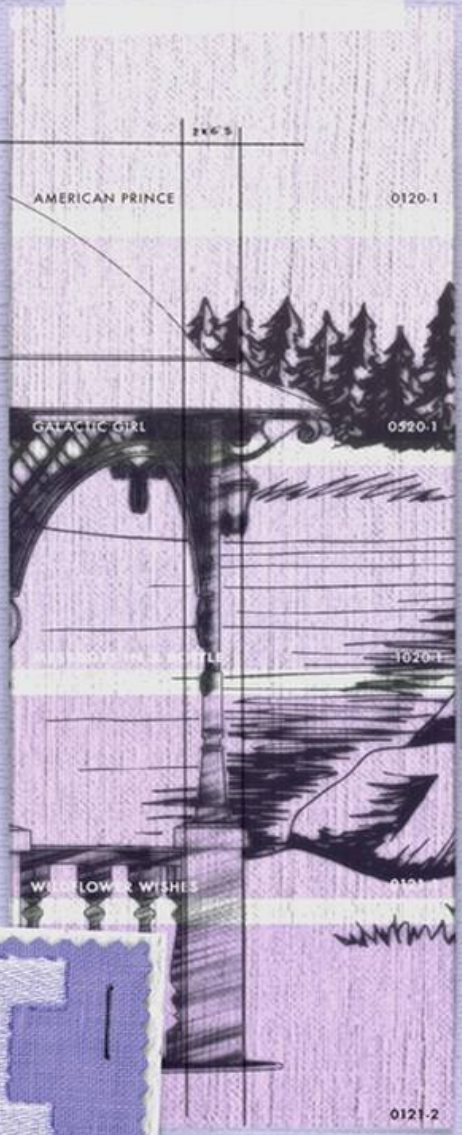
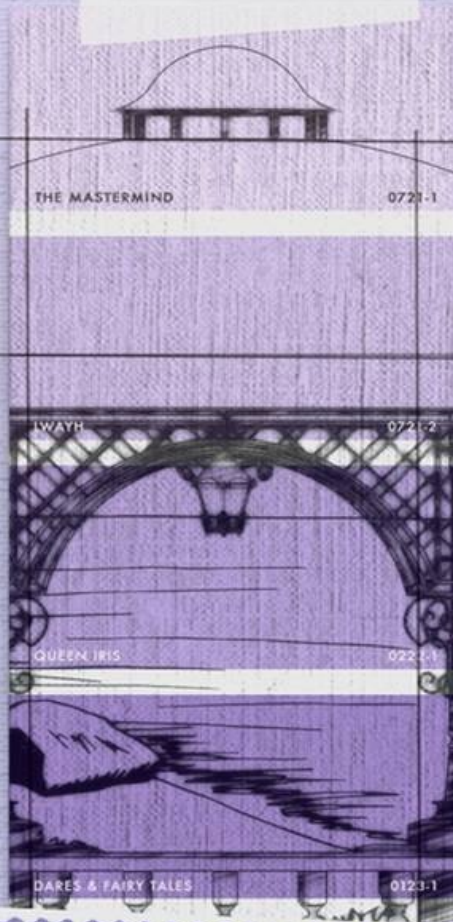


Make center post from 6x5"

LAKEFRONT BILLIONAIRES

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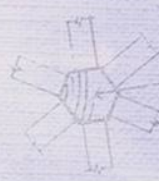


LOVE

REDESIGNED

WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LAUREN ASHER



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LAKEFRONT BILLIONAIRES

IF STEPS ARE NECESSARY OTHER STONE OR BRICK LITERATURE FROM BLOCK ABOVE. WOODEN STEPS ATTACHED TO FLOOR TO MINIMIZE TERRACE CORRELATION.



SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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LAUREN ASHER

BENCH CROSS SECTION

Plagued with an overactive imagination, Lauren Asher spends her free time reading and writing. Her dream is to travel to all the places she writes about. She enjoys writing about flawed yet relatable characters you can't help loving. She likes sharing fast-paced stories with angst, steam, and the emotional spectrum.

