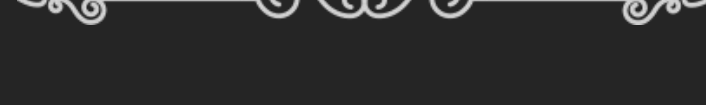


## The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 25



Cars had been lining up for hours dropping off their passengers before pulling away. For tonight only the gallery had valets to park cars in a nearby lot reserved by the host for his guests. Part of the gallery had been taken over by long tables for the caterers to display a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres. There was also a wet bar to mix and serve drinks according to the tastes of the guests in addition to servers offering trays of champagne.

Normally Augustus preferred to arrive late but tonight he came early, much to the Curator's surprise, so he could view the new installation of M. Gray's work before the crowd. He paid no mind to the servers as they made last minute preparations and instead focused on the new series.

Entitled A New Perspective the series was more playful than previous ones. All ten were in full color and each featured a different insect from a praying mantis to a jumping spider to a honey bee to a dragonfly. Each extreme close-up showcased a surprising amount of detail and the compositions made the insects seem almost...cute. From the way the praying mantis tilted its head to the side like a curious puppy to the way the spider held up its mandibles like someone playing peek-a-boo each was designed to make the viewer smile.

Augustus chuckled at the humor that abounded throughout the series. He couldn't wait to find out the inspiration for the pieces once the artist arrived. Satisfied he wandered the rest of the exhibit space eventually coming to his favorite series: Two Hearts. It had been a long time coming but finally the world would know.

He chose a place near the piano, champagne in hand, as the guests began to arrive. Augustus greeted those less intimidated by him, ignoring the rest. He had chosen the guest list carefully and he wanted to make sure the most important parties were present. Augustus watched the door closely mentally checking off when the certain guests arrived. His expression lit up immediately when March, Rose and Jude entered and greeted them warmly.

"Hey grandpa," Jude laughed surprising many nearby guests with the causal greeting. "When mom told me you bought an art gallery I didn't believe her. But you really did!"

"Yes well...an old man needs a hobby."

"A hobby?" Jude chuckled. "I heard M. Gray is supposed to be like some weird reclusive genius or something. When I told my friends about tonight they were super jealous. How the heck did you ever meet him let alone convince him to be a part of this?"

"...I suppose you'll find out tonight," Augustus winked.

"Why do I get the feeling you are up to something?" Marched asked eyeing his father suspiciously.

"I really don't know what you are talking about," Augustus said. "Have you seen your brother?"

"No. Not yet. I haven't heard anything from him since he called this morning to say he was taking the day off."

"That's twice this week," Augustus grunted. "I hope he isn't messing around."

"I don't think we have to worry about that, not when..."

"Grandpa Gus!"

Their conversation was cut short as Aria and Caden ran up to their small group. They were all instantly captivated by the matching twins. Aria wore a green dress while her brother wore an actual suit complete with bow tie and green handkerchief in the pocket. Dressed in a suit his resemblance to not just Julius but all the DaLair men was heightened.

"Oh, don't you two look so cute!" Rose cooed.

"We went shopping today so we could match mommy and daddy," Aria proudly announced.

March and the others traded silent looks. If the kids were saying daddy did that mean they now knew Julius was their father? Did Macey tell them? Did it mean she and Julius were on good terms? Did this mean...

"And where are your mommy and daddy?" Augustus asked.

"Over there."

They followed Aria's gesture to see Julius handing Macey a glass of champagne from a passing server. His arm slid around her waist as he leaned close whispering something to her before kissing her temple. Macey's cheeks turned pink at his boldness.

Rose clapped her hand over her mouth to keep from squealing. She was not only excited to see them getting along but also because for once Julius looked genuinely happy and at ease. The depressing cloud normally hanging over him had completely dissipated.

As always Macey was beautiful. Her dress was green with a satin finish. Unlike the other dresses she had worn it was off the shoulder leaving her neck exposed and allowing her to display a diamond necklace with a large, oval cut emerald for its centerpiece. As always her hair was pinned up.

"Mommy! Daddy!" Aria called. "We found grandpa!"

They turned toward her voice and made their way through the crowd that was now fully aware the entire DaLair family was in attendance. Their attention focused on the gorgeous redhead on Julius's arm and their five-year-old copies. Many followed the gossip columns and now seeing all four together there was little doubt in their minds they were in fact a family even before Aria's announcement.

"You should have told us there was a dress code," March joked. "Then we all could have matched."

