

# THE HOOKUP

## MOONLIGHT AND MOTOR OIL SERIES #1

By Kristen Ashley

### CHAPTER ONE

*Panties*

*Izzy*

I woke up to the sound of a ceiling fan.

I did not have a ceiling fan.

Obviously, this made me open my eyes and do it fast.

Which brought to my brain the fact that I was lying on tan sheets. They had a slight sheen to them. I could feel them too, and they were soft. They looked and felt expensive.

But they were not my sheets.

The pillow my head was on was not my pillow.

And the nightstand next to the bed that had three used condom wrappers, some change, a cell phone, an alarm clock and a lamp was not my nightstand, my cell, my alarm clock or my lamp.

Stupidly, I stared at the alarm clock.

I still had the same alarm clock that my mom bought me when I went to college. It was square, pale pink and had a mirrored face. Even though it was over a decade old and it had been super cheap, it was still cool and better yet, girly. Best of all, it still worked.

The alarm clock I was staring at looked modern, complicated and expensive.

I was not in my bed, in my home, with my alarm clock.

I pushed up to leaning on a hand, realizing I was naked (*I never slept naked*). I yanked up the sheet to cover me as it all came crashing in, even before my eyes swept the interesting (so interesting even in my state it had to be noted) space until it hit a wall of windows on the opposite side of the bed outside which stood a man.

Johnny.

Johnny Gamble.

My stomach pitched in an enjoyable way just at the sight of him.

But the sight of him also brought back memories of him and the night before.

His name was impossible. No man in real life had a name like that.

That was the name of the superhero in his everyday existence when he was not being a superhero. Or the suave, talented con artist who eventually falls for the girl and gives up the grift. Or the slick cat burglar who smiles into your eyes as he's sliding the diamond off your finger.

But that was his name.

Even more, that man standing out there was not a John with the "ny."

However, that was how he introduced himself.

"I'm Johnny. Gamble. Johnny Gamble," he'd said last night at the bar, smiling into my eyes and not sliding a diamond off my finger, because I didn't have a diamond on my finger, but more, he just wasn't that guy.

That man outside might be a John or a Dirk or a Clint or an Adonis.

*Johnny*, no.

Except looking at him, having said his name repeatedly to him, moaned it while he was inside me (amongst other times), he was absolutely *Johnny*.

He was outside now, with his coffee.

No, he was outside now, standing on his balcony wearing nothing but a pair of gray sweats, so long they gathered at his ankles and covered his heels, the hems of them loose with notches at the sides. He was bent into his forearms on his balcony, holding a heavy white mug between his two hands. He was twisted partially at his trim waist so I had a clear view of his muscled lat and shoulder.

I also had a profile view of his face.

He had black hair, a great deal of it—thick with waves and flips and curls—and right now a lot of it was hanging over his forehead.

He also had a black beard. It was not bushy but groomed. Not trimmed close and overly groomed but it wasn't lumbersexual or ZZ Top either. It stated he was a man who wore a beard before it was trendy, and he'd continue to have a beard when it was not.

I couldn't see them from where I was, but he also had black eyes. Dark as tar.

The beard didn't hide his strong jaw. And nothing hid his large, straight and aggressive but somehow classic and cultured nose. Or the heavy brow that shadowed his eyes, the thick black

eyebrows that seemed at a glance to be ominous, but if you spoke ten words to him, you'd know they were anything but.

*He* was anything but.

He was tall. He was built. Broad shoulders. Veined forearms. Ridged stomach. Bulky thighs.

Last, he was the most handsome man I'd seen in my life. The kind of man you'd expect to turn on the TV and see. The kind of man you'd think you'd walk into a movie theater and he'd be even larger than life on the screen. The kind of man you'd open a magazine and expect to see pictured wearing fabulous clothes at the wheel of a sleek speedboat on the Mediterranean, advertising cologne.

Not the kind of man standing on a wooden balcony behind whom—I squinted—rotated a water wheel.

A water wheel!

This fact, the fact that he was that handsome, not the fact that he lived somewhere with the impossibility of a functioning water wheel, was not the reason I was in his bed in his home in the middle of nowhere, a home that had a water wheel.

To be honest, this was part of the reason.

But not all of it.

Bottom line, I didn't do that kind of thing.

I wasn't the kind of girl who had a hookup.

I didn't frown on it. My mother taught me it was not my place to judge. Not anything. Not anyone.

