere with you," she hissed. "I'm serious, Danny. I can't believe you could say those things to me! I thought I meant something to you! I thought this was going somewhere!"

He laughed one more time. "You do mean something to me, Becs. You're fun. We've had some good times and the sex has been great but..."

But?! There was a but?! She inwardly seethed.

"But this was never going to go beyond that. I thought you realized that. I'm not looking for anything serious and...well...if I were, you just aren't my type." He shrugged and pulled his keys out of his pockets.

"Not your type? How can you even say that?" she cried. "For months we've been sleeping together and you didn't seem to mind...my type!"

He gave her another shrug and managed to look bored before his gaze landed on her chest. "What can I say? I'm a breast man." And before Becca could even respond, Danny walked around to

the driver's side of the car and unlocked it. "It's been fun, Beccs, but...you know. I thought you understood."

"Danny..."

"Later," he said as he climbed into the car.

Becca stood there and watched him drive away as tears welled in her eyes. When his taillights were out of sight, she let the tears fall for a minute before wiping them away. That was it? She'd invested six months with him and all that time he was only interested in her because of...because of her bra size? Becca's mind raced with all of the degrading things he'd said and she felt like she was going to be sick.

Slowly she walked over to the sidewalk and sat down on the lone wooden bench. The parking lot belonged almost solely to Enchanted, so the only traffic coming and going was from the vendors for the show tonight. Hugging her middle, she bent forward and forced herself to breathe.

All of the excitement she'd been feeling about the show and the party and the anniversary was gone. Right now all she wanted to do was get in her car, drive home and curl up in the fetal position. God, was she so hideous that the only reason a guy would sleep with her was because she had big boobs? Is that what all her other boyfriends had thought?

Every insecurity she'd ever had was now spinning around in her head, mocking her. Becca had no disillusion about herself—she wasn't classically beautiful like Hailey, or tall and glamorous like Angie. Hell, she wasn't even girl-next-door cute like Ella. But hey, it didn't make her some sort of troll either! And in her entire life, no one had ever said she wasn't pretty enough to model in the bridal shows.

The only reason you're in these shows is because you're friends with Hailey.

Oh, God. What if it was true? What if Mrs. James was losing business because Becca was an ugly bride?

Glancing around, she noticed the girls weren't there yet. If she could just get herself together, she could be out of here before they arrived and then call in sick. No one would have to know. There were no witnesses to her ever having been here! Part of her felt a little guilty because it was hard when a model didn't show up, but they'd dealt with it before and she knew Mrs. James would be able to make it work if she weren't there.

Scooping up her purse, Becca fished out her keys, stood up and wiped away the stray tears. She made it all of two steps before she tripped over her own feet and fell down on the pavement.

"Shit!" she cried. "Can I seriously not get a freaking break here?"

"Hey, are you all right?"

Oh great. The hipster.