

The Billionaire's Prodigal Wife by Tatiene Richard

Chapter 21

Chapter 21

"Where were you?" Alessandro didn't even look up.

She stuck her tongue out at his bent head. "Book store. Did you know my baby is the size of a lima bean?" She saw his eyes snap in her direction. "Oh, I've met my new muscle. Send him away. I can protect my own lima bean thank you."

He stood up from the table and extended his hand for her bag. "You bought books?"

"Yeah, and then I spent the afternoon quietly reading about the size of my baby and how you may feel inadequate and unimportant as I start to put the child's needs ahead of yours." She held his gaze. "I'm supposed to do stuff to make sure you don't feel this way, but I have a feeling even if I wanted you to have a taste of being second-rate, you're so full of yourself you'd never notice anyway."

She stepped past him and lifted the menu. "Are you leaving soon to go to Dulce?"

"No. We're going out to dinner." "I thought she's confined to bed." She looked at him sideways.

Alessandro saw Carlos and Nuncio exchange a long look and he considered maybe having someone to witness him murdering his wife wasn't a good idea. He turned to look at her. "I meant we, as in you and me, are going out to dinner. *We're* going to celebrate our good news."

"I don't have anything to wear." She did not want to go anywhere with him.

"Yes, you do. Your dress is on the bed and so are your shoes. Go take a shower and get ready."

"Don't order me around. If I don't want to go, I'm not going. I might be stuck with you as my husband but it sure as hell doesn't make you, my master."

He looked to Carlos. "You can leave. I'll call you when we're ready to go."

"Oh, you're taking Carlos and Nuncio to dinner. How sweet of you to make up for their wasted trip." She saw Nuncio covering his mouth with his hand as if trying to hide his smile, but his eyes danced, and she grinned at him behind Alessandro's

back. Maybe he wasn't so bad.

new books and read all about my little lima bean." She giggled as she rubbed her tummy and whispered to it. "Now that's going to be a funny nickname."

Alessandro was torn with wanting to kiss her senseless for the way she clearly in love with their unborn child and strangling her for making a serious attempt at making his life a living hell. He closed the door on Carlos' laughter and turned to face

her. "I'll ask in the future you not make a spectacle in front of the staff."

"Tit for tat?" She asked with a lifted eyebrow. "How about you get rid of Dulce, and I'll play nice in front of the staff?"

He pointed at her. "Mackenna, for the last time,"

"Save it Alessandro. I don't care anymore. All I care about is my baby. If you feel the need to have two women to keep your libido in check, fine. Whatever. I just want my baby." She rubbed her tummy and hummed as she walked to the bathroom, ignoring his furious hiss of breath and the way his footsteps pounded on the carpeting as he followed her into the bedroom.

She stopped moving as she took in the dress lying on the bed. It was one he'd designed when he'd been in her apartment while she'd napped. "You had it made?" She asked quietly as she dragged her feet to the edge of the bed and lifted the soft ice-blue material of the cocktail dress. "It's stunning Alessandro."

"Thank you." He spoke seriously. "I'd like to see it on you. I have someone coming up to do your hair. She should be here soon so go take a shower."

"Stop ordering me around!" She felt her hackles rising furiously. "If I don't want to go out to dinner, I'm not going." She folded her arms defiantly. "Who the hell gives you the right to bring someone to do my hair? I like my hair."

"It needs a trim." He pushed her fringe out of her eyes and she slapped his hand away. "Kira will be here soon."

"Kira?" She felt her blood drain. "You expect me to let Dulce's sister cut my hair? No thanks. I'd rather have a blind man with rusty scissors do it."

"Kira is a nice girl."

"I'm sure she is but I know where her allegiance lies, and I don't want her

The force of her slamming the door of the bathroom made him jump. He rubbed his fingers across the bridge of his nose. He wanted a cigarette so bad in this moment and he was torn with going to the veranda to smoke and going to the bathroom and making her see reason. He chose the latter and knocked once on the door. "Mackenna, open the door please. I just want us to have a nice dinner together. We got off on the wrong foot today and I think we can make things better. It will not be good for our child if we're constantly bickering." The sound of her moving on the other side of the door caught his ear. "Mackenna, let me in. I want to share in the joy of our child, and you hide from me."

He could hear running water as she turned the taps of the tub on, and he groaned and leaned his head against the door. “Mackenna.”

She kicked the door with her heel. “Stop whining Alessandro. It’s annoying.” She wiped tears off her cheeks as she waited for the water to fill.

“Open the door,” he pleaded. “I want to see you.”

He watched the handle turning and she opened it and glared at him. “Now you see me. So what?”

“Come here,” he held his arms out and pulled her into his grip. “If you do not want Kira to do your hair, I will send her away but there are many people who pay top dollar for her to do it. However, it is your choice. If you don’t want to go out to dinner, I will cancel our reservation and we will celebrate here in the suite all alone, just us.” He almost chuckled at the way she stiffened.

