

BadBoy 66

Chapter 66

Sorry for yourself

Today is the first day of school and also the first time I am resuming a new semester without Maria. It's odd.

I pass a look at my reflection in the rearview mirror. I don't look so bad. No makeup except a dab of red lipstick. Ben's clip—the second colourful item of my outfit—is keeping my hair away from my face.

My fingers shake slightly at the thought of Ben. I miss my boyfriend. I touch the butterfly on the clip and a wry smile forms on my lips. I haven't been the best girlfriend to him in days. I push that thought aside as soon as the laughing image of him and Olivia pops in my mind. Are they really just friends?

Drawing courage from within, I flash my image a thumbs in the rearview mirror and step out of my car. The parking lot is deserted, scary. Everything is scary without Maria and Ben. Most students, including me, are not so keen on resuming in the second week of January. I switch the plastic bottle to my other hand and start the climb up the front stairs. I have walked this place a thousand and one times. It's fine.

Or not.

The door swings open before I touch the handle, I jump back to avoid it hitting my face but end up falling flat on my butt. My bottle crashes to the floor, my bag slides off my shoulder and my books spill out.

Great.

With another sigh, I squat to pick up the books that are slowly getting drenched by the water leaking out of my damaged bottle. To think it is a new flask. If this isn't a sign that the whole semester will be awful, I don't know what else is. I don't look up to the owner of the feet that appear in my line of vision but I can easily tell it's a guy with big feet. My jaw ticks when he attempts to pick my books off the ground.

"It's fine," I grit out, yanking the book from his grip.

Noah raises his hands. I do the best I can to stop from rolling my eyes. I don't want his or Olivia's trouble this semester. Where's his side piece? Some seconds of silence pass, his hands rest on his knees

"Sorry," he mutters, lips in a contrite smile.

Sorry for yourself.

For some reason, I am extra snappy today. I woke up on the right side of the bed but everything annoys me. Noah jumps to his feet and offers me a hand. I eye it without taking it and my gaze trails to his face.

Our past conversations flood my mind.

The texts.

The letters.

Noah is Let.

Let is Noah.

Why?

We haven't talked since that text, never mentioned meeting. The letters don't make us friends. Maybe it does. It's hard to see him as a Mummy's boy or the same guy who was molested by his stepsister. It might have affected his behaviour towards girls but he's nice to Olivia. Will he be nice to me now?

I liked the anonymousness.

Are we going to mention the letters and texts or pretend he didn't bully me? I finish packing the rest of my books that escaped the water. Noah is quiet beside me as I step into the school. The hallway is almost empty with some girls gawking at us.

Ben always walks me to my locker and Noah is not Ben. I imagine the wheels in their heads spinning as they try to make sense of what's happening. They will gossip about it later. I dart frantic glances at Noah but he doesn't take the hint and my annoyance nears a tipping point when we arrive at my locker.

After shoving the wet book into my locker, I slam the door shut, half-expecting him to be gone but he leans on the locker close to mine with his arms crossed on his chest. I force myself to breathe deeply. I can try to be friends with him but not now.

"Today is not a good day, Noah."

He shoves his hands into his front pockets. "Not a good day for what?" The intensity of my gaze doesn't waver and my hands ball into fists when he chuckles. "I didn't come here to fight you." My eyebrows shoot up and his wiggle. Of all the bullshits, he pulls up with this nonsense. "I came here to apologise."

Can this day get any weirder? Noah sweeps his hair back, a smile on his face while expectantly awaiting my reply. He is fucking serious. I mimic his stance, my frown fast morphing into a scowl that makes him laugh. Why the hell does he keep chortling like an idiot? I am not a clown neither do I find this amusing.

"For what?"

"You know what," he retorts.

My head moves left, then right. "No. I would like to hear it," I say. He holds my stare head-on but I don't back down. If he wants to apologise, he must do it properly. We might be pen friends but it doesn't excuse his past behaviour. My hands lower to my sides. We don't have all day for this. "I'm waiting."

"Halloween night wasn't supposed to end that way," he says. The only thing they did right that day was attacking me when they did. A minute too early or late and I might have missed Ben. "I just came here to say I'm sorry and err... I hope we can be cool?" It comes off as a question. I shake my head. "Really?"

His lips quirk in a smile. He doesn't look so bad when he's not scowling. Why am I admiring a guy that's not my boyfriend? Why does Noah feel the need to apologise? I didn't request for his half-ass apology.

