

## The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book Two: Chapter Seventeen



"...Boss...Boss?...Sil!"

Silas jerked out of his idle thoughts to see Thomas standing at his desk. Thomas grimaced at his friend's deep frown. Unfortunately it was becoming a common expression. He hoped that finding the woman Silas had been chasing for years would have solved his problems but it seemed to have only caused more.

After their shopping spree the kids certainly loosened up. Duncan installed a flat screen TV in the boys' room replacing the Van Gogh above the mantel. They could be heard at odd hours playing online and even coerced their security detail to join their games. Each now had their own laptop. The one in Alexis's room was loaded with several programs for the vision impaired. Dozens of books had been special ordered and delivered all written in Braille which Duncan helped her arrange on her shelves. Theo had already assembled two of his Technic Lego™ sports cars together displaying them on his shelves while a third had just been started.

The kids were certainly settling in to their new home and making their rooms their own. Ava on the other hand was still as reserved as ever perhaps even more so now. She seemed intent to make him forget she was there and not draw his attention. Sensing she needed a little space Silas elected to go back to the office but his thoughts continued to wander back to the woman who consumed his mind.

"Things not going well?"

"I took too long."

"Pardon?"

"Ten years was too long."

"I don't follow."

"Ava has always been gentle. She never wanted to make waves or cause trouble. People overlooked her, dismissed her. She never learned to speak her mind or demand respect. She's so used to denying her needs and suppressing her wishes she can't even express them anymore."

Thomas nodded. If there was one word to describe Avalynn it was mouse. She was quiet, unassuming, never asking for anything even things she needed. When it came to her children she was a more assertive. Though he, Duncan and the security personnel struggled to keep up and monitor the kids one word from Ava was all it took to rein them in. The triplets were far more out-going and rowdy to the point of chaos yet they deferred to their mother completely. She never had to raise her voice.

Thomas never dealt with children and he was quite certain Ava had no idea how amazing it truly was. He never saw anything like it especially considering the kids' undeniable intelligence. Thomas would have thought they would be more rebellious but they were wholly devoted to their mother and never acted out against her.

"So what are you going to do?" Thomas asked.

"I have no choice but to take it slow," Silas said standing and moving to the window overlooking the city. A light snow had fallen overnight and he imagined the kids were probably out in the backyard making the most of it. "I need to coax her out. And maybe she'll start trusting me."

"Ma'am you can't go in there!"

They turned at the muffled protest in time to see the office door fly open revealing a tall, lithe blonde. She wore a business suit and her hair was tamed in a bun but her face was twisted in anger as she boldly claimed, "Oh he'll see me... Right now."

Silas looked to Thomas for answers but the other merely shook his head. The blonde looked familiar but for the life of him Thomas couldn't place her.

"And what business do you have with me?" Silas asked. "Miss..."

"Lamont, Tracy Lamont."

"Oh!" Thomas finally recalled why she looked so familiar. "You're Aunt Tracy."

Silas remained confused for a moment before recalling the kids mentioning their aunt. Glancing at the waiting secretary he waved her off. With a nod the woman closed the door leaving the trio alone. Without hesitation the blonde strode up to him and demanded, "Just what do you intend to do with Ava?"

"Marry her...if she'll have me."

Her mouth fell open. Though she had been ready to respond his reply completely blindsided her. It wasn't the one she expected especially not from him: Silas Prescott infamous bachelor with no interest in women.

"Shall we sit?" Silas gestured to the couches.

Mutely Tracy nodded. Letting herself be escorted she slumped into the leather upholstered seat unsure how she should take all of the information in. When the kids Skyped her they said they were fine and staying with their father. At first she thought it was a joke since they didn't even know who their father was...at least that is what she thought until Ava called her to explain everything in detail.

Silas sat across from her watching her closely. His mouth twitched with a smile. Was it only a few days ago he sat in the same spot across from his family? If his kids referred to this woman as their aunt then she was family too. But, more importantly, he needed answers.

"Miss Lamont, have you known Ava long?"

Tracy looked up her blue eyes studying him closely before saying, "We've been friends since middle school even though I was a grade ahead of her."

"Then I have a question," Silas said, "I know there is no way Ava would willingly take part in my roommates' tasteless joke...but how did she end up in my hotel room ten years ago? Lexi said it was because of her sister."

Tracy hesitated. Her first instinct was to tell him to talk to Ava but she knew Ava struggled to forget the whole incident. Perhaps it would be best for her to explain it now and spare Ava the embarrassment. With a sigh she leaned back into the couch and studied the man in front of her.

