



## Baby for Keeps (Kavanaghs of Silver Glen Series Book 2)

By Janice Maynard

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**CHRISTMAS IN THE BILLIONAIRE'S BED**

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## **Editorial Review**

### About the Author

In 2002 Janice Maynard left a career as an elementary teacher to pursue writing full-time. Her first love is creating sexy, character-driven, contemporary romance. She has written for Kensington and NAL, and is very happy to be part of the Harlequin family--a lifelong dream. Janice and her husband live in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains. They love to hike and travel. Visit her at [www.JaniceMaynard.com](http://www.JaniceMaynard.com).

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Saturday nights were always busy at the Silver Dollar Saloon. Dylan Kavanagh surveyed the crowd with a gaze that catalogued every detail. The newlyweds at table six. The habitual drunk who would soon have to be booted out. The kid who looked nervous enough to be contemplating the use of a fake ID.

Around the bar—a winding expanse of wood that dated back to the 1800s and had been rescued from a building in Colorado—the usual suspects ordered drinks and munched on peanuts. The tourists were easy to spot, not only because Dylan knew most of the locals, but because the out-of-towners scanned the room eagerly, hoping to spot celebrities.

Western North Carolina's natural beauty drew people for many reasons. Families on vacation, for sure. But the state was also a hot spot for location scouts. Dylan's home, the elegant town of Silver Glen, was no stranger to famous faces. Just last week one of Hollywood's iconic directors had wrapped production on a civil-war picture.

Dylan shrugged inwardly. He had no interest at all in the famous or the infamous when it came to the world of filmmaking, no matter how many A-listers dropped by for a drink or a meal. Once burned, twice shy.

Suddenly, he realized that he had unconsciously been watching something that sent up a red flag. The woman at the other end of the bar was knocking back drinks at an alarming rate. He frowned, surprised that his head bartender, Rick, hadn't already cut her off.

Working his way behind the bar, Dylan inched closer to Rick. Two other servers were helping out because things were so hectic. And that wasn't counting the three waitresses handling food orders out on the floor.

When Dylan was in earshot of his employee, he tapped him on the shoulder and muttered, "You need to pull the plug on the lady in pink. She's had enough, I think." The woman exhibited an air of desperation that didn't mix well with alcohol.

Rick grinned, his big hands busy filling drink orders. "Not to worry, Boss. She's drinking virgin strawberry daiquiris."

"Ah." It was blisteringly hot outside, an airless summer evening that justified anyone having a cold one...or two or three. The AC was working very well in here right now, yet the woman swallowed her icy drinks with reckless precision. With a nod, Dylan moved away, aware that he was creating a traffic jam in the narrow space.

Rick, who was two decades his senior, cocked his head toward the door. "Go home, Boss. We got this." The

big, burly man with the country accent was perfectly suited to his job. And he was a pro. He and the rest of the staff didn't need Dylan hovering and giving the impression he didn't trust them.

But the truth was, Dylan loved the Silver Dollar. He'd bought it as a twenty-year-old kid, and after renovating the old building from the ground up, he'd opened what was to become one of Silver Glen's most thriving businesses.

Dylan had been a wealthy man when he bought the bar. And if the place ever went belly-up, he'd be a rich man still. As one of the Kavanaghs, the family that put Silver Glen on the map back in the mid-twentieth century, Dylan could easily afford to spend his days and his dollars on idle living. But his mother, Maeve, had brought up all seven of her boys to respect the value of a hard day's work.

That wasn't why Dylan was hanging around the Silver Dollar on a Saturday night. He had put in plenty of hours this week. The reason was far more complex. This bar was proof—hard-core evidence—that he wasn't a total failure in life. Despite his youthful stumbles, he had made something of himself.

He didn't like thinking about his adolescence. Parts of it had been a nightmare. And the ugly reality that he was never going to match his older brother in academic achievement had tormented him right up until the day he admitted defeat and dropped out of college.

The truth was, he felt more like himself here at the saloon than most any other place. The Silver Dollar was laid-back, sometimes rowdy, and always interesting. It felt comfortable. Nobody here knew about his failings. No one, even the locals, seemed to remember that Dylan had been metaphorically voted "student most likely to be a bum."