“I’d hate for the dress to go to waste.” She whispered as she decided being all alone with him in the quiet suite was not conducive to her peace of mind.

“Then you should go get in the tub and soak for a bit. Our reservations are in a couple of hours.”

“I can do my own hair.” She protested weakly.

“Of course.” He kissed her lips softly. “Would you mind if when you are soaking, I take my shower?”

“No.” She shook her head as he turned her back into the bathroom and she

between wanting him and hating him. Perhaps one of her books would tell her if this was normal behaviour for a pregnant woman. She could hear him collecting his things in the bedroom as she quickly undressed and slid into the bubbles and the

turbulent jets.

Alessandro came into the bathroom and shut the jets down. “Out of the tub.” “What?” She stared at him. “Why?”

He held up a book he’d grabbed off her bed. It had fallen open to one page, “this says you’re supposed to avoid whirlpools and saunas and Jacuzzis for the first trimester. It was opened to this page on the bed.”

“Wait. Are you telling me I can’t bathe?”

“You can bathe. No jets.” He shook his head as he quickly skimmed the paragraph. “Not until after the first three months.”

She sunk back into the tub. “Fine. No jets but I want the bubbles.”

He smiled widely at her, but he pointed firmly to the water. “No jets.” He bent down and kissed the top of her head.

She sighed blissfully. “I haven’t soaked in a tub since I was in Milan in my grandparents’ apartment. I stayed there so long my wrinkles had wrinkles.”

He chuckled as he moved to the sink and dug out his shaving gear. “Well, I won’t let you stay so long tonight. When is the last time you went dancing?”

She turned her head to look at him as he squeezed a white creamy lather on his cheeks. She used to love watching him shave. She turned so she was lying on her belly in the tub and looked up at him. “I don’t know, maybe a month ago? Savannah took me the first weekend I got back from Milan. I carried her home.”

“Would you like to go tonight?” He asked her, his eyes meeting hers in the mirror.

She sat up straight. He’d never taken her dancing before. “You want to go dancing?”

“Yes,” he smiled at her surprise.

“With me?” She was confused.

He leaned down his cheek and watched as her tongue ran across her lips. “I’ll teach you how to dance.”

“I’ll have you know I dance quite well. Savannah dated this Cuban guy and he taught us a bunch of Latin dances and then we took classes. I can samba and merengue and salsa and a few others too.”

He turned slowly to look at her. “You danced the salsa with some Latin lothario?”

“I danced with him. Savannah slept with him. I was the better dancer. She was the better lover, or so she said.” She sunk backwards in the water as he moved closer to her, his fingers full of creamy lather as he reached for her. “Hey,” she protested as he grabbed her wrist and pulled her back toward him, half out of the water and against his chest. “You’re getting your shirt all wet.”

He cupped his fingers around her chin. “You do not dance with anyone but me, understood?”

At first, she thought he was joking but then she saw the steely glint in his eyes and his lips were straight. “Alessandro. I don’t think you have the right to tell me who I can or cannot dance with or do you forget I’ve seen you with Dulce grinding on you in a nightclub?”

His lips bruised hers as he kissed her hard and quick on the mouth. “I mean it. If you want to go dancing, I will take you, but you dance with no one else.”

As he released her jaw and moved back to the sink she sunk back down in the water. “What if I said the rule should apply both ways?”

“Fine.” He said sharply.

“Fine.” She said with equal edge. But as she lay back in the water and watched him finish shaving, it dawned on her he had agreed to something she’d never thought he would, and her heart raced with the knowledge of it.

The Billionaire’s Prodigal Wife by Tatiene Richard

Chapter 22

Chapter 22

Alessandro watched her across the table as she looked out across the restaurant uncomfortably. Not three syllables in succession had escaped her mouth since they’d left the hotel room. “If you are so uncomfortable with me, then perhaps we should go back to the room.”

She looked up and bit her lip. “It isn’t you Alessandro. Derrick Portman is here with his family. He keeps staring over here. I just feel guilty.”

“Why?” He grimaced at her. “I know he wanted to date you but what do you owe him?”

“He asked me out and I told him I wouldn’t until my divorce was final, but I asked him to wait.” She saw Alessandro’s hand tighten around the stem of his wine glass. “I didn’t tell him I slept with you in Milan. I was pregnant with your child, and I told him when my divorce was complete, I’d date him. He has been a friend a long time and I led him on. I just feel guilty.” She blew a long shaky breath outwards.

“You asked him to wait for you?” Alessandro spoke tightly as he turned to look at the man across the room. “You were really going to go through with this farce of a divorce and have another man’s baby?”

“He’s smart, funny, and handsome and he wanted me and only me. He’s professional and he’s made it clear he’s ready to settle down and he’s looking for someone to be with. I wanted to be the person he did it with.”

“Why? You don’t love him.” Alessandro returned coldly.

“Do you actually think you’re the only man on the planet I might be able to love?” She asked in amazement. “People fall in and out of the love all the time Alessandro. I spent five years hating your guts because you chose to go to your mistress instead of staying with your wife. Is it really so far of a stretch to think I would have fallen in love with an attentive, kind compassionate man who wanted to be in my bed rather than one who wanted to run from it?”

