

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 13



"Champagne sir?" a server offered as Julius entered.

Shaking his head Julius waved him off and headed to the bar to order his usual whiskey. He leaned on the counter with his drink in hand but found he really wasn't interested in actually drinking it as he studied the attendees. It seemed like the usual crowd. Julius drank with most of them on one occasion or another but he didn't feel like mingling tonight.

He was more relaxed than he had been in years. His mind was clear still reveling in the memory of the hour he spent with his children. Their giggles filled his ears and he longed to hold them again. Julius set down his drink a slow smile softening his expression. If only the kids were here tonight but this was not his father's crowd. It was unlikely Macey would attend without him and without her the twins would definitely not make an appearance. And given the crowd...he wouldn't want them here anyway. There was no one here he wanted to introduce them to.

"Julius! So glad you came!" Frederick called coming up to him and slapping his back in welcome.

Frederick was a couple years younger with thick brown hair. Unlike Julius who preferred a clean-shaved look Frederick sported a goatee. Tonight his hair was slicked back and gelled. Even his goatee seemed greased. As always he wore a limited edition suit though there hardly seemed a need for it as Frederick never set foot in his family's business.

Julius had to admit there was something attractive in the idea of turning over all responsibilities of running the family business to others and living off profits but ultimately it would be boring. His father raised him with more ambition and work was the one thing that kept his depression at bay at least during the day.

But things were different now. His mind filled with the images of Macey and the kids. Everything had changed. If he wanted to be a part of their lives he couldn't afford to be hesitant. He had to talk to Macey, apologize and clear the air between them. Julius would get down on his knees and beg if that was what took to convince her how much he wanted to be a part of their lives again. The first chance he got he would do just that.

"It's good to see you!" Frederick laughed. "Hey, you look different."

"How do you mean?"

"...Well, you shaved."

Julius blinked then touched his face. The stubble that had lingered there for several days was indeed gone. He hated to admit it but he had gotten lax about shaving over the past few months. One comment from Aria was enough to remind him he had to take better care of himself.

"...And you showered."

"Anything else?" Julius raised an eyebrow. Had he really fallen so far down all he needed to do to impress was shower and shave? No wonder his brother had been so worried about him.

"No. You just, I don't know, you just look happy!"

Julius grunted. But it was true. He was happy, happier than he had been in years. There was only one reason for this drastic change. He pictured them again and kept the image in his mind.

"You must have had a good day."

Julius smiled as he recalled using his laptop to play games with Aria while Caden played on his phone. They even snapped a few pictures just the three of them which he suddenly had the urge to look at again. He forced himself not to reach for his phone not wanting to share the moment with the likes of Frederick who couldn't possibly understand. Frederick never once mentioned marriage or kids in all the time Julius knew him. In fact Frederick avoided any conversation involving responsibility.

"Katherine must be something else."

"What?" Julius frowned. "Why bring her up?"

"What do you mean? She's your fiancée. Who else could put a smile on your face? You lucky dog. She's got an impressive ass."

"First of all, she's not my fiancée," Julius snapped downing his drink in one go. "Second, if you like her so much, you marry her."

Frederick laughed saying, "No. I'd rather be like your old man."

"Why is that?"

"He's, what, sixty-five? He came here with a redhead half his age. I should ask him where he found her. She's hot."

Julius scoffed then froze, "Did you say redhead?"

"That's right. She's gorgeous!" Frederick said gesturing with his hands to make voluptuous curves. "What a body! Definitely worth whatever your father paid."

Julius slammed down his glass. His gaze became stone cold and dangerous as he fought the urge to punch his friend out. In a low voice he finally spoke, "Don't talk about her like that."

"Oh, come on, don't be so serious. She's not your step-mom yet."

Julius shoved Frederick aside and stormed off before he did something he would regret. His hands were shaking. It wasn't that Frederick was wrong. Macey was gorgeous just imaging her took his breath away but he wouldn't tolerate that kind of talk about his wife from any man.

"What's wrong with you?" Frederick called after him. "Man, you're no fun without a three drink minimum."

Julius didn't acknowledge the last comment as he walked away intent on leaving but then came to a sudden halt. Why would his father bring Macey here? This was not his father's crowd. Did he come by mistake? Then again Macey did have an eye for art so seeing a Picasso might mean more to her. Still unsure he threaded his way through the crowd searching for her. He had to be sure.

It didn't take him long to find her. She stood out like a bright light in the dark. Her gown hugged her in all the right places. Its lace front showed more skin and highlighted her cleavage in a way the first dress she wore hadn't though they had a similar silhouette. She laughed lightly at something his father said. Julius's breath caught in his throat as he watched her converse easily with his father, a man most found overbearing and terrifying. Yet fear was never something she felt towards the DaLair patriarch. He was her father's best friend and practically an uncle.

How could he have forgotten that? Macey had always been comfortable around his father. She never acted nervous or flustered. Augustus was an excellent judge of character and he never ceased praising her.

