

The Billionaire's Twins Play Matchmaker Book One: Chapter 38: Bonus Story Three



Girl Talk

Macey slammed the door with little thought to the two-year-olds already tucked in their beds. She was frustrated and more than a little hurt. Were all men pigs or was she being overly sensitive?

"Sounds like the date didn't go well?" Victoria asked from the kitchen.

Macey sighed shedding her coat and pulling off her boots. Her attire was modest but despite Victoria urging her to wear a dress she had chosen a blouse and slacks for this outing. Her unruly hair was bunched in an alligator clip as per usual since she still had difficulty working with it.

Entering the kitchen she slung her purse on the counter saying, "Yeah, you can say that."

"Go hug your babies," Victoria smiled filling a kettle. "Don't come out until you feel better, or until the kettle whistles. Whichever comes first."

Macey rolled her eyes but heeded the advice. Practically tiptoeing she headed to the twins' bed room where the pair shared a crib. In the beginning she had a pair of cribs and had them sleep separately but quickly realized they slept better near each other. She didn't know if it was because they were twins or if they were simply more comfortable when they were together. She worried at first, concerned it would set problematic precedents but Victoria simply shrugged off such concerns saying; do what works.

She leaned over the crib gently smoothing Aria's unruly nest of red hair already as curly as her mothers. Macey sighed. She was going to have to learn how to handle such hair in a hurry if she was going to be any help to her baby. Satisfied she moved on to Caden who's hair was much lighter and shorter. Both were still sound asleep, untroubled by adult issues. Macey smiled looking at them. Her brow furrowed. Soon she'd have to upgrade them to toddler beds. She wondered if they would be able to sleep alone when that time came.

A sharp whistled stirred her from her mind's random wandering. With one last look at her babies she stepped back and tiptoed out. Gently closing the door she made her way back to the kitchen.

"Tea." Victoria said sliding a mug toward her.

It was filled with steaming water with a thin chain hanging over the side. Macey sat on the nearest stool and tugged at the chain before finally pulling it free. On the other end was a metal sphere perforated with small holes. Inside were tea leaves she purchased at her favorite small café. Setting the sphere on a dish she sipped from the mug but even it wasn't enough to sooth her.

"...So, what went wrong?" Victoria asked sitting across from her with another mug. Tea was not Victoria's favorite drink but at Macey's she never complained.

"Everything," Macey sighed.

Victoria grimaced.

Macey sipped from her mug again before she continued, "You know, when I told him I had two kids and it didn't scare him off I thought it was promising."

"But..."

"But he thought that two kids meant I was easy. All night long he kept reaching for me and trying to cop a feel."

Victoria rolled her eyes. That wasn't uncommon but for a first date she would have hoped him to have a little more class. Sadly she had her fair share of such characters especially after they learned she sometimes worked as a nude model for drawing and painting classes. Perhaps that was why she restricted her own dating to women as of late.

"Is that why you cut your date short?" Victoria asked glancing at the clock. It was barely nine o'clock.

"Yeah, he wanted to take me to a club but I said I had to get home. Then he thought it was an invitation to join me." Macey rolled her eyes.

Victoria raised an eyebrow.

"I told him the kids were already asleep and would be up early the next morning and he said that was fine...he could do it quietly if I could."

Victoria almost choked on her tea. She had to admit. That was the first time she heard that line.

Macey sighed again sipping her tea. Running the night through her mind again it hadn't been terrible. Granted her date was a little more handsie than she liked but he had been considerate. He opened doors and held her chair for her. They even managed a normal conversation though once he delved into his passion for football she was completely lost. Macey had never been very interested in sports and knew nothing about football teams or players or the FIFA World Cup.

"Am I being just too sensitive?" she suddenly asked.

"If there is one truth in the world, sweetie, it's that all men are pigs," Victoria said. "Why do you think my longest relationships have always been with women?"

Macey chuckled shaking her head. Her moment of mirth passed quickly and her face fell. She couldn't help but think of the dinners she shared with Julius. Most had been family dinners so they were hardly romantic settings but there were a few they enjoyed just to two of them.