Macey chuckled looking down at the excited Aria and Caden. Their enjoyment at being surrounded by family was palpable. It made her worry about what would happen when they eventually returned to Paris. Would it be hard for the twins to adjust to not having their family members so close? Would they even want to leave?

"Macey, I love your necklace," Rose said. "Where'd you get it?"

Macey gave Julius an annoyed glance before saying, "I don't know. He won't tell me. He also won't tell me how much it cost."

Julius merely shrugged, "If I did you'd insist on returning it and that's not going to happen."

"He's impossible," Macey sighed rolling her eyes at her sister-in-law.

"All DaLair men are." Rose chuckled. "And they have the love language of a crow...they just love giving sparkly gifts."

"Well dad," Julius cleared his throat, "you have all of us here. Are you going to explain why an art gallery of all things?"

"...I don't think so, at least, not just yet. The night is still young. All I will say is enjoy the evening, keep an open mind," Augustus smiled enigmatically. "And be prepared for a few surprises."

The DaLair brothers shared confused looks and Rose rolled her eyes while Jude barely contained his laughter. When Augustus was being mischievous it often led to situations like this. None of them knew what this set up was meant to deliver but it would definitely be a surprise.

So intent on keeping an eye on their patriarch none noticed the pensive look that crossed Macey's face. Her lips pressed together as she considered information that only she knew.

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Katherine climbed out of the taxi straightening her dress before sauntering toward the gallery entrance. She had not entered it since first failing to secure her desired photographer. Security at the door stopped her demanding her invitation. Aside from the DaLairs personnel allowed no one in without one. No amount of huffing or whining or threats swayed them.

Frustrated she finally reached into her purse and flashed the invitation. Its arrival had come as a surprise. Augustus DaLair had never invited her to any event before. To receive one now gave her the first glimmer of hope he might be warming up to her as Julius's attention waned. With the DaLair patriarch's help she could still turn her situation around. Once she married Julius nothing would stand in her way.

Security let her pass and she entered the now crowded gallery. She snagged a fluted glass from a server slowly making her way through the crowd looking for the one person she came to see.

Her gaze finally fell on Julius as he mingled with other guests instead of hiding in a corner with his drink like usual. At his side and in his arms was the now familiar redhead. She was at ease chatting to the man in front of them. Despite her humble origins and complete lack of experience she didn't seem at all intimidated while Julius gently caressed her hip listening as she talked hanging off her every word. Katherine slowly made her way closer.

"...So you're saying Picasso was not a nice person," a man a few years younger than Julius said. He was just as impeccably dressed and more than capable of standing on equal footing with a DaLair.

"Well I'm sure he'd get along quite well with a good portion of congress and a number of executives," Macey said earning laughter not only from Julius but the man in front of her. "But yes, personally, I find him disgusting."

"So what of Van Gogh?"

"He's actually a very tragic figure," Macey said. "He suffered from depression and psychotic episodes. He died penniless and his genius was never recognized in his lifetime. It's hard to believe he was a financial failure when his artwork sells for millions now, but he was. It's even more tragic when you think about how his innovations actually ushered in the modern era even before Picasso."

"So safe to say you like Van Gogh?"

"Oh yes. He deserves so much more recognition. Although I may be biased. He does remind me of my father."

"Your father?"

"My dad was a veteran and he suffered severe PTSD so Van Gogh's struggles do remind me a lot of him."

"I'm sorry to hear that but your father must be very proud to have a daughter as beautiful and intelligent as you."

"Thank you."

"I'll keep in mind what you said about Picasso and Van Gogh. I never knew art could be so fascinating."

"Of course. Have a good night, Mister Prescott," Macey said.

"Silas, please."

"Have a good night, Silas," Macey nodded as their guest went on his way.

Julius leaned close kissing her temple saying, "Have I told you how amazing you are?"

"You're biased."

"Yes. Yes I am." He chuckled. There wasn't a woman in the world that compared to the one in his arms.

"I need to go," Macey said after a moment and felt his embrace tighten. "Freshen up. I need to go freshen up."

Julius slowly relaxed and nodded, "Hurry back."

Macey gave him a tender smile caressing his cheek with her fingers before heading to the ladies' room.

"Someone's whipped."

Julius turned at the good natured teased to see March holding in a laugh while Rose chuckled. He shot his brother an annoyed look but couldn't stop his smile from returning. Nothing could ruin his mood tonight.

"Don't worry," Rose comforted him. "She loves you and you have our full support for whatever you have planned."

"What makes you think there's a plan?"

"Because we know you."

"...You really think she still loves me after everything?"

"Trust me," Rose patted his arm. "She does."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Woman's intuition."