



Synopsis

Renaldo da Silva's near-perfect life in Brazil comes to a halt when he finds out about his wife's betrayal. Now he doesn't want to have anything to do with her. But because he needs her help finalizing the biggest deal of his career, he's forced to make her a multi-million dollar offer and delay their divorce.

Sabrina da Silva can't forgive herself after a reckless night destroys her marriage. She agrees to help her husband and then disappear from his life for good. But with passion still smoldering between them, it's not easy for either to walk away. Will their passion be enough to overcome the ultimate test of their love?

Second Chances

by Delaney Diamond

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Chapter One

Over a year later...

Liar. Cheat. Those were the words that came to mind when Renaldo da Silva thought about his wife. His soon-to-be *ex*-wife.

Silently berating himself, he stared out of the giant windows of the luxurious penthouse apartment in the building his company owned. They'd shared it since she moved to Sao Paulo with him right before their marriage.

He should have known better. After all, he'd been warned, hadn't he? She'd told him about her background. She told him how she came from a family of drug addicts and criminals. She'd explained how she'd lied and stolen to make ends meet. He'd known what kind of woman she was, and he'd chosen to ignore everything she'd shared because he'd been such a besotted fool and assumed she'd done those things out of necessity.

He'd barely known her when they married. His impulsive behavior had simply been an act to whisk her away and make her his. According to her, he'd given her the kind of life she'd only dreamed of, but apparently it hadn't been enough.

Why?

He looked at the three photos in his hands, though he didn't really need to. The images of her and another man were seared into his brain. To think, he wouldn't have known if he hadn't been searching for a document in her home office. He wouldn't have found the pictures, and he wouldn't have known of her deceit.

He'd been a fool to welcome her into his life. The beautiful façade of independence and intelligence had blinded him to her true character. Her infidelity cut deep. He would never forgive her.

Sabrina stepped off the private elevator, glad to be home. The five-bedroom apartment took up the entire top floor of the building Renaldo owned. The recessed lighting shone down on the spacious entryway, while the rest of the house remained wrapped in darkness. In her hand she held her high heels so her feet wouldn't make a sound on the black walnut floors because he was probably asleep after his long trip.

She crept toward the staircase. Renaldo would not be pleased she'd worked another late night, particularly since she hadn't been at home to greet him upon his return from Chicago. But she'd been getting so much accomplished, she simply hadn't been able to tear herself away.

She only had one more thing to take care of before she joined him in bed.

Nausea filled her stomach. She had to get rid of the latest round of photos she'd received. Then she could concentrate on Renaldo and find a way to make up her absence to him.

She sensed his presence before she saw him. He emerged like an apparition from the darkened interior, slowly coming toward her. The shirtsleeves of his white shirt were rolled up to reveal his bronze, hair-sprinkled forearms. He still looked as handsome as the day she married him, even with the tired lines on his face.

She set her shoes on the table against the mirrored wall and planted her most becoming smile on her face.

"Honey, I'm sorry I didn't get here earlier. Feel free to give me a spanking."

He stopped a few feet away, not cracking a smile. "Where have you been?"

She couldn't decipher the strange look on his face. "At the office, of course."

"Working late again. You knew I was coming back tonight, but you couldn't tear yourself away from whatever you were doing to be here to greet me."

She'd really screwed up this time. He was obviously very upset with her. "I'm sorry, but when you see the numbers I have, you'll understand why I couldn't break away."

He took a step forward, but stopped again, examining her as if seeing her for the first time. But there was something else. His eyes were hard and cold. She'd finally pushed him too far.

"Renny, I know you're mad at me." She walked toward him, adding an extra swing to her hips, smiling teasingly. He could never resist her when she moved like that. "I'll make it up to you."

And then she saw the photos turned inward toward his leg. He couldn't have found the photos; she'd hidden them in her desk.

"What are those?" Her heart was in her throat, so she barely got the words out.

Renaldo tossed the photos on the floor and they fanned out across the polished wood, mocking her. *Oh God*. Her worst nightmare.

"You tell me." His quiet voice was louder than any shouting could be because of the derision it held. "Who is this man, and what are you doing with him?"

Sabrina swayed and reached for the wall to steady herself. "Where did you get those?"

"You didn't answer the question."

Because she couldn't. She didn't have an explanation.

"Were you with him tonight?" He spoke calmly, but she could see the darker emotions swirling in his eyes. He was seething.

"No. I was working. I swear."

Renaldo's hands clenched. "Why should I believe you? It seems that when I'm out of town, you find alternative ways to keep yourself entertained."

"No. Renny, that's not true."

He jabbed his finger toward the pictures. "Then explain those to me."

She would if she only knew how they'd happened. But she didn't.

He was so angry. His accent had gotten thicker, like it always did when he was aroused—either in passion or anger.

"I don't know how."

"They are not..." His voice trailed off as he fumbled for the correct English word. "They are not doctored?"

If only they were. She'd managed to keep this a secret for as long as she could, worried that this day would come and she would lose him.

"No, they're not doctored."

The breath he drew in was harsh and loud in the grave-like quiet of the house. "So you have been lying to me and sneaking around behind my back? For how long?"

"I never went behind your back," Sabrina said. "It—it just happened. I didn't plan it."

Renaldo snorted. "That's hard to believe when I find photos of you in intimate positions with another man, hidden away in your desk for enjoyment when I am not here."

"That's not why I hid them. I was ashamed, and I knew if you saw them I would lose you. I was scared. I was going to get rid of them. I—" She pressed her palms to her hot cheeks. "Please. You have to believe me."

"You should leave before I do something I regret."

