

BadBoy 24

Chapter 24

Bracelet

I don't get another reply from Let until Friday.

Let: I don't need your pity. I don't need your wishes. You can keep the fucking letter.

Me: I've never been to a high school party before. I've never dated or kissed anyone, I think I might die celibate because no one ever looks at me like they want me. I'm not sure what alcohol tastes like. My parents see me as this innocent child and I don't want to ruin that image for them. Daddy is busy all the time but he tries to be there for me. Sometimes I wish he will lose his job so I can see him more often. Lol.

At school, I am bullied. I try to be tough when the pranks and bullying start but it really gets to me. My best friend tries but sometimes it's not enough. I go home thinking, wondering if they will still bully me if I looked a little more like them and less of myself. But then, I like how I am, at least for most part of the time.

Sorry for taking your letter, sorry for reading it.

Satisfied with my reply, I read the words over and over again before inserting it into the novel. The tips of my ears are red from the cold as I hurry out of the library to my locker. Maria is waiting there with a frown, binder in one hand and my steps falter. I quickly bridge the gap between us. Her frown deepens.

"Where were you?" she asks, giving me a onceover that sends chills down my spine. I push one foot out, she adds, "You keep disappearing." To check on Let. I don't want his letter to get into the wrong hands. My lips stretch into a thin line, I gulp and she stops what she's doing to inspect my face. "Is it a boy?"

Eyes wide open, I blurt out, "No."

"Yep. It's a boy." She empties the content of the binder into her bag. "Make sure he's cute at least. I'm here when you're ready." I don't reply, she continues, "Have you decided on your Halloween costume?"

I shake my head. “No, I’m not interested.” She has never required my presence at these parties and I am happy staying in the shadows. She pulls me by the ear, I wince but she doesn’t release me. “Maria, stop.”

“No. Not until you say you are going.” I nod in a desperate attempt to free myself from the acrylic nails digging into my sensitive skin. Her hands jam together in excitement, she smiles and massages the spot. Slinging her bag over her shoulder, she wiggles her brows and I snicker. “I’ll go as Catwoman, you can go as Wonderwoman, you got the height.” Rambling nonstop without giving me a chance to talk, she says, “You don’t have to drive, I’ll come pick you up.” Her lips purse. “I wonder if Daniel is coming.”

A smile touches my lips, I throw an arm around her shoulder. “I think he is.”

“Are you sure?” Though unsure, I nod. I can convince him to attend for her sake. “What is he wearing?”

“You can always ask him,” I whisper.

Shrugging my arm off, she hisses and closes her locker. “Great advice, Tessa. Why didn’t I think of that?”

“Are you two together now?”

Her face takes on a faraway look, she sighs. “Not really. It’s complicated but he likes me.”

Knowing what the issue might be, I draw her in for a brief hug. “It will be fine,” I say. We continue to the cafeteria for lunch, I don’t attempt any skit like trying to sit with that gothic asshole after we collect our meals. Maria plays with her food, to lighten the mood, I say, “When will we go costume shopping?” She looks up, I point my plastic fork in her direction. “Mind you, I’m not going dressed as Wonderwoman or anybody who shows skin.” She scowls but doesn’t protest my reply. “I can go as superman or a hotdog.”

“I know you have no taste but that is way below the belt. I can’t let you do that.” I snicker, she erupts in a fit of giggles. “Seriously, is that what you want to wear?” I shrug. I didn’t think before sputtering that nonsense about hotdogs. “We can find something else.” She pulls out her phone to check Peepinterest, I look over her shoulder to the bright pictures displayed on her screen. “You can also go as Superwoman.”

“There’s no Superwoman,” I mutter.

Maria slides her phone to me, tapping on the picture of a lady in a customised suit. It’s easy to see she got the inspiration for the costume from DC comics. “We can make one like this for you. Wait, they sell it.” I shrug again. So long this saves us the stress of going to a physical store and also covers my body, I am fine with whatever she chooses. “Look, they have it in your size too.” I peer at the digits under the picture, she swipes right on her screen and stops. Her cheeks flush. “Guess what? They have mine too. Halloween party here we come.” Her hand raises in a high five, I slap my palm on hers. “I’m ordering it.”

“Nice,” I say with less enthusiasm but she ignores it.

“How’s drama club going? You never talk about it.” Because there’s nothing to say and it’s not as fun as having an audience on YouTube or being the superstar at the school’s choir. She nudges me. “Tessa?”

