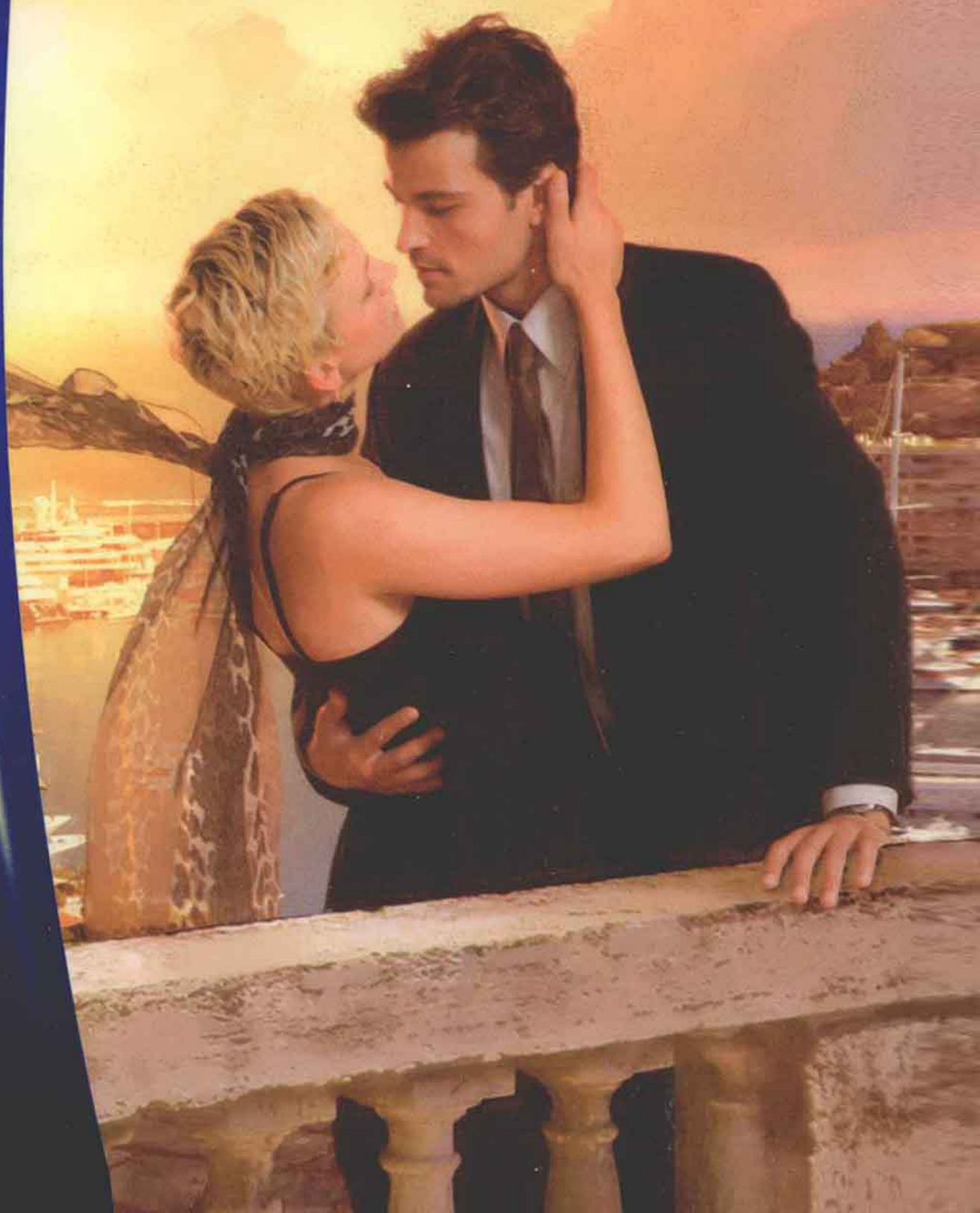


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*JENNIFER GREENE*





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*Introducing DADDY BY CHRISTMAS by Patricia Thayer.*

MIA caught sight of Jarrett when he walked into the open lobby. It was hard not to notice the man. In a charcoal business suit with a crisp white shirt and striped tie covered by a dark trench coat, he looked more Wall Street than small-town Colorado.

Mia couldn't blame him for keeping his distance. He was probably tired of taking care of her.

Besides, why would a man like Jarrett McKane be interested in her? Why would he want to take on a woman expecting a baby? Yet he'd done so many things for her. He'd been there when she'd needed him most. How could she not care about a man like that?

Heart pounding in her ears, she walked up behind him. Jarrett turned to face her. "Did you get enough sleep last night?"

"Yes, thanks to you," she said, wondering if he'd thought about their kiss. Her gaze went to his mouth, then she quickly glanced away. "And thank you for not bringing up my meltdown."

Jarrett couldn't stop looking at Mia. Blue was definitely her color, bringing out the richness of her eyes.

"What meltdown?" he said, trying hard to focus on what she was saying. "You were just exhausted from lack of sleep and worried about your baby."

He couldn't help remembering how, during the night, he'd kept going in to watch her sleep. How strange was that? "I hope you got enough rest."

She nodded. "Plenty. And you're a good neighbor for

coming to my rescue.”

