

## **BadBoy 51**

### Chapter 51

#### **Just us**

Ben loses his match.

My arms tighten around my torso as the referee raises Ben's opponent's hand to declare him the winner of tonight's match. Both of them are breathing heavily with sweat dripping down their bodies. The lights rotate until it is focused solely on Jack. The crowd breaks into a louder scream and a chant begins.

Ben searches the crowd for me, I wave and he looks away once our eyes meet. It might have been my imagination but disappointment laced with hurt flashed in his eyes. It wasn't his fault, he gave his all.

I fight through sticky bodies to get out of the auditorium, my toes curl with dread as Ben storms outside. I meet him pacing in front of my car. His hair is wet with sweat rolling down his forehead, he halts when he sees me and starts for the empty road. I race after him, jumping in his way to stop him from leaving.

"Ben." Sweat seeps into my palms as I cup his face. With his eyes cast down I can't tell if he heard me but his body is stiff. I bring his hands to my waist. His silence is startling. "You did your best, Benny."

"I could have done better," he whispers and his eyes finally come to rest on mine. "I wanted to win."

On my toes, I press a kiss to his lips. "I know."

Linking our arms, I drag him to my car and help him with his seatbelt. "I should have listened to you."

I don't say a word until I have fastened my seatbelt. "We win some, we lose some." He pouts. "It's fine."

"It's not fine, I wanted to take you out."

When the car is out of the driveway, I place one hand on the steering and take his. "How about this?" He is mute but I know he's listening. "Let me take you out and when you are ready, you can take us out. You get to take me out like you planned," I add when I sense his refusal coming, "and I get my date."

“Fine by me.”

We stop at a T-junction, the streetlight pours into our car, highlighting the cut on a side of his face. Jack can be brutal. His weakness is speed. Something I am a master of.

“You are bleeding,” I tell Ben. He feels his face for the injury and frowns. “There’s a first aid kit somewhere there. Flip through, you will see it.”

The traffic eases and I join other cars on the road, rolling down the windows to let in some of the cool air. “Nothing to see here,” he says seconds after searching through the car compartment and pulls out leftover cookies. I chuckle when he starts munching them without my permission. Ben, the foodie. “This is nice.”

He has eaten my cookies too many times to count but manages to act like it’s his first time. We arrive at his house and I follow behind him without an invitation. Lights flood the room once he flips the switch.

Asher is not home. From what I have gathered, Asher spends most of the Saturdays with his mum. She doesn’t live here with them. I wait for him while he goes up to get a change of clothes and first aid kit.

The noise from the television drowns his footsteps, I don’t hear him walk in until he grabs my shoulders and a scream tears out of my lips. Jesus Christ.

“Fuck you, Benny,” I yell at the idiot doubled over with laughter. He jumps over the couch to sit beside me, I place a hand over my chest until my heart quiets. My attempt to stay angry at him is futile, he snuggles closer to me and I turn to jelly. He pecks my cheek. “You almost gave me a heart attack.”

His head lowers and he captures my lips in a brief kiss. “Didn’t mean to, Gracie.” He lifts me like I weigh nothing onto his legs, our foreheads touch and his arms slide around my waist. “I really wanted to win.”

The sadness in his voice leaks into the air, I hug him and he draws circles on my lower back. I break away from the hug seconds after, he drags the centre table closer to him and props his legs on it. Taking over the remote, he flicks through different channels with one hand tucked behind the back of his head.

Face scrunched with boredom, he stops at a channel playing a hallmark movie. "Want to see anything?"

His fingers run through my hair as I prop my head on his laps and throw my legs over the armrest. A moan catches in my throat at the pleasure that sears through my scalp as he continues his massage. I dig my nails into my leg to keep from moaning out. I am fine with us sitting here in silence, doing this.

"No," I reply, "not really." His handsome face comes into view. "Do you have a movie in mind?"

"I could watch you all night," he whispers and I suck in a sharp breath. Blush rises to my cheeks, I grab the throw pillow and hide my face in it. His responding laughter tugs at my heart, he grabs the pillow and kisses the tip of my nose. "Don't be shy, Gracie," he says as he pulls me to his laps. His breath fans my face, causing a shiver to roll down my back. "It's just us."

Just us. Me and him in this small house. The words have more than one effect on me, mostly sensual. My nipples stretch against the material of my shirt, creating two beady dots and the skin between my legs tingle at the thoughts of all we could within this time. In the books I read, they always make out.

Ben's eyes darken, he looks from me to my chest and his fingertips caress my tits. I let out a breathy moan, my fingers splay across his bare chest which my brain just registers. His chest is firm and solid under my touch, I trace the line between his abs to his chiselled jaw and the cut on the side of his face.

It no longer looks as extreme as it did when it was bleeding. He doesn't flinch when I trail invisible lines around the closed injury. I grind against his body and my mouth lowers to the skin on his neck. His breath is warm against my ears, I nibble on his neck and his hand slides into my shirt to unclasp my bra.

