

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book Two: Chapter Thirty-One



Ava sighed stretching. Her body felt stiff yet relaxed. Though her throat was dry and her mind fuzzy she didn't have a headache. Memories slowly trickled to the surface. She remembered the confrontation with her sister followed by the encounter with her mother. After that she had a good time accompanied by Silas or Tracy though she couldn't remember the names of half the people she talked to.

She met so many people but they had all been friendly and receptive to her. They complimented her dress and even seemed interested in what she said. Ava had been afraid of the reaction she would get from the society she left behind but they welcomed her back. She was not naive enough not to know it was due in large part because of their inherit fear and respect of Silas but it still felt nice.

"Good, you're awake. I was afraid I'd have to leave without a kiss," Silas said as he stepped out of the closet adjusting his cufflinks. His gaze burned with desires barely contained.

"Silas."

Smiling he walked up to the bed and trapped her between his arms but she wasn't afraid. Leaning down he kissed her deeply. She reached up stroking his cheek as their lips parted.

"Careful luv. We may be here all day repeating last night's sport."

"Last night?" Ava repeated.

"You don't remember?" Silas asked almost hurt.

She hesitated, thinking back. Memories were still sorting themselves but he knew immediately when she recalled their time together after the party as her face suddenly became beet red. Chuckling he leaned down and kissed her again. Her innocence was strangely erotic. He gazed down at her with a loving expression amazed she was truly his.

"I love you so much, Ava."

She blinked her eyes going wide. Her gaze softened as a small smile settled across her lips. Ava didn't think she would ever tire of him saying that.

"I really wish I didn't have to work today but I have a board meeting. I need to put out some fires."

"Fires?" Ava repeated.

"Yeah. News that I showed up with my fiancée is already spreading faster than I anticipated so the board stirred up," Silas sighed with a dismissive shrug. "I have to explain the situation and tell them about the children which I am certain will put them in quite a tizzy."

"Will you be in trouble?"

"I'm the boss. What can they do?" Silas chuckled. "Besides these people have been bugging me to settle down for years they can't be mad that I've finally taken their advice."

"I suppose."

"Don't worry. It'll be fine." Silas leaned forward and kissed her. "No one will stop me from marrying the woman I love."

A blush turned her cheeks rosy as she met his gaze.

"So I want you to put some serious thought into what you want for the wedding."

"What I want..."

"I want you to have the wedding of your dreams. Flowers. Doves. Balloons. On top of the Eiffel Tower. Anything."

"I don't need..."

He cut her off with a kiss, "Anything. No matter how big or small. I'm sure my mother will have plenty of ideas but this is your wedding so make sure it is what you want. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Good. I told Duncan to bring the Christmas decorations out of storage and to purchase a tree so you and the kids have fun. If you want to go out just tell the security team and they'll arrange everything you need."

"All right."

"Good. I'm taking you out tonight. Just the two of us."

"Like...a date?"

"That's right. Do you like seafood?"

Ava nodded.

"Good." He kissed her a final time.

She smiled her eyes sparkling already anticipating his return. Silas sucked in a breath fighting the urge to crawl into bed and take her into his embrace. He might have if his phone didn't buzz alerting him Thomas had arrived and was waiting in the car.

He forced himself to stand, "Sleep as late as you like. I'll see you tonight."

"Tonight." Ava agreed watching as he reluctantly forced himself to leave. She smiled as she lay snuggled in the blankets.

She felt so warm. For years she struggled to fend off chills that never seemed to dissipate. No matter how many layers she wore she was always cold but since moving into the brownstone she was comfortable and warm. It all felt like a dream and she hoped it would never end.

Silas hurried down the hallway pausing at Alexis's door and knocked. Receiving the okay to enter he stepped into the bedroom and wasn't surprised to see all three of his children gathered and pretending to be innocently hanging out.

"Can we help you?" Alexis asked.

"I read a very interesting article about Marilyn Carlisle this morning," Silas said.

"Did you? I don't see how she can be interesting."

Silas sighed studying their blank faces. If there was one thing he could say about his children...they would make excellent poker players.

"The good news is Thomas couldn't link it to you so it's unlikely anyone else can...but you should be more careful in the future."

"Is that supposed to be a threat?" Theo snorted.

"It's a warning. I know you've been planning your revenge and I'm not going to try to stop you. I don't think I could be honest. But you need to be careful. You and your mother are not living in obscurity anymore. She's my fiancée and she is Emerson's long lost daughter so anything you say against Carlisle may come back to her. I'll protect her and you three as much as I can but that won't stop gossip from spreading as I'm sure you know."

Silas eyed them carefully as the brothers shared a thoughtful look. Alexis's expression became pensive before she spoke for the group, "All right. We promise whatever we do won't come back to mom."

After a moment Silas nodded. It seemed that was the best he could expect from them. Aloud he said, "Thank you. And just so you know...The best revenge you can ever have is living a happy life and rubbing it in their faces."

