

Badboy 86

Chapter 86

Who's next?

The whispers start during lunch. Ben and I do our best to ignore it while heading for the cafeteria but once we step inside, the place falls quiet. Eyes are on us and my steps almost falter. They are full on staring.

My hand slips into Ben's, we stop at the end of the queue and everyone scampers away like we have a plague. Ben tries to brush off the attitude but I note the worry in his gaze as he nudges me to the front.

We get our meals and make for our table. His friends don't call out to us like they usually do. Everyone is staring. It might be my imagination but I feel like they are staring at only me. But why? What have I done this time?

"Do you want to get out of here?" Ben asks.

I nod without hesitation. "Yeah."

Throwing our bags over his shoulders, he offers me his hand. I don't take it because my phone rings.

Maria.

The first thing she says is, "Check the blog."

I glance at my screen to be sure she's the caller. Ben looks to me for an explanation but I hold a finger up. Broadway Gossip should have been the first place I checked but I already forgot about its existence.

Sweat rolls down my temple. It can't be about me, it must not be about me. Ben lowers our bags to the seat, he's beside me in a minute, looking over my shoulder while I flip through tabs. My phone rings again. It's Maria. Ben and I share a glance, I shrug.

I might look like I am okay but I am freaking out. Maria is freaking me out. If she's calling this much it has to be about me. I pick her call for the second time. My heart pounds so loud I miss her words and have to ask her to repeat it. Ben slides his hand into mine. The jocks are watching us. Olivia is absent.

"Have you seen it?" Maria asks. Her voice is small, she sounds like she has been jogging. I respond in the negative. She sighs. "Okay." A long pause follows and my phone vibrates. "I just sent it to you. Check it."

The call ends. My hands tremble a bit and I release my breath. It can't be so bad. Who am I kidding? It is fucking bad if she had to call me during school hours. Ben says something, I don't hear him and I don't ask. Nothing is as important as this video.

I hit play on the video and everything stops. It's a video of me from Halloween night. My heart slows to a painful stop as the scenes play out in front of me. It starts when I am on the floor with them emptying that stinky water on me. I shudder from the memory and my jaw clenches when the scene changes.

The video has no audio. But it's clear. I am in the restroom trying to get rid of my outfit. I am half-naked and my back is to the camera. The angle changes to give a glimpse of my boobs. My vitiligo is also on display for anyone who cares to see it.

At that moment, all that mattered was getting out of the costume. I didn't care then, maybe I should have and done more to protect my decency. The entire school just saw my body without my permission.

The caption reads: Looks like she's covering her craw-craw (scabies) under all that clothing.

Tears cloud my vision, I don't realise I'm sobbing silently until tears drop to my hands. I shoot to my feet. Only one person uses that word. Only one person thinks vitiligo is craw-craw. I will find her. I will kill her.

Ben snatches the phone from me. He grabs my shoulders in a bid to make me look at him. But I can't see him. I look through him. I am here but I'm not very present. My mind is on all the places Olivia could be.

"Gracie," he calls out, "look at me. Babe." His fingers brush my cheeks and I shove him. I don't want him touching me. I don't want him acting like me or my body is perfect. It's not. I have an ugly skin. His voice sounds so far but he is right in front of me. I wipe the snot running down my nose. "Gracie, please."

He is still talking when I rush out of the cafeteria. My first stop is the art room. It's empty. I storm to the restroom. Empty. Anger runs through my veins as I march to the parking lot. She came to school, I know this because I saw her. That miserable girl.

My thoughts are centred on her. I want to hurt her. I wipe the tears falling down my cheeks. Being the good girl started this in the first place. But I'm done. Her car is still in the parking lot but she's not there.

Where can she be?

Fate seems to be on my side. Olivia is the first person I see as soon as I step inside. She stops in her tracks when she sees me. I wait for her to say something. Apologise. Explain the video. I don't know. Anything. For God's sake, I have done nothing to her. I even drove her to Ben's house. When does this beef end?

Olivia crosses her legs on her ankles and blows air on her fake nails. She spares me one long glance from my head to my toe. I don't shrink. I meet her gaze head on and she rolls her eyes. She tries to pass me but I drag the bitch back by her hair.

She yelps but there's no one in the hallway to help her. Her cheeks grow redder by the second, I release her and she staggers. With her nails out to scratch my face, Olivia launches herself at me but I sidestep her. I am so done with her shit. I fold my hands on my chest, the look in my eyes must have scared her because she doesn't attempt to come at me again.

Placing a hand on her hip, she asks, "What the fuck was that for? Are you insane?"

She will find out soon.

"Did you upload that video?" I ask. My tone is eerily calm. She looks around. "I'm talking to you."

"What video?"

What we will not do is feign ignorance. No one in school knows about the vitiligo aside from her and Ben. No one teases me about it but her.

I take a step forward, she stands her ground and flips her hair over her shoulder. Her facade doesn't fool me. I know her for who she is and I feel so stupid for letting this go on for this long. She is a hater. A jealous bitch who can't bear to see people living their best lives without her.

"If you don't have anything to say, get out of my way," she says. I don't move. My mind plays the video on repeat and my fingers tremble with the urge to hurt her. "Let's get one thing straight. You helped me that night but it doesn't make us friends. We can't and we will never be friends. Now, get out of my way, I have more important things to do."

With how wide and empty the hallway is, Olivia decides pushing me is the only way she can move forward. Her shoulder slams into mine and something inside me snaps.

Everything she has said in the past returns to haunt me. Mum's voice grows louder in my head. The anger and pain of moving many cities away from Ben consumes me. And the realisation that the whole school knows what I look like underneath my clothes spurs me into action.

I punch her.

The hit comes as a surprise to both of us but I recover faster. She tries to fight back but I dodge her attacks effortlessly. How did I let myself be bullied by this weakling? We fall to the floor and I pin her under me. I am on autopilot with my limbs moving at an insane speed. Thrashing and tearing at her. Her clothes. Her face. I want to hurt her. I need to hurt her. She must pay for all the months of bullying.

Someone tries to drag me off her but my elbow rams into their side. "Gracie. It's me."

It's a guy.

The voice is familiar but my brain only recognises my current mission. To destroy Olivia. To hurt her. The guy eventually succeeds in prying me off her. I struggle in his grip but his firm arms tighten around me. He whispers something about calming down into my ear, about loving me and my body sags against his.

He sounds like Ben. He smells like Ben. My Ben.

I stop fighting him. My chest heaves, a sadistic smile curls my lips when I spot the bloodied girl on the floor. Her shirt is ripped, her pink bra now torn to reveal a glimpse of her bruised boobs. Her hair is tangled. I managed to pull out some strands. Bitch.

An odd satisfaction spreads through my chest and I straighten up. I feel free. My knuckles ache but it's a pain that's worth it. A symbol of my freedom from all the months I tolerated her. Hate flickers through me at the small crowd gathered in front of us. They never helped me when I was getting bullied.

Ben lets go of me to help his friend and I yell at the dumbstruck faces, "Who is next?"