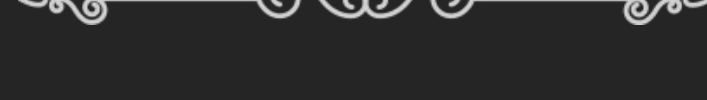


## The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book Two: Chapter Twelve



Theo sighed for the tenth time as he peaked down the hallway. After successfully making it to the computer room without being caught his job was lookout while Sean did his thing at the nearest monitor. Minutes ticked by and Sean's fingers continued to fly over the keyboard without pause.

"Awe, come on," Theo finally said. "It can't be that hard to get in."

"What? I got in ages ago," Sean snorted. "I already pulled up the security cameras so we'll know as soon as Alexis and mom arrive."

"Really?" Theo left his post to see his brother wasn't kidding. The screen displayed live feed from several cameras monitoring a parking garage. "So what are you doing?"

"Drumming up some troops."

"Say what now?"

"Hacker forums. I'm getting as many as I can for a cyber attack on Carlisle Enterprises."

Theo glanced at the open chat on his brother's computer but couldn't make heads or tails of the code they used. Finally he said, "I don't get it."

"It's simple. We need a distraction to get Lexi and mom out safely. That's where these guys come in. While they are in the system my activities are less likely to be noticed."

"So these other hackers are all going to attack the company's computers at the same time? But what good is that?"

"It's a complex computer network and every byte of data we monopolize is going to slow it down and possibly shut it down completely. Think about it. Every second Carlisle Enterprises is shut down is millions of dollars in net loss," Sean explained, "and while our grandfather's lackeys run around in a panic I can sneak Lexi and mom out undetected. Saves us some work and keeps me from burning all of my backdoors."

"And the others are okay with this?"

"Hackers aren't evil we're just smart and we do things to prove we can. I'm challenging them to a duel to see who can cause the most havoc not that anyone will be keeping score. It doesn't matter who wins as long as Lexi and mom are safe."

"Right."

"There they are," Sean said pointing to a camera feed. Sure enough their mother and Alexis emerged from a sedan flanked by several men and were escorted to a freight elevator.

Sean quickly cycled through feeds to keep eyes on them as they were escorted to the executive office. It was a stroke of luck when the men departed leaving the pair alone. Picking up the phone he dialed and waited watching Alexis move toward the sound to pick it up. He gave instructions quickly not wanting to be caught and she complied readily. Now they had eyes and ears in the room.

All the while he egged on the other hackers to hurry so the fun could begin. He knew not everyone would comply but he only needed a few. When Alexis threw down her gauntlet a descent majority had successfully infiltrated the company and bombarded the system with their own viral concoctions.

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"Boys? What are you talking about?" Emerson demanded.

"You don't do your own research do you? Typical rich boy. I bet you paid people to do your homework too."

Before he could answer the office door was flung open by a panicked IT member, "Sir!"

"I said I don't want to be disturbed!" Emerson glared at the young man.

"But sir...we have a big problem! The whole system is under attack."

"Stay here!" Emerson ordered the mother-daughter pair as he and his men followed the new arrival out. Two remained at the door as their grandfather hurried to a secure computer to see what was happening for himself.

"Nicely done," Alexis said out loud.

"Thanks," her brother's voice answered. "Got a little help."

"Figured. Now what?"

"I got you an out but you have to move quickly. When the fire alarm sounds count to ten then leave. Turn right and follow the crowd to the stairs. There will be a short hallway on your left that leads to the freight elevator. I'll hold it for you. Once you get to the first floor turn left and leave out the side exit. It'll be unlocked. There you'll find your chariot."

"Black SUV, right?"

"Right."

"Okay got it." Alexis gripped her mother's hand. "Stay with me mom. I told you everything will be all right."

"But Lexi, what is going on?"

"We'll explain later. Promise. We're ready, Sean."

"Here we go."

Seconds later the fire alarms sounded flashing emergency red lights on the startled workers. Many hesitated, grabbing coats and purses rather than fleeing in a hurry. The guards left at the door seemed at an equal loss unsure what they should do. They tried their radios only to receive nothing but static. Thinking something must have truly happened they joined the crowd as they streamed toward the stairs. As with drills the elevators would automatically drop to the first floor and would not take any passengers.

Counting to ten Alexis opened the office door, turned right as her brother instructed and led her mother along the wall with the stragglers who still made a decent crowd. They moved quickly and were long gone before anyone thought to check on them.

As they continued with the crowd Lynn stepped forward to protect her daughter from overeager jostling. Alexis held tight to her mother angling to the opposite wall seeking the hallway Sean assured her was there. Moments later they stepped into the small hallway and out of the streaming crowd. Alexis felt along the wall locating the elevator controls and tapped the button. A ding sounded as the doors opened and she pulled her mother onto it before they were noticed. The doors closed and the elevator descended.

Alexis breathed a sigh of relief already feeling safer.

Her mother didn't seem to share her relief, "Lexi, what is going on? Was that your brother on the phone? Why isn't he in class?"

"Umm...yeah that was Sean on the phone. Theo was probably right next to him."

