

## The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker

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### Book One: Chapter One

Slap!

Macey stumbled back touching her face as she stared wide-eyed at the man who had been her husband for the past two years: Julius DaLair. His sandy blonde hair crowned him like a halo but there was nothing angelic about his expression. He stood in front of her with his face blazing with anger. His gray eyes were a storm of emotions.

In the two years since their marriage he had grown cold and dismissive but never raised a hand to her before. His breath smelled heavily of alcohol and she could only guess how many drinks he imbibed since they arrived at his father's public birthday celebration.

"You're just like the rest of them aren't you?" Julius demanded. "You're just a gold digging whore!"

"N—no..."

"Shut up! I don't want to hear it!"

"But I'm not."

"What were you doing cuddling up to James? My money not good enough for you?"

"I wasn't. He came up to me! I told him..."

"I said I don't want to hear your lies!"

Macey clenched her jaw rubbing her sore cheek. Tears welled in her normally bright green eyes. Two years and he still didn't believe a word she said especially not when he had been drinking. Two years? No. Actually, it was longer than that after all they had grown up together.

"You can go home first!" With a look of disgust he turned and walked out of the private corner where he had dragged her from the crowd.

Macey stood trying to compose herself. Their marriage had been one of convenience more or less. Her father was a veteran and served in Vietnam. There he met and saved the life of Augustus DaLair. After coming home her father suffered severe PTSD. Her mother, a nurse, encouraged him to use art as therapy and it worked. Slowly he pieced himself together, married and started a family.

Art remained an important part of her father's life. He tried to make it his livelihood. Though his paintings were praised for their innovative compositions and unique use of color the fact they always depicted war scenes and soldiers meant there was only a limited demand for them and her father never made much money. In contrast Augustus DaLair started a business empire.

Despite the vast difference in their social standings, Augustus remained their steadfast supporter. Her father refused to take handouts and in order to support his friend Augustus became his most loyal patron buying most of her father's paintings thus ensuring they had an income. They were never rich but they had what they needed. Though her father wouldn't take charity he was glad to accept invitations to family gatherings and occasionally family vacations. Macey grew up alongside the DaLair brothers: March and Julius. They were like the cousins she never had. March treated her like a younger sister and she secretly developed a crush on Julius when they were eight.

Her father passed away from a heart attack when she was sixteen. Augustus became an even stronger supporter of her and her mother. In memory of his friend and the one who saved his life he vowed to help Macey and her mother in whatever capacity they needed even assisting her to attend the **School of Visual Arts** Her college plans came to a sudden end when she turned twenty and dropped out to care for her ailing mother who passed away shortly after. Two years later she and Julius married.

It was Augustus who first proposed the idea of marriage to one of his sons. She wasn't sure if it was charity or his abiding desire to ensure her a comfortable future. March was over ten years her senior and already married which naturally left Julius as the groom of choice. Though she initially spoke out against it her secret crush on Julius had only grown over the years. It had taken some time for Julius to agree. Macey tried not to seem overeager but inwardly she was thrilled.

At first their marriage seemed to work. Despite his earlier reluctance Julius was a model husband: attentive and sometimes even caring. It was her hope eventually he would come to love her but it changed six months ago. Rumors started to circulate. Her family had been poor and well below the DaLair family's means. People called her a gold-digger, a shameless tramp and a hundred other names. She tried not to let it bother her but it never occurred to her Julius would believe them.

She smoothed her dress and fiddled with her vibrant red hair that had come loose from its taming braid. Her naturally curly locks were hard to completely tame and she didn't have much skill in working with it. That had always been her mother's doing. Wiping away her tears she finally summoned the courage to leave the nook. Hugging herself she carefully made her way through the crowd that carefully avoided meeting her gaze. Nearing the bar she looked to see Julius surrounded by five gorgeous women.

Tears came unbidden and her hands dropped to her stomach. Why? Why now? Why here? How could he do this to her?

