

BadBoy 58

Chapter 58

Big brother

Ben groans. He does that a lot when I ask a question about his family. My fingers run over his jaw, he nibbles on my fingertips and a shudder skitters down my spine. A moment or two later, he sighs again.

“I need to be home with them.” With an eye roll, he says, “I don’t want to but I have to.” Ben is eighteen years and old enough to make decisions for himself but I guess his age doesn’t matter in the agreement with his mother. His head falls back on the couch. I trail a line on his chest. “Christmas is compulsory.”

My hands slide under his shirt, I trace the space between his abs. “At least you get to see Asher.”

“Yeah.” He looks down at me with a half-smile. “I guess so.”

His voice lacks excitement, he tightens his hold on me and my cheek presses to his chest. I look out the window across us and pry Ben’s hands from my waist. The sky is fast turning grey. A gentle breeze rustles the curtain and Ben sits up. The clock on the wall above the shelf of awards shows its time to leave.

The phone on the table vibrates, I untangle myself completely from Ben to pick it up. It’s a text from Mum. She wants to know my current location. She’s aware I am at Ben’s but the weather is starting to look worrisome. Kneeling by the table, I start shoving my books into my bag when I feel him behind me.

Ben’s breath warms my skin, he pushes my hair over one shoulder and pecks my neck. I suck in a shaky breath. After sending Mum a reply, I turn to him. He hoists me up and my legs easily slip around his waist.

“I have to go,” I murmur against his shoulder.

Holding a finger up, he pries his phone from his pocket to reply a chat from WattsApp. Ben laughs at one of the messages on his screen. “I can’t believe Liam is taking his girlfriend on a picnic. It’s their first date,” he murmurs and presses a kiss to my hair. “Of all the places to go, he chose a damn park.”

I freeze momentarily but he doesn't notice. Liam is his friend from school. He never misses a chance to show off his girlfriend. Meanwhile, my boyfriend can't take me on a date. I don't think our date will ever happen. Money is not the issue since Ben won his last two matches. I gaze at the walls and sigh. I don't know anymore. I guess I should be grateful I have a boyfriend. A date can happen in the future.

Ben slips his phone into his pocket with a tiny smile and a slight shake of his head. I am tempted to flick a finger over his forehead for laughing at his friend's idea of a perfect date, instead, I tuck my head into the crook of his neck and breathe in his scent. He smells like popcorn and a hint of something fruity.

A picnic date at the park or beach with my boyfriend is perfect for me too. We can walk around the park while holding hands and sharing lame jokes. Ben sets me down on my feet to turn off the TV. With his hand on my shoulders, he ushers me to the front door and stops. He tucks his hand under my jaw so I can meet his gaze. I lick my lips. I don't like it when he is staring this hard at me, it makes it harder to lie.

The skies are darker. I need to leave while I can. I attempt to push past him but he steps out and shuts the door behind him. He leans on the wall and tries to take my hands but I slide them into my pockets.

"Babe..." He frowns. "What's wrong?"

The words are heavy in my mouth. I gauge his face to decide if voicing out my thought is the best option. Ben lifts a brow. "A picnic date isn't the worse date idea. Because you don't like it doesn't make it bad." My voice is a bit snappy at the end. I take a deep breath. "Sometimes, it's the thought that counts," I say.

I miss the heat he was offering but I don't touch him. My phone vibrates in my pocket. I know it's Mum but I don't pick. I don't need to hear a lecture if she finds out I am not driving home.

Ben steps down so we are standing toe to toe. The height difference becomes more obvious but I don't back down under his hot, intense gaze. He folds his arms. "What's your idea of a perfect date?" he asks.

"Candlelight dinner, I guess. And a walk in the park," I reply. He's still staring at me with that look. I push one foot forward to draw circles on the floor. Ben is so close my thoughts are starting to melt into one. "It doesn't have to be something big. Anything that allows us privacy and bonding time. I'm up for that."

He doesn't say anything to that and all hopes of ever going on a date with him evaporates. I walk ahead of him to my car while he locks the door.

