

BadBoy 30

Chapter 30

All-Rounder

“Your shirt is hot,” Blondie tells me.

My head lowers, I smoothen the front of the white shirt I borrowed from Maria. “Um, thanks.” He winks, my fake smile widens. After Olivia made a mess of my shirt, I had to get a new one and the only thing my best friend found was a skin-tight top highlighting the shape of my upper body. I don’t need to look hard enough to see the outline of my bra and I know that’s what drew Blondie’s eyes to me. I need to stop calling the poor boy by his hair colour. Shouldn’t he be with the set design group? “Where’s Miss Jota?”

After giving instructions to the set design group, she left without a word. He shrugs. “Dunno.”

Ben is not here. Has he seen that stupid video? How did he react? He must have laughed his heart out. Someone chuckles behind me, my neck twists to get a look of the culprit and Noah winks at me. I quickly avert my gaze, eyes returning to my script. What if he was the one who recorded the video? Whitney is missing, she chose set design and I am glad she did. I don’t need a competition. She and Miss Jota spent the first few minutes discussing the designs for the set, Mr Rizwan also loved her ideas. Cue the eye roll.

The door opens, I don’t look up when someone pulls out a seat from the second row. “Yo,” Blondie says, “You’re late to the party.” Party? I throw a glance his way, he exchanges brotherly handshakes with Ben, grinning at him like best pals. They start a discussion about football and I return to reading. My feet raps the floor impatiently, I chew my lips, reading one line for the fifth time. We have been here for a while.

A figure sits beside me, from the boots, I can tell the owner. His masculine scent envelopes me, drawing me back to the day he pinned me to the wall and I struggle to breathe properly. I suck in a breath when he taps me, my head raises and I swallow the lump in my throat. I need to get a grip, I saw him in class.

“Hi, we have a class together, right?” We have more than one class but I simply nod and a smile spreads on his lips. “Did you get Mr Sam’s note? I missed it.” I think the fact Ben is talking to me like a normal person snatches my ability to talk, my mind blanks, eyes zero on his lips. He snaps his fingers in front of my face, I wet my lips but the words refuse to form. I copied the note, understood it too. “Hello? Hi?”

Air rushes into my throat. “Yeah,” I breathe out. “Yeah, I did. I did.”

Ben's eyes rake over me to the point of self-consciousness, I hide my trembling hands under my script. He needs to stop doing that, stripping me naked with a look. I clear my throat, forcing his eyes back to my face and he nods slowly.

A half-smile flits to his lips, he leans back on the chair and a bolt of jealousy hits me. Oh, to be a chair so I can enjoy his touch again. I shake my head to clear those thoughts. It's his closeness that drives me crazy.

"Can I have it?"

"No." He arches a brow, I clear my throat and hopefully the cobwebs in my brain. "I will give it to you if you apologise." His laughter is seductive, a hoarse sound I can get used to hearing. Ben spares me another look and doubles over in laughter. I press my lips into a line. I mean it. "Or you can ask Abigail for hers."

They stayed back to talk after class. I wasn't spying on them but it was hard to miss the invisible distance between them. A pang shoots straight to my heart. He stood as close as he stood beside me in that video, I didn't like it. I didn't like hearing her laugh at what he said or brushing his shoulders. Olivia will have a fit if she finds out I am not the real competition, I will be more than glad to be the snitch. I stop my thoughts from straying to darker zones, this is unlike me. Besides, I have Let. He understands me, I don't need to impress him, we flow so easily.

"Na," Ben says. "I want yours." Good for me because I will not hand over that note without receiving a proper apology from him. He fixes me with a smile and my heart jumps inside my chest. I love his smile. His eyes too, they steal attention. "But I won't apologise. You earned that punch, Miss. Both of them."

"Okay." My eyes return to my script but I can barely focus on my lines. "Stop calling me Miss, my name is Tessa." He has a problem with calling me by my name and I don't know why. "T. E. S. S. A. Tessa."

"I know your name, Miss," he replies, voice dripping with arrogance. I hate this guy sometimes. "About that note?" He bends over and his muscles flex. I bite my lips. "Don't do that." Do what? My teeth sink deeper into my lip, he says, "Stop it. You will hurt yourself." He groans but I find it harder to understand his point. "Now, your lips are bleeding. You never listen, do you?" Oh. I press a finger to my lip and retract it to the sight of blood coating my fingertip. Without meeting his gaze, I swipe it against my jeans and he chuckles. "The note."

