

## **BadBoy 31**

### Chapter 31

#### **Happy Birthday, Benny**

By 4 am on Friday, I am awake and mixing cake ingredients in the kitchen for a jackass who confuses the hell out of me. My movements are slow as I hop from one corner to another, getting the pan and other items ready. I might have won last night's match but Pablo did a good one on me. The bastard managed a kick to my cheek before I knocked him out. I will need an extra layer of foundation to hide the marks.

"Sweetheart, what are you doing?"

If I wasn't so sleepy, I might have jumped out of my skin in shock but my body delays my reaction to her presence. I blink sleepily at Mum, she saunters to the sink to fill her empty glass. "Baking, Mum."

"By this time?" She rubs the back of her hand against her eyes and leans on the fridge for support. Her gaze runs over me, I must look the sight with flour on my face and fingers buried in dough. "What time is it?"

"Um, I don't know." Liar, liar, pants on fire. I know it's too early for me to be awake. "Err...I'm not sure."

Her head jerks, she doesn't believe me. My body slumps in relief at being left alone and I resume mixing. In less than an hour, I am done. The pan enters the oven, I get everything ready for the icing. As per my agreement with Asher, it has to be in his locker. Ben is punctual so he should see the cake before the icing melts. I'll be using fondant icing anyways, it lasts. The main trick is putting it into his locker without getting caught. I would have employed Maria's help but she's convinced I am crushing on the poor guy.

In one of my letters to Let, I jokingly asked him if he knew how to pick locks and he told me about using hairpins. He did warn me to not get caught. My face heats up thinking about his reply, something about why a good girl is doing bad guys stuff. I laugh a little. If only he knows it is for a greater good. Not only am I keeping my promise to Asher, I'm trying to make up for lying to Ben. He cheered for Tee yesterday.

The oven pings, I take out the cake, spread the icing and write Ben's name as instructed by his younger brother. Asher doesn't have a phone but I take pictures to show him the next time we meet. I am taking Ben's advice to stay away from his brother except I run into him. That boy is too awesome to be ignored.

Minutes turn into another hour, I sneak out of the house as early as 6:30 am. A huge record for me, one I should gloat about to Maria but how do I explain why I have to be in school early? I don't have a crush on Ben.

The parking lot is almost empty when I drive in, I recognise a few teachers cars, no students.

Thankfully, the front door is unlocked, I tiptoe to Ben's locker with tired arms. After inputting different codes, including 1710 which is today, I am ready to give up. Of all days to forget my hairpin, it had to be today. A bit frustrated, I punch in the numbers: 0105. Asher's birthday. The opening click echoes in the hallway, I place the cake inside as gently as I can. Ben has a lot of Asher's pictures glued to his locker door, you would think the locker belonged to his younger brother. Since Asher didn't ask me to insert a note, I don't put one. I close his locker and jump at the sight of the person in front of me.

Black eyes bore into my forehead, I palm my chest. "Is that your locker?" the janitor asks, I nod. I am an awful liar. His face conveys his disbelief but he doesn't say another word. "Why are you early?"

"There's no rule against punctuality," I reply and stalk in the opposite direction, walking past my locker to hide behind the stairwell.

Footsteps echo in the hallway, I hold my breath until the nosy janitor passes my spot. When he is out of sight, I return to the staircase to capture Ben's expression when he sees the cake. I make myself comfortable, throat closing up at the cards glued to his locker. Jesus. How many minutes was I gone?

Bile jumps to my throat when one of his fangirls tries to open his locker. God so merciful, it doesn't work and a big grin springs to my lips. These girls are so thirsty and he doesn't even like them.

As the morning wears on, the hallway grows noisy. More students troop in, a lot of them stop at Ben's locker to tape a note or birthday card to the metal door. A corner of my lips lifts at the kind gestures. I roll my eyes when the fifteenth person passes by. I only got a card from Maria and Daniel. Then I went home to a birthday surprise from Mum and Dad. I am grateful for that but watching this show of love makes me feel more like a loser. People love him.

No one loves me. Feeling sorry for myself, I push up to my feet, prepared to leave this sad spot.

My parents love me. Maria loves me. Hayden too.

I don't get far before an unusual silence falls over the hallway. I throw a glance over my shoulder and stop. Birthday boy struts to his locker flanked by girls with their teeth buried in their lips. They must have given him gifts. Birthday wishes ring out in the air, I return to my hiding spot with my phone out. It's not the best spot but it captures him, plus I have an amazing phone, the zoom quality is crazy.

