

BadBoy 27

Chapter 27

No kissing

Music booms from the earbuds plugged into my ears, I slap a hand against my hip in rhythm to the song infiltrating my mind. My head bobs, I nudge the door to the drama room open with my foot and stop.

Everyone is here.

Well, not everyone but half of the school football team is present. I yank the earpiece out and shove my phone into my back pocket. My feet refuse to function, I lick my lips, praying for my brain to send signals to them but they remain glued to the floor. The room is packed with tall walls of bricks in the form of jocks, I can almost touch the testosterone in the air. Their heads snap to me in unison, my eyes find my sneakers.

What are they doing here?

“Tessa, nice of you to finally join us,” Miss Jota says. The cheeriness in her voice washes off some of the awkwardness, I smile and walk briskly to where she’s seated. I am only a few minutes late so I know she won’t reprimand me but the unwarranted attention feels like punishment. “We have new members.”

The new members are the boys seated in a circle with their chairs pulled back and chins propped on the top rails. I drag a seat close to Miss Jota’s worktable, she glances at me without saying a word but I am grateful for her frame which hides me from the view of those boys. I don’t understand why they are here. This is not the gym or school field. Miss Jota doesn’t seem to mind, she looks content with the number.

Whitney giggles, I look behind Miss Jota to see her in the circle of boys. She’s not the only girl there, her friends are there too. For the life of me, I can’t recall their names. They whisper among themselves, hands over their mouths to stifle the giggles that still escape as they cackle like aged witches. I feel someone’s hot gaze on me, my eyes flit in that direction and my heart slows when I locate the blue orbs fixated on me.

I avert my gaze from Ben and drop my bag at my feet to retrieve my script. I spent most of last night and this morning rehearsing my lines but with all of them present, I am not sure I will remember.

Why do they have to be here? My hands shake when I reach for the zip of my backpack, I miss it twice and give up.

Miss Jota stands, leaving me visible to the boys, I hear a few whistles and catcalls directed at me. When I raise my head to glare at them, I realise my shirt bunched at my back. My cheeks burn a bright pink as I tug the hem of my shirt over my waistband, thankful the part of my skin on display has no white patches.

“Before we start,” Miss Jota calls out in a powerful voice and I am forgotten as everyone’s eyes turn to her. She walks to the centre of the stage with scripts in one hand. “I would like to know if everyone is here for the drama or...” She turns to Whitney who smiles politely, I gag in my brain at her saccharine smile. “Some are here for the set designs. The numbers are welcome but I need to know before we start. Introduce yourself please and let us know.” Pointing to one of the boys, she says, “You, yes. You first.”

Noise breaks out among the boys after Miss Jota’s statement, I roll my eyes. Typical of them, they can’t do without causing commotion. My gaze darts to Whitney who is all too pleased with herself. We wanted more members, not the hottest guys in school. Even manwhore Noah is here. Can the boy even read? Yes, he’s hot but hot alone doesn’t cut it for me. Hot with brains, yes. Like Ben. I give myself a mental slap for thinking about him again, digging my fingers into my palm to stop from peeking at him but it is futile.

My body has a mind of its own so, I steal a peek. From my side view, I catch Ben staring at me and duck my head so my hair falls over my face. The boy is odd. First, he winks at me in class, punches me right after, then accepts my offer of a ride only to start ignoring me. Talk about weird. I don’t even like him that much. The boy doesn’t know how to treat a lady, maybe that’s why Olivia is cheating on him with Noah.

Heavy footsteps fill the silence as the boys move to the stage, I squeeze my lips as the first group start their introduction, not caring to look at them. I can identify them by their voices. They are halfway gone with the introductions when it hits me that someone is missing. I raise my hand, Miss Jota nods.

“Yes, Tessa?”

A lump forms on my throat when different pairs of eyes turn to me, I say, “Curt is not here.”

“Curtis?” That’s his full name. I nod and she pulls out a note from under the scripts. “He quit.”

Instant relief fills me at her reply, guilt tries to take over but it’s swallowed by happiness. I still dislike him for eating my chocolate and he is too loud. It will be awkward having him as my partner on set. He’s too short to play Romeo. Wait a minute, who says I am getting the role of Juliet? What if Whitney gets it? She brought all these people, Miss Jota might give her the spot. My eyes locate Miss Jota, she’s at the corner of the stage, watching the boys introduce themselves while dishing out scripts to those who care for the acting. I want the role of Juliet, it’s the only one that truly matters, the others are just extras.

I look up at the sound of chairs scraping the floor, the boys have been grouped into two. Noah is on the left side of the stage, Ben is on the right. I am not sure what he picked, acting or set designs. How did Whitney get him to come here? Sure, they sit at the same table in the cafeteria but I have never seen them talk. Why is he here without his almighty girlfriend? Drama club is the perfect place for her to dominate.

“It’s settled then. Thank you,” Miss Jota says and they file down the stage to their seats. “We already started the auditions but you boys will have more time to practise since the play isn’t until next semester. I will ask the art teacher, Mr Rizwan, to provide us with designs to use. Is that clear?” Our heads bob, I grow conscious when she turns to me. Sparing a look at her wristwatch, she says, “We have a bit of time for rehearsal today.” I relax when her eyes return to the boys, she frowns. “Who wants to play Romeo?”

Numerous hands shoot up, I take a subtle look at them and swallow tight. That’s a lot of numbers. All of them, including the boys who volunteered for set designs, want it. Miss Jota laughs, she gives Whitney a double thumbs up and my insides tighten with fury, maybe even jealousy. I thought I was her favourite.

“Does Romeo get to kiss Juliet?” one of them asks, a blondie with his hand shoved into his pocket.

Another person says, “Who’s playing Juliet?”

“Tessa will,” Miss Jota replies and my eyes round to the size of saucers. Holy cow, I’m Juliet. She doesn’t glance at me to see my reaction, I blink at the stage, picturing myself in my costume while reciting my lines to an audience that jumps to their feet to clap for me at the end of my wonderful performance. Wow.

“Na, I don’t want to kiss Mother Theresa. Let Whitney play Juliet, she I can kiss,” Noah says. His voice snaps me out of my daydream. Laughter follows his remark, I chew on my lower lip. Miss Jota opens her mouth to say something but his head rounds to Whitney and she giggles. “Yo, Whitney, what do you think, want to be my Juliet?”

A new wave of anger rolls off me as I rise to my feet. Their laughter increases and my fists clench at my sides. I beat Whitney or Miss Jota to reply to the mannerless prick. “Even if I have a gun pointed to my head, I won’t kiss you.”

Anger shadows Noah’s face at the hoots and cheers that follow my clapback, I match his stony gaze and he finally looks away after a few seconds of intense staring. Who wants to touch that public toilet he calls his lips? I am sure his mouth has been on half the cheerleading squad and places I never want to talk about it. Disgusting fellow. Ben, I can kiss.

On instinct, my eyes locate Ben. He arches a brow, a corner of his lips lifts in a smirk and I roll my eyes, pretending to be unaffected by his action. He’s so hot without even trying. Geez. If only he isn’t such an asshole or is at least as nice as Asher. I plop on my seat and the smile finally breaks free on my lips. He’s impressed. I impressed Ben.

The silence that takes over the room is stifling, I look up to see Miss Jota glaring at me and I shrink in my seat. Her disappointment is heavy and my chest sags. Noah started it first. “There will be no kissing anybody in this place, Noah and nobody, no one will be pointing a gun to anyone’s head.” I grimace, she narrows her eyes at everyone seated. “Settle down now. Tessa, come to the stage.”