Silas Prescott was not a man to be taken lightly. It was the reason why Ava had always been afraid of him finding her and the kids. Tracy thought he looked stern and humorless. He was the kind of person who stood alone and she pitied any woman who eventually found herself with him because he wouldn't spare her a thought. In front of her now though was a man who seemed devastated by the events of ten years ago. He seemed genuinely concerned for Ava so she couldn't help but want to tell him the absolute truth.

"Marilynn."

"Who?" Thomas asked.

"Her sister," Silas said. "Marilynn Carlisle."

"Oh, right," Thomas nodded. "But why would her sister do that to her own sister?"

"Because Marilynn is a conniving, heartless bitch," Tracy said. "As kind and sweet as Ava is Marilynn is her polar opposite and she's always been jealous of Ava."

"Really?" Thomas asked. As far as he knew Marilynn had always been the more popular sister. Why then would she be jealous of her sister?

"Marilynn always traveled the most popular circles," Silas agreed. Ava was always on the fringes. It didn't make much sense to him either.

"Right and Ava didn't," Tracy agreed, "but that didn't matter to Marilynn. It wasn't about popularity. Ava is sweet and kind. There is just something that draws you in and when she plays...well you've heard her so I don't have to tell you."

Silas nodded.

"Marilynn can't stand to see someone else in the spotlight. She belittled and bullied Ava all the time. She spread rumors in school all to keep Ava on the fringes."

"But not you?" Thomas asked.

"Of course not. I'm not a stupid sheep willing to go wherever I am led," Tracy gave him a withering look. "And I can think for myself. Ava always wants to see the good in others even when there is none and she always felt inferior to Marilynn. Marilynn was their father's favorite so Ava never dared speak a bad word about her. All Ava ever wanted was her family's love and acceptance. Unfortunately her parents are trash and her sister is a psycho."

Silas grimaced but didn't argue. There was a reason his family had long been at odds with the Carlises. They had no sense of loyalty or honor. Though others might have found it surprising how quickly Ava had been abandoned Silas did not. Emerson Carlisle was ruthless and would cut ties with anyone who did not bring value to him. Silas gritted his teeth and clenched his fists.

"I was away at college," Tracy sighed after a moment. "If I had been there...Ava would never have made it to that bedroom. Ava isn't a drinker. I don't think she's ever had more than a single glass of champagne in her life. Marilynn slipped a drug into Ava's drink but Ava is such a light weight it probably wasn't even necessary."

Silas breathed deep to calm his rage as Tracy shook her head.

"Marilynn confessed the whole thing after the fact just to rub it in Ava's face, including how she met these college guys at the bar who needed a willing girl to play a trick on their friend...which apparently was you."

Silas's gaze turned cold. Marilynn practically sold off her sister all to ruin her in the name of petty jealousy because she lacked actual talent herself. And he had fallen into the trap as well.

"If it's any consolation...I don't think Marilynn had any idea it was you," Tracy said. "If she knew it was you she probably would have offered up herself instead."

Thomas nodded. He cleared his throat before asking, "You know all of this for fact?"

"Marilynn told Ava and Ava told me," Tracy said. "After her father banished her from the family Ava called me because she didn't have anyone else to turn to. I drove four hours from campus to New York to pick her up. I was ready kick that mansion door down, give them a piece of my mind and punch Marilynn in the face but Ava just wanted to leave. So I took her back with me. Luckily I lived in an off-campus apartment so it wasn't a problem. We spent the weekend drowning her sorrows in ice cream."

Tracy allowed a small smile at the memories of that time. Ava was almost her old self again after a tortuous last year of high school. The dream ended when Ava received her rejection letter from Julliard resending her acceptance, then her positive pregnancy test.

Even Tracy couldn't say what went on in Ava's head as the reality of the situation settled in. But in the end Ava came to the only logical conclusion she could: if she wanted a loving family she would raise one herself.

"Ava wasn't afraid of having a baby. She actually seemed pretty excited all things considered. But I don't think anyone is prepared to be told they are going to have twins."

"Twins? Wait...there are three of them," Thomas said.

"Yeah," Tracy smiled. "The boys were hugging their sister so tight we didn't realize there were three of them until the pregnancy was almost to term."

Silas echoed her smile. It seemed his sons were protective of their sister from the very beginning. And all were devoted to their amazing mother. In that he had no complaints at all.

"Were you serious about marrying Ava?" Tracy suddenly asked.

Silas jolted from his thoughts. He met her gaze steadily before answering, "Yes."

"But ten years ago..."

