

BadBoy 50

Chapter 50

I did it

I walk out. On him, our relationship, our future. I don't look back, I continue walking.

The cold hits me once I'm outside. Tears well up my eyes and everything I said comes rushing back. We are done. I did it. Hot tears stream down my cheeks and blind my vision, my heart thuds so hard I am convinced it will jump out of my chest.

The door slams shut behind me, someone barges out and curses. I have a feeling who that is and my heart wants it to be him but I am too much of a coward to turn and find out. I don't want a confrontation.

"We are done when I say we are done." Ben's shoes appear in my line of view, I can't meet his gaze so I count the pebbles littered at our feet and kick some of them into the gutter. His hand comes under my jaw but I duck my face. He groans again but my head remains down. "And I am not done, Gracie."

What is he saying? Didn't he get the memo? We are done. I raise my head to finish what I started inside.

"Ben, I—"

Angry eyes shoot daggers into me. The rest of my words hang in my throat as Ben throws me over his shoulder and marches back inside the gym. I punch his back, rain curses on him but it doesn't deter him.

"Ben. Benny. Benjamin Carter. Put me down."

A cloud of dizziness washes over me at the abrupt view of the tiled floors I get. I focus on regulating my breathing. His ass is in my face, I can feel it if I want. The door to a room—an office creaks open and he dumps me on the only available seat. I jump to my feet in a bid to escape but he cocks his head.

"Don't you dare." My legs turn to jelly. "Sit."

I crumple into the chair and the wrinkles on his forehead ease. He is mad at me and I don't like it. I don't want him to be mad. But we can't help.

Making himself comfortable on the edge of the desk stacked with heaps of files, he says, "Start talking."

The upper part of the office is made of glass so I see the different sets of heads peering inside to have a look at us. "It's soundproof," he says, "they can't hear us except I use this." He unhooks the telephone hanging from the wall, gaze locked on mine, he says, "Get back to work, fuckers. Nothing to see here."

A small smile touches my lips as some of them throw their gloves up in protest. But they listen to him. In the moments until his gaze returns to me, I try to gather my thoughts. Do I mention Olivia?

"Gracie, talk to me." I wring my hands with a sigh. I should have ran. As a kid, I used to like running with Hayden, it was the only sport I did better than him. If I had run, I would have been in my car before Ben caught up to me. What should I say? I look up to him. "Please, don't lie to me. What happened?"

The tears make a fresh appearance but they don't fall. "Olivia," I say. He tenses. I keep my eyes on his chest. I don't need to see that disappointment in his face when he acknowledges her words. "She said so many things and she's right about all of them. It just took her saying it for me to realise the truth."

He places his hands on his knees. "What truth?" I shrug. I can't say it out loud. "Gracie, what did she say?"

"I'm not your type," I reply with a smile and lift my shirt. "No one would want to date anyone with a skin like mine. Who wants to be with a girl who has vitiligo? What if she's right and I wake one day to see I have contaminated you?" That's impossible but it doesn't stop me from saying it. "She called it crawl crawl." My voice falters, Ben scowls and a sad smile curls my lips. I have no words left and his silence is proof she's right. It's really over. I wanted us to be over but I wanted him to fight for us more. "I guess that's why you don't want a label with me."

"Labels make it more real."

I am not sure which stings more but his words pierce right through my heart. He is hurting my feelings. I squeeze my hands till they lose feeling.

My voice is barely above a whisper. I no longer care how ugly I look as the tears flow down my cheeks. "So what we have is fake?"

Ben runs his fingers through his hair and shakes his head. "No. No, Gracie. That's not what I meant at all. I meant pressure." I blink and the tears coating my lashes spill to my cheeks. Ben rakes his fingers through his hair. "Stop crying, Gracie. I don't like it." But he is the reason for my tears. He should refute Olivia's claims. "Please try and understand."

I am already shaking my head. "I don't want to understand. I want to be your girlfriend."

There, I said it. My desires win over Olivia's words. "Fine." He smiles. "Take it. Take the label."

His smile worsens the sick feeling of shame taking over my body. "Really? Is this a joke to you?" I scoff. "Am I a joke to you? Do you even care about me? Oh, wait. You don't. You just wanted a fight partner. You can't even ask me out on a date yet you are so quick to invite me to train with you."

My fingers are pointing straight at his chest, words directed at him with my eyes burning in anger.

He stands but I don't cower at his towering height. "Gracie."

"From the very first day, it was about the fight," I spit out. He doesn't care. "Last weekend, we were supposed to rehearse for the play, we didn't even get one minute to do that because all you wanted to do was train for the All-Rounders. Every time we meet all you want to talk about is the bloody fight."

Ben takes another step forward. The back of my legs hit the chair but I don't back down. "Gracie."

I don't want to hear my name from him. Why does he have to whisper my name like that? Must every word coming from him sound sexy? I force myself to remember Olivia's words, it does the trick. I snap back to reality and complete my statement. "You don't care about me, Ben. You know I like you and you are using my emotions against me. It's unfair."

"Gracie," he snaps, his tone icy. "Stop talking."

