

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 10



Julius sat at his desk slowly paging through the photo album his father gave him. He couldn't stop staring at the images of Macey and the babies. Guilt gnawed at him every minute. He should have been there. Macey should never have gone through her pregnancy alone. He should have listened to her, paid attention. He hadn't even known she wanted to go back to school.

"Julius...Jules...Jules!"

He jerked to attention at his brother's entreats. March watched him with concern. Ever since they left their father's office Julius paged through the album over and over again. It was clear his brother's thoughts were spiraling in guilt and regrets.

"I know what you're thinking...but maybe this is a good thing."

"How is this good?"

"You've been worried about Macey for six years not knowing what happened to her, if she was okay," March said, "Now you know."

Julius stared at his brother letting the words slowly sink in.

"I'm not saying what dad did was right...but if he's been taking care of them then you know they've been given the best care."

Julius sighed. March was right. The pictures made it clear the hospital boasted top notch facilities. Their father would not have been satisfied with anything less not with their mother's miscarriage hanging in his mind and especially not after the complications Rose suffered. Ensuring Macey's pregnancy and the twins' birth was carefully monitored would have been his number one priority.

Macey hadn't been alone. Though he still didn't know the identity of the raven-haired woman it was clear she was a friend and had been there for Macey through it all. None of that alleviated his sense of guilt and remorse but there was some comfort in that knowledge.

March took an uneasy breath seeing his brother relax even slightly. He still couldn't believe their father hadn't told them about Macey or the kids. Augustus had always felt indebted to Macey's father, Carl Grayson, the man who saved his life and because of that he was extremely protective of her, treating her like a beloved daughter even before her marriage to Julius. He certainly would have sided with her even against his own sons whether or not she had been pregnant with his grandchildren.

"Hello, am I interrupting?" they looked up to see Rose hesitantly enter.

March immediately smiled engulfing her in a hug. It was unusual for her to visit him at work though he was always pleased to see her. Rose was sensible and never forgot her station as his wife. Sometimes he wished she would step out a little more rather than going with the flow.

"Hello, love," March kissed her temple. "You know you are never interrupting. What brings you here?"

"Well...I just got back from visiting Macey and the kids."

"What!" both brothers stared at her in shock.

"How did you even know where to find them?" March asked.

"Well, you mentioned last night your father put them up in a villa," Rose said. "I didn't think he would put them out in the country. So I went looking at his properties in the city."

March was speechless. Rose was a real estate agent and had been in charge of acquiring many of their father's properties over the years so she would have intimate knowledge of each. It hadn't occurred to them he would place Macey and the kids in one but it made perfect sense. Augustus certainly wouldn't put them in a hotel. The fact Rose had gone searching for them was definitely one of the boldest moves she ever made.

"They are in Soho," Rose answered their unasked question.

Julius felt himself trembling. They were so close, not even a half hour's drive away. Hesitantly he asked, "H-how did they look?"

Rose gave him a sympathetic look before taking out her phone. She handed it to March who looked down at it with a smile before passing it to his brother without a word.

On the screen was a picture of the twins kneeling beside a table with coloring books strewn across it. Aria had her hair in pigtails and wore a dress with striped sleeves matching her skirt. On the front of her top was a zebra with balloons. Beside her Caden also wore a black shirt displaying the Batman signal. Both of the twins had a dusting of freckles over their noses that were definitely inherited from their mother. Even with the boy's green eyes his resemblance to his father was uncanny just as the girl resembled their mother. Julius couldn't look away as he memorized their every feature.

"They seem perfectly happy and healthy to me," Rose said.

"I'm surprised Macey let you take a picture," March commented.

"Just what is that supposed to mean?" Rose demanded. "Macey invited me in. She even introduced me as their aunt. They got all excited when I told them about Jude. Aria said I should take a picture so he could see them without skipping school."

"You told them about Jude?"

"Of course. They even asked to see his picture," Rose said. "I showed them one of you two together. They were really happy to learn they had so many family members. Look they even colored me pictures."

Rose took out the colored pages for them to look at. Julius finally tore his gaze from the photo to look at the pictures. He smiled seeing their childish scrawls: To Auntie Rose, Love Aria and Love Caden.

"So...about family," March hesitated, "do they know..."

Julius stiffened glancing up at him. Did his children know they had a father? Did they want to meet him? Would they even give him a chance after he missed so much of their life?

"I—I wanted to ask...but...I just couldn't do it in front of the kids," Rose gave him a sympathetic smile. "I really don't know how much Macey told them. I'm sorry."

"That's all right," Julius tried to sound convincing. "I already missed so much. I don't have the right to be called dad."

