

COMPLICATED

By Kristen Ashley

CHAPTER ONE

Later

Hixon

HIX ROLLED to his bare ass on the side of the bed, putting his feet on the floor.

Damn.

What was that?

Not good.

Not *good*.

Because it was good.

It was unbelievably *good*.

On this thought, he felt her move in the bed. Heard her low mew. Smelled her damned perfume.

Powdery, flowery and sweet, but it wasn't any of that that got to him.

There was a musk to it that made all that sexy.

Add that to the scent of sex in the room. The trace of her on him (that being more than just her perfume). The dark that surrounded him cut only with moonlight and a distant streetlight, so he could see practically nothing. This meaning he only had his other senses at his command, Hix felt his stomach tighten, his shoulders, his jaw.

All this to beat back the draw of her.

He had to get out of there.

He pushed up to his feet, mumbling, "Gotta go."

There was a quick beat of silence before he heard her soft, surprised, "Sorry. What?"

He reached for his shorts, pulling them up his legs, repeating, "Gotta go."

The mood of the room changed. The sluggish, warm feel of post-really-freaking-great-coitus shimmered to nothing as something heavier started seeping in.

"Go?" she asked.

God, she could unravel him with a syllable.

So, yeah.

That was right.

Go.

He had to *go*.

And do it before he smelled more of her. Heard more of that voice any way it came at him—the way it was before and for certain the way it sounded just then with hurt trembling through it.

He definitely couldn't look at her.

Not in her bed, the sheets rumpled because they'd made them that way, their clothes all over the room because they'd thrown them there, her mass of hair a mess because his fingers had been in it.

Not any of that.

But also just not looking at her *at all*.

“Go,” he grunted, locating his trousers five feet from where his shorts had been and tearing them up his legs.

He heard her movements in the bed, sensing she was sitting up in it, not getting out of it, which was good. If the woman did more than that, and all he had to do was visualize it in his head, he'd turn back.

“I...well, uh...”

That was all she said.

But it was too much. Now each syllable seemed to coat his skin, sing to him, luring him back.

Jesus.

What was that?

And damn, it'd been a long time.

But as long as it had been, he'd never been that guy.

The guy he was right then going to be.

How did that guy play crap like this?

“Thanks,” he muttered.

Another quick beat of silence before she said in a voice that was low and stunned, “Thanks?”

“Yeah.” He shrugged his shirt on his shoulders and didn't bother with the buttons. He just glanced her way without really looking at her even as he bent to tag his shoes and socks from the

floor, thankful they were all in a messy pile, not thankful her lacy bra was tangled with them.
“That was great,” he finished.

Lame, man, lame. And total dick, he thought.

The feel of the room went stunned, and sluggish again, this time with something that didn't feel good at all.

“Yeah,” she said softly to his back. “Great.”

He turned her way, skimmed his eyes up the bed, noting in a forced-vague way she was up on a hand, holding the sheet to her chest, her hair falling down her shoulders, the rich, honeyed, sunshiny blonde of it made dark in the marginal light, even as her other hand was lifted, pulling the front of her hair out of her face.

Yup.

Not good he looked at her.

“Later,” he said.

“Right.” There was a bite to that. Bitter and barbed. “Later.”

That made Hix pause, hearing that in her tone.

And it made him make a mistake.

He looked through the shadows into her eyes.

He couldn't quite see but he felt they were bitter and barbed too.

“Don't worry about locking the door behind you,” she said, now each word that came out of her was ice cold. “As you know, there's no crime in this town.”

Oh yeah.

He knew that.

But it didn't change things.

“You need to lock up,” he said quietly.

She tipped her head to the side sharply. “And it's my understanding you need to go.”

“Greta—”

She dropped her hand from her hair and a long, thick lock fell into her left eye, further shadowing her face in a way it felt like she'd taken a huge step back from him.

Nope.

He didn't need to see that either.

“Bud. Please.”

Her words weren’t an entreaty.

They were scorn.

And yup.

He had to get out of there before he did any more damage.

Even so...

“Lock up behind me,” he ordered.

“Roger that, Sheriff.”

“You got a way to get your car back from the club?” he asked.

“Don’t worry about me, darlin’. I got a way to do a lot of things,” she drawled.

All right.

She would be good. She’d move on.

Now he could be done.

He made the turn to go but twisted right back and again caught her gaze.

“It was great, Greta,” he repeated the truth in a tone that, this time, it couldn’t be missed he meant it.

“Yeah, Hixon. Brilliant.” Her words were clipped, and even though he knew without a doubt she agreed with what he’d said, her tone didn’t share his sentiment.

As he hesitated—in the shadowy dark he couldn’t see her eyes narrow, but he would swear he could feel them do just that—she finished, stressing just how much she was done as she gave him her, “*Later.*”

He lifted his chin, turned back to the door and walked his ass out.

He put on his socks and boots just inside her front door and buttoned his shirt before he walked out.

No one would be awake at that hour, but it didn’t matter.

In that moment, Hix wasn’t thinking about what would run through people’s minds if they saw him come out of a house in the very early morning with his shirt undone.

In that moment, Hix was only thinking about what would run through people’s minds about Greta if a man came out of her house in the very early morning with his shirt undone.

He sat in his truck at her curb and waited until he saw her form, shadowed from the minimal light filtering through the sheer curtain over the window in her front door and he knew she'd locked herself safely inside.

Only then did Hix drive away.

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