They had grown up together. She knew secrets about him no one else did. Yet Julius allowed himself to listen to rumors and twist the truth surrounding the woman who married him. Why did he let that happen? Could she find it in her heart to forgive him?

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Macey gave Augustus a peck on the cheek before excusing herself to freshen up and retreated to the bathroom. Fiddling with her hair in front of the sink she stared at her reflection. It never got easier. In just over an hour she lost count of the jealous glares from the woman around her. It didn't matter what history she had with Augustus DaLair just being at his side made her their target, never mind they didn't have the courage to approach him let alone stand beside him.

She didn't know which were worse, the jealous gazes of the women or the lecherous ones of the men. Macey felt like a piece of meat as they devoured her with their eyes. It was degrading and infuriating. If she were in normal clothes on the street they wouldn't even glance in her direction especially if she was with the kids. People only saw what they wanted to see.

When she felt composed again she stepped out to return to the party. Macey hadn't taken two steps when a hand reached out to grasp her arm. Turning to face the person hindering her she found a gentleman around her age. He had rich, black hair and eyes and would have been handsome enough if not for the hungry look in his gaze. She frowned and looked at his hand still gripping her arm but he didn't remove it.

"Yes?" Macey finally met his gaze again and spoke in a neutral tone.

"How much, gorgeous?"

"Excuse me?"

"Oh come on. You can't really be interested in that flaccid old man. How much did he pay for you? I can rock your world faster than he ever could."

Macey scowled, "You have three seconds to let go of me or I'll knee your balls so hard you won't be rocking anyone's world ever again."

"Oooo. Feisty. I like that."

He dragged her closer until a hand grasped his wrist squeezing it painfully. Wincing Macey's solicitor turned to see Julius glaring daggers at him. His grip tightened until the other man groaned in pain.

"I believe the lady said to let go," Julius said carefully controlling his voice.

"Fine. Okay," he finally released Macey though Julius was slow to relax his own grip. "Like father, like son, huh?"

Julius watched the other retreat breathing deep to calm himself. After enduring Frederick's insensitivity it had taken everything to keep from killing the man the moment he solicited her. Was everyone here an animal? He was doubly glad the kids were not in attendance.

"Umm, thank you," Macey hesitantly touched his forearm to gain his attention as he continued to stare after the retreating figure with a murderous glare.

Julius turned to face her. The look in his eyes immediately softened and made her fall silent. Guilt, fear and concern swirled in his gray eyes as he studied her face as if memorizing every freckle dusting her nose.

"Did he hurt you?"

"What? N-no. I'm fine."

Macey fell silent as he picked up her hand and carefully studied the wrist the other man roughly grabbed. His fingers gently massaged it as he scrutinized it from every angle looking for signs of bruising or tenderness. If she was hurt he would hunt down the person responsible and make sure they never again saw the light of day.

"Julius," Macey said gently touching his cheek with her fingertips of her other hand.

His gaze snapped back to hers surprised by her touch.

"I'm fine. Really."

His gaze softened and his anger dissipated. A smile turned up the corners of his mouth. He reached up pulling a stray hair out of her face and tucked it behind her ear saying, "If he had done anything to hurt you I would have..."

"It's all right. I guess...money can't buy class."

"No. Some things are priceless," he chuckled.

His thumb stroked her cheek. Involuntarily Macey leaned into the touch. Her eyes fluttered closed. Julius's smile broadened as his heart thudded in his ears seeing her reaction to his touch. He leaned forward until his forehead rested against hers.

"I've been so worried about you."

Macey hesitantly met his gaze. His face was so close but she didn't try to put distance between them. Was it just because they had been apart for so long or was she just that comfortable with him?

"I never stopped looking for you."

"...You didn't?"

Pain flashed in his eyes at the thought she didn't believe him but he could hardly blame her after their last night together. But she deserved the truth, the whole truth.

With a sigh, he said, "That night I came home drunk and passed out. But the next morning...when I realized you were gone, really gone...I had Eric track your phone and passed out. But the next morning...when I realized you were gone, really gone...I had Eric track your home and when I found it in the trash...I panicked. I had him comb through every second of security footage we could access to find you. But you just...disappeared. I never stopped looking. I had to find you. I had to tell you...how sorry I was for what I put you through."

Macey opened her mouth to say something but closed it again not sure how she should respond. Should she be angry? Sad? Grateful? Happy? She always thought Julius would be glad she left without a fuss and moved on with his life. Now it seemed that wasn't so. Had he really been looking for her for six years? Why hadn't Augustus said anything? Perhaps if she asked about Julius first he might have but she was too afraid to hear about his life without her or if he involved himself with someone new.

"If I could take that night back I would in a heartbeat," Julius said.

Before she could answer he leaned forward capturing her mouth with his. Macey stiffened in surprise but soon found herself relaxing as her desire for him stirred. His arm circled around her pulling her close as he nipped her lower lip begging for entry to deepen the kiss.