The boys snorted back a laugh. He wasn't sure if it was because he said something humorous or if they thought the image was legitimately funny.

"Last night your mother had her own confrontation with her sister."

"What happened?" Alexis tensed as did her brothers at the thought of their aunt causing their mother more pain.

"She was brilliant" Silas smiled. "She told your aunt off in marvelous fashion."

"She did?" Sean asked not sure if he believed that.

"She did. Your mother is a strong woman, she just didn't know it, and now she's getting her confidence back. So you three just watch her close and you'll see it for yourselves. I have to go to work today. It's time to officially announce your mother as my future wife and you three as my heirs...so try to stay out of trouble."

"Got it." The trio agreed and he left still concerned with what they would do but confident they would look out for their mother.

Duncan waited at the door with his overcoat.

"Ava might sleep a little longer but be prepared to serve breakfast when she is ready."

"Of course." Duncan helped him into his coat hiding a smile. "A tree will be delivered at ten."

"Good. This will be the first year in a long time that I'm actually looking forward to the holidays."

"I agree, sir. It's good to see you with a smile on your face for a change."

Silas looked at the man he had known since he was little before saying, "I know you've been worried."

Duncan bowed.

"Take care of Ava and the kids, anything they need."

"They shall want for nothing," Duncan assured him opening the door.

"Oh, Christmas presents. I need sizes, preferences, wish lists, whatever ideas you can get from the kids and Ava."

"Of course."

"I also told her she can redecorate any room she wants. She said our room is too dark."

"It is rather dark," Duncan agreed. "I shall discuss color options she wishes to pursue."

"Good."

"I do hope you don't work too late today," Duncan said. "A man who has a family to come home to shouldn't waste in time in the office."

Silas paused smirking at the butler holding the door, "Truer words have never been spoken. I'm going to take Ava out for dinner tonight so I can't be late."

"Very good, sir."

Silas stepped out taking a deep breath of chilly air. Ava and the kids had only been with him for a short time but it felt like years had melted away. He felt lighter and content. A smile came easily to his face. It truly did feel like the holidays were right around the corner.

"There you are. Finally," Thomas declared as he approached the waiting vehicle. "What took so long?"

"It's not easy for a man to leave the woman he loves in bed," Silas answered.

"That has to be the sappiest thing you've ever said," Thomas chuckled. "But it suits you. I don't think you've ever looked this happy before."

"I know and I'm sorry. It seems I've been worrying everyone for the past few years."

Thomas shrugged, "It's my job to worry. Let's get this over with so you can come home."

"Right. Did you prepare the files I asked for?"

"Naturally. Everything is in order."

"Good." Silas sat in the backseat. He tried to relax as Thomas slid into the driver's seat and pulled away from the curb. "I need you to make a reservation tonight for Le Bernardin."

"For how many?"

"Just two."

"Two?" Thomas looked at Silas in the rearview mirror to see a relaxed smile on his face. "What brought this on?"

"I realized this morning that I've never taken Ava on a date," Silas said. "In fact I don't think anyone has ever asked her out. I want her first to be perfect."

"I'll make the arrangements."

"Good."

In truth the restaurant didn't really matter as long as Ava was comfortable. The last few weeks had been particularly stressful and he wanted her to be able to relax. It was important everything went perfectly. He wanted her first date to be etched in her mind forever.

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The boardroom was full. Most of the time a few of the members skipped or missed meetings that did not immediately affect them. Silas only required them to be present during quarterly meetings as those guided the company's future goals. Informational meetings such as this one were not mandatory but there wasn't a single person who was going to miss it after hearing the rumors swirling from the charity gala.

Silas made only necessary public appearances. There were dozens of invitations sent him every month but he only answered those that piqued his interest. This naturally left many unsatisfied but in truth Silas made many more appearances than his father ever did.

Richard Prescott was acclaimed as a brilliant businessman but he was also unsocial and refused to waste his time with benefits, dinners and events. He left it to his wife to appease the masses with her time and attention while he remained in his office. Silas inherited his work ethic but also his mother's sense of sociability. Though Silas made regular appearances he never attended any event with a woman, let alone a woman he claimed to be his fiancée.

Silas was still young but there were whispers of concern that he had not started a family or even maintained a regular relationship. A few more vocal members of the board gossiped often about the company's future if he continued to avoid relationships. They also knew that his father already had a woman picked for his future wife but the woman from the rumors didn't match her description at all.

According to rumors and pictures she was petite and beautiful. She was very personable and people already sung her praises as a gentle and genuine lady. But they still didn't know anything about her or where she came from.

Silas entered ignoring the stares that followed him as he took his seat. His assistant circled the table setting a thin file in front of each member. Silas said nothing until the files were handed out and his assistant returned to his side.

"I know there are some rumors floating around," Silas said with no preamble. "I also realize you have some concern. So let's start with a few questions. Would anyone like to go first?"

