

## Bullied By The Badboy By Maramartha Chapter 17

Miss Tee

Broadway Heights is back to normalcy by Monday morning, the hallway is crowded with different groups mingling with themselves. I laugh at something Maria says, she gives me a look. “What? It’s true.”

“It’s not,” I reply, trying to keep the flatness out of my voice. Her dramatic gasp amuses me, she grips my shoulder. I don’t allow her intense look deter me. “You cannot walk on fire without getting burned.”

“You know nothing, my dear,” she retorts.

I make to whack the back of my head, she scurries ahead of me with a wicked laugh and goes to stand in front of her locker. I join her, she hums to herself while taking out the books for the first period. I mimic her movements, stuffing my bag with more notes than I require. I snicker when the weight of her books drags her arm down. A textbook drops, my eyes fall to the purse strapped around her waist, I shake my head.

Already sensing my remark, she squats to pick the text and says, “Shh.”

“Fashion before comfort, huh?” I mutter. I don’t know who gave her the grand idea that the tiny excuse of a bag that fits only a phone and a few pencils is ideal for school. It can’t fit two phones. “Smartass.”

Maria opens her mouth to fire a snide reply I am sure will annoy me.

“You...” She trails off, her eyes dart behind me and she swallows audibly. I follow her gaze to Daniel walking up to us with worried green eyes, she pulls me in for a quick hug, places a sloppy kiss on my cheek. “I’ll see you later, Tessa. Bye.”

With that, Maria is gone, racing to her class in stilettos like they are flat boots. Daniel stops beside me, I slam the locker after taking out my bag and shake my head. “Nope,” I say without looking up at him. I am tall but the giant is taller. “If she’s not talking to you, I’m not talking to you. It’s what the rule says.”

I try to get past Daniel but he stretches his hands to keep me caged between him and the door. My back presses into my locker, the coldness of the metal seeps into my skin but I don’t give him the satisfaction of meeting his gaze. He can handle a little silent treatment from his only female friends in the entire school.

“At least hear me out,” he whines.

“Nope,” I say with an extra stress on the p.

He groans, I raise my eyes to his and frown at his pouty lips and sorry attempt at puppy dog eyes. Nope, it’s not working on me. He pulls on a strand of his curly hair, it bounces and shrinks to his original state.

“Tessa.”

“Daniel.” He grabs my shoulders, his fingers dig into my skin, hard enough to stop me from escaping but not so hard it will leave a bruise. His eyes narrow for a second, he bats those unnecessarily long lashes. I imagine Maria drooling if he does this in her presence and my lips curl in a smile. “Why did you do it?”

He releases me to shove his hands into his pockets, I scan his peculiar outfit. He is wearing the school’s team sweatshirt with the number 54 and their mantra written in front, paired with a navy blue jean that’s almost black. I frown, he doesn’t even play football. He doesn’t get involved in school activities.

Some students walk past us, reminding me I need to be in class. No one gives our intimate position a second glance. They know nothing will happen if we are left in the same room, naked as the day we were born. I am cool with that, I don't see him as more than a friend. It will be awkward if I like him. I shiver at the thought. It will be a nasty love triangle between friends, I don't want it. Things will never remain the same. I love Maria too much to allow a guy ruin a childhood friendship for the second time.

Pushing away from the locker, I swat the hair flying into my eyes behind my ear, already missing the clip I gave Asher. That clip might be old but it always saves the day. "You could have asked her to the game."

Daniel shifts to the side, finding his timberlands attractive. "I could have," he murmurs. He looks lost for a minute, I shrug and he motions in the direction Maria ran off. "I'm gonna go. See you at lunch, yeah?"

"Yeah, lunch," I say but he's gone.

I search through my backpack to be sure I'm not missing anything, I don't want to be in this hallway until it's lunch time. A tap on my shoulder forces my head up, I swallow a lump at the sight of Ben. He glares daggers at me, his brows drawn so tight with his intense blue eyes boring into me. I can't help thinking he knows I was the Tessa Asher referred to, so I force a tiny smile to my face but it ends up as a grimace.