"They are five years old, Julius," Rose gently admonished. "Yes, you've missed five years but they have a lot of growing to do. You can still have years with them...as their father."

"If Macey lets me," Julius sucked in a breath.

Rose wasn't wrong. In the grand scheme of things five years was not long but it didn't alleviate his guilt in the slightest. He hadn't been there for his wife when she needed him and he hadn't been there for his children. Would any of them even want him in their lives? His finger traced the colored pictures as he let his thoughts circle. It seemed he couldn't escape from the depressing spiral.

"If you want...you can keep those," Rose offered.

"No...you keep them. They colored them for you," Julius hesitantly handed over the pictures. "But could you send me the photo?"

"Of course," Rose smiled accepting the pictures and her phone back. A few taps and she not only sent to the photo to Julius but also March's phones. She hoped it would be the first of many. "Well, I should probably go. I kind of rushed out of the office as soon as I narrowed down the properties."

"Yeah, we have a meeting soon," March nodded glancing at his watch. "Actually it should have started ten minutes ago. Julius did they call you he was here?"

"No." Julius shook his head storing the album safely in his desk. "And no calls he was running late either. We should check the reception desk."

He stood grabbing his jacket. They moved to the door as it burst open to reveal Katherine. She spared no glance to March or Rose focusing solely on the man she came to see.

"Julius! It's time for our date!"

"Our what?" Julius glared at her.

Since when did he make any plans with her? No matter how he wracked his mind he recalled no conversation about setting aside lunch for her. In fact since he saw Macey and the children at the party he hadn't spoken one word to Katherine or spared her any thought.

"We have a lunch date, silly."

"No. We don't," Julius said trying to control his anger. "I have a business meeting today."

"Why would you want to meet that stuffy, old man anyway?" Katherine scoffed. "He didn't even speak English. I mean, hello, this is America!"

"What!" Julius snapped. "What did you do!"

"Ah...well...I told him he'd have to wait his turn..."

"Do you realize you might have just ruined a multimillion dollar deal!"

"What? Well...How was I supposed to know?"

"Damn it!" Julius didn't wait for her explanation.

He pushed past her with March and Rose following close behind. Katherine trailed after them like a wounded puppy. They rushed to the reception desk on the executive floor only to be informed their guest had departed after a confrontation with Katherine. They hurried into the elevator and took it to the first floor lobby hoping they could still catch him.

"Julius I..."

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

Katherine bit her lip. How was she supposed to know he was an important guest? She just wanted to spend time with Julius. He had been growing more distant with her and she needed to rein him in. The wedding was only six months away and she had to make sure rumors put them together or she would never get him to the altar. He would have to marry her just to save face. The last thing he would want was the bad press of leaving a woman at the altar.

They rushed off the elevator and headed to the front desk when laughter brought them to a sudden halt. Their gazes went to the waiting area to see a man in his mid-forties in a finely tailored suit seated in one of the chairs. His hair was dark and neatly styled despite thinning as he aged.

Seated comfortably on his lap was a content Aria. Sitting on the coffee table in front of them swinging his legs was a slightly bored Caden. As surprising as it was to see the twins it was even more surprising when Aria spoke perfect German.

"Was hat vier beine und ist immer reisebereit?"

"Prinzessin kenne ich nicht. Was ist es?"

"Ein Elefant!" Aria giggled and earned a hearty laugh from the gentleman currently entertaining her. Or perhaps it was the other way around.

Caden snickered at the over the top response. He didn't think his sister's joke was that funny but he also wasn't paying close attention as he had the job of playing look out. His eyes kept watch on the front door waiting for a familiar face to appear.

Julius stared not believing the kids were really in front of him now. His twins, his babies. But his astonishment came with a thorn of jealousy as the stranger in front of him was enjoying their attention when he had not been able to hold them himself.

Aria giggled before catching her brother's silent signal. Her eyes glanced over the man's shoulder to see their grandfather enter. She didn't have to fake delight as she hopped off the business man's lap.

"Grandpa Gus!"

Augustus entered with Stephen in tow. His lunch meeting had gone well and he was in a good mood. When Aria's excited voice suddenly called his name he came to a surprised halt as not just her but Caden ran up to him. He dropped to his knee immediately embracing the pair.

"There you are, you rascals!" Augustus chuckled.

"Look grandpa, we made a new friend," Aria introduced. "Herr Leon. Das ist mein Opa Gus!"

"So I gathered Prinzessin." Leon laughed his English heavily accented. "Hallo Herr DaLair."

"Hello," Augustus shook his hand with some confusion as to how his grandchildren met the man who should have been engaged and in discussion with his sons.

