

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book Two: Chapter Fifteen



"So...What do you think of, you know, our father?"

Theo gave a noncommittal shrug at his brother's query as he lay at the foot of Alexis's bed.

The butler had shown them to their rooms without so much as a question concerning the origins of the four people his employer suddenly brought home. Originally the butler had given them each their own room. When the boys insisted on sharing the older man merely nodded and assured them that arrangements would be done by the end of the day. In the span of one dinner he had rearranged one of the rooms moving a second large bed into it.

Other furnishings had been moved out to make space but it in no way looked like an afterthought. The beds were situated on either side of the room with a writing desk beside each. There was also a small breakfast nook for meals taken in their room. There was still ample space as well as shelves that had been cleared for books and their own amusements after Theo had mentioned Lego™ models in passing. In addition to having their own walk-in closet their bath was shared with their sister allowing them easy access for their clandestine meetings like this one.

When Alexis first entered her room she had walked the perimeter using her cane to sweep the area in front of her as she memorized steps between obstacles. The butler had quietly watched her navigate the room asking her how she wanted things arranged or anything changed. Alexis had made simple suggestions like changing the table of her breakfast nook from a square one to a round one as corners hurt when bumped into accidentally.

Duncan had apparently taken the notes to heart. In addition to changing out the table he had also changed the bed to something with rounded edges as well as side tables. As in her brothers' room the shelves had been cleared of needless decorations in preparation for new additions. The butler had asked about her preferences including books and the like.

Alexis thought this amusing given she couldn't see to read them but then he asked if she could read Braille. That she found interesting. He also asked about food preferences and allergies. It seemed the butler cared deeply about making them comfortable and Alexis hoped this arrangement would work.

Dinner with their father had been predictably awkward as the butler served them several courses starting with soup, a salad, a main course and dessert. It seemed he had already been informed or otherwise familiar with their mother's preferences. Her salad noticeably lacked the sliced tomatoes theirs included and she had been given extra croutons on top of the feta cheese she liked. Dinner was pasta which the boys noisily dug into with gusto. Theo was bold enough to ask for seconds.

Though they were given parmesan cheese a quick taste of the liquid in their glasses confirmed they had been given almond milk since Alexis informed the butler her brothers were lactose intolerant. There was nothing life threatening in it and the boys still enjoyed ice cream when their mother allowed it but it was better to limit their intake of dairy whenever possible. It seemed the warning had definitely been taken to heart though Alexis wasn't sure just when the butler had gone out to purchase almond milk for her brothers since she doubted he had it on hand.

As she gleaned from their previous conversations their father wasn't adept at keeping a conversation with ten-year-olds. In the end it turned into a game of twenty questions as they fired one question after another at him and he asked questions in return. The questions were simple enough: favorite colors, favorite foods, games they liked and so on. He was at least trying to get to know them. Even though Alexis couldn't see him she could tell most of his attention was directed to their mother though he hesitated to speak to her.

After dinner the kids bid their mother good night and gathered in Alexis's room to compare notes. Leaning against her padded headboard Alexis said, "I think he's trying. I mean, he's awkward but that's to be expected. Mom's had ten years of practice."

"I second that," Sean agreed as he quietly typed away on her school tablet.

From the beginning he sensed no malice in their father. In fact he seemed genuinely broken up because of what happened ten years ago. There was no deception in his story either, Alexis confirmed it. It seemed both their parents had been victims. What was more he watched Silas carefully throughout dinner noting the way he looked at their mother longing to be closer to her. Sean believed Silas really did have feelings for their mother but it remained to be decided whether they would support him.

"Yeah, I guess so," Theo finally said. "I really wanted to hate him...but he is nice and it's obvious he has feelings for mom."

"The question is does she have feelings for him?" Sean asked. Figuring out their mother's feelings was more difficult.

At dinner she was abnormally quiet refusing to look anyone in the eye and only spoke when spoken to as if afraid of offending their host and being kicked out on the street. She didn't even try to reprimand Sean and Theo when they got a little wild with their demands. They understood she was nervous and probably a little afraid of their father given how their parents parted ways but her aversion was much more deeply seeded. Alexis suspected her silence at the table was something their mother had learned dining with her family when she was a child. Their grandfather struck Alexis as a domineering man who expected obedience and silent compliance.

