

BadBoy 56

Chapter 56

Our dreams will come to pass

“Daniel thinks next Saturday will be great,” Maria tells me. We are headed to the library to get her another set of textbooks. She went during lunch but forgot to pick some texts. Maria links our hands and guides me through the thin path leading to the back of the library. She grins with an excitement I don’t feel. “What do you think?” Ben has a fight this Saturday, I am not sure about next week. “Is that okay?”

“I’ll have to ask Ben,” I say and scratch the base of my neck. It’s almost laughable that I can’t make plans without consulting my boyfriend. Maria spares me a glance, a sound between a snicker and sigh escapes her but she says nothing. I push ahead of her and stop at the foot of the short stairs leading to the door of our destination. “Soo...” She glances up and I look away to the tall fence. “You and Daniel are dating?”

Colour rises to her neck, she covers her mouth with her hand and nods. I turn my back on our reflections on the glass door of the library and fold my arms. Two weeks ago she didn’t want to hear Daniel’s name, now they are a couple. We both went in too fast with the dating, I can’t help wishing we don’t regret it.

Maria’s brows furrow at my silence, my gaze trails her body before returning to her face. Her dressing is off and matching mine. Not as flirty as I am used to and the wheels in my head start spinning. For odd reasons, my mind wanders to dirty places. Ben and I have not had sex. I don’t think we ever will and I am fine with that. But I want to hear Maria’s thoughts on it. We have never discussed sex. It’s too weird.

“Since when?”

One foot shoots out, she bites her glossed lips and looks away. “Since yesterday.”

Yesterday when she told me and Ben about the date. I pull out my phone from my breast pocket to text Ben and my lips curl in a small smile. He already texted. He makes dating him so easy. I forget Maria for a bit as we begin texting back and forth. This might be both of us first relationship but we are killing it. I still have the notes he slides into my back pocket each morning. I want to believe it’s the same for him.

Maria’s breath fans my neck as she draws closer to me. I tuck my phone into my pocket and she stares at me for a long moment before asking, “Are you mad?”

Her lips are in a pout and she bats her lashes. Her innocent look doesn't fool me one bit but I have no reason to be upset if she is happy with Daniel. I throw an arm around her shoulder. "Not really. No."

She drags me into a hug. I giggle when her arms tighten around my wrists and she begins bouncing. She squeals, letting out a sound only her can pull off. I look on with a bored expression and she lets me go.

"We have boyfriends, Tessa." She jumps and claps again in joy. "Both of us." My smile is bigger than before. Our bucket list is almost done and I am not so worried about the rest of the items on it. Maria hugs me again, I rub her back and smile at the bland walls. "All our dreams will come to pass, Tessa."

Because I don't want to jinx it, I nod and she breaks away from the hug to wiggle her brows. Ben calls me right as I open the door for the second time in five minutes and she mouths for me to wait up for her instead. I settle down on the stairs to pick the call, legs sprawled out in front of me with my teeth buried in my lips.

He's not here but I feel hot and cold at the same time from hearing his voice. His breathing on the other end of the phone tickles my ear. "Hey." My voice is hoarse like I spent the night screaming, I clear my throat and try again. "Hey, babe."

"Hey. I miss you."

A smile touches my lips and I can't stop smiling as I tug on a loose thread on the knee of my jeans. "You saw me at the cafeteria, Benny." I don't mention his unusual disappearance during break time before he returned to shower me with kisses. It's hard to question him when he has his lips on mine. "We ate lunch together."

"That was how many hours ago?" he whines.

My heart does that little dance it always does when Ben is being such a needy baby and I lean on the wall with one shoulder.

"I miss you too."

Ben sighs and I picture him jutting his lower lip. It doesn't matter how often we see, it is never enough for us. I miss Asher too. He hasn't been at home for a while. With the holidays around the corner, everyone is busy and Ben's mum insisted on having him finish the rest of the year from her house.

Most nights, Ben and I speak over the phone until one of us falls asleep. As much as Ben denies it, I don't think he can fall asleep without Asher in the house. The school's hottest boy is afraid of sleeping alone.

It's cute and it's not. Knowing the full story makes it harder to tease him about it. He doesn't get to be the regular teen like some of us. In some ways, he reminds me of Let. They don't get to act their age.

"Where are you?" I ask.

We didn't get to spend any time together after last period, he sent me a vague text. The ensuing silence tells me I won't like his answer and he confirms it by saying, "At the ring. Got a fight in seven minutes."