"How? Did they do all of this?"

"No. Sean recruited some allies to help create a distraction. The fire alarms were definitely him though and making sure this elevator was available for us was him too."

"I—I don't understand."

"We probably should have told you sooner but we didn't want you to worry."

"What have you three been doing?"

"Plotting our revenge."

"Revenge?"

Before Alexis could respond the elevator came to a stop. Lynn hesitated as the doors opened. Taking her hand Alexis stepped off and turned left. As Sean told them the emergency exit was straight ahead and they soon found themselves on the crowded street. Office workers were milling around the building looking up expecting to see smoke. Sirens wailed as fire trucks arrived adding to the confusion. Lynn watched wondering if they would be arrested.

"Mom, do you see a black SUV?" Alexis suddenly asked.

Lynn slowly turned spying such a vehicle and said, "There's one across the street."

"Good, let's go," Alexis tugged her toward the street.

"Lexi! Wait!" Lynn held her back checking both ways before crossing. Though the last few minutes had been overwhelming nothing would interfere with her instinct to protect her children.

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"I'm telling you sir, it's chaos out here right now," Mike said.

"What do you mean chaos?" Thomas's voice asked over the phone's speaker.

"There are cops and fire trucks. I don't know what happened but it's big," Mike glanced at his partner who shook his head in equal bewilderment.

Less than an hour ago they settled in for another long day outside the diner only for it to be interrupted by a pair of men in suits who arrived in a nondescript sedan. They knew at a glance the pair were not businessmen any more than they were.

When the pair exited minutes later with a terrified woman between them Mike and his partner couldn't be more surprised especially when they realized it was the same woman they had been tasked with guarding. Mike made a quick U-turn to follow as the sedan drove away while his partner called their boss for instructions.

Their shock was only heightened when the sedan pulled up to the kids' school. Parking some distance from the other team they watched as the woman was escorted inside only to reemerge moments later with the girl huddled close. The girl didn't seem all that affected even as her mother cowered between the men in suits. If anything she looked angry. But where were the boys?

"Yeah, they have the woman and the girl now," his partner said as Mike watched the proceedings gripping his steering wheel with white knuckles. "No. No sign of the boys. Got it. We're supposed to stay with the mother and daughter. The other team will stay to keep watch over the brothers."

Mike merely nodded pulling out of their parking space to follow the sedan again. He wasn't sure if he was surprised or not when the sedan disappeared into an underground parking structure. Not having an authorized card to enter they were forced to park on the street to wait while keeping their boss updated.

Suddenly the back door opened and a young girl climbed in scooting over to make room as her mother joined her in the back seat. Mike and Don turned in surprise their mouths open in shock though neither dared protest.

"Hurry mom, close the door before anyone sees us," Alexis insisted before turning her attention to the other occupants. "Hello again, Mister Peppermint. How are you?"

Mike mutely stared looking from her to her mother and back again before her words finally clicked, "Mister Peppermint?"

"Oh sorry, that's my nickname for you based on your aftershave."

"Hey, what's going on?" Thomas's voice demanded over the phone's speaker.

"Oh? Is that your boss?" Alexis leaned forward. "What's your name boss man?"

"...Thomas..."

"Cool. Just call me Lexi, everyone else does. Mom and I are out of the building and sitting in your lackeys' vehicle if you haven't already guessed. I suppose we should talk face to face about what is going to happen next. Oh if you could send the other team to pick up my brothers that would be great. They're still at the school I presume. What's the name of your guys anyway?"

"Their names?" Thomas asked confused by her authoritative rambling.

"Well yeah. Mom is going to have to call the school and let them know who's picking up my brothers."

"Ah, Jake Clements. He's the head of that team."

"Got it. So you call and tell your guys the plan and mom will call the school. We'll meet you at your headquarters or whatever. Hey Smoky, you have a phone my mom can borrow right?"

Mike watched as his partner hesitated before handing his phone to the surprisingly pushy ten-year-old. She took it immediately handing it off to her stunned mother.

"Here mom. Call the school and say your...cousin Jake is picking up Sean and Theo."

"...My cousin?" Lynn looked at her daughter in confusion.

"They'll ask less questions if you say he's a family member from the start."

Lynn hesitated but there didn't seem to be anyway to dissuade her daughter from this course of action. In truth she was also feeling more and more anxious with the boys still out of her sight. It would be far easier to protect all of them if they were together. Biting her lip she complied with her daughter's request without any more objections.

Alexis smiled buckling herself in even as the men in the front seats continued to stare at them. Finally Thomas's voice broke the silence with a simple order, "Bring them in."

"R-right," Mike glanced at their unexpected visitors one last time before turning around in his seat and starting the vehicle. He had a lot of questions but he doubted he would get the answers, or like them.

After hanging up with the school Lynn buckled herself in and looked at the men in the front seat before looking again to her daughter and demanded, "Lexi, just what is going on? Who are these people and how do you know them?"

"They work for Silas Prescott," Alexis answered feeling her mother tense even before she reached over and grasped her mother's clammy hand. "It'll be okay, mom. Trust me."