

BadBoy 22

Chapter 22

Privacy

“You are acting strange,” Maria comments.

We are back to being best friends but I can't say the same for her and Daniel, she doesn't want to hear his name, doesn't want to talk about him or the cancelled date. The video is still out there, she will die if it goes viral. Secretly, I am hoping she comes around so her newfound interest in Ben will fade. I am not sure it's out of real concern for me but she has been updating me on his whereabouts. Right now, he's in detention. He might spend another week there and I think I like that fact. I like that I don't have to see him because my brain turns to jelly whenever he is close to me and I don't even like the guy.

I pretend to mull over her words, she slaps my forehead, I yelp. I definitely didn't miss this part of her.

“How strange?” I finally ask. We take the stairs two at a time. My attention is partially on her and the people rushing past us to the cafeteria. My eyes linger on some of the male faces, I focus on the back of their heads.

Who is Let?

“Very strange.” Maria drags me in the direction of the cafeteria and I stifle a laugh. She asked me after the first period if I would eat here but I chose to ignore her. “Clingy kind of strange. Are you on your period?”

My cheeks pink at her direct question, I use my hair to cover my face. She can be too blunt for my own good. “No...” She arches a brow, I lick my lips. “Well, yes but it has nothing to do with my mood.”

Besides, my period ends today and my mood is fine. I am among the lucky few who only bleed for three days. The cafeteria door swings open, we jump to the side as a student barrels out. I shake my head.

Teenagers.

“Tell that to yourself all you want, baby girl,” she says, “but I know strange when I see one.”

We ignore the murmurs and snickers around us once we are inside. The setup is the same. Cheerleaders and jocks are in their corner—the centre of attention, the less popular ones are also in their place. The big wigs look out of place without Ben but I don't comment on that, neither does Maria. I am sure they miss him, especially the witch whose eyes keep darting to the door. I wonder briefly what it must feel like to sit on that table with him, no spiteful remarks, just true friendship. Must be nice to be Olivia.

Tucking a strand of hair behind my ear, I grab a tray from the counter. Maria does the same and we move behind the queue to gossip. She didn't bring lunch today, it's a rare occurrence but not strange.

"Tessa," Maria whispers, a malicious note in her voice. I groan without looking at the student she subtly points at, making sure to keep my gaze on the tiled floor reflecting the bright lights. "Smash or pass?"

"None."

Her hand connects with the base of my neck, one boy snickers and I glare at his back. "Killjoy," she says.

The line eases without any more smart remarks from her, soon, it's our turn. I place an order of fries with ketchup on the side. Maria eyes my plate, shakes her head without saying a word. We are on our way to find a table when I notice a male student by a dark corner. It's easy to miss him, he's slumped over his bench like he wants to be anywhere but here. I drag Maria in his direction, plopping on the spot beside him.

What if he's Let?

"See?" Maria says, taking her seat opposite us. I ignore her and smile at him. "Strange."

The boy barely spares us a look, instead, he shrinks into himself and stabs his fries. Maria gives me the look, the look that screams: what is your plan? I have no idea why I am here either. He doesn't strike me as the kind of guy that was molested by his stepsister. Then again, what do molested kids look like?

"Hey," I say and clear my throat. Small talks shouldn't be this hard. I point to his tray. "Tastes nice, huh?"

His head raises from his plate, I shrivel when his cold eyes meet mine. I will pick Ben's glare over his. The dark eyeliner. Black lipstick. Jet black hair. Spiky hair and boots. Everything about him screams evil and gothic. He stands, I am about to apologise when he walks out on us with both hands clenching his tray. Maria giggles when he stops in front of the trash can and empties his meal into it. He turns once to send me his middle finger.

Maria's hoarse laughter irritates me to the point I flip her the bird and she pouts. My eyes trail the lanky figure of the idiot speeding to the door. Well, fuck him too. I was only trying to be nice. "What was all that about?"

I shrug. I wish I knew.

He is a bigger ass than Ben. At least Ben had a reason to hate me. I stop my thoughts from wandering in that direction. There I go again thinking about him. I don't like Ben, I'll never like him.

His blue eyes pop in my mind. That naughty smirk. I bite the inside of my lip. He is an ass with a cute little brother, that's all.

A groan escapes me, I chew the sides of my sandwich until Maria slaps me gently. "What?" I glare at her.