The sound from the television drags us back to the present before we can act on our impulses. We jerk back. I retract my hands from his chest, we share an awkward glance and his arms drop to his sides.

Without meeting my gaze, he says, "Let's pick a movie."

Embarrassment burns my cheek. "Yeah, yeah."

Ben doesn't let me get off him. Steadying me with an arm around my waist, he carries me to the kitchen to pop some kernels. When it's done, we carry two bowls to the parlour. He leaves me alone and returns almost immediately with a wool quilt and two cans of soda. I hide a smile at the can of coke he hands over to me. He remembered.

The lights go off, leaving only the television rays as our source of sight. "Horror or action?"

Peals of laughter escape me. Our first unofficial date is about to happen and my boyfriend thinks those genres are the best choices. For movies, I'll pick comedy and biographies and for books, I'll pick romance and thriller.

"None." I snatch the remote and stop at a station showing Marshall. It is one of those movies I never get tired of seeing. Based on true life events featuring a black lawyer who helps wrongly accused victims. Plus, I like the main lead in this one. I set the remote far from Ben's reach. "We can start with this one."

The movie begins, Ben groans into my ear. "Babe. Come on. You don't even like lawyers."

"I like this one," I reply with a snicker. He groans again. "If you are good, you will get a kiss from me."

That does the magic. He clamps his mouth shut. We watch in silence, chewing and drinking in complete quietude. On occasions, Ben leans over to peck me. Sometimes, he stretches his hand to me for a quick peck on his knuckles. He likes touching me. I like it.

Another scene comes up. I cringe when blood spills on the camera. The friend of the main character was beaten by thugs and his wife had to take care of me. I don't think my boyfriend realises when he reaches for my hand to give it a gentle squeeze but my heart flutters and a hive of bees erupts in my stomach.

Instead of watching the movie, I watch him and my cheeks ache from smiling so much. He is so cute.

"If it was my Gracie, she would have taken those fuckers down," he mutters.

Liar.

They would beat me blue, black and purple if I so much as tried to fight back. The only thing I would have done in that case was flee. But whatever rocks his boat. Besides, I like that he thinks I am strong enough to handle them. I peck him on his neck and he stuffs my mouth with more of his popcorn.

The movie continues and he grows more invested in it. He doesn't know when he pushes away from me to grab a pillow. I giggle when he shakes his head at a scene I almost lost my shit the first time I watched it.

"Don't tell me this fucker is thinking of taking the deal," he screams when the accused is offered a plea deal by the plaintiff. To accept ten years. The guy is innocent but no one wants to listen to him because of the colour of his skin. Ben throws the pillow at the screen when the guy tells his lawyer about taking the deal. "Are you fucking with me? Hit him, Thurgood." My hand goes over my mouth but the laughter breaks free. Ben's eyes narrow at me. "Babe, it's not funny. We have come too far for him to ruin this."

Pushing my legs over his, I ask, "Who's we?"

He appears stunned by my question but shakes out of his trance. "We." He taps his chest. "Me. Myself. I," he says. Switching our positions, he hovers over me and my back connects with the sofa. I wheeze with laughter as his fingers attack my side. I am too ticklish. "And Mr Marshall. We have come far."

Ben licks my nose like a puppy would. I scrunch my face in faux disgust and he licks my lips. If it were another person, I would have freaked out but this is Ben. Everything he does is perfect. I dip my hand into the bowl of popcorn and flick them across his face.

"You are cute."

"Handsome," he corrects, "Handsome is the right word."

"Okay, handsome." He winks. I shake my head, so tempted to burst his bubble of confidence. Our attention returns to the television, we return to our former position and his fingers run across my feet. His subconscious touches are the best. "You are a cutie who is handsome."

Ben snorts with laughter. I nod my approval as Mr Marshall's only female friend in the movie joins him in suede combat boots similar to the one I puked on.

“Sick boots,” Ben compliments, voicing out my thoughts as he strokes my feet absentmindedly.

“Yeah,” I say. He doesn’t look away from the screen. His concentration is cute. “I need one of those.” Ben hums an inaudible reply but I am certain he didn’t hear a word I said. We watch the rest of the movie in silence. As the credits roll in, some of the carefreeness dissipates. I mutter, “My mum wants to meet you.”

In silence, he pushes my legs off his laps so he can switch on the lights. On his return, he doesn’t take his former position. I bite my lips and stop as soon as his eyes narrow. My heart shifts into overdrive. We have been dating for less than a week, is it too soon to involve the parents?

“You don’t have to come if you don’t—”

He cuts me off. “When?”

I swallow the lump getting comfortable in my throat. “Thanksgiving. She wants to meet my boyfriend.” Faint lines appear on his forehead. The distance between us offers me courage to add, “My dad too.”

Another long minute of silence passes, I am certain he will refuse. “I’ll ask my mum and get back to you.”