

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 29



Paul silently sipped his drink his mind churning. When Victoria asked him to be her escort for the gallery opening he wasn't sure what to think. It just seemed so strange. Macey never even hinted at starting her own gallery let alone debuting in America. She avoided any talk about the States. For her to suddenly hold a grand opening in America was a shock but he agreed to accompany her nonetheless.

When they arrived he couldn't believe the grandiose presentation celebrating her work. It was clear it was done out of deep respect and genuine love. Considering the difficulties in her life Macey deserved the recognition. Not only had she been abandoned while pregnant she rebuilt her life for her twins.

Paul still remembered the first day he saw her on campus her belly beginning to show. Victoria introduced them and Paul thought he was looking at an angel. Only later did he learn the truth that her husband abandoned her and the baby. He was furious. If he had known who her husband was he would have hunted him down but Macey never wanted to talk about him. Paul was forced to let it lie.

He only saw her breakdown a couple times. Paul was always there to comfort her and be a sympathetic ear. Yet though he longed to be more she always seemed to keep him at arm's length. He assumed her reluctance was because she didn't want to be hurt again. After the twins were born Paul thought it was his chance to show her he wasn't like her ex.

At first the twins responded well to him but as they got older they too started to keep him at arm's length. It was odd. Paul had been in their lives from the very beginning but they already knew he wasn't their father. Or was it because their mother kept her distance? In either case he was never able to capture their hearts. He was an uncle and that was the place they kept him.

Paul was patient. Even when Macey agreed to go on a date here or there he stood back waiting confident she would turn to him eventually. But now...

His gaze drifted to Julius DaLair. Paul would be the first to admit the man was handsome with a superior aura of one used to getting what they wanted. And it seemed he wanted Macey despite abandoning her six years ago. Paul couldn't fault him for that. Who wouldn't be attracted to her? What bothered Paul was that Macey seemed to reciprocate. There was no denying the body language between the pair.

Julius's hand never left her waist and her body leaned into his. As if that wasn't enough, despite the fact Julius had been completely absent from their life the twins clung to him. Paul almost spit out his drink when Aria proudly introduced him as their daddy. For five years they had never been so warm and open with Paul. Less than a week passed for Julius to secure their hearts. The thought burned him more than the alcohol he was downing faster than he should.

Paul was distracted and unsure when Franklin left to visit with other guests. His focus remained on his rival as the small family group slowly split. It started with Macey as Victoria dragged her and the other woman whose name Paul had already forgotten to the hors d'oeuvres. Eventually Augustus, who Paul knew to be the twins' grandfather, and the younger man moved off leaving the brothers. Two was far less intimidating than four and guests slowly began to approach to speak to one or the other, sometimes both. Paul downed one last drink before making his way toward his rival.

"Tell you what, Luke: call me Monday," Julius told his last visitor, "I'll check my schedule for you."

He was used to people approaching him with business proposals even on nights that were clearly meant for relaxation. It was all part of his world and he bared them no grudge. His gaze kept drifting to Macey as she chatted with Victoria and Rose. People started approaching the female trio. Word that she was the famed artist was slowly traveling through the crowd and many were eager to speak with her as well as Victoria who was also being recognized by a surprising amount of visitors. Julius's chest swelled with pride for her accomplishments. She had achieved it all on her own.

"You don't deserve her."

Julius turned toward the slurred voice to see a man he didn't know standing close to him. Confusion furrowed his brow until he belatedly recognized him as one of Macey's college friends...the sculptor...Paul.

"Excuse me?"

"Y-you have no idea what Macey has been through. What you put her through when you abandoned her. She raised those kids without you. She doesn't need you...or your money."

Julius's gaze narrowed. It was clear the man in front of him was drunk but his words still cut deep. Julius already heard it from his father how Macey picked up her life after that night but no matter how many times he heard the truth it still hurt. He knew it was all his fault and he would do everything he could to make it up to her.

"I know your type. Rich boy. You think if you throw enough money around you can have everything. But you can't buy Macey. She'll figure you out. And those kids are smart. You won't be able to fool them either."