My heart beats against my ribcage as Ben opens his locker, the door cuts my view of him. Seconds grow longer without him making an appearance, my knees scream from squatting for too long. The door finally shuts, I tense as Ben comes into view with the mini-sized cake on one hand. I tried to make it fit into his locker. His eyes roam the corridor, the hand holding my phone lowers and I push back so only my head is poking out. Other students have their phones, I can get the video from the site.

Ben's eyes find me, a look passes between both of us and I almost drop my phone. I avert my gaze to my sneakers. I am wearing blue converse. Not black, not white. Maria will have a glorious fit.

He opens his mouth but never speaks because he is cut off by the uproar. Olivia sashays to him with a smile bigger than her GP and pecks him. When she notices the direction Ben is looking, her eyes scan the hallway. When they land on me, she pecks him on the other cheek. I straighten up and step out, no need to hide. Finally noticing the cake in his hand, she throws me a dark look. I shift, inching closer to the wall for protection. She knows I bake. She was lucky to taste most of my sugary delicacies then.

"Happy birthday, Benny." Her voice is extra loud, most likely to spite me and mark her territory. She's so greedy. Why must she have all the good looking guys? Ben grins at her, I mentally strangle myself. I can count the number of times he has smiled at me but with Olivia, his dirty mouth is ever willing to spread into a smile. She is not allowed to call him Benny, he doesn't like that name. "I see you got my surprise."

"Surprise?" Ben is as stunned as I am. I almost tumble forward in shock. This scum of the earth. This witch. "Your surprise?"

Olivia moves in front of him to obstruct his view from everyone, especially me. Her voice is louder than ever, I feel the words pierce my skin and harden my heart. "Yeah. The cake. You like it?"

"You did this?" Happiness leaks into Ben's voice, a wry smile forms on my lips. Asher was right, Ben loves the surprise. Olivia's head bobs and God help me, I want to walk over there, rip out her extensions and

shove it into her mouth so she's silent forever. She is a fucking liar and I am a goddamn coward so I keep staring at them, not moving, not blinking. "For real?" She nods again. Witch. "Liv." Please don't call the wench that. Her fingers rake his curls, my heart breaks at his responding grin which she allows me to catch a glimpse of. "This is unbelievable."

"Believe it Benny, I'll do anything for you," she says, grinning at him. Why can't she have a seizure and die? I don't ask God for a lot but... God, please. "Asher said he had a surprise for you but he wouldn't let me in on it." So that's how she knew. I hate her. "Took a while but we agreed to do this."

Liar.

The bitch knows I am listening, a lot of us are because Ben never dates. I hope she chokes on one of her smoothies. Ben excuses himself to drop the cake in his locker, giggles follow him when he lifts Olivia off the ground and presses her flush against the locker beside his. A dull ache spreads to my chest, my nails dig into my palms as his head lowers.

No.

His mouth hovers above Olivia's, tears sting the back of my eyes.

Please, no. I made the cake, kiss me instead.

I storm out once his lips brush hers. Both of them deserve each other so why am I tearing up? The sexy jackass and the conniving bitch, it suits them. I shove a student out of my way, feet slapping the tiled floor as I rush down the hallway. Someone calls my name, I ignore it and quicken my pace. I am a mess.

"Tessa." I can't ignore the voice anymore but I try. Maria blocks my path, I keep my head down. My eyes won't stop leaking. "Tessa." She grabs my shoulders but I refuse to meet her gaze. "Theresa, look at me."

I don't. I can't. She draws me in for a hug and I burst into tears. Students bump into us but no one cares to stop. Of course they won't, I am not Ben or Olivia. I'm no one. Maria draws circles on my back, my shoulders tremble and I eventually quiet down. She holds me at arms length to inspect my face, I accept the handkerchief she offers me with a grateful smile and she drags me in the direction of the backdoor.

Fresh air hits us once we exit the building, I inhale shakily, biting my lips harder to push out Ben's voice in my head warning me against it. "I made the cake," I whisper. Maria doesn't appear surprised. She also knows I bake. "She's a liar. Demon. I hope she dies." Without a word from her, I launch into the full story. How I met Asher, our agreement on the cake. "She's a big, skinny liar," I murmur once I'm done. "Fuck her."

Laughter escapes Maria. "So you do like him?"

I punch her slightly on the shoulder, I just broke down and that's the only thing she cares about. There is no use denying it, I like him. I really, really like Benjamin.

"Yes. Now what?"