He had always been a gentlemen holding doors and offering her a seat. He never presumed to order her food for her letting her select whatever she wanted without complaining once about the price and he always offered her dessert without any snide comments about her weight.

Their conversations were admittedly stilted and tended toward him complaining about work but that was partially her own fault for asking about his day. Still he always reciprocated by asking about hers. She made it a point to attend art exhibits and loved to take time out by visiting the botanical gardens. No matter where she went she was always seeing how she would compose the picture herself and occasionally took pictures on her phone when she found a particularly interesting scene.

Julius never asked to see the photos she took and at times barely seemed to listen but it was fine. She could hardly expect him to share her interests. Perhaps it was just like when she listened to someone else talk about sports. Whether he paid attention or not he was never lewd and didn't turn everything into some sort of innuendo. She couldn't help but compare every man she met to him.

It had been nearly two years since she left him and he still lingered in her mind. She wondered what he was doing, how his work was going, did he ever think about her the way she thought about him?

Tears blurred her vision as she imagined him with someone new. There were dozens of young socialites eager to be by his side so he would have no trouble finding a replacement for her. Was it really so easy for him to forget while his memory lingered in her mind?

"Macey," Victoria stood quickly coming to her side and wrapping her in a hug. "Shh. Sweetie. It's all right."

"I just feel so stupid," Macey struggled to control her tears. "Why? Why do I still have feelings for him? Why does it hurt so much to think of him with someone else? Why can't I forget him?"

Victoria sighed. Over the years she had had many relationships some longer than others. Not all of them ended amicably and it would be lying to say she hadn't been affected by them. She still held regrets over some of them wishing they could have ended more peacefully.

It was said time healed all wounds but that was not entirely true. Time dulled the pain perhaps but deep wounds never truly healed. There was always a scar whether one cared to acknowledge it or not.

"L'amour c'est comme la guerre, facile à démarrer, difficile à finir...et impossible à oublier." [1] Victoria said with a sigh.

It never ceased to amaze her how naïve people were when it came to love. Even the French who had so many quotes and proverbs concerning the darker side of it were not immune to this mentality. Love was often melancholy and lonely. Regrets were surprisingly easy when it came to such strong attachments. It hurt her to think the gentle woman in front of her had firsthand experience in this matter.

If there was anyone who deserved a happy ending it was Macey. Victoria had seen it from the very beginning. Though an adult, Macey had been sheltered from many things. Her heart and love was deep and abiding. One only needed to see how she cared for the twins to see that.

Life had not jaded her. She still saw beauty in the world around her. It helped her with her art no doubt but it left her unprotected from tragedy. Just who was this man who had rendered Macey to such a pitiable state?

She had never met Julius but she had met Augustus, Macey's father-in-law and grandfather to the twins. He was a typical American as far as Victoria was concerned: arrogant and self-absorbed. But he was also a tender father treating Macey more like a real daughter rather than a woman who had simply married one of his sons. He was also a surprisingly gentle and caring grandfather.

The image of the older man tenderly holding his grandchildren after their birth was still clear in her mind. When they had first met Victoria knew him to be a formidable person used to getting his own way but in the presence of his grandchildren he became a puddle of silly faces and baby talk. Victoria certainly couldn't fault him for that. The twins were adorable and it did improve her opinion of the man in general but she couldn't let herself forget the twins' father was his son.

Julius DaLair. Though she never met the man Victoria spent considerable amount of time learning about him. She hadn't told Macey yet but after learning about her ex Victoria had done rather extensive research over the internet and through magazine headlines kept track of his actions since Macey's move to Paris.

To be honest Victoria felt a little sorry for him. Though the current situation was all his own making it was clear he was not doing well in Macey's absence. As of yet he hadn't taken a new woman. Most headlines detailed his drinking binges but never once did any mention him in a new relationship. He was clearly a man in pain and perhaps for the first time he was realizing the wonderful woman he had lost.

Augustus never mentioned his son in Macey's presence. A fact Victoria was grateful for and elevated her opinion of the man. After all he confessed to her about wanting to reunite his son and Macey together eventually. Despite his desire he had yet to act on it. Victoria wasn't certain if he was being sensitive to Macey or just afraid of Victoria herself since she originally raised her voice against it.