Julius frowned. Did this man really think that was what was going on? Of course Macey couldn't be swayed with money or jewels or fancy clothes. She was far too genuine to fall for such traps. And Julius certainly didn't need to be told how smart the kids were. He had already seen it.

But there was something in the drunk speech gave him pause. He realized the man in front of him was jealous and there was only one reason for that: he was in love with Macey.

Julius clenched his fists but held himself in check. When Macey introduced them she had been happy to see her college friends but there had been no particular attachment to this man beyond friendship. So this man's love was one-sided. That thought calmed him. Julius would tolerate many things but not a rival for Macey's affection.

"You don't know anything about her. You probably don't even know her favorite food is strawberries!"

March stood beside Julius as the drunk accosted him. Like his brother he recognized the man as Macey's friend and like Julius he also slowly realized the man was in love with her. He glanced at his brother trying to gage Julius's reaction to this revelation. Though the man's accusations were not completely wrong they weren't completely right either. He opened his mouth to speak but Julius beat him to the punch.

"Macey doesn't like strawberries. They make her break out."

Paul fell silent as he and March both looked at Julius in surprise but he wasn't done speaking his mind. Julius had listened to the other's rant and now it was time for Paul to listen to his.

"Macey's favorite fruit is watermelon because it reminds her of summer and she prefers it with a dash of salt. Her favorite food is honey and everything made with it or slathered in it including pancakes. Her favorite color is green which is fitting since she was born in May. Her favorite book is a Picture of Dorian Gray because it is all about how artwork reveals the truth. Her favorite movie is the Princess Bride. She's seen it a million times and can quote it verbatim...and she always cries at the exact same place."

Paul stood open mouthed in shock. She didn't like strawberries?

Julius finally moved stepping forward and staring at the man in front of him. He couldn't hate this man, not completely. Paul had been there to help when Julius failed but that did not mean he would allow his place beside Macey to be taken.

"Six years ago I made the biggest mistake of my life but just because it gave you the opportunity to be a shoulder for her to cry on don't think you know her better than I do."

Paul quailed at the self-assurance in Julius's voice. There was no doubt, no insecurity. In no uncertain terms Julius was declaring Macey was his and his alone.

"You're drunk," Julius said stepping back, "I'll forget about this for Macey's sake but I am very sure you will never forget this moment. Remember it. And remember she has always been mine...and always will be."

Julius turned and walked away before he caused a scene sure to anger Macey. He didn't know if she knew Paul's feelings but she considered him a dear friend and hurting him would be hurting her.

March followed his brother as he walked to a nearby server switching his empty champagne flute for a full one. He watched his brother carefully but despite the confrontation Julius seemed...relaxed. He sipped his drink rather than downing it as his gaze drifted to where Macey still stood chatting and laughing unaware of his little altercation. Nothing else mattered but her happiness.

"That was amazing," March said.

"What do you mean?" Julius asked.

"How did you know all of that about Macey?"

"What are you talking about? You grew up with her too."

"I did but I didn't know any of that. How many times did you watch the Princess Bride with her to know it was her favorite movie?"

Julius snorted, blushing slightly. The first time he watched it was after he broke his arm and she decided to play nurse. Like any young boy he had been bored with the premise of a movie claiming to be a romantic comedy but it was surprisingly entertaining. Halfway through he realized Macey was mouthing the entire dialog. Over the last six years when she intruded into his mind he would start the movie and remember that moment. He didn't feel like admitting it to March.

"Daddy!" Aria squealed as she and Caden ran up to them.

Julius handed his drink to his brother so he could scoop both twins up in his arms. They hugged him tight and he felt the last of his tension melted away. How had he gone so long without the double hugs of his babies? How would he survive without them from now on?

"How are my babies?" Julius asked.

"We're fine. Are you okay?" Aria asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Aunt Vicki said you needed a hug," Caden answered. "Are you not feeling well?"

Julius furrowed his brow glancing toward the raven-haired beauty. She gave him a knowing smile and a wink before turning back to her current visitor. How much did she really know? Had she seen the confrontation that unfolded between him and Paul?

"Do you feel better now?" Aria asked.

"Yes. Yes I do. I always feel better with your hugs."

They smiled throwing their arms around him again for extra healing.