“Thanks for the apology, Noah.” He hasn’t earned it. I try to leave but he blocks my path. “Anything else?”

“Nope,” he says with a stress on the p.

Weird. But not as weird as him being nice to me. He went silent on me during the whole holiday, only to show up now and pretend we are best friends making up after a fight. To be fair, I didn’t text him either.

What would I have said knowing Let is the guy who connived with Olivia to make my life hell? Noah gives a mock salute and I flip my middle finger at his retreating figure. He can choke on his stupid apology.

“What did Noah want?”

Jesus. My heart jumps to my throat. I place a hand on my chest. Taking a deep breath, I turn to my boyfriend. His blue eyes lack warmth and it throws me off balance. Where is the love for his babe? No love for me since he has Olivia. I recover from the shock of his presence and school my face into a mask.

“You have to stop sneaking up on me like that,” I say, pushing my bag up one shoulder. “I don’t like it.”

Ben grunts and an unusual air of awkwardness settles over us. It feels like we are at the beginning stage of our relationship again. He doesn’t offer to take my bag like he would normally do. No notes either.

“Sorry,” he mutters.

There’s no trace of remorse on his face. No pet name. No gushing over me. He doesn’t try to peck me. He doesn’t even smile. We have not seen each other in over two weeks, the least he can do is pretend to be excited to see his girlfriend. Well, I’m not happy to see him too and he can go on as many family dinners as he wants with Olivia. They are more compatible. She is his friend. Hiding my hurt, I push away from my locker but Ben drags me back.

A startled gasp escapes me as my back connects to my locker. I wince and his expression softens.

What is going on with him?

His hands come on both sides of my head, successfully caging me between himself and my locker. All reasonable thoughts flee my mind, my heart slows its beat and I look up to him with fear stricken eyes. He is scaring me.

Ben takes a deep breath and some of my fear ebbs. This is not my Benny. This imposter is acting strange. "We were not done talking," he breathes out. "Please don't walk out on me when we are talking."

His eyes hold mine, the raw, intense emotions in them startles me.

Why is he angry? I am the one who should be mad.

"Fine." I cross my hands with a huff. Forcing a cheeriness I don't feel to my voice, I stick out my tongue. "What were we," I murmur, putting emphasis on the last word, "saying?" His head jerks but his frown remains on his lips like a trademark. My patience wears off fast. He is so annoying. "Please remind me."

Ben leans forward, his lips hover over my ear and a chill rushes down my body. I missed this electrifying feeling that rattles my entire being when he's in close proximity. "What did Noah want?" he whispers.

I delay to answer so I can feel his body against mine a little longer. He lifts a brow and I clear my throat. "To apologise for being a jerk. Dunno why now." Maybe I do but Ben doesn't need to hear that. "How are you?" His lip twitches, my heart sinks to my belly when he stops me from placing my hands on his chest. It is not fair. "Benny. I missed you."

"Right." My jaw drops. I blink. That's all he has to say? Alright, two can play this game. I square my shoulders, ready to leave but he doesn't move. He's like a wall of brick keeping me away from my class. My mouth open in protest, he places a finger on my lips and my mind blanks. "I was at your house this morning," he says. I gulp. "But you already left."

Because I rushed to school to avoid him. I shrug. His eyes narrow but he doesn't speak.

“Had to leave early,” I mutter.

Disbelief etches on his face, he steps back. “Where were you last night?”

In my room, thinking hard about how to act normal around him today. He said it more than once, he and Olivia are just friends. It is no big deal. It was just a dinner. A dinner he didn’t think to mention to me.

“Home.”

Ben scoffs. “You told me you weren’t home.”

I did? When? That’s why I don’t tell lies. I forget the lie as soon as it is out of my lips. I roll my shoulders in a casual shrug, not the least apologetic. He lied to me first, so we are even. Ben’s gaze is still on me, I move one step away from him.

“Guess I lied.”

“Guess you lied?” He scoffs and pins me with a stare that burns into my skin. I want to confess what I saw to him. I don’t like that we are not on great terms but I keep my mouth shut. Since he didn’t tell me about it, why should I bring it up? “I don’t think you want me around you anymore.” Come again, say what? I gasp silently. “So I’ll just go.”

He backs away from me. I wait for his laugh, maybe a smile to show he is joking. But he takes one step, two steps. He is leaving. I pinch myself out of my shock. When I find my voice, I yell at his back, “Ben.”

But he continues to his class without a backward glance.