“Did he make love to you?” Alessandro asked coldly his eyes still focused on the man who didn’t notice he was being watched. He was staring at Mackenna like a man obsessed.

only in the last few months he’s been single again and I’ve noticed him looking and I looked back. No, he didn’t make love to me,” she reconfirmed to her arrogant husband.

“Yes, he has.” Alessandro commented quietly.

“No, he hasn’t.” She retorted angrily as she covered her cheek with her palm and shielded her face from Derrick’s stare. “He didn’t even kiss me once.”

Alessandro leaned forward then across the table. “Every night in the man’s dreams he undresses you; he takes you to his bed and he makes love to you all night long. I promise you the man thinks of it more than you want to admit. I bet he knows every nook and cranny of your body.”

She was a furious shade of red now. “Alessandro. Stop it.”

“He wants to make love to my wife, and *I’m* supposed to stop?” Alessandro demanded angrily.

“Alessandro, you won. I’ve already called Camille and my grandparents are over the moon I’m going back to Milan.” She prayed the words would change his focus on Derrick.

“You’ve called them already?” He sat back, his eyes narrowing on her.

“Yes. I called my grandparents first. They were excited about the baby.” It was so easy to change the topic of conversation when it had to do with him winning.

“And the viper?”

“Camille? She’s not a viper Alessandro. She’s a divorce attorney and she’s good at what she does.”

“She threatened to castrate me.” Alessandro told her with a straight face. “She said she wanted to do it with a dull spoon.”

"You showed up at her daughter's baptism and threw a fit because she wouldn't give you, my address." She glared at him. "Her daughter's baptism Alessandro! Do you know how angry I would be if someone did such a thing on our child's special occasion? Alessandro, I wouldn't threaten to castrate you. I would do it. I would have splayed you out on the banquet table and removed your manhood with a pair of

"I was desperate to find you." He knew no shame. "You owe her and her family an apology." "I will pay her bills." He shrugged. "Alessandro. You owe her an apology."

"Fine. I will apologize." He picked her fingers off the table and twined them through hers. "What should I do to make it up to her?"

"I don't know. I'm sure you'll think of something."

"We'll invite her to our baby's baptism." He grinned at her unrepentantly from across the table.

"You're a jerk." She muttered as she lifted her water glass. She took another peek and Derrick was still watching her intently. She felt like the biggest fool on the planet. Alessandro would never give her an ounce of the respect Derrick would have. He could have made her a great husband and now she would never know.

"Stop looking at him. It only encourages his fantasy." Alessandro sipped his wine and glared at her from across the table.

"Maybe I'm having some of my own." She flicked an annoyed glance in his direction.

"Mackenna, if you continue in this manner, I will end this evening right now and we'll leave. This is supposed to be a celebration of our renewed relationship and you are deliberately trying to provoke me."

Her blue eyes glistened with unshed tears as she bit her bottom lip. "I'm celebrating my baby, not being shackled to you for all of eternity."

Her words caused him to snap the stem of his wine glass and he passed it to a waiter before dropping a pile of bills on the table and pulling her from the table and pushing her towards the entrance. She yanked on her arm, but he held her firmly, dragging her the way a parent removes a poorly behaved child. She was aware of Carlos and Nuncio looking in surprise at them as they rushed to the door.

As soon as they were outside, she turned on her heel and pulled away from him, uncaring she was drawing attention. She shoved his chest hard, but his feet didn't

whole life upside down without caring one ounce of how this affects me or my dreams or my heart. All you care about is what you want. The things I want, and need are thrown

under the bus because they're unimportant to you. If you want someone to do everything you want, call Dulce and I'm sure she'll bend up like a pretzel just fine for you."

Carlos interrupted. "There is a photographer..."

"Screw the photographer," Mackenna said furiously. "I don't give a damn if there are a dozen photographers. Dulce would probably have an aneurysm if someone other than her was photographed with you. Well, lucky for her, I'll never be hanging off your arm like she does so it makes for some boring photojournalism." She walked away from him then swiping furiously at the tears streaming down her cheeks.

She heard him behind her order something be done about the paparazzi headed in her direction and then she heard his hard footsteps on the concrete coming up behind her. She kept walking ignoring his calling of her name and when he gripped her elbow, she shoved it backwards hard and caught him by surprise in the solar

plexus.

"Don't touch me Alessandro. I might be having your baby and I might be stuck being married to an overbearing pompous jerk, but I don't have to let you treat me like your child." She glared at him furiously from the other side of a park bench where she'd jumped.

"You might have been twelve years older than me when you swept me off my feet in Milan, but I've grown up since then Alessandro and you seemed to have regressed to an immature, spoilt self-absorbed goon who thinks he can run roughshod over the people around him without repercussion. I will never, not ever, dine with you in a restaurant again because I will never give you the satisfaction of pulling such a humiliating stunt again."