My eyes are heavy with unshed tears and my vision blurs a bit. I swipe the back of my hand across my nose when he starts towards me and blink back the tears. Ben made me promise never to hold anything back from him but I have no idea how to mention the date to him. Maybe I am putting more thought into a date than what we already share. He loves me. I love him.

Ben places my bag on the passenger seat and secures the seatbelt around it. He winks, coming over to do the same for me. A rumbling in the distance causes our heads to lift to the skies. We share another gaze.

His face registers the disappointment I manage to hide, he kisses a path from my neck down to my ear. "I love you." He jams my door close and hugs me through the window. The front door of his neighbour's house opens, someone's head pokes out and the door closes. "Drive safe." He bops my jaw. "Love you."

Putting the car on reverse, I mutter, "Love you too."

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I think I am depressed. Why else am I stuffing my face with cookies dipped in two flavoured ice-cream on a beautiful Friday evening? The answer is simple. I have not seen my best friend and boyfriend in days. In truth, I miss Ben more than I miss Maria but if she was here, she would have taken my mind off him.

What's he doing now?

Pushing myself against the headboard, I set the ice-cream tub on the nightstand and bring out my phone. The movie I was watching on my laptop has come to an end but I can't even remember the title.

There is no new message from either of them. Ben has kept in touch since the break began. We call and text all the time. I also get to speak to Asher when he's available. My legs tangle in the bedsheet in my rush to get out of the bed to take a shower. Instead of pushing it off me, I fall back to the bed with a huff.

What was my life before Ben? Sprawled on the bed, I try to think back to my life before dating. I was a pathetic loner. Someone knocks on the door, I press a pillow to my face and groan into it. We are only two at home. Me and Hayden. He's hell-bent on annoying the shit out of me until he returns to school.

"Go away." My voice is muffled. I am not sure he heard me. Even if he does, he won't listen.

The door opens and the bed dips under his weight. "This place stinks."

Hayden is a liar. Sure, I have not had my bath today but he is exaggerating. Siblings exaggerate all the time. Hayden moves to the window and parts the curtain, allowing a welcome streak of sunlight.

I watch his movements from the corner of my eyes, too lazy and tired to assist him. Not that he needs help. His muscles have doubled since the last time he was home. Body wise, I look nothing like him.

He returns to the bed and grips my shoulders. I wince. "Get up, lazy ass." I am not lazy, I just chose to spend the day indoors and think about my boyfriend instead of helping him set up the Christmas tree.

"Mum says we are going out to eat." I roll to my stomach and prop myself on my elbows. His eyes dart to my opened wardrobe which I have not had the chance to arrange. I have not had the chance to do anything useful. He flicks a finger over my forehead, I howl like a stabbed wolf. "You have to dress nice."

He sweeps his hair off his forehead and I sigh for the millionth time at that move. Hayden never grows out his hair but he came home sporting bangs he keeps fighting with every few minutes. Maybe it's his strategy to win girls because it gives him a chance to show off his toned biceps when he raises his hand.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" His knuckle bops my nose and he pinches my cheeks like I am still his chubby cheek sister from nine years ago. Duhh. I have a boyfriend now. "Is that a yes or a yes?" I am getting off the bed already. I raise my hand and sniff my armpit, almost gagging at the smell that assaults me.

Hayden chuckles. "Told you, you stink."

"Shut up." He makes a face at me, I flip him the bird and he raises both hands to do the same.

My phone pings. We share a brief look and I dash for my phone before he does. The text from Ben has me smiling from ear to ear, I type up a reply to him and add numerous heart-eyed emojis to it. I love my boyfriend. Hayden snorts as I stalk to the bathroom. He is aware Ben is my boyfriend, Mum has not shut up about him. I swear she is more excited than I am. I pause at the door to stick out my tongue at him.

In a singsong voice, I say, "Single. You are so single. You have no girlfriend. No one wants you. Oh, big brother."

The pillow Hayden sends flying misses my head by sheer luck, I skip to the bathroom to prevent another attempt, laughing so hard my ribs hurt. I have missed my big brother. It feels good to have him back.