



Meddling with a Millionaire

By Cat Schield

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Cat Schield lives in Minnesota with her daughter, Emily, and their Burmese cat. Winner of the Romance Writers of America 2010 Golden Heart® for series contemporary romance, when she's not writing sexy, romantic stories for Silhouette Desire, she can be found sailing with friends on the St. Croix River or more exotic locales like the Caribbean and Europe. Contact her at www.catschield.com.

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Sighting his quarry at last, Nathan Case dodged a waiter carrying a tray of champagne and navigated around a chocolate fountain. Twenty feet ahead, Emma Montgomery slipped through the cream of Dallas society gathered to celebrate New Year's Eve. Ever since arriving at her father's home an hour ago, Nathan had been searching for Emma, contemplating exactly what he intended to do when he tracked her down.

His options ranged from kissing her to throttling her.

He had yet to decide which way to go.

As if sensing the intensity of his thoughts, she glanced over her shoulder. A strand of hair caught on her lush lips as she scanned the party guests. Delicate fingers brushed long sable bangs back from her forehead, exposing the frown that pulled her brows together. She looked like a wild creature caught out in the open, unsure of where to flee. Then, her chocolate eyes locked on him.

Quick as a rabbit, she ducked around a potted palm and disappeared.

His heartbeat surged as he picked up his pace. He'd had women play hard to get before. The game sweetened their ultimate surrender. But Emma had taken the maneuver to a whole new level. If he didn't know better, he would think she was avoiding him.

Ridiculous, given what he'd learned today.

He passed the library where a rollicking sing-along was taking place, with two dozen people crowded around the grand piano to belt out Sinatra tunes.

He caught sight of Emma just before she ducked into the room and followed, glad to leave behind the throng drinking Silas Montgomery's booze and gawking at the mansion the oil tycoon had built as a testament to his wealth and power.

The two-story library with its cherry paneling and wall of bookshelves was more intimate than the colossal great hall they'd left behind, but not quiet enough for Nathan. He intended to have Emma to himself by midnight. He had no intention of letting anyone but him kiss her incredible mouth.

She stopped dead as he cut off her escape route. The noise level was too high for conversation, but Emma had little trouble communicating her impatience as he herded her toward the piano and nudged her into a narrow space between a blonde in a red halter dress and a short balding man whose attention was riveted on the woman's cleavage.

Nathan surveyed the blonde without interest. Although he appreciated a half-naked woman as much as the

next guy, he wasn't a fan of augmented breasts. He preferred curves that jiggled. Emma's in particular.

His lips hovered just above her ear as he softly sang the lyrics that accompanied the romantic tune. He put his hands on the gleaming black instrument, trapping Emma between his arms. She stepped closer to the piano to avoid contact with his body.

With her luscious frame calling to him, Nathan locked his elbows to prevent himself from pressing his lower half against her round rear end. He almost groaned at the memory of cupping those sexy curves in his palms. Desire roared in his ears, drowning out the music. He lowered his head and inhaled her perfume. The scent wrapped around his libido, causing momentary amnesia. Why was he angry with her?

Then he remembered.

In the pause between songs, he whispered in her ear, "Your father and I had an interesting chat this afternoon."

Emma lifted her shoulder as a barricade. "Cody mentioned that you had a proposition for Daddy."

Nathan had a proposition for her as well. A proposition of a very different nature than what he'd discussed with Silas Montgomery.

"Did your brother tell you what we discussed?" he quizzed. "No."

"Aren't you curious?"

"Should I be?"

Leaning down, Nathan nuzzled Emma's temple. "Your name came up."

She jerked away from his lips and glared at him, but before she could voice the protests roiling in her eyes, the man tickling the ivories played the first bars of "Come Fly With Me" and conversation became impossible.

What was going on? Emma certainly wasn't acting like a blushing bride-to-be. But he was convinced she'd been behind the terms her father had presented earlier that afternoon. Silas Montgomery couldn't resist giving his little girl anything her heart desired, and Nathan knew Emma wanted him. She'd certainly demonstrated that after he'd stolen her away from the Christmas party they'd been at three weeks ago. So why had she bolted the instant she'd set eyes on him tonight?

Across the piano, a round, middle-aged woman frowned at him, an expression made all the more dramatic because it looked as if she'd used a black marker to drawn on her eyebrows. He met her gaze hard, silently warning her to mind her own business. She shifted her attention to the bald man, who was now captivated by Emma's cleavage.