"Mackenna, you are causing a scene." He put his hand out to her. "Come to me and we'll go back to the hotel and talk this out."

a scene? Throttling him seemed too easy. "No." She shook her head. "I don't want to be with you. I'm going back to my apartment and I'm spending the night there, alone."

He rubbed his hand over his face and then patted his chest automatically for his package of cigarettes and grimaced.

"Smoke two cigarettes, it might end my misery sooner," she said nastily as she saw his movements and started to walk away from him again.

"I am not smoking any. When I realized we were bringing a child into our home, I decided to quit." Just thinking of it made him want one but he forced the craving back as he tried to focus on making her calm down.

"Mackenna." He started to speak but one of the first photographer's counterparts rounded the corner and began snapping his photo. It took all of ten seconds for Nuncio to be on him but in the moment of distraction, he realized Mackenna had disappeared.

She had ducked into a shop to avoid the photographer and the way Nuncio was clutching him by the throat. She lifted her eyes to the woman behind the counter. "Can I have a decaf vanilla latte please?" She then added a chocolate dipped biscotti to her order and fumed at Alessandro.

How could he go from being such a pain in her backside to endearing in a half-second? His words had surprised her. He'd decided to quit smoking for their baby. He'd always said he enjoyed smoking and he'd have to have a very good reason to stop. She had never minded the taste of it when he kissed her, simply because he'd made her forget anything but kissing him. His clothes never seemed to

smell of it and he was never someone who left ashtrays or cigarette butts around and so his habit had never bothered her. Yet to know he would put their child ahead of his own vice reminded her of all the good things he was, and she got irritated with him for being able to switch her emotions so easily.

His hand tight on her waist as she waited for her coffee told her he'd found her, and he wasn't happy she'd disappeared for the last two minutes. "Do you want

"Not particularly. Doctor Ingram said you shouldn't have caffeine." He watched the woman behind the counter preparing a coffee.

"It's decaf and I want something to soothe my nerves." She didn't look at him as he pressed a kiss to the side of her head.

"It's always a coffee shop with you." He whispered quietly. He had known of the first time she'd run from him had been to a coffee shop bathroom. He'd laughed at her but suddenly he wasn't finding it amusing in the least. She was always running from him when he only wanted her to run to him.

"It's where I was last month in Milan too." She turned her head and looked at him and saw the surprised expression.

"I did not find you there," he said quietly.

"I saw you go in," she retorted, her tongue poking in her cheek with mirth at his displeasure. "You missed me by this much," she held her fingers a smidge apart. "Is it my fault the only places open when you make me angry are coffee shops or pubs?"

He hugged her tight to his side, his arm caressing her gently. “I apologize, Mackenna. I am finding it difficult to adjust to you having a life outside of me.” He kissed her temple again. “Can you forgive me?”

“No.” She saw his wide-eyes and gave a sad smirk. “Did you think I would just say yes, and all would be well? You embarrassed me Alessandro. It was difficult enough sitting in a restaurant knowing people think I’m your doormat but for you to drag me out of there was humiliating.”

He stroked her cheek as he took the brunt of the anger, he knew he deserved. “How do I make it up to you? What can I do to make you feel you don’t have to hang your head in shame because you’re having our baby?”

The Billionaire’s Prodigal Wife by Tatiene Richard

Chapter 23

Chapter 23

His words cut her to the core, and she took a breath, “I’m not ashamed to be having our baby, Alessandro.” She chastised him quietly. “I love our baby. I’m ashamed my closest friends and family know I’m back in your bed and it will only be a matter of time before you’re back in hers. My grandfather’s first question was to ask if Dulce was no longer employed by Giordano Fashion. I had to lie and tell him everything was resolved because if he knows the truth, he will be ashamed of me and rightly so.”

He gave a long sigh. “You would want me to let go of a model who has made my company hundreds of millions of dollars in the last six years to ease your suspicious mind?”

“Knowing you could put a price tag on the value of our marriage sickens me.” She dug through her purse for the money to pay for her coffee and then rolled her eyes as Alessandro passed the waitress the money.

“You know. I’ve always considered Dulce a drama queen, but I think you might be trying to take her throne.” He followed her out of the café.

“Ass.” She mumbled under her breath as she sipped her coffee. “The limo is waiting across the street.”

“That’s nice.” She ignored his extended hand. “I told you. I’m going back to my apartment.”

“Let me put it for you this way, Mackenna.” He gripped her by the shoulders and stared into her eyes, ensuring she could see the annoyance flickering there. “I agree this evening is a bust. There is no point trying to salvage dinner at this point. So, we can go

back to the hotel. You can do whatever you want there and I will do work so as not to strangle you. Or we can go back to your apartment, and we can spend the evening in your cramped little quarters. Since my work is all in the hotel room, I'm sure we can find another way to pass the time in your tiny room. We'll both spend the night in the tiny little cot you call a bed. It's so small you'll likely have to sleep on top but I'm okay with it. Either way, now you are carrying my child, we sleep in the under his breath as she furio ossed the street and

same bed." He laughed under

He climbed in behind her and he grinned as he realized Nuncio was giving her hell for disappearing.

