

## **BadBoy 55**

### Chapter 55

#### **The boy I love**

Me: I dropped a letter for you.

Let: What about?

Me: You will have to get it to find out

I shove my phone into my backpack as my boyfriend approaches me. His arms slide around my waist and he lifts me off the ground to drop me on the bonnet of my car. Standing between my legs, he drags my lip between his and hugs me again. I lean into his embrace taking a whiff of his cologne. I love this guy.

“Who was that?”

We are alone in the parking lot but I whisper in return, “No one.”

Ben folds his arms, flexing his biceps. I stroke his forearm. He is mine. “And you were smiling like that?”

“Are you jealous?” I tilt my head and pout.

“If it’s another guy? Yes. I want to be the only guy making you smile,” he says with so much sincerity.

Butterflies erupt in my stomach at his words. I drag a hand over his shirt, stopping to press my hands flat against his chest, directly over his heart beating so hard against my palms. “What about my dad?”

His smile is adorable. I peck him. “You know what I meant.” I do. But I don’t want to let him know about Let. Not only will it be awkward since I have shared more secrets with Let than I have with him, it might ruin us. Ben interprets my silence to mean approval and his lips pucker. “Aw, babe. That was a guy, no?”

“Well...” I let the seconds drag on while inspecting his face. “Just a friend. You are the one I want.”

His hand slides into my shirt, I giggle as he tickles my belly button. Ben makes me super comfortable in my skin. He’s the only boy allowed to touch me. He makes having vitiligo feel okay.

My head falls back as his fingers trail up to my midriff, he nibbles on my jaw, then presses a kiss to my lips. I lock my arms around his neck to deepen the kiss before he pulls away. I was so wrong. Dating in high school is a must.

Ben’s nose brushes mine. “You too. I love you,” he says, eyes wide with love and admiration for me.

“I love you too, babe.”

“Get a room, you two,” someone screams.

We don’t pull apart, only grin sheepishly at each other. We are used to it. The stares, the second looks at our linked hands, the whistles. With Ben around me, it’s easier to look back at the gossip mongers and wink. I never have to second guess myself. Even Olivia can’t get to me. We are perfect for each other.

My lips crack into a big smile as my best friend struts to us. She shoves Ben away from me and takes his place, dragging me in for a super unnecessarily long hug. She pats my hair and sighs. Dramatic much? Maybe I am spending less time with my best friend and more with my boyfriend. We need to rectify that now she and Daniel are back to the talking stage. I saw them kiss once but I am waiting for her to spill.

Placing a hand on her chest, she says, “You guys are too cute. I love it.” I love it too. We can’t get enough of each other. It’s like my love for him is so much I will combust if I don’t share some of it through body contact. She turns to Ben. “Hey, you.” Ben didn’t have to do much to win her over. His charms did it for him. Her smile goes big, eyes wide with mischief. I sit up. She winks at him. “Doing the Lord’s job, I see.”

On cue, my hand goes to the spot on my neck she keeps staring at and she giggles harder. What’s there?

Ben likes to kiss the spot between my neck and shoulder. I don't know why but I like that he has a spot on my body. His spot. Ben wiggles his brows and pries my hand from it. I narrow my eyes at two of them smiling in cahoots. It's great to see two of my favourite people getting along but not at my expense.

Sensing my fake anger, Ben pecks me and whispers against the spot, "It's nothing."

He pushes Maria gently to the side to take his former place and Maria screams, "It's not nothing."

Maria raises a finger to silence me as she rummages through her purse. For the first time in a long time, she's not wearing any flashy colours. Plain black top and navy blue ripped jeans. I am not sure who is rubbing off on who but I have started adding colours to my outfit while she's doing less to hers.

It's mostly blue because it is the colour of Ben's eyes. No heels yet and maybe in the near future but I alternate between my boots and sneakers with light makeup. Ben helps me pick my clothes sometimes. We don't do the whole matching couple thing but once in two weeks we show up in the same outfit.

Maria pulls out her compact mirror and her lips spread into a wide grin like she finally found the secret to being sexy forever. It is one of her life goals. She jabs Ben, he glares at her and she glares harder.

