

## Bullied By The Badboy By Maramartha Chapter 4

### Time for Africa

I hate crowds, so why am I here? In a pub with noise and more noise, shitty beats in the name of music. Maria slides a glass of iced coke to me, I make a face and take a sip while she gulps the weird content in her shot glass with a grimace. Lucky her. I need a clear head and sharp mind for tomorrow's fight.

In less than a year, we will both be eighteen and eligible to drink and party the right way. I squint at the bright, colourful lights swirling above the small crowd moving on the dancefloor, bobbing my head to the beat. Though our fake IDs allow us entries into a few clubs, alcohol is off limits. For fun, we have them serve our drinks in shot glasses and act like it's the almighty margarita we have heard so much about.

Only tonight, Maria got lucky. She got her first real taste of margarita.

"Ryan Raynoldz, smash or pass?" she asks, shot glass turned over to catch the last drop of her cocktail.

I fake gag. The man might be fine but no way will I smash him. "Pass. He's older than you. Both of us."

"He's not that old." Whatever, I am not interested in smashing him. She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear, showing off a hoop earring that's definitely mine. "Alright, Zic Effen?" I wrap my arms around my neck and pretend to strangle myself. "Party pooper." Hey, I'm not the one who wants to talk about boys. Pointing to her empty cup, she burps and murmurs, "Doesn't taste as good as they say it does."

She giggles, I kick her stool and she fixes me a glare that vanishes as soon as the DJ starts a new song. My body sways to the beat, I snap my fingers, singing along to Coldplay's jam. Maria eyes the dancefloor with longing but stays put on her seat. I am a bad dancer but she's not. Being a great dancer must come with her singing ability because she does both so effortlessly. Bodies grind against each other on the dancefloor, the bartender attends to other customers for a bit before we are left alone in the bar again.

Maria leans on me, her head resting on my shoulder and I pat her arm. "Don't worry, you will kill it." She raises her head to stare at me like I said the impossible, I shrug and she returns to her former position.

After all the risks we took to get here, she has to kill that opening or we will be eternally grounded. As far as our parents are concerned, she's at my house and I am at hers. What they don't know is their beloved daughters are at a pub, waiting for the go-ahead from the manager. He promised to let Maria open for the new band playing. I have no idea why they are late but we have no option than to wait.

The song switches, Maria screams, almost falling out of her seat at Shakira's song—Time for Africa. She is obsessed with that woman. Her bandage gown rides up as she begins to rotate her waist, I play the role of a hype man, clapping and encouraging her to move that sexy body. My phone pings in my pocket, I ignore it. There have been tons of messages since that video was uploaded. I've received praises too.

Talk about, nice job. Congrats on hitting her. I know she's hated by some students in BH, why won't she? She is nasty but I don't want to be anyone's hero. I must have looked so sad because Maria plops back to her seat with a frown. She places a hand on my knee, my phone vibrates again and she pulls it out.

“Told you your five minutes of fame will end soon,” she says. Err, what’s she talking about? It has been more than five hours and I am still getting messages. My phone dangles between her fingers, I snatch it and my brows nearly disappear into my hairline at the new post. “Everyone’s talking about the cafeteria kiss.” A video of Ben kissing Olivia’s cheeks plays on repeat like a broken record. It is not even a real kiss; a sloppy peck. “I thought Olivia didn’t do highschoolers anymore. What’s she doing with Ben?”

I don’t know and I force myself not to care. Since that break up, she has not dated anyone in our school, she’s above that and will rather go for college guys. Good for the rest of the girls crushing on the jocks.

“She might have changed her mind,” I say when I see Maria’s still waiting for my reply. “Ben is fine.”

“Oh, he is. He is more than fine.” Propping her elbows on the counter, she lets out a dreamy sigh. “He’s hot. I would change my mind too if he asked me out.” Only that he didn’t ask Olivia out, she must have forced herself on him. Maria is still frowning so I nudge her with my knee, she can get any boy in school if she tries. Her phone vibrates in her purse, she takes it out and scowls. “Daniel’s not coming. Asshole.”

Daniel Holt is our friend, the last person in our group; tall, curly hair and green eyes. Maria has had a giant crush on him for as long as I have had one on Ben. Hold up, that didn’t come from me. I don’t have a crush on Ben, he’s hot and that’s it. Anyways, she has a crush on him but won’t say anything and Daniel is oblivious to it. The boy barely comes to school so how will he know? Secretly, I’m glad they are not together because I don’t want to be the third wheel neither do I want to watch them lick each other’s faces.

I am about to reassure her when her phone rings, she pouts at something the voice from the other end says, mutters a small yes and the call ends. Sitting upright, she smoothes her gown and grabs her purse.

“It’s time.”

She’s the one performing but my limbs tremble when I get up to engulf her in a hug. “Good luck.”

Her smile is jittery. The layers of makeup—smokey eyes, red lips don’t hide her nervousness. She walks a few feet from me and stops. Throwing a look over her shoulder, she says, “You better get my good side.”

I flip her my middle finger but she is already out of sight. We discussed this. I don’t want to be in a crowd of sweaty bodies holding up a phone to create a video that will never make it to her YuuTube channel. At the end of it all, I will get bashed for my poor photography skill. Let’s face it, I am a terrible camera lady.

The crowd goes silent as Maria climbs the stage, I eye those at the VIP section with a scowl, they get a first hand view of everything, they should make the video. My resolve weakens at Maria’s smile. Damn. Why do I have such a soft heart? Knowing me, I’ll be out there in seconds, trying to get her best side as she sings her heart out. I pop out of my seat but a walking nightmare stops me from taking a step forward.

Olivia.

How does she always know where to find me?

She’s not alone. Nate has an arm around her waist, she’s pressed to him and I almost feel bad for Ben. His girlfriend is cheating on him a few hours after their kissing show. I shove my hands into my pockets, Nate

laughs and I remember what sticks out about him. She cheated on him with Nate. My blood boils at the distant memory, I put on a faux smile and excuse myself, covering only a few distance before a cold liquid trickles down my scalp to my shirt. Olivia stops in front of me with my empty glass of coke in her hand, a proud smirk on her lips. I want to throttle her or slap some more sense into her head but I don't.

Nate takes his place beside her, she slams the cup on the counter and a crack appears on it. I scoff as she closes the gap between us to gloat, uncurling my fist when Nate takes a protective stance behind her.

The bitch can't even fight her battles alone. Why else did she come with Nate? Maria's voice fills the pub, so angelic and smooth I want to scream she's my best friend. Guilt tightens my guts, I should be capturing this moment. Olivia scoffs when she gets no reaction out of me, looping an arm around Nate's waist, they waltz out of my sight. I take another deep breath, this night is for Maria, I won't create a scene, I won't ruin it. Getting back at Olivia will only result in a back and forth of dirty pranks, I want none of that.

I slapped her, she emptied a drink on me. We are even now.