Mackenna faced him angrily. "Call your watchdog off."

"I don't think so." Alessandro chortled at her misery. "It is nice to share the responsibility of your safety with another. Nuncio will take his job very seriously."

Nuncio pointed his finger furiously in her direction. "If you pull a stunt like this again, I'll insist on handcuffing you to my side when we're out and don't think I won't do it. My last job was protecting a pair of twins of a movie star and his wife, and they hated my guts because everywhere they tried to hide, I was already waiting. You might have gotten away with your escape artist routine once on me, but you won't repeat it again. I promise you."

"Whatever," she suddenly laughed at him and both Alessandro and Nuncio sat back startled at her sudden change in demeanour.

"Why is she laughing?" Nuncio asked Alessandro in confusion.

She chuckled under her breath as Nuncio glowered at her and Alessandro merely flicked a glance at his watch. She caught the movement and her grin disappeared. "I'm sorry Alessandro. Are we keeping you from something important? Does Dulce need her sponge bath?"

He ignored her comment and looked to Nuncio. "I apologize for my wife's lack of manners Nuncio. You'll get used to her eventually but even the first day we met she was volatile and emotional. She likes to think she's all grown up but she's still very much a child trapped in a woman's body. I'm afraid everyone who's ever loved her has indulged her just a bit too much."

She threw the bag containing the cookie at him and he caught it with a grin. "At least she threw the cookie and not the coffee."

"I haven't tasted coffee in two days. I wouldn't waste a drop of it on you." She drew her tongue along the plastic lid in a seductive swirl she knew would catch his eye. She

squealed as he reached out and yanked her across the space and onto his lap. "Alessandro!" She wrestled him for the cup, but he took a long drink of it as he vacated. "Give me my coffee."

He held it up, his arm outstretched past her and laughed. "It's too sweet. You're giving our baby too much sugar."

"He's too little to even notice. He's a lima bean, remember?" She struggled against him, but he held her firm. "Alessandro, you're being unnecessarily cruel."

"What do I get for giving you back your coffee?" He tormented her by taking another long drink of it as she wiggled on his lap.

"You call me immature?" She shrieked at his annoying behaviour. "You're wrestling me in the back of a limousine. Do you even know what a seatbelt is?"

"Seatbelts are for sissies." He teased her, his eyes dancing merrily as she pouted. "Kiss me, Mackenna."

"No." She pulled her head back and her full bottom lip pulled downward in a frown. "Alessandro. I'm angry with you. I'm not going to just give you kisses for my coffee."

"Then I'll drink your coffee." He held it up to his lips, but he waited for her. "Just one kiss, Mackenna."

"You have to bribe your wife to kiss you. Do you know how pathetic it is?" She demanded of him eyeing her coffee longingly.

His teeth were white as his lips pulled back in a smile showing he took no offense at her comment. "I know deep down you love me. I just have to help you find it again." He saw her brow furrow and his smile grew wider still. "Come and kiss your husband, Mackenna."

"Do I get my coffee back?" She eyed the cup hungrily. "You took me from the restaurant before I even got to eat, and my belly is rumbling." She saw Nuncio staring out the window in boredom, but Carlos was laughing at her, and her own lips twisted at Alessandro's playful mood. She had never been able to resist this mood and Carlos had been with Alessandro for years and knew his personality well. Nuncio probably thought he was working for a pair of kooks.

She smiled and then adjusted herself over his lap, so she straddled him, and he fluttered shut as she lowered her lips to his and drew them slowly along the soft fullness of his. She kissed him slowly and tenderly knowing this was what he'd wanted from her.

He wanted to kiss and make up and she admitted she wanted it too. She was tired of fighting with him. His arms tightened around her waist, and she deepened the kiss slipping her tongue past his teeth and a sound comparable to the sound of a kitten's mew escaped her lips. She pulled her head back and looked down at his half-closed eyes. "Do I get my coffee now?"

"I'll buy you your own shop," he murmured huskily as he drew her back down to his lips.

She giggled at his words, her lips brushing his. "I can't have that. You'll know where I am all the time."

He held her tight his eyes serious as he looked up at her where she stared down at him. "I want you with me all the time Mackenna. I made a mistake before being away from you for too long. I won't make the same mistake again. I want us to be together."

"Alessandro," she felt the tears in her eyes, and she blinked rapidly to hide them.

He looked past her and realized the car had stopped moving. "Let's go inside and sit down. We'll order dinner in, and we'll talk. Okay?"

She nodded as emotion clogged her throat. He'd gone from playful to serious in one kiss and she was confused. She was tucked under his arm as he sheltered her from a pair of photographers who had obviously found out where he was staying, and were trigger happy with the camera. When Nuncio moved to them, she reached out and shook her head at him. "They're not worth it Nuncio. If you make a big deal of it, they're going to think there's a story where there isn't one. Just walk away. At some point, they'll grow bored with how boring I am, and they'll move on."