The Board members hesitated. As much as they wanted answers they recognized Silas's tone. It was the same one he took when making decisions. All business decisions were final and he did not allow them to be questioned. If he was taking such a tone now the others knew to tread carefully. It was clear Silas already made up his mind and this meeting was not called to debate the merits of his decision but to merely inform them as a courtesy.

Clearing his throat one member finally ventured a query, "The woman you were reportedly with...I'm not one to invest in rumors but...they claimed she is your fiancée."

"She is."

"But..."

"Sir we are happy to hear you are considering settling down but just who is this woman?"

"Her name is Avalynn Carter but you probably know her better as Avalynn Carlisle."

His announcement immediately caused a stir. Silas expected no less considering his family's history with the Carlises so he let them continue for a time without interruption. Finally one bold member stood looking directly at Silas. He was older than most others at the table and had served under Silas's predecessor.

"Sir, do you mean to say you are selling out the company to Emerson Carlisle?"

"Of course not," Silas snorted. The board members shared dubious looks. "As I'm sure you were already aware Ava was the victim of a cruel prank ten years ago and disowned by her father. She has no affiliation with him or his company."

Younger members quietly nodded. Though ten years was more than enough time for many to forget the incident, it had caused quite a stir at the time. Since then the younger Carlisle daughter had not been seen or heard from again. Now it seems the reason for that was because she had changed her name. Even so that could not be the only reason.

"But still...a man with as many options as yourself need not settled for the disgraced daughter..." the protesting member fell silent at Silas's warning glare.

"I am settling for nothing," Silas said. "Ava is the woman I always planned to marry."

The board members erupted into another conversation. Silas let them talk. No one but his mother knew of his plans so this was expected. He didn't mind their chatter. Nothing would interfere with his future together with Ava.

"Sir, have you told your father about these plans?" the elder member eventually asked.

"He will be informed when I see him next. I will also be formally announcing my engagement during our annual New Year's Gala," Silas said making it clear it didn't matter what his father thought about his marriage or fiancée. "By that time Ava and I will have settled on a date most likely spring or mid-summer."

Silas spoke evenly. His tone left no room for debate as if he was speaking about history rather than the future. The board members silently traded looks as they sat in their own thoughts. Richard Prescott was the cornerstone of the company and though it had been years since he last set foot in the building his influence could still be felt. Silas had taken what his father made as a foundation expanding and refining it as he pleased. But why start this fight?

"There is another announcement I will be making at the New Year's party," Silas said after a moment. "You'll find that in the files Thomas prepared."

Hesitantly the board members turned their attention to the files and opened them. Inside were hospital test results. Each result was labeled positive though they were uncertain about the meaning until they read more closely: paternity tests. The realization struck each member but their shock only deepened when they looked more closely. The tests were not for the same person. Each test was for a different patient but the parents for each were the same mother: Avalynn Carter, father: Silas Prescott.

"Sir! What is this?" a member nearly shouted with a hint of leapt to his feet.

"I think that is obvious," Silas said without a word of amusement. "As I said ten years ago Ava was the victim of a cruel prank... as was I. The result of that prank is in front of you. My children and heirs: Alexis, Sean and Theo. One day they will take over in my stead and I expect everyone here to treat them with the proper respect they are due...or you will regret it. My children are not to be taken lightly."

The members shared looks. Though Ava's fall from grace was no great secret Silas's part was well-hidden. Only his mother knew the full extent of what happened so it was quite a shock to those gathered around the table.

Children? Heirs? Their future bosses? And Avalynn Carlisle was their mother?

Ten years ago Avalynn had disappeared from the public eye. Though they didn't know the extent of the prank it was clear it resulted in the conception of the three children presented to them. But why would Silas Prescott agree to such an obvious play for his company. There was more to the story but none were bold enough to ask him about it. One thing was clear: however, Silas had every intention of claiming and supporting his family.

This certainly wouldn't be the end of it. Richard Prescott would have something to say though the members were divided on whether they wanted to witness the showdown between father and son that was sure to ensue. Perhaps it was best not to protest this announcement until after the Prescott's annual New Year's party. Whether or not Silas announced his impending nuptials and heirs would certainly tell them who won.

"That's everything I have to say," Silas stood. "Use this forewarning to prepare your departments and interests. I'm sure chaos will follow once the announcements are made."

Without another word Silas exited leaving the others to discuss this new information freely. Thomas followed a step behind. Once they were out in the hallway he said, "Well that went a lot smoother than I thought."

"They know better than to defy me," Silas said. "It's clear not all of them agree given their protests."

"Well those were mild enough."

"They are expecting a confrontation between me and my father so they are waiting to see the results."

"I can see their caution. He was your predecessor and founder of this company. He's like an insurmountable mountain in their eyes."

"Hmm. They are going to see that mountain fall if he chooses to stand in my way."

"You sound very confident."

"Nothing will stand between me and Ava."

"No need to convince me. I believe you."