



Wanted (Pregnancy & Passion Book 2)

By Maya Banks



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From #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* and *USA TODAY* BESTSELLING AUTHOR
MAYA BANKS

Pregnancy, Passion and One Determined Tycoon...

Despite his fiancée's chilling betrayal, wealthy developer Ryan Beardsley provided for Kelly Christian when he sent her packing. So why hadn't she cashed his check? He's livid to find her working in a dingy Houston diner, desperate and pregnant. Regardless of whether the baby is his—or his brother's—Ryan demands that Kelly return to New York with him. Now. For the baby's sake. Or maybe because the woman's as irresistible as ever...

"Top Pick! [...] An extraordinarily moving romance with wonderfully charismatic protagonists."

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WANTED was originally published as *Wanted by His Lost Love*

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Maya Banks lives in Southeast Texas with her husband and three children. When she's not writing, she loves to hunt and fish, bum on the beach, play poker and travel.

Escaping into the pages of a book is something she's loved to do since she was a child. Now she crafts her own worlds and characters and enjoys spending as much time with them as possible.

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"Almost enough to make you believe in the fine institution of marriage, isn't it?" Ryan Beardsley said as he watched his friend, Raphael de Luca, dance with his radiant new bride, Bryony.

The reception was taking place inside Moon Island's small, nondescript municipal building. It wasn't exactly where Ryan imagined any of his friends would host a wedding reception, but he supposed it was fitting that Rafe and Bryony would marry here on the island where so much of their relationship had been forged.

The bride positively glowed, and the swell of her belly added to her beauty. They stood in the middle of the makeshift dance floor, Bryony tucked into Rafe's protective hold, and they were so focused on each other that Ryan doubted the world around them existed. Rafe looked like he'd been handed the universe, and maybe he had.

"They look disgustingly happy," Devon Carter said next to him.

Ryan chuckled and looked up to see Dev holding a glass of wine in one hand, his other shoved into the pocket of his slacks.

"Yeah, they do."

Dev's mouth twisted in annoyance and Ryan chuckled again. Devon himself wasn't very far away from a trip down the aisle, and he wasn't taking it with good grace. Still, he couldn't resist needling his friend.

"Copeland still putting the screws to you?"

"And how," Devon muttered. "He's determined for me to marry Ashley. He won't budge on the deal unless I agree. And now that we've relocated the resort and begun construction, I'm ready to get on with the next step. I don't want him to lose confidence over this blown deal. Problem is, he's insisted on a dating period. He wants Ashley to be comfortable around me. I swear I think the man believes he lives in the eighteen hundreds. Who the hell arranges a marriage for their daughter anymore? And why the hell would you make marriage a condition of business? I can't wrap my head around it."

"There are worse women to marry, I'm sure," Ryan said, thinking of his own narrow escape.

Devon winced in sympathy. "Still no word on Kelly?"

Ryan frowned and shook his head. "No. But I only just started looking. She'll turn up."

"Why are you looking for her, man? Why would you even want to go back down that road? Forget about her. Move on. You're better off without her. You're out of your mind for pursuing this."

Ryan curled his lip and turned to look at his friend. "I have no doubt I'm better off. I'm not looking for her so I can welcome her back into my life."

"Then why did you hire an investigator to find her, for God's sake? You'd be better off letting the past stay in the past. Get over her. Move on."

Ryan was silent for a long moment. It wasn't a question he could entirely answer. How could he explain the burning desire to know where she was? What she was doing. If she was all right. He shouldn't care, damn it. He should forget all about her, but he couldn't.

"I want some answers," he finally muttered. "She never cashed the check I gave her. I'd just like to know that nothing has happened to her."

The excuse sounded lame even to him.

Devon raised an eyebrow and sipped at the expensive wine. "After what she pulled, I'd imagine she's feeling pretty damn stupid. I wouldn't want to show my face either."

Ryan shrugged. "Maybe." But he couldn't shake the feeling that it was something more. Why was he even worried? Why should he care?

Why hadn't she cashed the check?

Why couldn't he get her out of his mind? She haunted him. For six months, he had cursed her, lain awake at night wondering where she was and if she was safe. And he hated that he cared, even though he convinced himself he'd worry about any woman under the same circumstances.

Devon shrugged. "Your time and your dime. Oh, look, there's Cam. Wasn't sure Mr. Reclusive would actually crawl out of that fortress of his for the event."

Cameron Hollingsworth shouldered his way through the crowd, and people instinctively moved to get out of his way. He was tall and broad chested, and he wore power and refinement like most other people wore clothing. The stone set of his demeanor made him unapproachable by most. He could be a mean son of a bitch, but he could usually be counted on to relax around his friends.