Carlos and Nuncio both blocked her from the shutters of two more hopped out of the brush and Alessandro kept her protected under his arm as they were moved inside. Hotel security apologized for the breach as soon as they were inside and promised to deal with the issue immediately. She looked up and saw Alessandro's

"It's not your fault." He said coldly as they stepped into the elevator.

"If I hadn't of yelled at you on the street then they wouldn't have followed." She felt tears spilling onto her cheeks. "I'm sorry. I know you don't want them to know about me."

He barely glanced in her direction as he spoke furiously to Carlos and Nuncio about hiring extra protection to ensure her privacy. She walked ahead of him into the hotel suite, and she stood back as they did a quick sweep of the room to ensure nothing tampered with or anyone hanging around where they shouldn't be. She felt uncomfortable as they men glowered and grumbled back and forth about the breach

in security. When she started to walk to the veranda to escape their smoldering commentary, Nuncio swore and dragged her back.

“Paparazzi could easily be set-up in a nearby building with their zoom lenses on this room. All *you* would need is for one of them to snap a picture of you on the veranda.”

“Right. Then someone would have to explain to the world just who the brunette with the bad hair is in Alessandro’s room while his girlfriend is laid up in the hospital.” She pulled a face and moved to the bedroom. Uncaring the door was open, and all three men were looking at her with annoyance she began preparing for bed. She had loved dressing up for Alessandro tonight. She’d never worn one of his creations before and it had fit her to perfection. It had a deep plunging neckline and a flared skirt hanging to her knees and the material was the softest material she’d ever felt. She had felt like a princess. She unclasped the diamond necklace and earrings he’d draped on her. She placed them back in the box on the nightstand and then began unzipping her dress.

“Mackenna, there are still others in the room.” Alessandro spoke with annoyance.

“They’ve seen better looking naked women than me, I’m sure.” She ignored him and stepped out of the pretty dress and hung it back on the fabric hanger. She heard his hiss of irritation as she moved to the wardrobe in only a matching panties and

She pulled a robe off the hook on the door and slung it over her shoulders. Her cell phone started to buzz, and she moved to it and pulled it from her purse as she sat on the edge of the bed. She instantly recognized Savannah’s number. “Hi.”

“Mac, I need to see you right now. Where are you?”

“In Alessandro’s suite at the Marquis. Why?” Something in Savannah’s voice made her sit up straight. “What is going on?”

“I’m in the lobby of the Marquis. What floor?”

“I’ll send Nuncio down for you.” She moved to the living room. “My friend Savannah is in the lobby. Can you go bring her to me? She’s upset about something.”

Alessandro’s phone rang and he opened it. “Dulce, I’m busy right now. I’ll call you back.” He ended the call abruptly as he glared at Mackenna. “Put some clothes on now.”

She pushed her arms into the robe and tied it around her waist and glared at Alessandro. “Happy now?” She stomped her foot. “Nuncio, can you go get my friend?”

I don’t want Savannah being pestered by your stupid paparazzi. Go get her.”

Nuncio moved out of the room and when he came back five minutes later, Savannah was with him, and she was furious as hell.

The Billionaire's Prodigal Wife by Tatiene Richard

Chapter 24

Chapter 24

Mackenna had never seen her best friend so angry. It wasn't she'd never seen her angry. She'd just never seen her *this* angry. Her blue eyes were blazing, and her hair was bedraggled like she'd been pulling it and her lips were full and round. Her cheeks so red it reminded Mackenna of the time she'd gotten so sunburnt it had hurt to even breathe. Which she thought might have accounted for Savannah's short breath if she hadn't known she'd been working eighteen hour shifts for the last week

and likely hadn't seen the light of day.

"Savannah? What's wrong?" Mackenna was amazed she wasn't even looking in her direction.

Savannah managed to get across the room before Carlos or Nuncio knew what she was doing, and she landed a solid right hook to Alessandro's cheek and the sound of it echoed in the room. (This novel will be daily updated at www.noveljar.com) In seconds Carlos had her pinned to a wall and Savannah was screaming for him to let her go because she was going to kill him.

"Savannah!" Mackenna was horrified. "What the hell are you doing?"

"You put her through all kinds of hell for nothing you insensitive bastard!" Savannah screamed. "How could you? You said you loved her and yet you tortured her when you knew the one thing to have eased all of her pain!"

Alessandro wiped a drop of blood from his nose with a handkerchief and took a long slow breath, his eyes cold and angry. "I did no such thing Savannah."

publicity you purposefully allowed the charade to continue and encouraged Dulce in it. You, lying scum!" Savannah's feet were off the air as she wrestled against the wall to lunge at him, but Carlos held her firm.

"You knew!" Savannah said bitterly, (This novel will be daily updated at www.noveljar.com) her eyes narrow and furious as she took in the arrogant stance as he moved to cross the room in her direction.

"Savannah, I'm sure you think you've uncovered some glorious truth, but you are mistaken."

