

Badboy 84

Chapter 84

### **Black eyes and split lips**

I am pissed. I send Mum a text to let her know I'll be home later than usual. Ben is silent as I pull out into the streets. He has been quiet since Olivia called crying on the phone. I don't buy her fake tears one bit.

"She's using you," I say to him. I press the horn when the car in front of me refuses to move. Ben sits up without a word. I know what he's thinking but I don't want him to think it. She needs to stay away. "Are you not going to say anything?" He does that half-shrug thing and I blurt out, "I don't want you to go."

"Don't do that, Gracie."

I punch the steering. "Don't do what?"

That low growl that escapes him annoys me. I understand they might be friends but someone needs to put Olivia in her place. If he won't do it, I'll have to. Why didn't she call one of her dumb minions for help?

"She's my friend," he grits out.

"I'm your girlfriend."

"Stop the car." I step on the accelerator, pushing the car to its speed limit. "Gracie, stop the car."

His voice holds no laughter. My chest deflates and I take my foot off the pedal. The car slows to a stop by the roadside, some cars breeze past us and I roll down the windows. My fists clench and unclench. I hate this. I don't want him to go to her house and I only volunteered to drive because I don't trust her.

Ben unfastens his seatbelt, he adjusts on the seat so he is facing me. I look out the window to avoid his gaze. The evening breeze caresses my face and sends my hair flying in all directions. There's a tug on my shirt and it grows urgent when I don't turn. I slap Ben's hands off me and he plucks me out of my seat.

I bury my face in his chest and my body sags in tiredness and frustration. My voice is a whisper. "When Olivia and Hayden were still dating." Ben stiffens. Not a lot of people are aware they dated. They met through me. "She cheated on him. I told him and she got mad at me. Really mad. That's why we don't talk."

According to her, I should have confronted her first before reporting to my brother. As in, it's what the girl code states. If I hadn't caught her pants down with another boy, I would have been fooled by her tears. Hayden believed me because I was his sister until he confirmed it himself. She's so manipulative.

Ben tucks his hand under my jaw. My eyes are bright with tears that don't fall, his are big with concern. "I don't think she's lying this time," he says. "Things have changed since then. She's a better person now."

"I don't think so," I reply and break away from the trance his eyes have pulled me into.

Ben fingers my hair. His lips quirk. "People change, Gracie. Everyone deserves a second chance." I hum a monotone response to his statement. If he's convinced she's an angel, no point trying to argue with him. He hugs me. "Her parents are getting a divorce. It's very messy and she doesn't want anyone to know."

"Then why did she tell you?"

Ben is my boyfriend, not hers. She shouldn't tell him stuff like that if she can't tell everyone.

"Because I have experienced it," he answers. "And it's not something I would wish for anyone." My heart softens a little. When he says it like this, it will be selfish of me to try to discourage him. "Please, let me go to her."

Questions flit through my mind. I trust Ben. But I don't trust Olivia around Ben. Once a cheat, always a cheat. She might try something funny with him. Ben's sad gaze on me has my head bobbing in approval.

"Okay," I whisper.

As soon as the reply is out of my mouth, his lips collide with mine. He pours his appreciation into the kiss, I do well to match his energy but I am not fully present. If she had called him in the middle of our date, would he have left? I push those thoughts out of my mind. Ben is kind so he will always think of others.

We resume the journey to her house. Once the car stops, Ben hurries to the entrance. He doesn't need to knock because the door opens and Olivia launches herself on him. His head subtly turns my way as if to seek my approval before his arms wrap around her. I think she's crying. Her shoulders are trembling.

I don't realise I'm biting hard on my lips till a sharp pain flickers through me. There's blood. I lick my lips dry and long press the horn. They jump apart. Olivia throws my car a look and sends Ben a questioning glance. She's about to walk back into the house when he drags her. He shouldn't have.

Ungrateful bitch.

Whatever they are saying seems to annoy both of them. She speaks, he speaks. They are both speaking over each other and I have a feeling it has to do with my presence. I horn again, her sharp eyes cut to my car and I release the horn. The bitch doesn't scare me. Ben grips her shoulder, forcing her to look at him.

After a few minutes, she nods to whatever he tells her and hugs him again. Their close contact bothers me and my nails dig into my knees. I need to breathe. They start for the car and I flip the radio to appear busy. A love song comes on, I switch it off.

Who wants to listen to a love song after they just watched their boyfriend comfort another girl?

Olivia hesitates beside the car, Ben comes over to my side and pokes his head in. I do what my fingers itch to do. I run them through his hair. His hand closes over my wrist, he palms my face with my hand.

"Sorry," he says with so much sincerity it feels like a sin to refuse the apology. "This was a bit too much." I don't know what he means but I nod again for his sake. "Can she come in?" I want to say no. "Please?"

"Sure."

Ben returns to her. I catch Olivia stealing glances at me. She is right to be wary with everything she has done to me. If I were her, I would refuse to be in the same car with the person I bullied. I fold my arms across my chest as she covers the distance to the car and the sight of her swollen face steals my breath.

Black eye and split lips. If I know anything from fighting, I know that someone punched her in the face. Someone stronger than her or it was multiple punches to the same spots. Silently, she gets into the car.

“What? What are you staring at?” she barks.

Her tone is rude but I can't bring myself to be mad at her. I look at her house. The lights are on. “Sorry.”

“Sorry too,” she says in a small voice that I almost miss. “Didn't know you two were on a date.”

I don't say anything to that but my heart goes out to her and Ben. Ben stops pacing in front of the car. There's a sad look in his eyes when they meet mine. I try to smile at him but I only manage to pull it off halfway before the smile falls. He strolls into the car and hugs me again till I break away for air.

“Thank you,” he mouths.

Throughout the ride to his house, he never lets go of my hand. As soon as the car stops, Olivia runs out. She comes over to Ben's side, her lips purse as she contemplates her words. In the end, she walks away without a word to either of us.

“Does that happen often?” I ask in a whisper.

Ben shrugs and my stomach churns. If anyone touched a single hair on my head, they would be locked up. My parents will not let it slide. I don't know what to think. I didn't even know Olivia's 'sweet' parents were getting a divorce. They always seemed nice, especially Mrs Beckham. I don't know anymore.

“Do you know who did it?”

Ben presses the back of his hands to his eyes. “Can we not talk about it? Please.”

I snort and he peeks at me with one eye opened. "Okay, Benny." I retrieve my stuffed lion from the floor of the backseat and dangle it in his face. His lips break into a small smile. "Thank you for Benny Junior."

A moment of quiet passes between us. The lights in his living room flicker to life, two shadows rush past the curtain and I giggle again. Asher is home too. The knowledge relieves me more than I care to admit and I feel like such a shitty person for letting my thoughts wander in that direction. Olivia needs his help, the last thing she will try to do is seduce my boyfriend. It is silly but I keep thinking about it.

"It's not like I don't want to tell you," Ben murmurs. His voice slicks through the cobwebs in my brain. His brows are furrowed and he's frowning. I reach up and peck him. "It's not in my place to do so, Gracie."

"I understand," I tell him. His eyes say he doesn't believe me. "I'm serious. I'm not mad."

"Okay." Ben sighs. "You have to go home now." I guess so. This night is a lot. Ben thinks so too because he says, "I am so exhausted." Me too. He steps out of the car before I reply. "Alright, babe. Go home."

He's not chasing me but it feels like it. Either way, I have to leave now or Mum will ground me for the rest of our stay here. Ben waits for me to start the car. He smiles at me and I wave, he waves back. My car pulls out of the driveway, from the side mirror, I see that he is still waving at me. I love that boy.