Her extra-curricular activities include watching YouTube, binging old episodes of *Parks and Rec*, and searching Yelp for new restaurants before choosing her trusted favorite. She works best after her morning coffee and will never deny a nap.

Find her on:

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PIATKUS

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First published in 2023 by Lauren Asher
Published in Great Britain in 2023 by Piatkus
This paperback edition published in 2023

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Interior formatting: Mary at Books and Moods
Cover designer: Mary at Books and Moods

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A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-349-43797-2

Piatkus
An imprint of
Little, Brown Book Group
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DZ

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk

www.littlebrown.co.uk

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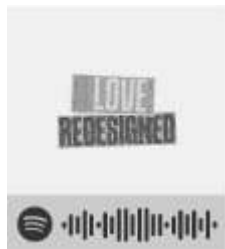
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*To those whose love language is words of affirmation.
Your praise kink is safe with me (and Julian Lopez).*

CONTENT WARNING

This love story contains explicit content and topics that may be sensitive to some readers.

For a more detailed content warning list, please visit laurenasher.com/lrcw



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Love Redesigned

Playlist



Fuck Love Songs

Playlist



Stressed and Depressed

Playlist



Get Hammered

Playlist

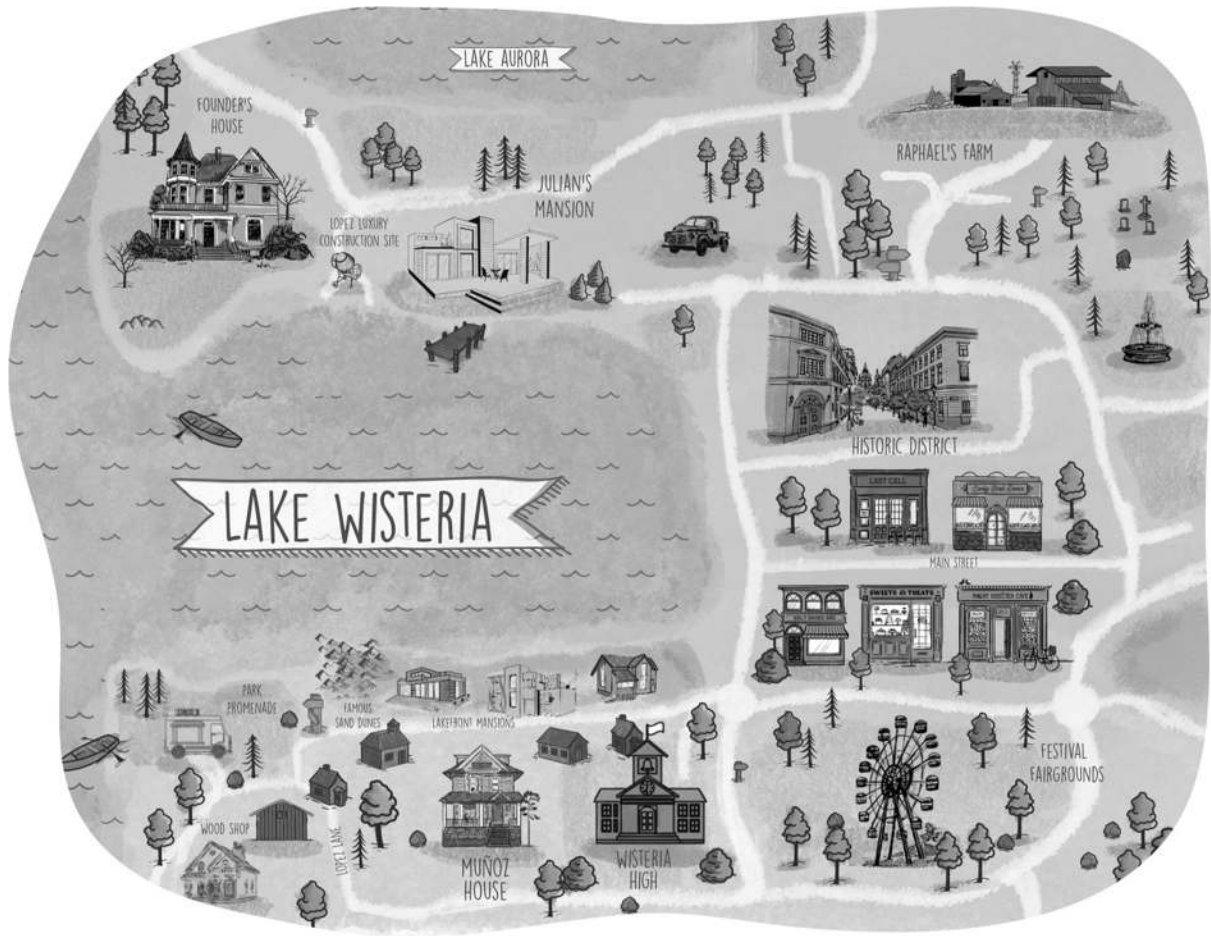


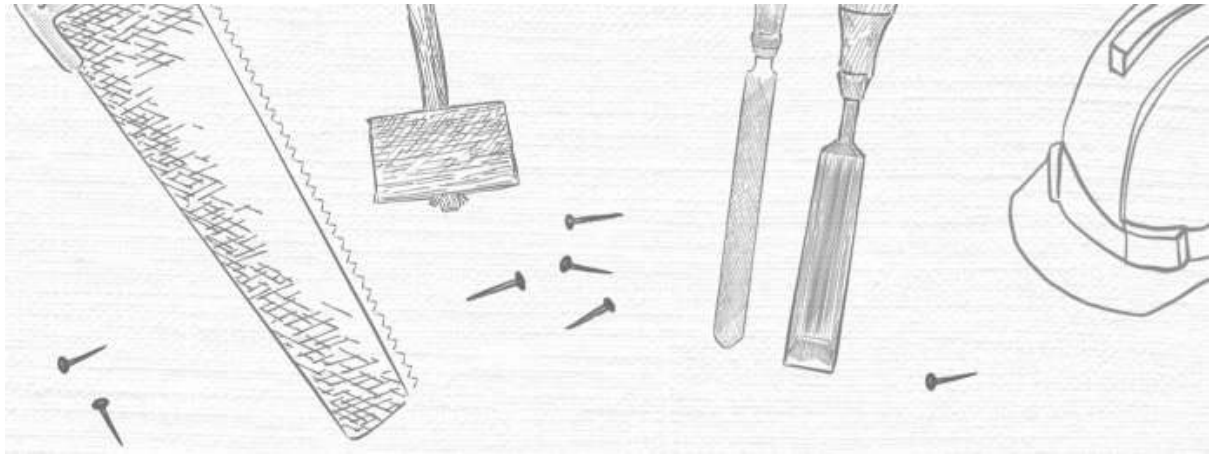


Duke Brass: Greatest Hits



Album - Duke Brass





CHAPTER ONE

Julian

I'm about ten seconds away from losing my goddamn mind, and I have the painfully slow driver clogging up the only road into town to blame.

The sun set twenty minutes ago, giving me nothing to focus on but the illuminated California license plate caught in my headlights. I resist the urge to flash my high beams and honk my horn, although I nearly give in when the black Mercedes-Benz sedan weaves slightly to the side before correcting itself.

Cálmate. You only have five more miles left before hitting Main Street.

While I'm tempted to cut around the other driver so I can make it in time for my godson's talent show, I don't want to risk damaging my new McLaren by going off-road. I didn't spend the last few years of my life talking myself into buying my dream car only to ruin the suspension a week after having it delivered.

Cálmate: Calm down.

The blast of my phone's ringtone startles me as my cousin's name flashes across the screen. I take a deep breath before stabbing the button on my steering wheel.

"Where the hell are you?" The sound of Rafael's harsh whisper fills the car.

"I'll be there in ten minutes."

A disapproving hum follows. "But the show starts in five."

