

Bullied By The Badboy By Maramartha Chapter 16

Benny

“Benny!” Asher screams, jumping on his brother. Ben catches him mid-air like he weighs nothing and ruffles his brother’s hair. The two are lost in their little world as I escape to my car. Ben is still an ass.

Hopping into my car, I insert the key into the ignition without starting it. Ben slides his big helmet onto his brother’s head, hooking the strap under his jaw. He pats the helmet twice with a grin, the harsh lines around his lips soften, his eyes gleam. They fist bump, I smile at how easy it is for them to get along.

Ben climbs the bike first, Asher gets in after him. I have never been on a motorbike, I am not sure I want to be on one with Ben in control. If he is anything like the jackass I know, he will throw me off his bike.

With his leg on the metal thingy, he throws his brother a look over his shoulder. “Ready to go, Champ?”

“Yes.” Asher’s eyes flit to the curb. “Wait. My new friend.” I slide down my seat, breath held in and eyes closed. For once, I’m grateful for my weight because the tiny space fits my frame. “I think she left.”

The disappointment in Asher’s voice is palpable, I almost give out my location but the reminder of Ben’s presence shuts me up. I don’t want to talk to him. I don’t want to remember the cafeteria incident and the apology in Mr Sam’s class. I don’t care if Olivia is his girlfriend, he should stay out of girls business.

“Who?” Ben asks, a note of exasperation in his voice.

I hiss, pressing a hand to my mouth to stop myself from getting out of the car to yell at him. He has only been here for less than ten minutes and he's already annoyed. He kept his brother waiting for hours.

"Theresa. She was waiting with me. Here." A long painful minute passes, swallowing becomes harder for me to do and I curl into myself when I don't hear the sound of his bike leaving. "Look, that's Tessa's car."

Footsteps near my car, a forehead presses to the window. I freeze. The figure raises his hand to knock on the tinted glass, I don't move, I don't breathe until he inches away and my shoulders sag with relief.

"There's no one in there, Champ," Ben says.

"Too bad, I wanted you to meet her." My lips quirk, no way. Asher might be a sweetheart but his big brother is a walking demon. "She was really nice, Benny. And pretty too." I blush. "Can we go now?"

The fading footsteps followed by the revving of the bike calms me, I don't sit up until I hear the sound of the engine across the street. A note on the curb calls my attention, I walk to it and smile at the content.

Asher's short message to his brother. I might switch Benny to Demon and write: Happy Birthday Demon. It is what he gets for being an asshole to me. The bright lights glued to the school building guide me as I walk back to my car with my silhouette for company, I settle inside, glad for the respite against the evening cold as my fingers hit the heater. I take a deep breath, pull up in the direction of my house with sadness hanging over me. It has to be because I saw them together, I never miss my brother this much.

Tears leak from the corner of my eyes as I approach our street, I park in front of our dark house. Another night without my parents. Furiously wiping the tears, I get out of the car and sling my backpack over my

shoulder. I should be grateful. Their job is the reason why I can drive a car like mine, live in a nice house.

Once I'm inside, I grab the first drink I touch from the fridge, order pizza and rush to my room. When the delivery guy arrives, my room is dark enough to pass for a cinema. Moments after he leaves, I snuggle under the sheet, laptop propped on my legs and box of pizza on the bed. I giggle as the credits roll in, I have seen this movie a thousand times but the suspense remains the same as the first time.

A yawn leaves me, I close my eyes and jolt awake to the sound of my phone going off. I squint at the phone, mind a bit hazy as I blindly reach for the switch. Light floods the room, I blink sleepily at my phone, unable to process the words on my screen. The empty can of soda crunches under my feet as I get out of the bed, I toss it into the dustbin beside the door, groaning when my phone resumes vibrating.

Who calls someone this late at night? With a grunt, I answer without looking at the caller.

"We won," a shrill voice says from the other end. I jump. Retracting the phone to glare at my screen, I grunt at the image of Maria smiling at me. "Tessa." Her voice drills through the fog in my brain, I stagger to the vanity and collapse on the chair. Of course she has to be the person calling. "Are you there?"

"Yeah, what's up?"

"We won." I nod, wiping the dried makeup off my face with the last of my wet wipes. Good for them. I could care less. She drones on and on about the after party she missed because she is still grounded. I give the expected responses, humming and forcing out laughter to let her know I

am listening. My eyes wander to the table clock, my brain freezes at the time and I miss her last words. “Tessa, are you there?”