"Macey?"

Turning toward the gruff yet gentle voice she saw her father-in-law looking at her with concern. Shaking her head she whirled around and rushed off as if chased by hellhounds. Outside she had the valet summon a taxi to take her home.

Letting herself into the condo she leaned against the door. The tears she tried so hard to control flowed freely. Stumbling through the silent suite she eventually made it to the study. She collapsed in the chair bringing her knees to her chest and sobbed into her gown.

Eventually she exhausted her tears and slowly reached for her purse. Silently she removed a folded paper and smoothed it out. On it were the tests from her hospital visit confirming her pregnancy.

She stared at it before reaching into her purse again for the card she bought. Pulling it from the envelope she read the front: **A Surprise for You** before opening it to reveal a copy of the ultrasound picture. A small arrow pointed out the baby's position. It was almost a month old and her morning sickness was beginning to set in.

Macey smiled despite herself. Her day had started with such excitement. When the home pregnancy test came back positive she eagerly rushed to the hospital for confirmation. She planned to present the card and ultrasound to Julius during dinner but...

Sighing she looked to the desk to see a stack of papers. It wasn't like Julius to bring work home with him. Her brow furrowed as she leaned forward and read the top page. It was a divorce settlement. The color drained from her face. He actually wanted a divorce. Her vision blurred and she touched the new wetness streaming down her cheeks.

**And here I thought I was out of tears**

Macey didn't know how long she sat there before finally coming to a decision. She flipped through the divorce papers until she came to the last page where it called for her signature. Using his favorite pen she signed with her neat scrawl. Then she grabbed a small paper pad writing a short note before setting down the pen. With a sigh she removed her wedding and engagement rings setting them on the stack of papers.

Opening the drawer where Julius kept his cigars she grabbed a lighter and ashtray. Lifting up the hospital report she lit the corner on fire and watched it burn before dropping it into the tray. The paper burned quickly turning brown and crumbled to ash. Satisfied she clutched the ultrasound picture to her chest, tossed the card and left the study.

Retreating to the bedroom she moved to the walk-in closet and stared down her side filled with dresses, skirts, blouses and shoes of every kind and style, none of them hers. Going to the dresser she opened the bottom drawer removing a pair of jeans and a hoodie. Casting aside her black gown she changed immediately feeling better. Tying on her sneakers she stood leaving everything else.

Retrieving her purse she returned to the kitchen. Digging through it she claimed her wallet but hesitated. Every credit card belonged to Julius. It was all his money. He'd probably cancel them all tomorrow once he learned she was gone. In the end she only took her driver's license, fifty-three dollars in cash and her phone.

Taking one last look around the condo letting two years of memories run through her mind she headed to the door. She opened it, locked it and stepped out closing it firmly behind her. There was no going back now as she had left her keys on the counter as well.

With a sigh she marched to the elevator and took it to the ground floor. If the doorman thought her sudden departure or new attire strange he said nothing as she exited the building.

Reaching the street she turned and continued on her way. Every step that took her farther from her life made it all more real and surreal than before. There would be no more crying. She had lived her life trying to please a man who never wanted her but not anymore. This was her life and only hers. Her hand involuntarily drifted to her stomach:

**our life.** She had responsibilities now to the growing life within.

The idea of starting over with nothing was frightening, but her parents had done it. She would too.

**We' ll get through this, baby. Promise**

She was several blocks away when her phone suddenly lit up and played Beethoven's **Fifth Symphony** Startled she took it out of her pocket to see Julius was calling. Macey chewed her lip. He was probably calling her for a sober ride...or to yell at her again. Shaking her head she tapped the dismiss button before tossing it into the trash. There was no one she wanted to call anyway. A few more blocks brought her to a bus stop.

Fifteen minutes after her arrival the last bus of the night pulled up. Determined she stepped on board, slipped a five into its collection bin before finding an empty seat. Silently she watched the city through the window as the bus disappeared into the night.

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