

From Atlanta,



with LOVE

Stories and Excerpts from  
the Supporting Authors of  
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# The Lambing

by Anna Martin

It was nearly 4.30 in the morning by the time Henry walked in the front door of the farmhouse, and the sun was just starting to rise over the Somerset countryside. In any other circumstances he'd stop and take notice of the gentle beauty in the first rays of light starting to creep over the hills, but, to borrow the words of his husband, he was bloody knackered.

Henry shut the door behind himself and carefully tossed his keys in the Bristol blue glass bowl they'd been given as a wedding present. It wouldn't be long until Ryan had to get up for work so Henry tried to be quiet as he moved through the house. Then he caught the distinct sound of Ryan thundering down the stairs.

"Hi," Ryan said, leaning in for a kiss as he pulled a hideously ugly knitted sweater down over a t-shirt. "You're late."

"I know," Henry said after returning the kiss. "I couldn't kick them all out until after three, then we had to clear up and I offered to drop the girls home so they didn't have to walk."

"How chivalrous of you."

"I thought so."

Henry was the owner of Stretton House, a large country manor he'd inherited from his great-grandmother. When he'd first arrived in Cheddar from New York the house had been in a poor state of disrepair and he'd spent several months restoring it to its former glory. Now, he ran events and weddings on the weekends, and opened the house up to paying visitors for tours during the week. It was a job he loved doing, in a house he loved owning. But the late nights were a killer.

"What are you doing up so early?" Henry asked.

"Mr. Jones called," Ryan said. "Several of his ewes have gone into labour, he wants me to help with the lambing."

"You are joking."

"Nope. Sadly not."

"That's disgusting. I thought there was a reason you don't have sheep."

It was true. Ryan kept a variety of different animals on the farm, but they were there for educational purposes, not to try and make a profit.

Ryan shrugged. "Lambing season means all hands on deck. Mr. Jones will help us out when it comes to harvest if we need extra help. It's just the way things work around here."

He picked up the keys to his truck and leaned in for another kiss, then allowed himself to be distracted when Henry slid his tongue into Ryan's mouth and his fingers into Ryan's hair, slowing things down and taking more than he'd been offered.

"Don't let the dog on the bed," Ryan said after he'd pulled away, then peppered more kisses on Henry's lips.

"I won't," Henry said, lying. "Have fun."

Ryan snorted with amusement, gave him one last kiss, and left.

The big farmhouse was eerily quiet with him gone.

Henry trudged up the stairs, heading for the attic bedroom that they most often slept in. When he passed Ryan's room, the master bedroom Ryan had used before Henry had moved in, he noticed that the sheets were ruffled and the big, old sheepdog was sleeping in the corner. Apparently Ryan had slept there.

Quickly changing his plans, Henry went into Ryan's bathroom and took a shower, washing the smell of sweat and beer from his body, and leaving his beautiful Hugo Boss suit in a pile on the floor. Once clean, he found a pair of Ryan's boxers and crawled in between sheets that still smelled like the man he loved.

For a moment he inhaled and let his body relax for the first time in hours. Then he whistled for the dog.

Hulk didn't need to be asked twice and leapt up onto the bed with more enthusiasm than Henry thought he could muster. Henry rubbed the dog's shaggy head and fell easily to sleep.

Later; much, much later, Henry heard Ryan come back in.

"If you try to get into this bed while smelling like sheep uterus I might have to kill you," Henry muttered, stretching and rolling over on to the cool side of the sheets.

"I've already showered at Mr. Jones's."

"Shower again," Henry said darkly.

He didn't bother to wait for Ryan's reaction, but a few moments later the water started, so Henry guessed he'd been obeyed. While Ryan washed Henry dozed, and was woken again when the bed shifted and Ryan crawled in behind him.

"Have you any idea how late it is?" Ryan asked as he scooped Henry up in his arms, neatly spooning him and pressing whisper light kisses to Henry's shoulder.

"Not a clue."

"It's *late*. You missed church."

“How tragic,” Henry said around a wide yawn. Ryan chuckled. “How many sheep babies did you deliver?”

“Six. I'm sure there will be more, though.”

“That's something to look forward to.”

“You're so bloody sarcastic,” Ryan said, digging his fingers into Henry's ribs in a hard tickle.

“Oof. Get off. Get off!” Henry squealed. He rolled over and pouted. “I hate you.”

“No you don't. You love me.”

It didn't take long for Henry's expression to soften. “Yeah, alright. I love you.”

“I knew it.”

Ryan pulled him closer and kissed him again, smoothing Henry's bedhead hair back from his face.

“You let the dog on the bed,” he mumbled against Henry's lips.

“I missed you,” Henry said.

“Is there any particular reason why you're in here rather than your own bed?”

“I missed you,” Henry said again.

“I missed you too. I was starting to worry when I heard you come in.”

“I'm sorry, I'll call next time.”

Their conversation was conducted nose to nose, Henry's hands wandering all over the strong, broad back that he so adored. Actually, he adored all of Ryan, but tried not to say it too much in case Ryan got a big head about it.

“Are we going to the pub for lunch?” Henry asked.

“Mm. I think so. I thought you'd be bored of Stella's food by now, though.”

“Never. A little birdie told me she was doing roast beef.”

“That's good,” Ryan said and gently bit Henry on the nose. “I don't think I could handle lamb today.”

“Oh,” Henry groaned. “That's...”

Ryan chuckled. “I'm joking. Was the little birdie by any chance...”

“Stella herself?”

“I thought so. She catered yesterday, right?”

Henry frowned at him.

“What? I remember things,” Ryan said defensively. Henry's sister-in-law managed to run both her own pub and the catering side of Henry's wedding business. How she had any free time was a constant source of bafflement.

“I know you do, baby,” Henry said. “Yes, she catered. Yes, she's doing beef. And yes, I most definitely want to go to the pub for lunch. I think you've earned a pint.”

“I definitely have,” Ryan said seriously. “I think I've earned kisses, too.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes. And maybe a blowjob.”

At that, Henry's resolve cracked and he burst into delighted giggles, burying his face in Ryan's chest.

“Is that so?” he said, trying to claw back some of his restraint. It didn't seem to be working.

“Yes. I showered twice and didn't let the dog on the bed and... I'll give you one in return?”

Henry smiled, his eyes closed and cheek pressed close to Ryan's skin, and sighed in contentment. Of all the places in the world he'd seen, and all the places still left to visit – this was home.

Then he gave Ryan that blowjob, because he did deserve it, and Henry loved him, after all.