“You never know, Izzy, what the story is,” she'd told me more than once. “You never know what's deep inside a soul. You just never know. And since you don't know, you're never, not ever, in the position to judge.”

So yes, I'd learned not to judge.

But I didn't do that kind of thing, meeting a man at a bar, having a few drinks with him and then going home to have sex with him (lots of sex), sleep naked with him and wake up in his bed while he was outside wearing not much and enjoying a cup of coffee.

I'd often wished I was that kind of girl.

In fact, my mom was that kind of girl.

And until she'd gotten married, my sister was too.

I just wasn't.

I was too shy.

To be honest, I was also a hint of a prude. I tried to drive that out of me, the need I felt to be proper, modest, *good*. However, I'd learned from a young age what "bad" could bring you, and my inherent shyness and that lesson didn't allow me to be anything else.

I'd also learned at a not-young age the way men could be, falling into a trap that from my history (and my mother's) I should have seen from a mile away.

So I wasn't just shy. With men, these days especially, I was skittish.

But not with Johnny.

Not Johnny Gamble.

And not just because he was so handsome.

It was also not just because he bought my drinks. Though it was partly because, between drink three and drink four (all of which he bought me), he'd stopped the waitress and said, "Could you bring my girl here a glass of water?"

That said that he didn't want to get me drunk so he could then have his way with me. He didn't mind me feeling relaxed and loose, but he didn't want to take advantage.

That also said a lot of good about him. But it wasn't just that either.

And it wasn't just because he listened. He didn't talk much, but he listened and he did it in an active way, asking questions as I talked about my job, my mom, my sister, my pets, my house. He was interested. He was following everything I said. His gaze didn't roam to other women at the bar or the game on one of the television sets.

His attention was all on me.

It also wasn't just because he had a great grin and an even better smile. His grin was broken, hitched at one corner, creasing one side of his face in a way that made his dark eyes seem like they were twinkling.

His smile was more. Big, bright and white in that dark beard, curving those full lips, it was sweet and it was sexy, both achingly so, both in equal measures.

And he gave me both a lot, his grin and his smile, which was also another reason why I was right then naked in his bed. He thought I was funny. And I liked that. It felt good to make him grin and smile, and definitely chuckle (something he did a lot of too).

Adding all this together, after drink four, when he'd leaned into me and asked in his deep voice, "You wanna get outta here?" I said yes.

I didn't hesitate.

I nodded and verbalized my agreement with a shy, somewhat breathy but still definite, "Yes."

That earned me another smile.

I would find it only got better after that.

It started with the fact that he opened the door to his truck for me.

And after I was in, he closed it behind me.

Then, as he started us on our way and it hit me it might not be the smartest thing to do, to get in a strange man's car and go to his house, I looked at his profile in the dashboard lights, the timidity hit me along with some panic, which made me blurt, "Am I...uh, going home tonight?"

He didn't ask my opinion on the subject. He also didn't hesitate.

He just said, "No."

At that point, after I experienced a pleasant trill down my spine, I pulled my phone out of my purse and told him haltingly, "I just...need to text my friend. I have dogs. Cats too. And some, uh...other animals. She lives close to me. I want to ask her to pop around in the morning to feed them, let the dogs out."

"First, I think it's cool you've got a mind to your pets, and second, I'd think you were stupid if you didn't have a mind to yourself and let a girlfriend know where you were and who you were with."

That was his response. He knew why I was calling Deanna, and that reason wasn't only because I wanted someone to have a mind to my pets. And like getting me a glass of water between drinks, it showed that he, too, had a mind to me.

So yes, definitely yes, he started out great and kept getting better.

I texted Deanna with this information, and although the anxiety sheared away at his earlier comment, it came back because we went out of town. I lived out of town in the opposite

direction on three acres with my house, my small stable, my two dogs, three cats, two birds and two horses, but I didn't live as far out as he did.

Deanna might have my text but she wouldn't know who he was, where he was taking me, and as he turned into a dirt road that was surrounded entirely by woods I wondered what I'd gotten myself into.

Serial killers, I was sure, lived on dirt roads in wooded areas.

And maniacs that forced you into underground bunkers and kept you captive while forcing you to make babies so they could build armies (or whatever) also surely all lived on dirt roads in wooded areas.

When his headlights finally fell into a clearing that had a two-story building made of stones in varying shades of mellow cream, tan and brown (the water wheel was on the other side so I hadn't seen it), flanked by a large creek, I felt nothing but the panic because we were in the woods, nothing around us, and I had a long way to run to get to anything if I had to run away.