I gasp when I see the mark on my neck. A red mark that shows someone, which is me, was getting kissed on the same spot for so long it left a mini bruise. A hickey. My cheeks flush, I frown at Ben who stares at his feet. I should be mad but I have never gotten a hickey before. It feels like Ben's mark of ownership.

"You."

"Yes, me," he says with his lips pressing to the spot. "The boy you love. You like it?"

The boy I love. I like the sound of that. I giggle at his innocent pout. Not him acting like it's a gift. Maybe it is. I love it. But I settle for saying, "How long?" During the periods where I had to go to class alone, I received stares but I attributed it to my new relationship status. Ben puckers his lips and I poke his chest. I want to brand him too so everyone knows he's mine. "I want to give you one of mine," I tell him.

“Okay. Cut. Cut. Cut.” Maria pushes between both of us, separating us with her hands. “Not while I am here. When I’m gone, you two can maul each other.” She clears her throat. Way to ruin a good moment. Her gaze alternates between me and Ben, he bounces on his foot at the seriousness that takes over her face. “I wanted to ask you guys if you would like to go on a date.” She jumps a little like the over-excited cheerleader she is. “Daniel found this new place and we were thinking, why not make it a double date?”

Ben’s eyes find mine, he silently asks if I want to go. We haven’t had our date. He has not had any fights since then. Anytime I want to ask him for stuff, I remember the long list on his phone and stop. I don’t want to add to his burden. But I want all the little moments a girlfriend should have with her boyfriend.

“Come on, guys,” she adds. She juts her lower lip and turns to Ben. That look always works for me. If she is in the mood, she will force the tears out. “I swear it won’t be awkward.” Ben slides a finger into the tiny pocket of his jeans. Maria’s making my boyfriend uncomfortable. “If you say yes, Tessa will say yes.”

Ben tries to look over her head to me but she raises her hands to block his view. I want this date. I want us to dress up and go out. But he is broke. Well, not broke but he can’t afford it now. Asking him to stop with his list has proven to be the equivalent of pouring water into a basket. I am taking a break from it.

I jump down to stand between them. “Nope, Maria.” I stick out my tongue. “Not interested.”

“That’s why I didn’t ask you,” she fires back and returns her gaze to Ben like I don’t exist.

Ben’s arms slip around my waist from behind, he tucks his head into the crook of my neck and I give his hand a small squeeze. Maria groans and throws her hands up. Shifting her handbag to the other hand, she shakes her head as she realises how futile talking to Ben is. “You are just as terrible as she is.”

Feigning hurt, I gasp. “I’ll take that as a compliment,” I murmur.

Maria stomps her foot. “It’s not a compliment.” Another second passes, she lets out a deep sigh. “Just think about it, okay? The place is really nice.” She is talking directly to me. “Candlelight dinner. Great customer service. You even get a valet to park your car.” The more she talks, the more I want to go on this date. At the same time, I cannot move past their services. Such great service has to come at a big price. “Think about it.” She nudges my side with her elbow. “Me, you, Daniel and this guy right here.”

“We will be there,” Ben answers on my behalf. Maria’s squeal is glorious. I plug my fingers into my ears, she hugs me and dashes out of sight. I spin in Ben’s embrace. His smile dies at my frown but his hands glue to my waist. I like how touchy he is, it makes it okay for me to be touchy too. “You want to go, right?”

More than anything in the world. I push my hands into my pockets. “Can we afford it?”

“The card.” A look flashes across his eyes. “I still have the card, remember?”

I can never forget it. When I am on my bed at night, staring at the ceiling, the pain in his voice as he spoke about the card always returns to haunt me. I want him to live like a normal teen. He is hurting but he hides it beneath his smiles, winks and playful arrogance.

“Ben, we don’t have to—”

He shakes his head. “Shhh. Don’t ruin it,” he whispers. “You want to go on a date with me, right?” I nod. I want us to both play dress up and do all those little cheesy things. “Then we will go. It’s a date.”

“Can we at least split the bills?” I ask.

The excitement I should be feeling is dampened by the knowledge he will have to repay it. Ben glares at me. “Never. It’s my treat.” My shoulders sag in resignation, he hooks a finger under my jaw. “I love you.”

My hands wrap around his wrist. “I love you too.” I exhale a soft breath and say, “Always and forever.”

Eyes locked on mine, he says, “Always and forever.”