While Augustus bided his time Victoria educated herself about the man who broke her friend's heart and found herself pitying him as much as she pitied Macey. It was becoming clearer to her that the pair was still very much in love with each other and their shared love was only getting stronger in their absence. It wasn't enough to earn Victoria's forgiveness but it did give her hope for Macey's future.

The twins were still babies but they were growing quickly. Soon enough they would be talking and inevitably they would ask about their father. Victoria wasn't certain if Macey had considered this. Children were observant and it wouldn't take them long to figure out other children had two parents which would naturally lead them to wonder about their missing father.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Macey finally calmed enough to ask about the proverb she quoted.

"Only that love is not as easy as some make it seem," Victoria said. "It is not a smooth road. It is like country lane full of twists and turns and unexpected views."

A smile twitched Macey's mouth, "I like that analogy."

"Good. Well, shall we get on with it then?"

"On with what?" Macey asked even as Victoria picked up her phone.

"I propose pizza and ice cream and a movie," Victoria said. "Any favorites?"

"Well..." Macey hesitated. "Sure. I'll introduce you to my favorite movie."

Macey's favorite movie turned out to be a romantic-comedy of all things. Such movies weren't typically Victoria's cup of tea. She found most of them insipid and overly simplistic. But she was pleasantly surprised by Macey's choice. As romantic-comedies went the Princess Bride didn't follow the standard formula perhaps because it was based on a book. The plot and characters were original even when they were in line with typical fantasy roles.

The book it was based on Victoria later learned was written as a satire of fairytales and even the whole literary process which certainly explained its unconventional plot. She found it surprisingly entertaining and light-hearted enough to help Macey forget her troubles for the time being.

Watching the final scene of the main characters riding off into the sunset, Macey sighed lightly sniffling prompting Victoria to hand her a tissue. Shortly after the movie began Victoria had noticed Macey silently mouthing most of the dialog, impressive since it was dubbed in French. She wondered if this movie had been one of the reasons why Macey took to learning French so easily.

"Vicki, you think I'm a fool, don't you?"

"Well, that is out of nowhere. Why would you think that?"

"Because I'm still in love with Julius. It's stupid isn't it?"

"No, sweetie. You told me before you've been in love with him since you were like ten? You don't get over a love like that over night."

Macey sighed, "He never loved me. I just feel so stupid for caring so much when he felt nothing."

"Unrequited love is the most difficult," Victoria agreed. "But you shouldn't feel stupid or a fool. Love has a mind of its own."

"I just wish I could get over him. I'm tired of hurting so much."

"Unfortunately grief of the heart does not heal quickly," Victoria gave her a sympathetic look.

"But it's been almost two years."

"Yes, but you have loved this man since you were ten. One does not get over almost fifteen years of love quickly."

Macey sighed hugging the pillow she had snuggled with during the movie. When Victoria said it like that it made getting over Julius an insurmountable mountain. Her heart ached with every memory. They had known each other for so long. There wasn't a secret that they didn't know about each other. None of the girls Julius briefly dated knew half of what Macey knew about him but that knowledge hadn't helped. In the end it all fell apart.

"Try not to think about it too much," Victoria said, "and don't worry about."

"That's easy for you to say."

"I suppose it is. I wish I could say I have experienced the kind of love you have but no one ever touched me that deeply," Victoria sighed. "I envy you. I really do."

"Envy me?" Macey blinked.

"Yes. When you love someone you love them with everything you have. You don't hold back. Whether it is Julius or those two twins sleeping in the other room, you love them with every part of your being." Victoria smiled at her.

"Isn't that how everyone does it?"

"Oh no, sweetie. The rest of us are far too jaded from a harsh, unforgiving world and disappointed by broken promises. It chips at us little by little forcing us to build walls to protect ourselves. Those walls might protect us from the outside but they also prevent us from giving everything of ourselves to another," Victoria explained with a sad expression. "Any time I meet with someone knew I never show them all of me. I always hold a little part back. That inherent distrust is always present and quite likely dooms all of my relationships."