“No.”

“I just saved you from chewing your lips and losing blood. You could have died from blood loss.” I roll my eyes so hard he laughs and my frown disappears. “In my opinion, Miss, that’s better than an apology.”

Clutching my knee, I shake my head. “I don’t need your opinion, I need your apology.” An eerie silence falls on us, he snickers. I look up and my eyes twitch. He has my bag. Ben is going through my bag. I try to snatch it from him but it’s too late. He holds my calculus note above his head with a sheepish grin I want to wipe off. Glaring daggers at him, I say, “Haven’t you heard? You don’t go through a lady’s bag.”

“But you’re not a lady. You are a girl,” he mutters, no malicious intent. I scoff, he shrugs. “Word: Lady. Etymology: Middle English. A woman of authority, breed or higher class. The mistress of a household.”

Wow. He’s smart. Really smart and he’s staring at me. I swallow my initial comeback, thinking long and hard of a smarter reply. “There are many meanings for a word. A lady could mean a young woman.”

“Yeah,” he comments, lowering my bag to the floor, “but you are a girl, not a young woman.” His brows crease, I shift, trying to find the best position. “What’s wrong with being called a girl?” Floored by his words, I gawk, unable to counter him. “Close your mouth, Sweetie,” he says, “a fly might get in.”

Just when I was beginning to think we might get along, he had to remind me of his real self. Bringing out his phone to take pictures of the note from today, my eyes find my feet when his head jerks to me. What is it this time? “Is this your handwriting?” Ben asks, flipping pages and taking more pictures. “Miss?”

“Yeah.” I save my best handwriting for class because I don’t want to spend half the time later figuring the notes instead of reading. The curvy, more calligraphic handwriting is reserved for Let and doodling.

Ben must have realised I wouldn’t fight him for my note because he doesn’t try to hide it from me. I twiddle my fingers when his eyes rest on my face for the umpteenth time, flushing under his gaze. His mouth quirks. The idiot is well aware of the effect he has on most girls. As much as I hate to admit it, I am on the list of girls smitten by his looks. His arrogance is stifling but attractive.

There I go again thinking about him in a good light, I hate this shit. Ben gives me mixed feelings.

“Hmm.” I try to ignore the jock while he clicks away but it’s hard. He’s hot. Too hot. Plus, he was nice to me today. I steal more glances at him, doing my hardest to be subtle. “Like what you see, honey?” A cough catches in my throat, I stare straight ahead, cheeks staining red. He called me by a new pet name, confirming my suspicions about him hating my name. “Keep staring and I will have to charge you for it.”

See, his ego is bigger than this entire room and where is Miss Jota?

Speaking of the devil, she walks into the room with puffy eyes and I forget all about Ben. She looks like she has been crying. I don’t like that. Miss Jota claps to garner everyone’s attention and the noise ceases. I am not the only one who notices her eyes, Ben snuggles close to me.

“What happened to her?” he whispers.

Chills race down my body at his proximity, I shrug. “I’m so sorry for keeping you all waiting,” she starts, “but there will be no practice today.” A gasp echoes through the room, Ben frowns at me and I realise I was the one who made the sound. She forces a smile to her face, waving her phone in the air. “I have received some... devastating news and I need to attend to it immediately. Practice will resume next week.” My chest sags, I slump on my seat. I love her but come on, that’s a week from today. “Keep practising.”

The hall is silent after Miss Jota leaves, none of us expected today to turn out this way. Students begin to trickle out, I pry my note from Ben’s hand. He doesn’t give me issues, I shove it into my backpack.

“You registered for the All-Rounder yet?”

I freeze. My ears must be playing tricks on me, Ben is talking about the illegal ring in school. If I admit to knowing what the All-Rounder is, I can’t deny being a part of it. “Are you asking me?” He looks behind me and shrugs. I roll my eyes, of course there is no one there. “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

Laughter tears through his lips, he eyes me and I almost blurt out the truth. "Okay, Tee," he says and I lick my lips. He doesn't have to call me by my stage name to make his point. I get it, he knows it's me but I will still deny it. In school, I am Tessa. A corner of his lips lifts, he mutters, "Good luck fighting Pablo."

The hall grows hotter, I snatch my bag from the floor. I fight Pablo on Thursday, it's impromptu. Coach begged me to stand in for one of his guys. Ben's smile makes me jittery. I hear myself say, "I am going to go now. Bye."