"Don't worry. I'll make it before Nico takes the stage."

"Not sure how that's possible when he's in the opening act."

Mierda. “I had no clue.”

“The program schedule got switched at the last minute after a few kids came down with a bug. I texted you this morning about it.” He doesn’t bother hiding his annoyance.

My hands clutch the smooth leather wheel. “The meeting in Lake Aurora took a lot longer than expected.”

“Of course it did.”

“Things should slow down soon.”

“Sure they will.” His rough tone only fuels my irritation.

Before his wife filed for divorce two years ago, people called Rafael the easygoing Lopez cousin, with him constantly going out of his way to put a smile on everyone’s face.

Rafael’s deep sigh cuts through the silence. “It’s fine. Nico will understand.”

Mierda: Shit.

My godson might be a mature eight-year-old kid, but he isn’t *that* mature. And after everything he has been through with his parents’ divorce, I refuse to add myself to his growing list of family disappointments.

“Your mom saved you a seat in the back of the auditorium in case you make it.”

“Rafa, I’ll be—”

He hangs up before hearing the rest of my sentence.

Pendejo.

Rafa and I have been butting heads more often than not lately, mostly due to his attitude and my busy schedule running my late father’s construction company. While I try my hardest to balance my personal life and Lopez Luxury expanding beyond my father’s wildest dreams, I keep falling short.

I scan the narrow space beside the road. The incline is muddy but still drivable for the handful of seconds I need to pass the car in front of me.

Stop overthinking and do it.

The rosary my mother hung from my rearview mirror spins as I turn

my wheel toward the shoulder and slam my foot against the gas pedal. The engine revs as it switches gears, and my tires squeal.

My heart lodges itself in my throat as the other vehicle veers to the right and blocks my clear path.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!

Pendejo: Dick.

Time seems to speed up as our two cars collide. My headlight shatters and metal crunches as the front of my car smashes into the rear bumper of the other. I'm propelled forward, only to be shoved in the opposite direction as my seat belt locks in place.

Thankfully, the airbags don't deploy, although my relief is short-lived as whatever spark of hope I had of making it to Nico's show fizzles out, leaving me with nothing but a desire to yell at the reckless driver.

Take five. The memory of my dad's voice pulls at the invisible strings wrapped around my heart until the tightness seems unbearable. I can picture him clearly as he helped me calm down from another night terror, one deep breath at a time.

I never thought I would be using the same strategy twenty-five years later, but here I am, with my eyes screwed shut as I force myself to count my breaths until the chest pain lessens and I'm no longer vibrating with rage.

I'm hit with an early October breeze as I walk toward the other car. The driver is hunched over the wheel, her dark, shoulder-length hair obstructing my view of her face.

I reach out to tap on the window, but a high-pitched shriek coming out of the car's speakers stops me. "Don't worry! I'm on my way!" The call cuts out after two beeps.

The woman's panicked breathing becomes more obvious with each rapid rise and fall of her back.

"Hey." I knock my fist against the window when she doesn't acknowledge me. "Are you okay?"

She lifts a trembling finger to the glass while keeping her head down. "One second." Her voice wavers.

My stomach muscles clench. “Do you need an ambulance?”

“No! I’m fine!” Her head snaps in my direction.

Vete a la chingada.

“*Julian?*” My name leaves Dahlia Muñoz’s parted pink lips in a hoarse whisper.

It’s been years since I heard Dahlia say my name in that soft voice of hers, and it hits harder than a sledgehammer to the chest.

The last time I saw her was at Nico’s baptism eight years ago when we became his godparents. We both put on a happy face for our families, but the tension and awkward silence between us nearly choked me, especially since we hadn’t spoken since my dad’s funeral a year and a half prior.

She stayed at Stanford all year round, including the summer break, while I kept my distance because I was a coward.

A coward who was blindsided when she showed up with Oliver, my ex-roommate and her new boyfriend. I didn’t think they would become friends, let alone a couple, although it makes sense given Oliver’s jabs about my crush on Dahlia and the way he looked at her despite knowing how I felt.