"She does," Alexis said leaving no room for debate. "She's just buried her feelings for so long she's afraid to acknowledge them anymore."

"So...what do we do? Do we...help him?"

"No," Alexis said after a long moment. "He needs to earn mom's love himself but we also don't have to work against him."

Sean and Theo considered this before agreeing. This made the most sense to them. If their father was serious he would do whatever was necessary to earn their mother's love. Secretly Alexis hoped he would. She had a feeling it was the best and only way to get their mother to play music again and that was something she desperately missed.

"Moving on...what about our grandfather?" Alexis asked.

"Well, we're in the news," Sean announced. "Carlisle Enterprises Victim of Major Cyber Attack FBI Says."

"Cool." Theo smirked.

"Have they connected it to us?" Alexis asked concerned.

"Doesn't look like it," Sean said, "though the article doesn't really give much details. I mean, it is an ongoing investigation. I can deep dive the FBI I suppose but that would be risky."

"No. Leave them be. They aren't our target. What about getting back into the company?"

"No problems there. There's no way for them to plug all the holes. It's practically a sieve. I'm sure the FBI is having a field day analyzing their network trying to track all the breeches."

"Okay. We'll have to lay low for awhile," Alexis declared. "At least until the FBI is done with their investigation. We'll have to keep an eye on our grandfather though. He'll be moving on us soon."

"What do you think he'll do?"

"He wants custody of us, or at least me. When he can't find us he'll try to draw mom out by suing her for custody rights," Alexis said after some thought.

"Seriously?" Theo scoffed.

"Should we be worried?" Sean asked.

"Courts generally favor the mother when it comes to custody hearings," Alexis said, "so his only hope of winning will be to prove mom is unfit."

"Good luck with that," Theo snorted.

"Evidence is on mom's side," Sean agreed. "The apartment is clean, we have all our boosters and we all have straight A's in school."

"True. If he can't find evidence to support his claim he will probably try to make it up," Alexis said. Their grandfather struck her as a man who would do anything to get his way, legal or not.

"What do you mean?"

Alexis chewed her lip before saying, "It's time to consult Aunt Tracy. Drop her a chat. She's the expert when it comes to legal stuff."

"She should still be in the office," Sean agreed opening a new window. "Let's see if she's paying attention."

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Ava snuggled deep into the heavy comforter. As much as she tried to find fault with their treatment she couldn't. Silas was a charming and attentive host. Though he kept minimal staff, the butler was kind and considerate even asking about any allergies she and the children might have.

Dinner itself was simple though served in several courses. The elegance was lost on the kids who did not try to curb their usual animated nature. It was bad enough when they kept asking for seconds but they actually got a little too rowdy and though Ava wanted to reprimand them she didn't dare.

Growing up her father insisted on silence during meals. One was only allowed to speak when spoken to. While he often asked Marilyn how her day was and she regaled him with extravagant embellishments he never asked Ava about her day less it was an update about her piano lessons. The kids had the advantage of being related to Silas by blood so she hoped that would ensure fair treatment but she was nothing to him and couldn't risk offending him by being harsh with the children. Yet he had also tried to talk to her while learning about the kids' likes and dislikes.

Her brow furrowed. Come to think of it...the butler had asked about allergies but she didn't remember telling him about her preferences. Yet during dinner her salad was the only one without tomatoes and the only one with crumbled feta cheese included alongside the croutons. How did he know she didn't like tomatoes? It didn't make any sense. Not even her own family knew that about her.

She sighed turning over to look up at the canopy above her. There were too many questions. Why was he treating them so well? Why was his gaze always soft and loving when she dared meet it? Was it guilt? Wasn't he angry with her? Did he want something from her? Was he planning to take the kids away from her?

Ava had a lot of questions but no answers. Her mind buzzed with them and she lay awake a long time without getting anywhere trying to answer them. The only one who knew the answers was Silas but did she have the courage to confront him?