Nathan sucked in a breath and counted to eight before he mastered the impulse to bare his teeth at the guy like some overzealous guard dog. Instead, he focused on the familiar music, relaxed into the romantic lyrics that had caused generations of women to swoon, and contemplated the knockout he must marry if he hoped to do business with her father.

Nathan and her brother, Cody, best friends since college, had often talked about business opportunities that sparked their interest, but they hadn't discovered any worth pursuing until recently. When he and Cody had first discussed the idea of a joint venture between Montgomery Oil and Case Consolidated Holdings, Nathan

hadn't anticipated marriage to Emma as part of the negotiations, but he couldn't say he was completely surprised that Silas had made it a key factor in the deal. The project would be a long-term undertaking, requiring huge amounts of capital from both companies. Cementing the connection between Case Consolidated Holdings and Montgomery Oil through marriage ensured that both sides were totally committed to the venture.

Emma would know that. And use it to her advantage. He should be flattered that she wanted him so much that she'd cooked up the scheme and persuaded her father to go along with it. And why wouldn't Silas agree? Once Emma was married, she became someone else's responsibility.

"You have an amazing voice," the blonde to his left told him. She smoothed her left hand across the piano's glossy surface, showing off the huge diamond adorning her middle finger. The bare ring finger proclaimed her availability. "And you know all the words."

Across the narrow space separating their bodies, Emma's spine stiffened at the blonde's blatant flirting.

"My mother loved Sinatra and played his music all the time while I was growing up. She used to call me her very own Rat Pack member. Although, I think her meaning had less to do with my singing and more to do with my knack for troublemaking."

The blonde gave a throaty laugh.

"You're trouble all right," Emma muttered.

Nathan grinned. He liked her humor. She was a terrific package: sexy and funny.

Thinking he had smiled at her, the blonde rotated her upper body toward him. Her low neckline gaped farther as she extended her right hand. One shapely leg slipped between the long slit in her skirt and grazed his thigh. "My name is Bridget."

"Nathan." He clasped her hand while annoyance radiated from Emma like fallout from a nuclear disaster. "How do you know Silas?"

He didn't catch Bridget's answer because his arm no longer blocked Emma's exit, and she'd seized the opportunity to run. As she turned to go, her chest brushed against the bald man's shoulder and his eyes almost popped out of his head. Oblivious to the commotion she'd caused, Emma offered him a brief apology as she slipped past.

Nathan gave the blonde a what-can-you-do shrug. Her smile became a pout as he turned to follow Emma.

She didn't get more than three steps beyond the library before he caught her. Nathan slid his hand around her waist and altered her direction, guiding her to the one place on the first floor where they wouldn't be disturbed by party guests.

"The last time we met I got the feeling you were looking for a little trouble," he murmured near her ear as he herded her down the hallway to her father's study.

She eyed him as warily as a colt sensing the approach of a mountain lion. Perhaps she'd guessed what was on his mind. No man pursued a woman the way he had without wanting her naked and horizontal.

"Maybe I was," she said. "But that was then."

"And this is now."

At the end of a long corridor, Nathan opened a door, and ushered Emma inside. Dark paneled walls absorbed the single light source: a lamp perched on one corner of a massive antique mahogany desk. In a home office of normal size, a piece of furniture like this might have overwhelmed the room, but this house had been built to impress. A leather couch, with flanking chairs, sat before the carved marble fireplace. Texas landscapes adorned the walls, painted by one of Nathan's favorite artists of the early twentieth century. Unlike the delicate French antiques decorating the rest of the mansion, this room's rugged lines and leather furnishings suited the Texas oil magnate who lived here.

Nathan shut the door, caught Emma's arm and spun her around. Before she offered a protest, he backed her against the door. On the other side of the panel, voices and music blended into hazy, indistinct murmurs. Alone at last.

He leaned his forearm above her shoulder, letting his intent settle over her like a silk sheet. "Aren't you curious why your name came up?" he questioned, returning to their earlier topic.

"Not in the least."

"It seems that your father is shopping around for a husband for you."

"Damn." Her head fell back against the door, and the fight whooshed out of her. "He's been trying to marry me off since college."

"Why?"

"Because I'm a handful of trouble he wants to dump into someone else's lap." Bruises developed in her eyes, put there by her father's harsh opinion. "He's got this idea stuck in his head that I need someone to take care of me."

Being the pampered daughter of a billionaire was part of her charm. Nathan was lo...

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