"You are eating the crust," she says. Her eyes lower to the crumbs of bread sticking to the corners of my lips, I rotate my shoulders in silent enquiry. I don't get her point. "Sooo, you hate the crust." Oh, I glance at the bread in my hand and spit out the bits I already ate. I do hate crusts, very much. "What's wrong?"

Do I even know what's wrong? Her eyes soften when I push my plate to one side, I try and fail to smile.

"I don't know." Maybe she's right about me acting strange. Maybe my period has something to do with my mood swings because why do I suddenly feel the urge to cry? Gosh. I hate periods. I rise from the bench, her worried gaze follows me and I muster a smile. "I'll be right back. Don't go anywhere."

I think I know what's wrong with me. Let. He didn't reply my note. Is he mad at me? I will be mad too if someone took my letter. Does he know who I am? I sigh, hurrying to the library before the bell rings.

The smell of books instantly comforts me, I release the breath I held in and allow the worries fade to the back of my mind. My fingertips brush the edge of the wooden shelves as I walk through rows and rows of books. I hesitate at the section before literature—my main destination, take out an old text and skim through the first chapter. I am stalling. I know I am but I am not sure I can handle the disappointment.

Murmurs tickle my ears, I stiffen and press my back to the shelf at the sound of a deep voice speaking in hushed tones. When the footsteps recede, I peek from my hiding spot and release a long breath. It is a girl. With my clammy hands tucked in the pockets of my sweater, I scurry to the literature section. My heart skips a beat as my fingers connect with the green novel, I chew on my lips and slowly pull the book out.

My note is missing.

The discovery stuns me and the book falls. I pick it, shake it, flip the pages but there is nothing. No note. Closing my eyes, I inhale and exhale slowly. This doesn't mean anything, it means nothing. Someone else might have taken it, it might have fallen off and the cleaners swept it. I jam the novel close and shove it back to its rightful spot. After wiping my palms on my jeans, I begin my walk of shame out of the library.

Maria meets me in front of the cafeteria with her shirt sporting a new stain. I would tease her about her messy eating habits but I don't feel like talking to her, I don't feel like doing anything anymore. I want to lock myself up in a room and cry. Her smile falls at my sombre look, she palms my cheek to inspect my face.

"Are you okay?" she whispers. Her hands move to the back of my neck. I nod. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah." Tears fill my eyes, I blink them back while fiddling with the hem of my shirt. "It's my period."

Throwing an arm around my shoulders, she pulls me down the empty hallway. I offer her a small smile when we pass her class. We don't stop walking until we are at the door of my empty class. She hugs me, clinging to me for longer than she usually does. My arms wrap around her, I tuck my head into the crook of her neck and inhale. As usual, she smells nice, like strawberries and roses. She is right, I am being too clingy. Right now, I don't want to let go of her. I don't know why. We don't even have the same classes.

"Be fine, okay?" she says after pulling away from the hug. I nod and she pecks my cheek. "Love you."

“Love you too,” I say without making an attempt to get into my class. Abigail struts towards us, I step aside and she rolls her big eyes before sashaying into the class. I giggle when Maria raises a brow at me. She won’t leave until I am inside my class so I go in and wave to her through the glass. “Bye, señorita.”

Abigail and I are alone in the class for less than a minute before other students troop in. My shoulders sag with relief, I pull out my notebook and start counting from one. I don’t miss the glances she spares Ben’s seat, the murderous glare she gives me like it’s my fault he is not in class. If he had kept his hands to himself, he would have been here.

Mr Sam finally comes in and she faces forward. I float through his lectures and the rest of my classes, as soon as the bell for last period goes off, I am at the library again.

I snatch the book from the shelf, I don’t get to open it before a note falls off and my blood runs cold.

Let: Haven’t you heard of the word privacy?

The words lash at me, I flinch. I continue staring at the note, a tear trails down my cheek and I swipe at it. I have no idea why I am crying. Folding the note neatly, I bring out my jotter and pen down my reply.

Me: I’m sorry for invading your privacy. I’m sorry that happened to you. I’m sorry for the things you had to experience alone. I’m sorry she didn’t believe you. I’m sorry you are hurting. You didn’t deserve any of it. AJ must be proud to have you as his brother, your dad too must be proud. For what it’s worth, I believe you and I really hope she chokes on her smoothie. Tell me where to keep the letter and I’ll do just that.