The space between us is gone, we are standing a hair's breadth away from each other. His brows are so drawn together, his anger is obvious.

He is staring hard at me, I am not sure what I want to say or do anymore. I poke his chest. He is evil. He knows what he does to me yet he hates labels.

"Or what?" I whisper.

"Or I'll kiss you," he whispers in return.

We stand there for a minute, my lips part but he doesn't kiss me like I half-hoped he would. Without a word, he scoops up my bridal style like I weigh nothing. He occupies the empty seat without letting go of me. I hide my face in his chest as his jaw rests on my head. His heart thumps against my palm and I trace the sweat drying out on his tank top.

"It's unfair," I say after seconds of staring at his chest. He needs to want me like I want him. "Ben."

"I'm broke." I look up but his gaze is elsewhere. "That's why I haven't asked you on a date yet. I know you want it." I want us to spend quality time together but his finances never crossed my mind.

Our school is not for just anyone so I assume anyone who goes there has money. But I will pay for our date or split the bills if it makes him feel better.

"I was going to win Saturday's match so I could take you somewhere nice. It's why I have been training so hard to win." He plants a kiss on my forehead and my senses take flight. I pucker my lips for another kiss. "I thought you liked spending time with me in the gym or the house." My head bobs, a smile flits across his lips. "Fighting is one of the things we have in common. You are as passionate about it as I am. I really want to win, Gracie."

With his explanation now out in the open, I feel like the asshole. I sit up and he steadies me with an arm around my waist. "I also want you to win. I want us to win." The lingering air of sadness migrates. I sigh. "You didn't ask me on a date because you are broke?" He nods. "Olivia. She said so many things and I believed her. I thought you didn't want me. It was easy to believe her. I have never dated before."

“Me too,” he says and our foreheads touch.

Nerves swarm my body. He acknowledged us. But I need to be sure. “Does that mean I’m your girlfriend?”

Ben smiles and the lines on his forehead disappear. “Do you want to be my girlfriend?” I nod. Gone is the shy Tessa. I want him and I am not ashamed to let him know. “Then you are my girlfriend and I am your boyfriend.” My grin is instant. “I don’t like labels. Since we already acted like couples, I didn’t think there was a need to put a name on it. I like you, Gracie.” I pat my pockets for my phone and flip to my calendar. “What are you doing?”

I pause briefly. “Saving the date so I can buy you gifts on all our anniversaries. I like labels and I like you, boyfriend.” His chest rumbles with laughter, I slip an arm around his neck. “I’m sorry, Benny.”

Giving me a small squeeze, he lifts the hem of my shirt and traces a patch. “Vitiligo is not contagious.” It is not. “I wish you talked to me instead of letting Liv fill your head with lies.” He called her by her nickname but I refuse to focus on that. I am now his girlfriend. I hug him tighter to show remorse. “She’s not happy with us together and she’s trying to tear us apart. It almost worked today.”

But it didn’t and I don’t want to talk about that manipulative bitch anymore. She is ruining the moment without being here. I unlock my arms around his torso.

“Why are you broke?” That guarded look takes over his features and he grows stiff. “Ben, please talk to me. Why are you broke? What of your mum?”

Locking our fingers, he says, “She’s okay.” I roll my eyes and he chuckles. “Gracie, it’s a long story. Can I tell you another day?” His eyes plead with me to agree. I nod and it earns me a chaste kiss. “The first day I punched you, I didn’t mean to.” He pouts and I poke his chest. I wonder if he will get tired of explaining himself. He is sorry and I get it. I forgive him. “I was angry about the loss and you were this little scaredy cat who needed her best friend to defend her. I couldn’t believe I lost that match to you.”

He looks down to see me staring at me. “You scared me back then,” I confess. “You are quite scary.”

I laugh, Ben laughs and presses another kiss to my lips. I love it when he kisses me without thinking.

“That was an asshole move on my part.” I caress his jaw in agreement. “I don’t hit women. I don’t hit girls.”

The part of me that has always wondered why he did it stirs. “Do you fight because you are broke?”

He nods. “I wanted to get Asher a gift. I was so fucking sure I would win and I didn’t understand why you would take that away from me.” He closes his eyes and exhales. “I followed you home. You live in this nice house with your parents, you didn’t need it as much as I did.” There’s no anger in his voice, I guess that’s why I let him pour it out because it seems like what he needs. I know it now, he was the guy on the bike. The person watching me. “You couldn’t even stand your ground against me in school.”

“Because you scared me,” I say with a pout. He doesn’t smile. “I didn’t know it meant so much to you.”

“I know.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be, Gracie. You deserved that win.” My chest expands with joy. “I should have protected my knee but no one had noticed it.” If I didn’t have Coach, I wouldn’t have either. “Just talk to me. If you have any doubts, talk to your boyfriend first. I don’t know how relationships work. This is my first but I am trying.” My head bobs, we are both trying. “I want you to be my fight partner but I want you as my babe more.” He engulfs me in a hug, the heat from his body seeps into mine. “I really like you for you, Gracie.”