"Hi," I say. My voice comes out shaky, I clear my throat. "Hi." Waving a hand in his face, I mutter, "Ever heard of personal space?" His warm breath on my face slightly disconcerts me, I poke his rigid shoulder. He doesn't move, instead he arches a bushy brow and slaps my finger off him. "Sorry," I hear myself saying, proud my voice doesn't betray me. Pushing past him is futile, the boy is made of steel. From the corner of

my eyes, I note the empty hallway and it lends me courage. “Excuse me, I need to get to class.”

“Right.” He takes one step back to bring out a familiar object from his pocket, goosebumps break out on my arms when he yanks my wrist to place my hair clip on my palm. My eyes fleet to his face, his tongue runs over his naturally pink lips. “I believe this is yours.” Closing my hand over the clip, I bite my lower lip with a nod, there is no use denying it. Ben’s fist clenches at his side. “Stay away from my brother.”

The contempt in his voice irritates me, pokes me in all the wrong places. I square my shoulders. “Or what?” My only offense was keeping his brother company until his arrogant, irresponsible ass showed up. He should be thankful. The anger evident in his eyes fuels me to add, “What will you do if I don’t?”

Time slows like I’m in the ring ready to face a bigger opponent, I blink and the next moment, I am pressed against the locker with Ben’s fingers digging painfully into my cheeks. Blood roars in my ears, my cheeks burn from the force of his hands. The callousness of his palms doesn’t escape me. My breath lodges in my throat when his lips near my ear, my eyes dart to the hallway. It’s fucking empty.

“Not so tough now without your mask, eh, Miss Tee?” he whispers. Malice dances in his eyes while mine burns with hot tears eager to escape. Maybe he’s right, maybe I am just a weakling without the mask to give me strength. “Stay away from Asher. Play with your age grade or I will make your life hell.”

Seconds roll by, his fingers press harder into my skin, I am sure there’s blood because that spot stings. Ben’s dark gaze sweeps over my face before coming to rest on my eyes as if asking if his instruction is clear and I nod. He lets go, I suck in a sharp breath, inhaling deeply to ease the

burning in my lungs. My eyes burn from holding back my tears, I whimper and take a step to the side so I'm out of his evil reach.

Ben chuckles, a sinister sound that taunts me as I wipe the thin line of blood without a mirror. The inside of my cheeks hurts like I was stabbed with needles multiple times. I straighten up, balling my hands into fists, I beat him once, I can do it again. Ben notices my stance, he scoffs, mocking laughter escapes him.

“Instead of harassing girls, you should focus on being a more responsible big brother.”

An emotion crosses his face, he bridges the gap between us in seconds. This time, he doesn't touch me but he's close enough for me to notice his healing cuts and the tiny scars scattered around his brows.

“What did you say to me?” His voice clogs with an emotion that scares me, I lost my will to talk and resort to shaking my head. He grabs me by the collar, cutting off my air supply. “C'mon, Tee, repeat it.”

“I didn't say anything,” I whisper, gaze fixated on the wall behind him. His grip on my collar slacks, I inhale and squeeze my eyes shut when he scoffs. “My name is not Tee, my name is Tessa. Let me go.”

Silence falls over us, I pry one eye open. His sadistic smile is the first thing I see before stars dot my vision. Excruciating pain spreads through my stomach, Ben takes a step back with his hand clenched tightly at his side and a satisfied smirk adorning his lips. He did it again. He punched me on that same spot. It happens in slow motion like I am watching myself. I double over in agony, slumping to the ground when I can't hold myself up any longer. My eyelids grow heavy, I have trouble staying awake.

Through my bleary vision, I see someone running up to me, I hear a scream that hurts my ears. The figure crouches beside me, I wince when he touches my stomach. Tired of fighting the sleep, I give in.