He'd absolutely hated not being able to master the required subjects in school, but he had masked his anger and frustration by building a reputation for insolence, irresponsibility and wild partying.

Only when he had found this old building disintegrating and in disrepair had he finally settled down and found his passion. Like the building, there was more to Dylan than met the eye. But he'd had to prove himself. So the Silver Dollar was more than a project. It was his personal declaration of independence.

Besides, Dylan was *between relationships* at the moment, and he'd rather be here mingling than sitting at home watching summer reruns. He was a people person, plain and simple. That brought him back to the puzzle of the woman in pink.

*Ignore her.* Rick was right. Dylan *should* go home. As much as he enjoyed spending time at the Silver Dollar, there was more to life than business. Before he departed, though, he knew he had to check on his unusual and intriguing customer. When the stool beside her became available, Dylan took it as a sign. He had Irish blood running in his veins. Sometimes the universe pointed toward a clear and obvious path.

It wasn't strange to have a single lady drinking at the bar. But the ones who did were usually trolling for a pickup. This slight, harried-looking woman seemed to be encased in a bubble of solitude, her eyes focused on her drink. Quietly, he sat down to her left and only then saw what he hadn't been able to see from his previous vantage point.

She was holding a baby.

An infant, to be exact. Cradled in the woman's right arm, resting in her lap, was a tiny, sleeping child. A girl,

if the little pink ribbon stuck to her one curl of dark hair was any indication.

Already regretting his impulse, Dylan assessed the situation instantly, realizing that more was at work here than a woman needing a drink. If he were smart, he would back away. His impulse to wade in and help people often went unappreciated, or even worse, blew up in his face.

When the woman didn't so much as acknowledge his presence, even though they were sitting practically hip to hip, his gut told him to stand up and walk away. He would have. He should have. But just then the slender female plopped her glass on the bar, hiccupped and gave one of those little multiple-hitching sighs that said louder than words she had been crying, was about to cry or was trying *not* to cry.

Female tears scared the crap out of Dylan. He was no different than any other member of his sex in that regard.

He had grown up without sisters, and the last time he saw his mother cry was at his dad's funeral years ago. So the urge to run made complete sense.

But something held him in his seat. Some gut-deep, chivalrous desire to help. That, and the faint female scent that made him think of summer roses blooming in the gardens up at the Silver Beeches, his brother's ritzy hotel on top of the mountain.

Still debating what he should say or do, he paused for another careful, sideways glance. His mystery lady was sitting down, so it was hard to gauge her height, but *average* was his best guess. She wore khaki pants and a pale pink, button-down shirt. Dark brown hair pulled back in a ragged ponytail revealed her delicate profile and a pointed chin with a bit of a stubborn tilt.

Something about her was very familiar, perhaps because she reminded him of the actress Zooey Deschanel, only without the smile or the joie de vivre. The woman at Dylan's side was the picture of exhaustion. Her left hand no longer held a drink, but even at rest, it fisted on the bar. No wedding ring. That, however, could mean anything.

*Stand up. Walk away.*

His subconscious tried to help him, it really did. But sometimes a man had to do what a man had to do. Grimacing inwardly, he leaned a bit closer to be heard over the music and the high-decibel conversations surrounding them. "Excuse me, ma'am. I'm Dylan Kavanagh, the owner here. Are you okay? Is there anything I can do to help?"

If Mia hadn't been holding her daughter, Cora, so tightly, she might have dropped the sleeping baby. The shock of hearing Dylan's voice after so many years burned through her stupor of despair and fatigue and ripped at her nerve endings. She had walked into the Silver Dollar because she heard he was the owner and because she was curious about how things had turned out for him. She hadn't really expected him to be here.

Looking up, she bit her lip. "Hello, Dylan. It's me. Mia. Mia Larin."

The poleaxed look that crossed his face wasn't flattering. Only a blind woman could have missed the mix of emotions that was a long way from "Great to see you." He recovered quickly, though. "Good Lord. Mia Larin. What brings you back to Silver Glen?"

It was a reasonable question. She hadn't lived here since the year she and Dylan graduated from high school. He had been eighteen and full of piss and vinegar. She had been sixteen and scared of what lay ahead. She'd also been a social misfit with an IQ near 170 and little else to commend her. While she was in graduate school, her parents had sold the family home and retired to the Gulf Coast, thus severing her last connection to Silver Glen.

