

Badboy 83

Chapter 83

Benny junior

We win our second match on our second month anniversary. Double celebration.

My boyfriend grins as the referee raises our hands to declare us tonight's winner. With my mask, I can't do much but nod when the audience renders an ear-splitting cheer. We must have made a lot of people happy, especially those who gambled at the beginning of the match. After the first round ends, there's an option to withdraw a lower amount than the original. Most people never take it. It was Ben's idea for us to place a bet and Coach helped.

Ben throws an arm around my shoulder, we are no longer concerned what people would think of us as we skip through the dim corridor. Coach joins us shortly, his grin is so big and proud, I can't help smiling.

"Made you two thousand box," he says as he slaps a wad of cash on the dresser. My mouth opens and closes. Ben whistles. We might have been willing to bet but we didn't expect this magic. "Good game."

Coach claps Ben on his back and leaves the room. He knows we are dating. Ben picks the money, it's in one hundred bills. He kisses a note and winks at me. I laugh. This is the laziest money I ever made.

Music filters in from my small speaker on the table. Ben connected his phone to it. He spins me around in a small circle and ends it with a dip. I laugh as we dance to a song I am unfamiliar with. I don't know what we are celebrating. Our anniversary or our win. But I am more than glad to be his dance partner.

There are two more fights tonight. One of the winners will be our opponents for the next match. The other winner fights the team who fought before us. Ben nuzzles my neck, his hands wrap around my waist.

"That right hook was..." He holds up my hand to his lips and places a feather-like kiss on my knuckles. "It was awesome, babe." I was the one who landed the winning punch in the third round. He kisses my cheek and brushes my hair like he's too pleased with me. I am pleased with myself. "You're the best."

My lips pucker and he pecks me. A yawn escapes me. "You did good too," I tell him.

“Not as good as you,” he answers.

We skip to the couch and I sit on his lap. We need a bath and a cloth change but we are both tired. Coach made us come earlier to watch the first match of tonight. His idea of a pre-match motivation.

“I applied to SAS,” Ben murmurs. I hide my face in the curve of his shoulder, he presses a kiss to my hair and gently draws my head back so he is staring at me. “Miss Jota wrote me a recommendation letter.”

She wrote one for me too but I am yet to apply. Ben isn't aware and I'm not sure I will tell him anytime soon. I don't want to get his hopes high because it's NYU for me. My SAT results came out great, a little above two thousand. Daddy knows people who know people who can help me. I stand a good chance.

Miss Jota asked me to try. I might, so I don't have to lie to her each time she asks about the status.

“I'm sure you will get in,” I tell him.

Lines appear on his forehead. “I hope so.”

I shake my head. “I know so, Benny.”

On my feet, I pull him up so we can get rid of our filthy clothes. We agree to meet at the car after cleaning up. I step out first to the lot. Minutes later, Ben struts out to join me. He gets into the front seat and fastens his seatbelt while I drum my fingers on the steering.

A hand runs through his damp hair which appears darker than they are. “Where to?” I ask.

He hasn't mentioned our anniversary so I wait for him to say something. Instead, he says, “The park.”

In a few minutes we arrive at the park. It is not as filled as it would be during the holidays. Ben and I link arms as we start for the ice-cream stand. I giggle when he picks flavours for me. Vanilla and strawberry. The ice-cream lady continues stealing glances at us and all I do is grin harder. He pays. I don't protest.

Night is falling, the skies are darker. We circle the park on foot, no word spoken between both of us. An electronic sound catches my attention, a booth with stuffed animals on display. I drag Ben to the stuffed toy store. There's a loop on the wall and the glass of stuffed animals under it. You can earn one by making a clean shot. I look to Ben with puppy eyes.

The attendant, an old man with wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, smiles at us. "How are ya?" There's a thick drawl in his voice. He explains the rules to us and Ben's frown deepens. "Three down and you win."

Laughter bubbles out of my lips at Ben's frown. There's no way I am leaving this place with a stuffy. You have to make three shots in a row to win one of them. Ben turns to me, a hand in the pocket of his jeans.

"Are you sure you want this?"

Instead of putting him out of his discomfort, I point to a stuffed lion from the pile. It has a tiny scar on its face that reminds me of Scar from Lion King. My smile widens at my boyfriend's scowl.

The old man offers him seven balls. Ben gives me a look and I shrug. He shoots one of the balls and it goes in. I plug my fingers in my ears and let out a shrill sound. The old man laughs, Ben shakes his head.

I love him too.

Ben misses the next one. I yawn and my arm wraps around myself at his next loss. He is staring intently at the basketball hoop. If he makes three straight wins, then we will get it. I don't think that is possible. Basketball is not his thing.

When he misses one more, a groan escapes me. This was supposed to be fun but watching him struggle over it has my skin prickling with guilt. Ben slaps a dollar note on the counter and requests to play again.

This time I watch with less enthusiasm as he makes the shot. He wins the first two and I straighten up. The initial excitement returns. I bounce on my toes, hands clasped in front of me with my eyes glued to the loop. Ben takes the shot and it goes right through. He punches the air, then rushes over to carry me.

"I knew you could do it," I say with all smiles.

He grins. "Liar."

To be fair, it looked impossible. The old man clears his throat. Ben doesn't put me down and my legs wrap around his waist as he goes to collect the prize. He frowns at it like he's disappointed at his win.

"You should play too." I freeze. No fucking way. I will lose before the game starts. "Yes, babe. You have to." His voice raises an octave higher. "I want a teddy too. It's the only anniversary gift I want from you."

Burying my face in my palms, I shake my head. The only thing I'll do is embarrass myself.

"Benny." My hands lower to his shoulders. I pout. "It's hard. Don't make your Gracie suffer for nothing."

Ben wrinkles his nose. We forget about the old man, my arms lock around his neck and I plant a kiss on his lips. When I think I've finally convinced him, he says, "What a man can do, a woman can do better."

"But you said I'm not a woman. I'm a girl."

My lips take on a victorious smile, we wave the old man goodbye and head to the car. The radio flickers to life, a song comes on. I reduce it to the lowest.

Ben throws the lion up and catches it effortlessly. "What will you call him?" he asks.

"Benny junior."

Ignoring his laser gaze, I put the car on drive. It's some minutes past eight, Mum will be expecting me anytime soon. We reach his house in no time and I take my rightful position on his lap. We grin at each other and I sigh heavily. I don't want him to go.

Eyes downcast, he says, "I enjoyed today."

Ben rubs his nose against mine, a tingly feeling slowly makes its way down to every fibre of my being.

I enjoy every moment spent together with him.

"You have to go home," he tells me without making an effort to get me off his lap. He slips a wad of cash from his pocket, counts ten bills and places it on my palm. My brows raise. "Go buy yourself a house."

That's a line from a music video we both watched. "You're an idiot."

"Your idiot."

We stay silent for a moment, then I sigh again. My heart is heavy. "I have to go now," I whisper.

His phone's ringtone cuts through the air, we share a glance when Olivia's name appears on the screen. The atmosphere shifts into something melancholic and I chew on the inside of my lips when Ben doesn't pick.

The call ends and the phone starts ringing almost immediately. "It might be important," I hear someone say. Me. Ben lifts uncertain eyes to my face. He doesn't want to upset me. "Just pick already. Get it over with."