"No, I'm not." She looked to her best friend who was staring at the pair of them. "I went to her, Mac. I went to Dulce. When we had coffee this morning you were so torn, and it broke my heart. You are the only family I have Mac. I have nobody else and yet you love me like a sister. You don't care where I grew up or about my past or my present or even my sexuality." She snickered then.

“Oh, that’s a big one. My sexuality.” She looked back to Alessandro. “I bet you Mac told you I was bisexual.” She saw the man holding her against the wall lean back with his eyes big and wide. “I used to be ashamed of it, but Mac taught me it shouldn’t matter to anyone else except me and my partner. She never judges me.” She lunged again at Alessandro as a thought occurred to her. “You should have trusted her, and you put her through hell instead!”

“Savannah, I don’t understand. Why did you go to Dulce’s room?”

“You were crying this morning Mac and it killed me.” She swallowed the lump in her throat. “I thought maybe if I appealed to Dulce, for the sake of your baby she would back off. She’s been calling reporters all week and yapping to the staff, and I just wanted her to back off a bit. Hell, the paparazzi outside were probably given your coordinates by her, she’s been so damn vocal.”

Mackenna knew no good was coming of this and she sat down on the edge of the sofa.

“Savannah, I already know she won’t. She wants Alessandro and he wants her. I’m just a filler. I hate it but in the end my baby is all who matters, and I’ll get around it.”

No.” Savannah spit angrily. “There’s the problem. You shouldn’t have to get

and start over but we both know all you want is for Alessandro to give you the love and respect you deserve. Instead, he lies to you even now.”

“Savannah, are you in love with my wife?” Alessandro asked coldly, trying to change the subject.

Savannah grimaced. “No, you pompous ass. I love her like a sister, like a best friend but not like a lover. We just don’t click sexually.”

Mackenna waved her arm. “Alessandro, stop changing the subject. Savannah, spit it out.”

“Dulce refused to back off. She loves the publicity and the headlines. It makes her a lot of money and Giordano even more. She said as long as the tabloids would print the rubbish she was selling, she was selling it.”

“She told you it was rubbish?”

“No. At first she said it was all true. She said she and Alessandro had been having s*x for years but then I caught her in a lie. He,” she pointed to Alessandro, “didn’t tell her where he disappeared to for two days during fashion week in Paris. She gave me some crazy story about how they hooked up in a room every night they were there and slept in until noon, having crazy wild s*x until the hotel complained.”

She managed to have relaxed enough Carlos released her and she walked to Mackenna.(This novel will be daily updaed at www.noveljar.com) “He was with you. You made a baby on your trip. There is no way on earth they were having s*x if he was having s*x with you.”

Mackenna nodded to her friend, encouraging her to continue. She feared, looking at Alessandro, knowing he would be impassive and cold.

“It’s in her contract Mac. She’s gay. She’s terrified it will ruin her in the tabloids so she as it in her contract Giordano Fashion House can never publicize her sexuality and will protect her at all costs,” Savannah glared at him, “to the point of providing her a handbag.”

“I don’t get it, what’s a handbag? Why does she need a purse?” As soon as she spoke, she realized the intention of Savannah’s words. “Oh my God, they give her a decoy lover?” She turned and pointed at Alessandro. “You, you behave as her lover

“No,” he denied, a flush rising on his cheeks as he struggled to contain the rage at Savannah for interrupting the evening.

“Yes,” Savannah corrected him glaring with pure hatred, “your wife sat home night after night wanting only for you to love her and you were out hamming it up for every damn tabloid and camera to protect your little money maker. Because there is a clause in the contract Alessandro cannot tell anyone, nobody, even you Mackenna, of his prized Dulce’s sexuality, he wouldn’t tell you. He just let you wither in misery.”

“I didn’t know Dulce was telling you we were lovers Mackenna, this is the truth.”

Mackenna wrapped her hands around her middle as she sat rocking back and forth on the sofa. “All this time, all this time you knew the one thing to make it all better for me and you kept it from me.” Her voice cracked and she shook her head. “How did you get her to admit it to you Savannah?”

“I got in her face and was yelling at her for being cold and insensitive and she laughed, and things got weird,” Savannah ran her fingers through her hair in embarrassment.

“Savannah, you kissed her, didn’t you?” Mackenna would have laughed at her friend’s antics if she truly weren’t messing around with the enemy.

“Yeah, and she kissed me back and it was something, I’m not going to lie. I’m sorry Mac, I know you hate her, and I crossed a line. But then a nurse walked in, and she went ballistic someone caught us,” Savannah moaned and covered her face.

“Someone saw you?” Alessandro muttered shaking his head. “Are you kidding me? Do you know the damage you have done Savannah? Your temper and your lust have probably cost my company millions of dollars. Get out.” He pointed to the door.

