

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 31



"Mommy!" Aria greeted as Macey made her way to them.

"Hello, baby," Macey smiled as her children clung to their father. She loved to see them like that except it meant he didn't have an arm free for her.

As if sensing her thoughts Julius carefully set the twins on their feet and pulled her into his embrace. He pressed his forehead to hers. The last of his worries and anger from before drained away. She was in his arms and nothing else mattered. Well, maybe there was one thing.

"So, are you going to tell me about Cap d'Agde?"

Macey stiffened and said, "Nothing...happened."

"It's a beach...where people are nude...in public."

"Julius..."

"...Macey."

"Look...I had just started showing and I was uncomfortable and bloated and surrounded by young college girls with their perfect bodies," Macey sighed. "Victoria suggested we get away for a weekend. I had no idea she made reservations at that resort and the first day I refused to leave my room."

"And the second..."

Macey rolled her eyes.

"Macey?"

"Look, it's a public beach, Julius. It has all sorts of people on it. Young, old, thin, fat."

"Nude," March added earning a warning look from his sister-in-law even as Rose elbowed him in the ribs.

"The reason Victoria brought me there was to feel better about my body and the changes it was going through," Macey said. "It takes a lot to feel confident when you're bloated and nauseous all the time."

"I heard that," Rose sighed recalling the troubles of her own pregnancy.

Julius frowned, not satisfied but also not wanting to argue. It was yet another trial she had faced without him. He should have been there to tell her how beautiful she was. Instead Victoria had taken more extreme measures to make a point. But it wouldn't happen again. For now he would let it go. His embrace tightened holding her close.

"I can't believe I'm holding a world famous artist right now."

Macey chuckled, "Stop. I'm hardly world famous."

"I beg to differ," Julius kissed her temple. His gaze swept over the gallery and found they stood close to the first series that had drawn him in: Two Hearts. "I can't believe this is your vision."

She followed his gaze and blushed as she said, "Well, actually those are...sort of...self portraits."

"What? What do you mean?" Julius looked at the series again featuring a model's growing stomach alongside ultrasounds. Realization suddenly dawned on him and looked back at her. "That's you!"

Macey blushed, "To get ready for school I was taking pictures everyday and one of my first projects was a self portrait. Victoria suggested this. She helped me set up the compositions. I tweaked them a bit for the gallery but...Yeah, that's my belly."

He held her face and kissed her. His eyes sparkled as he said, "You know, when I first visited the gallery I bought that whole series."

"You did?"

"I did." He kissed her again. "You're amazing."

Macey blushed again. Normally she felt self-conscious in the crowd but near him nothing else mattered.

Julius sighed, "Macey, there's something I've wanted to ask you ever since I saw you at the Baccarat."

"Okay?"

He stepped back pulling a velvet lined box from his pocket and dropped down to one knee. Macey gasped shivering with anticipation.

"I've made mistakes. I'm not perfect," Julius said, "I can't promise I won't make more but I'll always love you. Would you... be my wife again?"

He opened the box to reveal their wedding rings nestled together. Tears filled her eyes. Had he really kept them in hopes of finding her...just for this moment? How? How could they make this work? She had to go back to Paris. She had commitments. The kids had school. He couldn't just drop out of his family's business either.

All around them the crowd was becoming aware of the situation. They recognized Julius immediately and those who were unaware were quickly informed she was the artist of the night. The crowd waited on baited breath for her answer.

"Don't think, Macey," Julius whispered. He could see the wheels turning. "Just say the first thing that comes to mind."

"Y-yes," Macey stuttered fighting back tears. She couldn't deny the answer she wanted to give. "I will."

He smiled slipping her rings back onto her finger where they belonged. Quickly putting on his own Julius stood pulling her into his arms capturing her mouth with his. A wave of clapping surrounded them but he didn't care. All that mattered was the woman in his arms. She was his everything. Not breaking their kiss he picked her up showing the world the most beautiful woman ever born. And she was his.

Julius set her back on her feet still not breaking their kiss. She was his again and he was never letting go. Never. Finally releasing her lips he hugged her close. Nothing and no one would ever come between them.

"I love you, Macey. I always have. I always will."

"I love you, Julius," Macey could barely speak. Those were words she always wanted to hear him say.

He leaned forward and kissed her again.

* * *

Katherine circled the exhibit space trying to calm herself. The redhead...Macey Grayson...M. Gray! They were one in the same. How could a talentless hack become an acclaimed artist? She should be a failure like her father! And worse she knew Victoria Laurent one of the most famed wedding dress designers ever! Not only did they know each other but they were on good terms. The kids dared call her Auntie Vicki like she was some sort of farmer's wife!

And the look on Julius's face. He was becoming more and more enamored by his former wife. She had to find a way to get between them. There had to be a way to take control of the situation. Over the years she put a number of women in their places, this time would be no different. All she had to do was spill a little champagne and when the redhead overreacted Katherine could play victim to the sympathetic crowd. It was a ploy that worked before and would work again.

Then she would be back with Julius and the redhead would be disgraced. Maybe Macey would run all the way back to Paris. She would never be able to show her face in New York again. Then she and the twins would be out of Katherine's hair for good.

It was the perfect plan.

With her new resolve Katherine grabbed a glass of champagne and made her way to where she last saw her rival. Not finding Macey at the refreshment table Katherine continued to work her way through the crowd, searching. She finally found Macey once again in Julius's arms.

His adoring gaze was consumed with her. His arm snaked around her waist letting his hand gently caress her curves which she didn't mind as she leaned into him smiling seductively, a slight blush to her cheeks feigning innocence. Suddenly Julius dropped to one knee. He held out a velvet lined box. Nestled within was a set of wedding rings; both male and female. Katherine's mouth dropped open not believing what she was seeing. Where had those come from?