"Yes...it seems there was a miscommunication with my appointment," Leon cleared his throat unwilling to describe the horrid conversation he had with the insufferable woman upstairs. "I wasn't able to make the meeting but your grandchildren have been delightful company."

"That is too bad, but if you have time now..."

"I'm afraid not; however I will not fly back home until Friday. Perhaps we can meet later."

"Yes, of course," Augustus reached behind him and Stephen immediately placed a card in his hand. "Here is my business card with my direct line. I'll make sure Stephen keeps my schedule clear for you."

"I look forward to it," Leon nodded. "Now I must be off. Auf Wiedersehen, kleine Prinzessin."

"Auf Wiedersehen!" Aria waved as he departed.

Augustus maintained a smile until Leon left. His smile immediately faded and his expression became serious as he turned back to the twins, "All right you two, how did you get here?"

"The Métro," Aria answered without hesitation.

"...You mean the subway?"

"Ah-huh. Mommy had to work but we didn't like our babysitter so we decided to come and visit."

"You mean you rode the subway all the way here by yourselves!"

"No. We met Franklin halfway here. He brought us the rest of the way."

"Who's Franklin?"

"He plays saxophone in the subway station."

"You met a homeless man in the subway and he brought you here?"

"I don't think he is homeless," Caden said thinking back to the well cared for instrument and the new cell phone their guide possessed.

"You realize your mother is probably out of her mind right now?" Augustus shook his head holding out his hand to Stephen who placed his phone in it already dialed and ringing. He only had to wait a moment before a panicked voice answered, "I can't talk now! I have to go!"

"Macey before you hang up...it wouldn't have anything to do with a pair of adorable twins who happen to be standing in front of me would it?"

"...They are with you? Thank god."

"It seems they didn't like their babysitter and snuck away," Augustus said choosing not to elaborate on details. There was time enough for that later when she wasn't panicked.

"I'm at the gallery right now. Can they stay with you until I'm done?"

"Of course. I have another hour before I can knock off work then I'll take them home. You can pick them up there," Augustus fell silent listening to her response before saying good-bye and handing the phone back to Stephen. He gave the twins a serious look saying, "Your mother wishes me to inform you both you are grounded for a week. No cartoons. No piano."

He pointed to each in turn and their eyes widened in shock and horror. Augustus smirked at their obvious distress before he asked something that had been nagging him since he stepped into the building, "Now, why were you two sitting here in the lobby?"

"We told the lady at the desk we were here to see you but she said we couldn't without an appointment," Aria explained stumbling over the last word's pronunciation.

"Is that so?"

They nodded.

"I see. Stephen, take them to my office," Augustus instructed.

With a nod the assistance herded them toward the small elevator off to the side. It could only be used by those possessing authorized codes and it offered a direct route to the executive floor.

Augustus marched toward the reception desk eyeing the name tag the woman manning it wore saying, "Miss...Johnson."

"Yes Mister DaLair!" she stood up immediately.

Usually the DaLair patriarch ignored her presence.

"You see those children?" Augustus nodded in their direction.

She glanced at the pair following Stephen as he reached the elevator and ushered them on. They seemed vaguely familiar. Looking back to her boss she nodded.

"Those are my grandkids and if they ever show up here again and I'm not immediately informed...it will be your job." Augustus glared all his earlier good nature was gone replaced by a ruthless aura.

The receptionist quailed.

"I don't care if I'm in a meeting or out to lunch. I expect a call the moment they enter the building or you're fired. Understood?"

"Y-yes sir."

"Good." Augustus turned finally acknowledging his sons who witnessed it all. "Hello Rose dear."

"Dad," Rose stepped forward giving him a peck on the cheek before retreating. "I should get going."

"Mhmm." Augustus let her go fixing his sons with a hard stare. "Someone want to explain to me how my two sons with a combined thirty plus years of business experience threw away the deal of the century that my darling grandchildren somehow managed to salvage?"

March and Julius shot each other looks wondering how much to say. Knowing the situation was his fault Julius finally spoke up, "It's my mistake. I was...distracted."

Augustus' gaze narrowed falling on Katherine who smiled at his notice hoping he would greet her as he had Rose but her expression faded under the weight of his glare. He was well aware she often interrupted Julius's work though she had no business in the office.

Augustus never asked what happened in Julius's office during her visits not wanting to know the extent of his son's infidelity. He was at least fairly confident his son never actually succumbed to her romantic advances.

After a moment Augustus finally spoke, "Son, you better not waste the opportunity in front of you or I will be sorely disappointed."

"I won't," Julius assured him.

With a nod Augustus left them to catch up to the twins. They had a lot of explaining to do. What in the world possessed them to worry their mother so?