“This is what you care about Alessandro?” Mackenna felt her eyes pooling with unshed tears as the betrayal seared her soul. (This novel will be daily updated at www.noveljar.com) “You knew, all this time, you knew. Now I know, the first thing you can come up with is my friend, the only person who is

trying to protect me and keep me safe, the only one who genuinely loves me, has cost you some money? Of all the billions of dollars you make annually, this would be a blip on your radar and yet it's where we are?"

reveal her secrets Savannah," Alessandro ignored Mackenna's harsh words.

"Uh, quite sure she was all in where the exposing was concerned. It wasn't my hand on my boob when the nurse walked in and it sure as hell wasn't my own hand holding the back of my head while she devoured my face."

Alessandro blanched at the description and Mackenna didn't miss it. Asshole, Mackenna thought angrily.

"Wow, she really went for it huh?" Mackenna quipped smartly.

"And then some," Savannah exhaled slowly, "until the nurse walked in on us. She didn't seem to get there is a patient confidentiality thing, and she went off the deep end. She was screaming about calling her lawyer and her publicist and him," she thumbed her hand in Alessandro's direction.

"If it wasn't for your friend Mackenna, then this would never have happened. Dulce can twist all of this and say it was a set-up to get rid of her. She has a forty-million-dollar contractual buyout. This is a nightmare, and you are both taking this much too lightly."

Mackenna stood up and moved to her friend and hugged her tight.

"I love you Savannah, thank you. Thank you for thinking of me and trying to protect me and for punching him in the face," Mackenna held her friend's eyes, not missing the hiss of Alessandro's breath at her last words. "You've done what I so want to do but don't have the balls."

Savannah rested her forehead against her friends. "I'm sorry, I know how much this must hurt. I'm sorry I kissed her. I know how much you despise her."

"I do despise her but I'm thankful for you going through all of this for me. You are the best friend anyone could ever ask for."

"Did you plan this Mackenna? Did you know she was going to expose Dulce?"

Alessandro's accusation came out of left field and Mackenna was left speechless for a moment. (This novel will be daily updated at www.noveljar.com) "Are you insane? You saw how upset she was when she came in. This sure as hell wasn't planned!" Mackenna raised her eyebrows incredulously.

them. "I want you both gone when I get back."

Mackenna paled, "Excuse me?"

“You want your divorce, you got it. I don’t know how the pair of you came up with this plot but to selfishly expose someone’s deepest secrets just so you can get your own way and feel better about yourself and your situation. You took advantage. * He pointed at Savannah, “you’ll lose your medical licence for taking advantage of a patient.”

“She wasn’t my patient, and I don’t care how you want to spin it, this isn’t on me or Mac. This is all you and Dulce,” Savannah hissed back angrily.

Mackenna felt sick to her stomach as Alessandro slammed out of the hotel room. She moved back to the sofa and put her head in her hands. “What the hell just happened?”

“I’m sorry Mackenna,” Savanna whispered. “I didn’t mean to ...”

“No,” Mackenna held up her hand. “You did mean to, and you meant well and I’m grateful. You’re the best friend a girl could have. Can we go back to our place

now?”

Nuncio shook his head. “No, there’s no way I’m letting you out of my sight.”

“Nuncio, you heard him. He wants me gone and we’re getting divorced. You no longer need to watch over me.”

“At the very least, I will take you to the place you want to go, and I will stay there until Alessandro tells me otherwise.”

Mackenna nodded. “Fine.”

It was a quiet drive back to the apartment Mackenna shared with Savannah and the two girls held hands in the backseat, comforting each other. When Nuncio walked them to the door, he did a sweep of the apartment before letting them inside and if he had any opinion on the living quarters, he made no comment other than to wish them goodnight.

Mackenna had changed from her robe to a pair of velvet pants and a hoodie, obviously a choice Alessandro in his shopping of clothes for her he had chosen this

next.

“Mac, you need to get some sleep.” “I need to leave,” she corrected quietly. “He said he’d give me my divorce.” “What about the baby?” Savannah swallowed the lump in her throat.

“He can’t take from me what he can’t find.” Mackenna whispered rubbing her belly.

“Mac, I don’t know about this. You love the guy. You have always loved him, and I’m not convinced you will ever stop. Raising a baby by yourself will be hard.”

“He loves his precious Dulce more and worse, he loves the money most. You heard him tonight, all he cared about was his precious model’s secrets were potentially exposed.” Mackenna looked at her friend. “I would rather spend the rest of my life alone than with him and his selfishness. He knew all this time Savannah. All this time, he had the key to saving our marriage in his hand. I would not have liked their relationship being all over the tabloids like it’s been but at the very least, I’d have understood. (This novel will be daily updaed at www.noveljar.com)He just kept it from me. He kept me hidden from the world because he was embarrassed by me, never wanted anyone to know I existed. She knew our secret. I wasn’t allowed to know hers?” Mackenna wiped angry tears off her cheeks.

“Where will you *go*?” Savannah asked quietly.

“More importantly, how do I get past his goon outside?” Mackenna grumbled as she plunked on the sofa.

“I might know of a way to help,” Savannah offered with a wink more playful than she was truly feeling, her heart breaking for her friend.