The problem was, the only people he counted as friends were Ryan, Devon and Rafe. He didn't have much patience for anyone else.

"Sorry I'm late," Cameron said as he approached the two men. Then he glanced over the dance floor and his gaze stopped when he came to Rafe and Bryony. "How did the ceremony go?"

"Oh, it was lovely," Devon drawled. "All a woman could hope for, I'm guessing. Rafe didn't give a damn as long as the end result was Bryony being his."

Cam emitted a dry chuckle. "Poor bastard. I don't know whether to offer my condolences or my congratulations."

Ryan grinned. "Bryony's a good woman. Rafe's lucky to have her."

Devon nodded and even Cameron smiled, if you could call the tiny lift at the corner of his mouth a true smile. Then Cam turned to Devon, his eyes gleaming with unholy amusement.

"Word is you're not far from taking a trip down the aisle yourself."

Devon muttered a crude expletive and flipped up his middle finger along the side of his wineglass. "Let's not ruin Rafe's wedding by talking about mine. I'm more interested in knowing whether you were able to acquire the site for the new location of our hotel since Moon Island is now officially a bust."

Cam's eyebrows went up in exaggerated shock. "You doubt me? I'll have you know that twenty prime acres of beachfront property on St. Angelo is now ours. And I got a damn good deal. Better yet, construction will commence as soon as we can move crews in. If we really dig in, we'll come close to hitting our original deadline for the grand opening."

Their gazes automatically went to Rafe, who was still wrapped around his bride. Yeah, the man had caused them a major setback when he pulled the plug on the Moon Island venture, but it was hard for Ryan to get up in arms about it when Rafe looked so damn happy.

Ryan's pocket vibrated, and he reached down to pull his phone out. He was about to hit the ignore button when he saw who was calling. He frowned. "Excuse me, I need to take this."

Cameron and Devon waved him off and returned to their bantering as Ryan hurried out of the building. As soon as he stepped outside, the sea breeze ruffled his hair and the tang of salt filled his nose.

The weather was seasonable but by no means hot. It was about as perfect a day as you could ask for, especially for a wedding on the beach.

He turned to look at the distant waves and brought the phone to his ear.

"Beardsley," he said by way of a terse greeting.

"I think I've found her," his lead investigator said with no preamble.

Ryan tensed, his hand gripping the phone until his fingers went numb. "Where?"

"I haven't had time to send a man to get a visual confirmation yet. I only just got the information in a few minutes ago. I felt strongly enough about her identity to give you a heads-up. I should know more by tomorrow."

"Where?" Ryan demanded again.

"Houston. She's working in a diner there. There was a mix-up originally in her social security number. Her employer reported it wrong. When he put in the correction, she popped on to my radar. I'll have photos and a full report for you by tomorrow afternoon."

Houston. The irony wasn't lost on him. He'd been close to her all this time and never known it.

"No," Ryan interjected. "I'll go. I'm already in Texas. I can be in Houston in a couple of hours."

There was a long silence over the phone. "Sir, it might not be her. I prefer to get confirmation before you take a needless trip."

"You said it was most likely her," Ryan said impatiently. "If it turns out not to be, I won't hold you responsible."

"Should I hold off my man then?"

Ryan paused, his lips tight, his grip on the phone even tighter. "If it's Kelly, I'll know. If it's not, I'll inform you so you can continue your search. There's no need for you to send anyone down. I'll go myself."

Ryan drove through Westheimer in the blinding rain. His destination was a small cafe in west Houston where Kelly was waitressing. It shouldn't surprise him. She'd been waitressing in a trendy New York cafe when they'd met. But the check he'd written her would have prevented her from needing to work for quite some time. He figured she would have returned to school. Even when they'd become engaged, she'd expressed the desire to finish her degree. He hadn't understood it, but he'd supported her decision. The selfish part of him had wanted her to be completely reliant on him.

Why hadn't she cashed the check?

He had hopped the ferry to Galveston immediately after giving Rafe and Bryony his best wishes. He hadn't told Cam or Dev that he'd found Kelly, just that he had an important business matter to attend to. By the time he'd gotten to Houston it had been late in the evening, so he'd spent a sleepless night in a downtown hotel.

When he'd gotten up this morning, the skies had been gray and overcast and there hadn't been a single break in the rain since he'd left his hotel. At least the weather had been beautiful for Rafe's wedding. By now the happy couple would be off on their honeymoon—someplace where there was an abundance of blue skies.

He glanced over at his GPS and saw he was still several blocks from his destination. To his frustration, he hit every single red light on the way down the busy street. Why he was in a hurry, he didn't know. According to hi...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Louis Venable:

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Nellie Wellborn:

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