He tensed. Neighbor? *What neighbor kisses you like I did?* “That’s me, just the full-service landlord,” he said, trying to keep the sarcasm out of his voice. He started to leave, but she put her hand on his arm.

“Jarrett, what I meant was you went beyond helping me.” Her eyes searched his face. “I’ve asked far too much of you.”

“Did you hear me complain?”

She shook her head. “You should. I feel like I’ve taken advantage.”

“Like I said, I haven’t minded.”

“And I’m grateful for everything...”

Grasping her hand on his arm, Jarrett leaned forward. The memory of last night’s kiss had him aching for another. “I didn’t do it for your gratitude, Mia.”

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*She didn't set out to kiss him.*

It was just...a kiss seemed a way to halt him in his tracks.

All she did was frame his face in her hands and press her lips against his for a couple of seconds. That was all it took for Maguire to go from manic-energy machine to statue still.

With that first contact, her lips seemed to instantly recognize that Maguire was nothing like any man she'd ever known.

She'd felt so caged these past two months, caged so tightly she couldn't seem to free herself. Maguire had inserted himself in the role of her white knight—more like her kidnapper—but that wasn't the man she found herself kissing.

It wasn't a hero who kissed her back.

It was a man.



Dear Reader,

I was thinking about my daughter when I wrote this book. She came out of the womb knowing how to handle men—she had her father doing anything she wanted before she could even talk. Of course she's beautiful... and kind...so that was part of the picture.

The story idea came from that premise.... The hero initially thinks he's handling the heroine (of course). He comes into her life when she's in trouble, pitches in like the true hero he is. (He was *so* fun to write!) But even though he didn't know it—and probably still doesn't—my heroine was really doing all the handling.

He rescues her...but she rescues him right back.

I hope you like the story! And please feel to write me, either through my website, [www.jennifergreene.com](http://www.jennifergreene.com), or the Facebook page for “Jennifer Greene Author.”

Jennifer Greene

# THE BILLIONAIRE'S HANDLER

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*JENNIFER GREENE*



**SPECIAL EDITION®**

Published by Silhouette Books

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§*New Man in Town*

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## JENNIFER GREENE

lives near Lake Michigan with her husband and an assorted menagerie of pets. Michigan State University has honored her as an outstanding woman graduate for her work with women on campus.

Jennifer has written more than seventy love stories, for which she has won numerous awards, including four RITA® Awards from the Romance Writers of America and both their Hall of Fame and Lifetime Achievement Awards.

You're welcome to contact Jennifer through her website at [www.jennifergreene.com](http://www.jennifergreene.com).

To Jennifer Jeanne  
You have the biggest heart of anyone I know  
Love you.



## *Prologue*

Maguire climbed aboard, wasting no time before kicking off his shoes and sinking into the white leather couch. Maybe he was stuck suffering through a Puccini opera tonight, but there were advantages to being the lone traveler on a private jet. Not only did he own the escape vehicle—which was mighty convenient—but on the long-hour flight to New York, he could bank a serious snooze.

That was the plan.

But he closed his eyes, expecting to hear the door close and the engines start up. Instead, he heard a kid's breathless voice, yelling all the way from the tarmac.

"Mr. Cochran? Mr. Cochran!"

The boy wore a courier uniform, and bounded into the cabin with a flushed face and a self-important air.

"I was told to deliver this to you immediately, sir."

"Thank you." Maguire tipped him and sent him on his way. The pilot had already stepped out of the cockpit to see if there was a problem. Maguire asked him to hold up for two shakes until he had a chance to find out what was so critical in the ordinary manila envelope.

The return address warned him, but the picture that spilled out brought an immediate scowl to his forehead.

He'd seen the photo before. The young woman was sitting on a carpet with a half-dozen children. The kids all appeared to be disabled in different ways. They were clapping hands with her, playing some kind of game or song. She was sitting on her knees, just like the kids, her pale hair wisping around her cheeks, her eyes full of laughter. Everything about her looked as fragile as powder.

"The situation has deteriorated," was the opening line in the report from his investigator.

Maguire read on. Some of it, he already knew. The job she loved was in jeopardy. Her place was constantly hounded by strangers. She'd tried a change

in phones, which was like plugging a finger in a dike. Then she'd tried security, but what she knew about security measures wouldn't fill a thimble. A second photo showed an exhausted woman with shadowed eyes, who looked as if she'd been eating a nonstop diet of nerves and stress.

The break-in was the recent development.

"The police are looking into it," his investigator reported, "but this could be the straw that broke the camel's back. Last night her brother visited her. He called an ambulance. At this time, I've been unable to substantiate what the medical problem is."

Maguire put down the envelope, his mind spinning a hundred miles an hour. None of this should have anything to do with him. He hadn't caused the crisis, didn't even know the damn woman.

Even though his father had died, it seemed Maguire was still stuck cleaning up the man's messes.

"Sir?" The pilot hovered in the cockpit doorway, waiting for instructions.

"See how fast you can change flight plans. We're canceling the New York trip. I need to fly into South Bend, Indiana."

He put a dozen things in motion within minutes, as if he'd been prepared for this contingency for some time—which, of course, he had. He'd known this could happen. Known he might have to become involved.

Sometimes there was a problem that only a billionaire could handle. The irony was that money had nothing to do with it.