"Ten years ago my roommates spiked my drink and placed a woman in my bed to get me to loosen up. I thought she was a maid they paid for the night. I had no idea it was Ava. I never saw her face and I would never have even imagined it was her. I took my anger at my friends out on her. If I had known..."

Silas fell silent rubbing his forehead fighting his own shame. He had lost control of his temper and it cost him everything. He chased Ava away and she had been forced to raise their children alone. He wasn't there to hold her or their babies. How could any of them forgive him?

"You really didn't know it was Ava?"

"She never looked at me and I would never expect her in...that sort of situation."

"And you really want to marry her."

"Yes. I've been looking for her for ten years...ever since she disappeared. I never thought...It never occurred to me..."

"Why though? Why would you...Wait. Are you...do you love her?"

"Ever since I first saw her play when we were kids."

"But in school you were always with other girls."

"The daughters of my father's business associates," Silas waved a dismissive hand. "They meant nothing."

"All this time..." Tracy slumped back staring at him for once speechless and seeing him for the first time. She remembered her conversation with Ava when they found out she was pregnant. Tracy urged Ava to demand some support from Silas but Ava refused. If they had approached him back then Ava and the kids...

Silas Prescott...the most popular guy in high school with a new girl every week. Silas Prescott...the youngest CEO to take over his family's company. Silas Prescott...New York's most eligible bachelor with no interest in women. Silas Prescott...

"Ava always had a crush on you," Tracy said quietly. "She never tried to catch your eye. She could never compete with the girls you loved with her. She didn't think you could ever be interested in her, a Carlisle."

"I don't give a damn about her family," Silas grunted.

"What about yours? They okay with you marrying a Carlisle?"

"I got where I am because I don't let anyone stand in my way when I want something," Silas coldly replied.

"For Ava's sake I hope so," Tracy said. "She won't be able to stand having her heart broken twice."

Silas flinched. He wouldn't allow that.

"Well if the kids are willing to give you a chance I guess I can too."

"What?" Silas blinked.

"They Skyped me last night to explain what happened. I was getting worried after Ava's call so I'm glad they did. I don't know how you did it but they are willing to let you have a chance."

"A chance at what?" Thomas asked, confused.

"To win their mother's heart, jackass," Tracy rolled her eyes at him before looking back to Silas. "But don't get too excited. You have to win Ava back yourself. They aren't going to help you. They just won't interfere. Considering how protective they are of their mother you should know that is a huge concession."

Silas nodded. He had no doubts.

"Well I need to go." Tracy stood with a sigh.

"So soon?" Thomas smirked. "You barged in here so suddenly."

Tracy raised a brow saying, "Well maybe you should consider upping your security if you have a problem with uninvited guests. Anyway I have a big case to prepare for."

"Really?"

"Yeah my best friend is going to have to defend her parental rights from her worthless father," Tracy scowled.

Silas and Thomas tensed in surprise.

"The kids filled me in. With all his family troubles Emerson isn't going to let this opportunity pass by. He'll go after custody of all of them just to hurt Ava, but he especially wants Lexi."

"He touches one hair on their heads, he's a dead man," Silas scowled.

"What are you planning?" Tracy asked. "How do you think you can stop a grandfather from seeing his grandkids?"

"I'm their father and once the paternity tests are filed it won't matter what he has to say."

"Paternity tests? So you don't trust Ava's word?"

"My faith in her is not an issue," Silas eyed her coldly. "When I announce the children as my heirs my shareholders and board members will demand proof. To prevent interference it is best to obtain it now while few know about them."

"Interference?" Tracy asked. "How could one interfere with a paternity test?"

"By switching samples or forging results," Thomas answered. "It's happened before."

"...Oh. All right. Well I have to go."

"You will be representing Ava during the custody hearing assuming there is one?"

"Of course. Custody battles aren't my specialty but I'll be damned before I let anyone take my niece and nephews from their mother. Why?"

"Send me the bill. Spare no expense and take whatever precautions you think are necessary."

"As if I would ever charge my best friend...but you? Sure." Tracy gave him a wink before letting herself out.

Silas's brow furrowed wondering just how Ava and Tracy had met and what made their bond so strong. He could hardly complain. It was comforting to know Ava had a dedicated and loyal supporter.

"Man she's something else," Thomas whistled. "And hot as hell."

Silas looked over his shoulder raising an eyebrow.

"What? Everyone loves leggy blondes," Thomas shrugged. "Oh right...you prefer petite brunettes."

He fell silent at Silas's warning glare. Silas moved to his desk, "Keep an eye on Emerson. Let me know the moment he makes his move."