"No, Renny, please. You *have* to listen to me. You have to hear me out." The scorn and anger in his voice hurt. It was almost too much to bear, because ever since she'd met him, he'd been her champion and treated her with care and respect. Her perfect world was falling apart.

"Leave."

"Renny, please."

"By the time I count to three, you better get out or I will toss you out."

“Please don’t do this to me. Give me another chance.”

“One.”

“I was drunk,” she said, shaking uncontrollably. “I didn’t know what I was doing.”

“Two.”

“You love me.” He flinched as if she’d struck him. “Can we please work it out? I don’t know what happened, but you know that’s not me. I *love* you.”

“Love me?” His upper lip curled. “You love this life. Your ambition betrays you. You love money and power. You love material things, but you *do not love me*.”

Sabrina’s eyes welled up with tears of pain at the way he’d characterized her. “If you believe what you’re saying, why did you marry me? You don’t believe that. I know you don’t.”

“I was a fool,” Renaldo said in a voice full of regret. “I saw what I wanted to see.”

“That’s not true. I’m your wife.” Her hand flattened against her heart to stem the hurt expanding in her chest. “You know me.”

“Obviously I do not. Your time is up. Three.” He reached for her.

He was really going to do it; really going to put her out.

Sabrina slapped at his hands. If he couldn’t catch her, he couldn’t toss her out.

But Renaldo caught her hands. He was too fast, too strong. He caught her arm and spun her around hard, slamming her back against his chest.

“You can’t do this.” Her pulse kicked up a notch.

He was so tall, that when his arms cinched around her like tight bands and he easily lifted her, her feet dangled a few inches above the floor. “Go to him now. Tell him I sent you, and he can have you all to himself.” His breath was hot against her cheek and bitterness laced his voice. “I want you out of my house and out of my life.”

Sabrina twisted and kicked, throwing her body backward to force him to put her down. “I’m not leaving!”

Her desperate movements only made him clamp his arms tighter as he marched toward the side door leading out to the stairwell.

“Renny, I love you. Don’t do this. D-don’t!”

He didn’t stop and managed to hold her still with one arm and use his free hand to open the door.

“Renny!”

He stepped out into the stairwell and deposited her there. “Do not come back here.” His voice was so cold. So devoid of any emotion except anger. “You will hear from my lawyer.”

He stalked back inside and slammed the door behind him.

Sabrina blinked back tears as she stared at the bare white walls and the long staircase leading down to the next floor.

This couldn’t be happening. It couldn’t be over. She loved him. He had to let her explain. Something had gone terribly wrong that night, but she was still Sabrina, the woman he married. The woman he said he’d love forever.

She would make it up to him. She’d do whatever he wanted, if only he’d forgive her. Didn’t he know she couldn’t live without him? He *had* to forgive her.

She pounded on the door. “Renny! Please forgive me. Please!”

She didn’t know how long she stood out there, pleading for his forgiveness. She pounded until her fists grew sore and her arms tired. But he never came back. It would be futile to try the private elevator; he would’ve had her key card deactivated by now.

Exhausted, Sabrina finally accepted her fate. She’d lost everything. Renaldo, her home, her security.

And she was the only person to blame.

Finally, she crumbled to the floor in a miserable, sobbing heap.

Later that night, Sabrina knocked on the door of her cousin’s apartment. When Jewel opened it, she stared at Sabrina with wide eyes.

“Brina, what happened to you?”

Sabrina knew she looked as bad as she felt. She’d seen an image of herself reflected in the mirrored walls of the elevator on the ride up. Her cheeks were tear-streaked, and lines of black mascara ran down each side of her face. Her hair, which she’d taken great care with, was a mess after tumbling from its neat arrangement during her altercation with Renaldo.

“Can I come in?” she whispered. Her throat felt raw from all the screaming and crying she’d done.

“Of course.” Jewel opened the door wider.

“I don’t have any money. Would you pay the taxi downstairs?”

“No problem. I’ll be right back.”

In the past, Sabrina had been the one to help Jewel; now the tables had turned.

Like a zombie, she trudged in and dropped onto the sofa. She rested her cheek against its back and curled her bare feet under her. When Jewel returned, she didn't have the energy to lift her head and face her. How she managed to make it to the apartment was still a mystery.

Jewel sat beside her, her brow furrowed in lines of worry. "Brina, what happened? What's going on?"

"He threw me out."

"Renaldo?"

Sabrina nodded, feeling the tears well up in her eyes again. She hadn't thought she had any more left.

"What do you mean he threw you out? What for? The two of you are married."

"We won't be for much longer." Overwhelming sadness forced the tears from her eyes.

"Honey, you're not making sense." Jewel took her hand. "What on earth would make him want to divorce you? He's madly in love with you and you're madly in love with him. You followed him here from Chicago. You even convinced me to come with you, for heaven's sake. Of course you're staying married. You just had a little spat, that's all." Jewel patted her hand.

Sabrina shook her head. "No. It was more than a lovers' quarrel."

"Tell me what happened."

Sabrina sniffed and wiped under her nose. "He found out."

"Found out what?"

"About Mateo."

"Who in the world is Mateo?"

"The guy we met at the club."

"Wait a minute, that was months ago. You stayed in touch with him?"

"You could say that."

"Honey, you're not making sense. Look at me." Jewel moved closer on the sofa. "What are you talking about? Why were you still in touch with Mateo?"

Sabrina closed her eyes and her face crumbled. "Because I spent the night with him." Her voice pitched lower and cracked. "And now Renny knows."

About the Author

Delaney Diamond is the bestselling author of sweet and sensual romance novels. Originally from the U.S. Virgin Islands, she now lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She has been an avid reader for as long as she can remember and in her spare time reads romance novels, mysteries, thrillers, and a fair amount of non-fiction.

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