Placing the call on speaker, I pinch my pale cheeks to restore colour to them and stick my tongue out at my reflection. My smile falls a little when my eyes lower to the clock. If no one woke me, then it means I am home alone on a Saturday. My lips turn down in a frown, Mum should be here. Maria’s annoyed voice snaps me out of my misery, I pout at the digits on my screen. She has been talking for five minutes.

I trace the shape of the wonder woman sticker glued to the mirror and whisper, “Yeah?”

Her heavy sigh carries into my room, I manage to smile. “Are you coming to my house?”

Scowling as I fold my arms across my chest, I say, “Why am I coming to your house?”

“Because I am still grounded,” she replies in a duhh tone. “And I’m bored out of my mind.”

“You’re always bored, Maria,” I whisper but I am already shuffling to the bathroom. “I’m on my way.”

I finish up in less than five minutes, rushing down the stairs like I can’t get out of this empty house any faster. I haven’t checked the messages on my phone but I bet they are from Mum to let me know she will be later than usual. Being the owner of a fashion line, I would expect her to have enough free time but it’s never the case. On the bright side, she’s better than Dad, I always see her everyday.

My car stops in front of Maria’s house, a small white bungalow with pink flowers surrounding the porch. I ring the bell, shove my hand in my

pocket while bouncing on my toes. If her mother opens the door, I might get an earful for following Maria to a pub. I guess she's not mad at me since she didn't tell Mum. Or Maria is a really good liar, she claims to have told her mum the video was captured by a stranger.

Another minute without a response, I ring the bell again and the door opens to reveal Maria in a white, halter neck gown. She places one hand on her full chest and sighs. "At long last, the queen has arrived." I push my way in, she rattles nonstop behind me. "What took you so long? Did you come with anything?"

I have been in her house far more times than I count so I don't need directions to her room. "Anything like what?"

Her room has more posters than mine, CDs, a closet full of gowns, crop tops—everything a teenage girl should have. Kicking my sneakers off, I jump on her massive bed, catching the bag of chips Maria aims at my forehead. She joins me on the bed, sitting cross legged in front of me like a disappointed grandma.

"No idea," she says.

Opening the chips, I shove a handful into my mouth. "Yummiieeee." With my mouth full, it's hard to form a coherent sentence. Maria's face scrunches tight in revulsion, I burst out laughing and bits of chips fly out.

"That's disgusting, Tessa."

I pout, she rolls her eyes and points to the table with different nail polish. She skitters to it and returns with two colours. Pink and purple. I hiss when she offers me her hand, eyes narrowed to slits as I pick the purple. Pink is too bright and girly, Maria doesn't need the extra shine, she is all of that already.

“Daniel came. He was at the game,” she whispers when I am done with the left hand. “Maybe that’s why he cancelled.” She stretches her other hand to me, our knees touch when she draws closer. I bite my lips and concentrate on doing a great job on her nails but she clears her throat. I don’t want to talk about boys, I don’t want to think about them or a certain big brother by the name I shall not mention. “Tessa.”

“Okay,” I murmur. I feel her eyes on the back of my head before I look up. “You might be right.”

She curls and uncurls her hands, if her nails were dried, she would have run her fingers through her curly hair flowing down to her waist. I set the nail polish aside and rotate my shoulders. “But...” she whispers.

I smoothen the creases on my sweatpants, focus on the lacy hem of her gown. “I don’t think that’s a good reason. If he cared, he would have asked you to go to the games with him.” She hums, my eyes meet hers. “Everyone knows you’re a cheerleader, you would have definitely been at the game.”

Maria blinks and the sad look is gone. “I guess so.” Licking her lips, she says, “I was willing to miss it for my date.” I cackle, she hits me on my forehead. We were too consumed with our excitement to have remembered the game. Her mum would have roasted her if she missed it. “You should have seen Ben.”

My heart skips, the image of him ruffling Asher’s hair floats through my mind. He made his brother wait because of a game. Ass. Maybe I need a chill pill since Asher wasn’t mad at him. I have never seen him smile that much before at school. To be fair, we don’t run in the same circle so I won’t know if he does.

“He was everywhere, motivating the boys. I don’t think we would have won without him.” Maria’s flirty smile has my insides knotting. I don’t like it. She should reserve it for Daniel. She falls back to the bed, I mimic her position and we stare at the ceiling. “If he wasn’t dating that bitch, I would totally date him.”

At her remark, something strange claws at my heart, something that wasn’t present when Ben pecked Olivia. I shut my eyes so tight my face pulls into a grimace. I shouldn’t feel this way. I hate Ben.

“No, you won’t. You like Daniel.”