He didn't tell me. Maybe because I might have discouraged him. He has a fight on Saturday which is only two days from today. And we spent most of yesterday evening training for the All-Rounder. The first rounds start in the second week of January. Our fight is in the fourth week. Coach Greyson believes we can win. I hope so. I need us to win. Winning is no longer about me. It's about Ben and his future too.

"Babe, I was going to tell you," Ben says.

"Liar. You weren't."

Ben chuckles and my fast growing anger dissipates. Burnout is real. I worry for him. I look to the fence surrounding the library. Maria is taking too long. I can't leave because I am her ride home and I want to be there to support him. He hasn't invited me to any of his fights since the last one before Thanksgiving. I think he's scared to let me see him lose again. I don't care. I love him for him, not his wins or losses.

"I was going to tell you after the match," he confesses.

The guilt intensifies, I bring my knees to my chest. I want to be able to do more for him but I don't know how and I can't involve my parents. My bracelet catches the light, I smile at the beads with my name on it.

"It's okay. I'm not mad at you." Just worried. He mutters his gratitude. I add, "Stay safe for me, okay?"

"Cross my heart," he mutters, "I will. Love you."

I blow a kiss to the phone. "Love you too."

Someone hisses. I jump and hit my head against the wall, cursing at my best friend who doubles over in laughter. Witch. I flip her my middle finger, she shows two fingers in the peace sign and I roll my eyes.

How long has she been standing there?

Maria crouches to my level to arrange the small heap of books. I frown at the pile. If I have to use this much notes for something I love so much, I might lose interest. But this is Maria, her goal is to win AGT.

"Guess who I saw inside?"

I am not sure why we are both seated on the floor when my car is out there in front waiting for us. She pokes my knee. "Daniel," I answer without thinking and she rewards me with a longer hiss. "Who?"

She flicks a finger over my forehead and rises to her feet. Offering me her hand, she pulls me up.

"I said guess," she retorts.

If she's making a big deal out of it, it has to be someone we never expect to see there. "Olivia." Maria rolls her eyes. If Olivia is at the library, it's most likely to make out with someone. She hasn't given me any troubles since Ben claimed to have spoken to her and I have steered clear off her path. "Who is it?"

Maria sighs. "Noah. He was reading a note."

Noah? The guy who held me while Olivia harassed me. The Noah who walked out of drama class because Miss Jota told him to play Romeo. I freeze. Maria snaps her fingers in my face and I shake my head at the thoughts starting to form. Let and I have not spoken in ages. It's hard to remember a pen pal when you have a boyfriend like Ben. He hasn't replied my last letter and I haven't bothered him about it yet.

The thoughts spinning in my head has me taking hasty steps to the door, my hand closes around the doorknob and I dash to the literature section. It has to be a coincidence. If Noah is Let, I am not sure what I will do.

I take a shaky breath before pulling out the novel.

Noah cannot be Let. Noah must not be Let.

I don't like that guy one bit. I talk myself into opening the novel and a folded sheet falls out. Another thought hits me. What if he isn't Let but a sneaky little twat who snoops around libraries? What if this is a silly coincidence? What are the odds?

Let's letters are deep, Noah is not that type of guy.

A groan slips from me as I pat my pocket for my second phone. It's at home. Sometimes I forget about the old phone because I use it for only Let. I duck behind a shelf when I see Noah heading for the door.

Seconds after he leaves, I am still trying to process my discovery when Maria walks up to me with a deep scowl. I mouth an apology to her and drag her to the car. Once I get home, I scoot upstairs to my bedside drawer and retrieve my phone to text Let.

It's now or never.

I close my eyes briefly and exhale.

Me: You were at the library today.

Let: Yes.

Me: I think I saw you.

Let: Really?

Me: Yeah.

Let: Oh. You were behind a shelf? The music line?

Music? I wasn't looking when I hid behind that shelf. I bite my lip and fall to the bed, gaze on the ceiling. I guess the next thing is for us to meet up but that will mean acknowledging his secrets and absolving him of his bad behaviour. I didn't realise he had a younger brother or stepsister. I don't know anything about him but I wish it wasn't him. Is that why he bullies people? Transfers his aggression to others?

Me: Yeah. You wore black jeans and grey polo?

Let: Yeah. That's me.

Let: So that's what you look like.

My heart skips. I drop the phone and pick it. He knows what I look like. I know what he looks like. But I still feel protected by the fact we haven't had a physical interaction and I want to leave it that way.

Me: I don't think we should meet yet.

Let: I agree.