No! This couldn't be happening! I have to stop this!

But the crowd was already taking notice as Macey covered her face with her hands her eyes sparkling with tears. Julius just smiled, "Macey, will you be my wife again?"

Her shoulders shook as she stared at the man on his knee. The crowd gathered sensing a momentous occasion. Fighting tears Macey finally managed to stutter, "Yyes."

Julius slid the engagement-wedding ring set on her finger. He reclaimed his own wedding band from the box sliding it on his hand before standing and taking her into his arms. Without hesitation he captured her mouth with his unaware of their audience as cheers erupted around them.

Katherine was rooted to her spot. She couldn't move, couldn't look away. Julius suddenly picked Macey off her feet not breaking their kiss as he slowly spun her around. He finally set her down and only then broke their kiss. They smiled staring into each other's eyes before he kissed her again.

This couldn't be happening. The room was filled with New York elites, business professionals and press. By morning news of this would be on the front pages and all over social media. She had to turn it around. How? Her gaze fell on her champagne flute.

Of course. The perfect plan.

Katherine moved to step forward only to have her hand grasped. She was suddenly pulled back through the crowd. Confused she didn't fight the force until she was finally clear of the throng. Turning she found herself facing Stephen.

"You?"

He said nothing turning her toward the bar where she found Augustus silently sipping his drink. His face was an indecipherable mask but his eyes glinted like a predator. Katherine froze when she saw him. He had never been kind to her but perhaps he was as disgusted by Julius's action as she was. This might be the chance she needed certainly with Augustus's help she would be able to remove the redhead from Julius's life.

"Dad?" she smiled sweetly. Augustus raised an eyebrow but instead of answering gestured to a folder on the bar. She stepped forward to look at it.

"What's that?"

"This...is an analysis of my son's drink two years ago," Augustus said. "It appears someone spiked his drink."

Katherine felt herself pale as he slid the top page to the side.

"This is a finger print analysis of that same glass," Augustus said. "There are only three fingerprints on the glass. My son's, though I doubt he would spike his own drink; the bartender's, who swears he knows nothing; and yours."

Katherine struggled to maintain a blank expression but she felt a tick as her face twitched from the stress building within.

"And this," Augustus slid the analysis aside to show her the last page, "is a document showing you were receiving fertility treatments at the time."

Her mouth dropped open. She stuttered, "H-how did you get that?"

"You'd be surprised what you can acquire with enough time, patience and money," Augustus said. "A better question would be how you thought I wouldn't know? Of course all of this is purely circumstantial but it tells an interesting story. Anyone who sees it would instantly put two and two together. You spiked my son's drink in hopes of sleeping with him and getting yourself pregnant. That right?"

"It's...not proof," Katherine tried to compose herself. "It would never hold up in court."

Augustus smirked, "It's proof enough for me. I don't need a court to pass judgment. It seems I have been rather lax since the birth of my grandchildren. People have forgotten I am not a man to be crossed. It's time to remind them by making an example of you."

"Y-you can't do anything to me. My father will stop you."

"We both know that isn't true, don't we? By this time next week your parents will declare bankruptcy and their creditors will be hounding them every second of every day."

"H-how did you know that?"

"My dear, who do you think made that happen?"

Realization came slowly but Katherine's gaze widened. Her family's financial difficulties, her sudden lack of funds, it was all due to the man in front of her. But why? Wasn't she the best match for his son? She knew all the best people, traveled in the best circles. She could do so much for Julius, elevate his clientele and connections. What could that redhead do with her art?

"I let you have your fun. It was even occasionally entertaining to watch," Augustus said, "but my plans for my son never included you."

He glanced behind her as the security Stephen quietly summoned arrived.

"It seems Miss Trent overstayed her welcome. See her out."

Without a word they seized her by the shoulders and escorted her toward the door. Katherine opened her mouth to protest but Stephen gave her a final piece of advice, "Miss Trent, it would be better for you to leave quietly. It will not look good for you if you cause a scene."

Her mouth snapped shut and she was led away. Her face was red with embarrassment, her mind muddled. How? How could this happen? Had Augustus known this entire time?

"That went well," Stephen gathered up the folder and the papers he compiled and secreted for two years while Augustus sipped his drink. "Are you going to tell them?"

"No. My sons are smart enough to have their suspicions. We'll leave it at that,"

Augustus said looking toward Julius as he slowly released Macey from their kiss. Julius was a proud man he would be livid once he learned the truth of Katherine's deception but there was no reason for that not when he had a young wife and twins to care for. It was better that he focused on the future, not the past.

Aria shrieked as she and her brother ran up to their parents. Julius scooped up Caden and Macey held Aria bringing their family together. Finally his son had lived up to his expectations and secured a woman that would prove priceless.

"In that case, case closed," Stephen interrupted his thoughts.

"Hmm. Keep an eye on her for the time being."

"Sir?"

"Cockroaches are survivors after all."

"You think she'll seek out a new target?"

"It's guaranteed. I have a good idea where she'll go. Unfortunately for her he is next on my list."

"Understood. I'll keep an eye on both concerned parties."

"Good."

"Sir, are you really planning to buy the Trent's entire hotel chain?" Stephen asked.

"Good people shouldn't lose their jobs because their employers are fools though I've never had much interest in the hotel business...we'll just call it an investment property."

"Of course," Stephen nodded with a cut throat. It was the reason why he had remained loyal to Augustus DaLair. While the business world had no shortage of a cut throat rats Augustus maintained his integrity and never used his power to punish those who were innocent.