Since the baptism, we have both done an outstanding job of avoiding each other—or at least we *had* until she ruined all our efforts with tonight’s surprise visit.

“Dahlia.” An intense need to escape overwhelms me as her eyes slide over me.

Vete a la chingada: Get the fuck out of here.

I hide my shock as she exits the car with her head held high despite the mascara running down her cheeks and the slight trembling of her chin. Dahlia has only cried twice in the thirty years I’ve known her—once when she broke her arm trying to beat me in a tree-climbing contest and the other while at her father’s funeral.

Like the tide with the moon, I’m unable to resist Dahlia’s gravitational pull as my gaze follows the length of her body.

The plain white T-shirt she wears complements her golden skin and wavy brown hair, while her ripped jeans appear more fashionable than

functional with how her knees pop out of the large, gaping holes. Her curves perfectly balance out her sharp cheekbones and pointed chin, creating the best combination of soft and sultry.

The base of my neck tingles, and I look up to find Dahlia's red, puffy eyes narrowed at me. Her ruined makeup doesn't detract from her beauty, although the dark circles underneath her eyes have me speaking before my brain catches up.

"Your face is a mess."

Pinche estúpido. Unlike my mom and cousin, I'm not a people person, and it clearly shows.

Dahlia's golden rings glint in the moonlight as she wipes at her cheeks with a frown. "I had something in my eye."

"Both of them?" I widen my stance as I cross my arms.

She dabs at the corners of her eyes with her two middle fingers. "A decent person wouldn't call me out on that lie."

"Since when are we decent to one another?"

Pinche estúpido: Fucking idiot.

"It's never too late to start."

Because of our slight height difference, she is forced to tilt her head back to get a good look at me. Her walnut-colored eyes remind me of long-ago late nights spent in the woodshop, meticulously obsessing over staining my latest carpentry project.

Whatever resolve I had quickly crumbles when she *sniffles*.

"Allergies." Her defensive tone, paired with her twitching nose, makes my chest constrict in an act of ultimate betrayal.

What the hell is going on here, and how do I get it to stop?

I keep my facial expression neutral despite the rapid thumping of my heart against my rib cage. She doesn't last long under my scrutiny before slumping against the door with a sigh.

I'm struck with a compulsion to say something, but words fail me.

My ringtone shatters the moment. "Shit!"

Her brows shoot toward her hairline. "What's wrong?"

You. Always you.

Blaring sirens drown out my response. Every muscle in my body goes rigid as a rush of vehicles makes its way around the bend in a single-file line. A fire truck and ambulance lead the safety brigade, followed by the sheriff, his deputies, and the Lake Wisteria trolley.

You've got to be kidding me.

Dahlia curses up to the stars. "*Dios, dame paciencia con mi mamá.*"

Dios, dame paciencia con mi mamá: God, give me patience with my mom.

My gaze cuts into her. "That's who you were talking to?"

"Unfortunately."

Leave it to Lake Wisteria to turn a fender bender into a community crisis.

It's not the cars they're concerned about. It's her.

Dahlia is more than my childhood rival. She's Lake Wisteria's Strawberry Sweetheart who is finally returning home after years spent away living out her California dream.

And you're the cabrón who nearly drove her into a ditch.

I rub at my throbbing temple.

"Do you think we can escape before they get here?" Dahlia's gaze flicks from me to my car.

"This is all your fault." The words slip out.

A few minutes in Dahlia's presence already have me slipping back into the bad habit of speaking without thinking.

Add it to the long list of reasons you should avoid her.

She pops a hand on her hip. "*My fault?* We wouldn't be in this mess if you hadn't tried to cut me off."

"I had somewhere to be."

She throws her arms up. "Well, I was..."

Usually I crave silence, but something about Dahlia shutting down at the first sign of opposition frustrates me.

Bright flashing lights cast us in shades of red, white, and blue as a few of the firefighters hop out of the truck to assess the scene while two medics quickly determine both Dahlia and I are fine.