Macey bit her lip giving her friend a sympathetic glance. Victoria had never told her this before. Perhaps it wasn't just with romantic relationships that Victoria kept at arm's length. It seemed even friendships were treated with the same self serving distance. She wondered what could have happened to Victoria to leave her so distrustful of others. Was it really just life chipping away at her or was there perhaps something more to it.

Macey wanted to ask but thought better of it. If Victoria maintained her walls for so long it was unlikely Macey could bring them down on a whim. It had taken her friend two years to open up this much who knew how long it would take for her to open up even further. Pushing Victoria now would only bring the walls back up so Macey remained silent grateful she learned this much.

"Oh, stop with the face," Victoria smiled at her. "It's nothing you need to worry about fixing."

Macey grimaced. Victoria had already warned her that she didn't have a poker face. Apparently every thought and emotion no matter how fleeting she had was written on her face no much she tried to keep herself reserved.

"Right. I should worry about fixing myself."

"You aren't broken, sweetie. You're perfect the way you are. It's the world that is broken."

"Vicki..."

"Just keep loving your babies the way you do. They will learn how to love through you so if you raised them with an open heart then their hearts will also be open," Victoria said. "That is how it should be. As for how you feel about their father... try not to think about it too much. You will get over him eventually."

"And what if I can't."

"Then you won't." Victoria shrugged. "A woman's heart is as deep as the ocean and can hide incredible secrets in its depths. But if your heart truly does not let him go then perhaps it is trying to tell you something."

"What could that possibly be?"

"I don't know," Victoria shrugged. "You'll learn that in time just...don't force yourself or your heart to move on before its time. Give yourself time to grieve properly and don't worry about it so much."

"I guess..."

Victoria watched as Macey stood to get them more tea. She sighed. It was good to see Macey enjoying herself and it was clear motherhood suited her quite well. No two babies had ever been so loved. As the twins grew they would take up more and more of her time and Macey would need the distraction. While her father-in-law was the most prominent man in her life he was hardly the only one making plans.

Ever since her first met Macey when she began her schooling Paul Järvinen had taken quite a fancy to her. In fact he was becoming borderline obsessed with her. Victoria had to caution him several times not to push Macey too far. She was still recovering from a broken heart and needed time to find herself before she entered another relationship.

So far Paul adhered to Victoria's warning but he viewed the twins as a new opportunity to prove himself more worthy of her than her ex. Whether Paul cared to admit it or not he had a massive inferiority complex and it colored just about everything he did including his artwork. It was one of the reasons he rarely showed his pieces in exhibits preferring to place them in random locations and natural settings believing this would make their meaning more clear and avoided art critics at all costs.

The fact Macey still loved her ex forced him to compete with the phantom of another man. Paul constantly struggled to come up with ways to prove himself the better man. With the birth of the twins he now thought to prove what a good father he could be but in truth he was awkward at best. Paul did not have any experience with children or babies. Though he tried to show Macey he was someone she could rely on he often needed help when the twins' cries were not easily soothed and never once did he change a single diaper.

Victoria refused to interfere either for or against him. If he could win Macey's heart on his own that was one thing but she wouldn't help him. As much as she liked him she didn't particularly think he and Macey were well suited to each other. In some ways he was stuck in the last century and more than once Victoria had to correct him rather forcefully. Last time they drank together he rather loudly declared a woman's place was in the home and no woman of his was going to be allowed to work.

Macey attracted his attention because she was such a soft and caring sort. She was often quiet and reserved in social situations lacking confidence to attract too much attention. No doubt this stirred his desire to be her protector but Macey didn't need protection. She needed support and the occasional push to stand up for herself.

Victoria smiled accepted the mug Macey handed her. It had only been two years but she was already showing huge progress in building her confidence. Now that the twins were born her progress was progressing even faster with her mother instincts guiding her to protect them. It was a pity Macey just couldn't see her own strength. If anyone deserved a happy ending worthy of a romantic movie it was her.

"I have only one wish for you, sweetie," Victoria said as Macey sat back down.

"Oh? And what is that?"

"Je vous souhaite d'être follement aimée." [2]

[1] "Love is like war, easy to start, difficult to finish...and impossible to forget."

[2] "I wish for you to be loved madly." (André Breton)