“I hate it there,” I mutter, she frowns. “We have practice today. Maybe I’ll hate it less.”

Drawing me in for a side hug, she says, “It’s because you already closed your mind to it. Try not to hate it, yeah?” I nod. Maybe she’s right. “Try to enjoy it.” She pokes my shoulder. “I know you, you can act.”

We push our trays to the side. “I’ll try, Maria.” She smiles. “I’m ready to get out of here?”

She spares a look around the noisy cafeteria we tuned out, stands and offers me a hand. “Me too.”

The rest of the day is uneventful. Hours later, I push the door to the drama club open and saunter inside. Today, there’s only four of us. Miss Jota, the drama coordinator sits on the edge of the podium, a small pile of scripts by her side. She welcomes me with a kind smile, motions for me to occupy one of the plush seats. I take the one farthest from the group, away from those three girls with their thick hair and heavy makeup that make them appear older than their real age. They always act like I’m invisible.

Miss Jota distributes the scripts and returns to her seat, a small smile on her lips. She claps to get our attention, I look up from the script—a modern retelling of Romeo and Juliet. “As you know, we should have gotten started on the end-of-session production but we don’t have the numbers yet.” Her eyes fall to the empty seats, I kick the bag at my feet. “It’s fine since we won’t be performing until next semester but this is something for you to think about.” Miss Jota raises one script. “Auditions will start in a few

weeks. The date will be communicated to you but there's no harm in giving you more time to practice, is there?" We all shake our heads. "Good, I believe that's all. See you all next Friday. 5 pm."

One of the girls raises a manicured hand, I believe her name is something that starts with a W—Whore. With that amount of red lipstick, thick eyeliner and fake tan, the name sounds right for her. She blinks like she's about to have a seizure, I look away. Miss Jota continues arranging the scripts into a neat pile.

"Miss Jota, what if we don't want to perform?" She looks at her squad and they giggle like little witches. Why are they in drama club if they don't want to perform? "Is it okay to do something else instead?"

Miss Jota pauses, placing both hands on her waist, she says, "Something like what, Whitney?"

Oh, Whitney. Whore suits her better. "I don't know, the stage will need designs." She gestures to the podium bereft of any glamour. Miss Jota frowns. "We can make set designs while the others perform."

"Not bad. That's not a bad idea, Whitney." Miss Jota nods thoughtfully. I have to admit it's a good one. "If you can find more students interested in joining you to design, then I'll discuss it with the arts teacher."

I leave the room once Miss Jota's attention returns to the scripts. From the few lines I managed to read inside, I know I want to play the role of Juliet. We will need a male lead for Romeo but I have a feeling Whitney and her friends have someone in mind for that. The parking lot is almost empty, I get in and toss the script and my bag to the passenger seat. It is a few minutes to six, Daddy promised to be home.

The sound of an engine sputtering to life has me surveying the lot for the source but there's nothing. I begin the slow drive to the gate when the sound comes up again. At the sight of Ben crouched beside his bike, I stop by the side of the road. He runs a hand through his hair, kicks the bike again and releases a curse. I start the car, driving slowly till I am parked beside him. His gaze doesn't leave his bike, I clear my throat.

"Need a ride?" His eyes lift to my face. The annoyance boldly written all over his features almost has me swallowing my words but I remind myself he has to pick Asher. His hair is damp with sweat, meaning he has been at this for a while. "Asher doesn't like being kept waiting even if he pretends not to mind."

He huffs and locks his bike to the railing. "Fine."

I hide a smile when he gets in. Pushing my bag to the backseat, I frown when he picks the script. "What's this?" The engine roars to life, he flips through the script. "Romeo and Juliet. A retelling? What the fuck is this shit, Miss?"

Miss? He knows my name. Asher introduced us. We are at a stoplight when I mutter quietly, "It's for drama club."

"Cool."

"Please use your seatbelt." His eyes burn into my side, I start breathing normally when he looks away.

No one speaks, I honk at the car that swerves to my lane. Something drops to my leg, I look down to see a bracelet. "From Asher." I bite my lips to keep from smiling, taking the turn that leads to Asher's school.

"I thought you didn't want me talking to him."

He leans back to say, "I haven't changed my mind on that but he adores you." One hand closes around his seatbelt. "It's handmade." I nod. I already love it. "If he asks, tell him I gave it to you on Monday. Okay?"