

Bullied By The Badboy By Maramartha Chapter 9

Home

The hallway is silent, way too silent for a noisy school.

Everyone is watching, feasting their eyes on us and waiting to see what Ben will do. As for me, I want to crawl into a hole and disappear. But I can't move. Ben is so close to me I can see the cut on his lips, how the pupils of his blue eyes dilate in annoyance. He places both hands on either side of my head, leans till his nose brushes my ear and shivers spread down my back. His breath tickles my neck, I shut my eyes tight to avoid meeting his gaze and hug the textbooks to my chest like they can save me from his wrath.

“Where were you Saturday night?” he asks in a clipped tone doused with anger, oblivious to the scene he is making. His voice is loud enough for anyone close to hear, my eyes flutter open and I swallow hard.

From my peripheral view, I notice a few girls bring out their phones to start recording. Maria gawks at us, I can imagine the wheels in her head spinning out of control. It is not what she thinks. I cast one pleading look at Ben, we can discuss this later but he doesn't lose his composure. His brows furrow so much a wedge appears between them and I start praying for a teacher to appear so I don't have to answer him.

“Are you deaf? Where were you?” he barks.

His tone doesn't sit right with me, I clear my throat. “It's none of your business, Benjamin.”

No sooner are those words out of my lips when Ben punches the space beside my head. A collective gasp echoes in the hallway, the loudest of it

coming from me. His eyes narrow to harsh slits, I swallow as his mouth parts open to repeat his question in a slow, menacing voice warning me to behave myself.

“Home,” I blurt out. My voice is shaky, one of the textbooks drops to the floor. Our gazes follow it, none of us attempts to retrieve it. I would have picked it but I am too scared to move. On a regular day, I can handle myself against bullies but Ben’s eyes hold a promise and I won’t give him a chance to fulfil it. He arches a brow displaying a cut, my heart jumps into overdrive. I did that too? Is that why he’s upset? If it’s the money, I can give him my share. We can talk this out somewhere private. “I was at home.”

If looks could kill, I would have died on the spot. There is so much anger and hate packed into the stare he levels at me, if I didn’t have to protect my identity, I would have confessed, told him all he needed to know with an apology. But I can’t tell him the truth with Maria standing inches away from me. We have been best friends since napkin days and she doesn’t know I fight for Coach Greyson. I force tears to my eyes, batting my lashes at Ben who continues staring at me like I have grown a horn on my forehead.

Does he believe my lie?

“She was at home, I can confirm that because I was there,” Maria says with a slight shake of her head, her voice a tiny ray of hope floating in my head. My chest deflates with relief, my head jerks shakily in agreement. Unable to form another word, I mutter my gratitude under my breath. Moving forward, I will do whatever she requests of me without complaints. I will even take a photography class for her sake. She inches towards Ben, thrusts her phone in his face. “We were at her house, an all girls night.”

I know she's showing him a picture from the last time she spent the night at my house, which was during the summer break. We are not allowed sleepovers when school is on session but Ben doesn't need to know that. The silence stretches, I am certain I am not the only one waiting for his response.

Where are the teachers when you need them? They are only good for sending us off to the principal's.

Still locked in a battle of stares with me, Ben murmurs, "Stay out of this, Maria Vega."

This can't be good. My heart sinks to my stomach, sweat breaks out on my forehead but my hands are too stiff for me to raise them and wipe the sweat so they trickle down my face, stinging my eyes. Maria lowers her phone with an apologetic look, my breath catches in my throat. I start breathing normally when Ben takes a step back, he smirks and I shrink into myself as his finger connects with my pendant. I shouldn't have worn the necklace today. He traces the shape of the pendant, his eyes flicker to my face.

"You were at home?"

I nod, Ben nods. He squats to retrieve my textbook, I accept it and the remaining texts drop to the floor. I can't hold anything with the way everyone's looking at us and making no efforts to help me. I don't want to be here, I want this thing to end. Pointing to my backpack, he tugs on the strap, I slide it off my shoulder and he shoves my textbooks inside. I step aside as his fist comes down on my locker one last time, my shoulders sag as he takes his leave. Maria is beside me in seconds, her eyes hold questions she will only ask in private. We don't see Ben coming until he rams his fist into my side.

Sweet Jesus.

I wheeze. Why does he keep hitting the same spot? My knees weaken, I collapse to the floor and curl into a ball. Maria's mouth opens and closes, she snaps out of her trance when I whimper. I expect her to come to my aid but she struts to Ben and I look up right in time to see her land a slap on his smug face. The pain spreading through my stomach stops me from processing what just happened, more students bring out their phones as I lay moaning on the floor with my cheek pressed against the cold tiles.

Maria screams at him, "Que te la pique un pollo." I sniff, her attention returns to me and she crouches, gauging my face to assess the extent of the damage done to me. She doesn't lift my shirt, knowing how uncomfortable I am with revealing skin and I offer her a tiny smile so she can stop worrying. I am not fine, my stomach is on fire, I think he broke my rib. "Are you okay?" she whispers. I put up a brave front and nod, I will be okay. I am a fighter, I am a champion. Wagging a finger in Ben's direction, Maria murmurs, "Idiota." He frowns but doesn't express remorse neither does he glance my way. "Stupid."

With Maria's help, I get up but it takes a few seconds for me to stand on my own. Everyone makes way for us to pass, not caring to hide their nosiness as their phones continue capturing us. I will definitely be on the front page of Broadway Gossip tomorrow. Fun times. At least I'll share the spotlight with Maria.

Rustling from behind has me and Maria pausing, a backward glance reveals a fight has broken out. Wait, is that Daniel? Daniel is fighting Ben. I squint as my friend tackles Ben to the ground. When did he arrive? I nudge Maria on the side, she smiles at me and we resume walking. Students begin running down the hallway, the stern voice of Mr Mark, our Physics teacher, bounces off the wall and I suppress a hiss.

Where was he when I needed him? I think I hear the boys fighting but I don't turn to confirm.

Against Maria's wishes, I head to my class instead of the nurse. How do I explain the bruising in my stomach to them? She follows me into my empty class, I rest my head on the desk and close my eyes.