

Bonus Chapter for IN BED WITH MR. WRONG

– It's Time –

"I can't believe it's been over a year since we've been back here."

Ryan could barely believe it, either. His life had done a complete one-eighty since he met Bri. He'd never been happier. It was this place that had been the turning point for their relationship. Really, he was almost surprised the cabin itself hadn't changed, to the point where he half expected to find condoms scattered about. "I thought this might be nice for a last hurrah."

"We won't be doing much hurrahing once this little baby comes." She spread her hand over her belly, now as big as a beach ball. "It won't be much longer—thank God. One more week."

Their lives were about to change again, and he couldn't be happier for it. "I can't wait."
"Me either."

"Why don't you sit down and prop your feet up? I'll see about making us some food." Ever since she hit her last trimester, all she wanted was turkey sandwiches prepared a very specific way—with Miracle Whip and Colby Jack cheese. He'd tried it once and the strange combination of flavors made him a little sick to his stomach.

But what his pregnant wife wanted, his pregnant wife got.

He never got tired of thinking about her like that—his wife. She'd helped him put down the roots he never knew he wanted, and now they were starting their own family. It was a little strange to think about, but he liked it. A lot. Ryan barely had time to slather on the Miracle Whip when Bri's low cry had him spinning around. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. It's fine. It just caught me by surprise."

"That doesn't sound like nothing." He moved around the island towards her. She was partially hunched over, both hands plastered to her stomach. Goddamn it, he knew what that meant. "How long since the last one?"

"Not too long. But they're getting worse." She flinched. "A lot worse."

He didn't hesitate. "We need to go to the hospital if they're coming that fast. You're having a baby." And sooner rather than later from the sound of it.

As he helped her to the truck, he dialed his brother's number. "Drew, it's time."

“What the hell? She’s not due for another week.”

“Yeah, well, apparently the baby wasn’t willing to wait.”

His brother cursed long and hard as Ryan hoisted Bri into the truck and shut the door. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing very, very carefully. Shit. He would have noticed if she was contracting this heavily on the drive out here, which meant this labor was coming on fast. He drew a quick mental map. It would take a good thirty minutes to get from here to the hospital—maybe longer. It should be plenty of time, but he didn’t like that she’d had two contractions in the last six minutes.

“Where are you?”

“The cabin, remember?” He’d had to set it up through Drew in the first place.

“Shit, yeah. Okay, you’re taking Old Mill road and coming up from the backside of the hospital?”

“That’s the plan.” If everything went well.

“I’ll grab Avery and throw on the lights—give you two an escort.” He could already hear Drew moving, a door slamming and the engine of what must be his cruiser turning over. “See you in five.”

“Thanks.” He hung up and started his own engine. “How are you doing?” he asked Bri. “You know how they say the breathing helps?”

He’d gone to the same class she had—and felt pretty damn stupid practicing those breathing techniques. “Yeah.”

“It’s not helping.”

Shit. “Buckle up. We’re getting you to the—”

“Ryan?” She gave him a terrified look. “I think my water just broke.”

Sure enough, there was a wet spot growing on her skirt, soaking the fabric. He took a deep breath, because if he said the wrong thing right now, she was going to panic. And that was the worst thing to do. “I think you’re right.”

She shifted. “Oh God, I’ve ruined your truck seats. I’ll buy you new ones. I promise!” Frankly, that was the least of his worries right now. “It’s okay.”

“It’s not okay. You brought me out here to give us a romantic weekend and now I’m ruining your truck seats.” Her lower lip quivered, but then her face screwed up as another contraction racked her body. “God, that hurts.”

“Just keep breathing, sweetheart.” He threw the truck into gear and backed down the bumpy driveway, wincing at each pothole. Bri didn’t seem to notice, her entire concentration centered around her stomach. After thirty seconds, she straightened a little.

He glanced at the clock. Two minutes since the last one. At this rate, they weren’t going to make it to the hospital. He turned onto Old Mill Road, heading for town. It was tempting to drive like a bat out of hell, but this road was narrow and it was impossible to see around the next bend at any given time.

“Hurry, Ryan.” She hissed out each exhale through clenched teeth. “I’m serious. You had better not be going the freaking speed limit right now.”

“I—”

“Because your brother is the freaking Sheriff—he’s not going to give you a ticket.” She glared at him, her blue eyes a little too wide. “Drive. Faster.” The next contraction hit, and her entire body went taut. “God, God, God, God, God.”

Nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. He counted off the seconds in his head as he navigated around first one bend, and then another. At twenty-seven, she groaned and relaxed a little. He wanted to keep her relaxed, but the truth wasn’t going to make her feel better.

“Bri?”

“What?” She didn’t open her eyes.

“I don’t think we’re going to make it to the hospital.”

Her eyes flew open. “What?”

“Your contractions are coming too fast. The baby’s coming.”

“Well, the baby can damn well wait fifteen minutes to get to the freaking hospital.” Another contraction hit, and Ryan pulled over at the spot he’d had in mind since the last one—a little turn around that was barely a car’s width from the road. It would be enough.

He’d just put the truck in park when a siren cut through the afternoon, and looked up in time to see Drew’s cruiser come flying around the bend. Apparently he wasn’t worried about speed limits, because he damn near took the turn on two wheels, and then skidded to a halt next to the truck. In a flash, Avery was out of the car and around to Bri’s side. She opened the door, and her eyes went wide. “Oh shit.”

“Avery, I need you behind Bri. Support her.”

She obeyed instantly, helping them maneuver Bri around so that she faced the side of the road while Ryan ran around to that door. He pushed up her skirt and pulled off her

panties. A quick examination confirmed what he already suspected. “On the next contraction, I need you to push.”

“What?” Drew stood on the other side of the door, which blocked his view of Bri, his face white as a sheet.

He continued his examination. Their baby was head-down as far as he could tell. Thank God. “Do you have towels or something in your trunk?”

“Uh...Yeah. I have something that would work. Do you need a first aid kit or something?”

Ryan shot him a look, and then did a double take. “Jesus, don’t you dare pass out. You’ll take off half your face on the asphalt.” When Drew swayed, he cursed again. “Sit your ass down and put your head between your knees. Now.”

But then another contraction hit Bri, and that was all he could focus on. “Come on, sweetheart. Push.”

“I hate you. I hate you so much right now.”

“I know. But I can see our baby’s head.” He was vaguely aware of Drew making a retching sound, but that could wait. “You’re almost there.”

“I sure as hell hope so,” Avery muttered. She smoothed Bri’s hair back. “You got this. Just keep on crushing my fingers and yelling at Ryan. When you’re holding your baby in your arms, this pain won’t be nothing but a memory.”

Bri pushed, the most bloodcurdling scream Ryan had ever heard in his life coming out of her mouth. The blood threatened to rush out of his head, but he concentrated on what was important—their baby. He had to get them through this. “One more big push and you’re done. The baby’s beautiful, Bri. So damn beautiful.”

Her breath sobbed out, but she pushed, and he eased their baby the rest of the way into the world. The world stopped spinning for one eternal moment, and all he could see was his daughter’s face. Then she gave nearly as loud a yell as her mom had just done. “A daughter. Bri, we have a daughter.”

She lifted her head and gave a faint smile. “She’s beautiful.”

“Just like her Mama.” He raised his voice. “Drew, I need those goddamn towels now.” As much as he wanted to just hold their baby and enjoy the moment, the process wasn’t quite done yet.

His brother appeared at his shoulder and, after checking to make sure he wasn’t actually going to pass out, Ryan handed his daughter over to be wrapped up in the blanket. Then he turned back to Bri. “We’re almost done, sweetheart.”

By the time they'd taken care of the rest, more sirens sounded, an ambulance hauling ass into view. The paramedics jumped out, but stopped when they saw that the baby was already here. They wasted no time in getting Bri and the baby bundled up and into the ambulance. Ryan paused before joining them. "Can you two—"

"We got it." Avery smiled. "Go be with your family. We'll be to the hospital after we drop your truck off...anywhere but here."

For his part, Drew still looked shell-shocked. When she nudged him, he shook his head. "Yeah, we'll be there in a little bit." He paused. "You did a good job, Ryan."

He nodded once and then climbed into the ambulance next to Bri. She held their daughter with a ferocity that dared anyone to try to take the baby from her. He kissed her temple. "You're amazing."

She tore her gaze away from the baby long enough to smile. "We never do things the simple way, do we?"

"I don't think we know the meaning of the word." He stroked this thumb over their daughter's cheek. "What do you want to name her?"

"Lily. Lily Marie Flannery." She let her head fall back to the pillow. "I love you. I'm sorry I said I hated you."

"I think you were entitled." He kissed her. "I love you, too." Ryan cupped Lily's head. "And you too, cutie. I love you, too."