She shrugged, feeling her throat close up at the memories. "I don't really know. Nostalgia, I guess. How are you doing?"

It was a stupid question. She could *see* how he was doing. The boy with the skinny, rangy frame had filled out, matured, taken a second helping of tall, dark and gorgeous. His warm, whiskey-brown eyes locked on hers and made her stomach do a free fall, even though she was sitting down.

Broad shoulders and a headful of thick, golden-chestnut hair, along with a hard, muscled body added up to a man who oozed masculinity. She wondered if he was still as much of a badass as he had been as a teenager. Back then his aim in life seemed to be seeking out trouble.

He was the first boy she'd ever had as a friend, the only boy who had ever kissed her, until she got out of college.

And here he was, looking too damned appealing for his own good.

Dylan grinned, the flash of his smile a blow to her already damaged heart. In an instant, she was back in school, heartsick with a desperate crush that was laced with the knowledge she had as much chance of ever becoming Dylan Kavanagh's girlfriend as she did of being voted Homecoming Queen.

He raised a hand, and at some unseen signal, the bartender brought him a club soda with lime. Dylan took a drink, set down his glass and flicked the end of her po-nytail. "You've grown up."

The three laconic words held equal measures of surprise and male interest. Her stupid heart responded with adolescent pleasure despite the fact that she was now past thirty, held two doctoral degrees and, as of twelve weeks ago, had become a mother.

"So have you." Though it galled her to admit it, she couldn't hold his gaze. She was no longer the painfully shy girl she had been when he knew her before, but even the most confident of women would have to admit that Dylan Kavanagh was a bit overwhelming at close range.

He toyed with the straw in his glass, not bothering to disguise his curiosity as he looked down at Cora. The baby, bless her heart, was sleeping blissfully. It was only at two in the morning that she usually showed any aversion to slumber.

"So you have a child," he said.

"What tipped you off, smart guy?"

He winced.

Appalled, she realized that her careless comment must have sounded like a reference to the past. She'd tutored him because he had dyslexia. As a senior, Dylan had hated being forced to take help from a

classmate, especially one who had skipped two grades and was only fifteen. The pride of a cocky teenage boy had taken a beating at having Mia witness his inability to read and master English textbooks and novels.

"That's not what I meant," she said quickly. "I'm sorry. I'm a little self-conscious about having a baby and not being married. My parents are adjusting, but they don't like it."

"So where's the kid's dad?" Dylan seemed to have forgiven Mia for her awkward comment. His eyes registered more than a passing interest in the answer to his question as he waited.

"I'm not really prepared to go into that."

The man on her right reared back in raucous laughter and jostled her roughly. Mia cuddled Cora more tightly, realizing that a bar was the last place in the world she should have brought her infant daughter.

Dylan must have come to the same conclusion, because he put a hand on her arm and smiled persuasively. "We can't talk here. Let's go upstairs and get comfortable. It used to be my bookkeeper's apartment, but she moved out last Tuesday."

Mia allowed him to help her to her feet. Grabbing the diaper bag she'd propped on the foot rail, she slung it over her shoulder. "That would be nice." For a woman with a genius IQ, she probably should have been able to come up with a better adjective. But this encounter seemed surreal. Her social skills were rusty at best. Given the fact that she hadn't slept a full night since Cora had been born, it was no wonder *nice* was the best she could do...

"Follow me." Dylan led her across the restaurant floor to a hallway at the back of the building. The steep, narrow staircase at the end was dimly lit.

He insisted on taking the diaper bag and would have taken Cora as well, but Mia clutched her tightly. "I can carry her." She trailed in his wake as they ascended, trying not to ogle his tight butt packaged nicely in well-washed jeans.

She knew the man in front of her was a millionaire several times over. Yet somehow, he had the knack of appearing to be just one of the guys. It was a talent she had envied in high school. Mia hadn't fit in with any crowd or clique. Shy and serious, she had been all but ostracized by her classmates who were two years or more ahead of her in adolescence.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Mary Gines:**

As people who live in the modest era should be change about what going on or details even knowledge to make these individuals keep up with the era that is always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by reading books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to a person is you don't know which one you should start with. This Baby for Keeps (Kavanaghs of Silver Glen Series Book 2) is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

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