And he was tall and fit, he had very long legs, so I had the distinct feeling if I had to run, he'd catch me.

He got out, came around and opened my door (mostly because I was frozen in my seat).

He also took my hand, and when I turned my head, I could feel through the dark that he was looking into my eyes.

It was then he said softly, "Izzy, baby, there's a good possibility I'm gonna bite you. But just to say, trust me, you'll wanna get outta my truck, because I can guarantee you're gonna like it."

A tingle drifted between my legs that must have been a lot more powerful than it felt, because it forced those legs to the side.

Johnny got out of my way as I got out of his truck. He guided me to some wooden, open-slat steps at the side of the building, and he stopped me halfway up to kiss me.

The rest was a haze of nothing but goodness.

During that goodness, on more than one occasion, he had bitten me.

And he'd been true to his word.

I'd liked it.

And after three times of having sex (but four orgasms for me), I fell asleep naked in his arms.

Now there I was, still naked in his bed, and he was deep in contemplation of the creek and woods that surrounded his home, cocooning it in nature, looking a part of it with his bearded-man-because-he-was-a-man-who-wore-a-beard, sweats-wearing, coffee-drinking casualness in his space.

I looked away and spied my panties tangled with my jeans on the floor by his bed, and not far away from them was the T-shirt he wore last night.

I scooted to the edge of the bed, holding the sheet to my chest, and kept scooching, and reaching, as I extended out a leg as far as I could stretch, toes pointed, to drag his T-shirt my way.

I managed this, leaned over, grabbed it and pulled it over my head.

Only then did I get up.

I was tall. He was taller but I was tall. He had very broad shoulders, so the shirt bagged at mine and down my chest, but it barely covered my rump.

That wasn't the only reason I bent and nabbed my panties.

I slid them on, surreptitiously looking out the windows only to see Johnny had moved, but only to be in the act of lifting his coffee mug to his lips. His eyes were still trained to the distance, his back partially twisted toward me.

Thus I took in the room, which was one big room (huge actually) with kitchen, dining area, lounging area, a reading area, and bed. But there was a mouth to a hall to the right of the kitchen.

I headed that way seeing three doors down the hall, two to the right, one to the left.

The first to the right was open. I glanced in and saw a big long room that had a lot of stuff. This stuff was a furnace, water heater and a Wi-Fi setup, but also a bunch of man things. Jackets and fleeces on hooks. Boots and running shoes in an untidy pile on the floor. A gun rack with four places for rifles, only two of them taken. What appeared to be a bound up tent and some folded camp chairs in the corner. A camp stove. Camp lanterns. Fishing nets. Fishing poles. A big backpack.

I walked a couple of steps down the hall and looked into the room at the left.

The bathroom.

I entered and was astonished.

The front room I hadn't fully taken in. The ceilings, however, were wood. The walls, stone. It was a room you would expect in this building made of cream, tan and brown stone that had a water wheel.

The bathroom had been completely redone, and even to my inexperienced eye I could see it was recently.

And it didn't look like it belonged in this building.

All white.

Everything.

Shiny white, subway tile walls. A large shower (actually mammoth, with five sprays, two slanted in at the top sides, one at the ceiling, and two more coming from the walls). A white with gray veins marble-topped double sink with illuminated mirror. A toilet behind a half partition that hid it mostly from view. And a big (actually huge) corner tub with a narrow platform built around it where it met the wall, where a woman would put candles, plants, decorative jars with bath salts.

The last I knew because there was that there. The only thing on that narrow platform. A decorative glass jar with a handsome chrome top half-filled with blue bath salts.

This was not Johnny's.

This was someone else's.

Right just then I didn't want to think of the possibility of "someone else."

I looked away from the bath salts and the fabulousness of this huge, clean, gleaming, gorgeous bathroom that was any woman's fantasy and so incongruous to the furnace/water heater room that was a mess of men stuff and outdoor gear, and I used the facilities. I washed my hands. I opened Johnny's drawers until I found some toothpaste and used my finger as a brush. I rinsed and stared at the mirror into eyes that really needed the makeup removed, and in a further quick and as noninvasive as I could make it perusal, I searched for facial care products that might go with the bath salts.

There were none.

There was, however, some mouthwash so I used that.

I wanted to leave the bathroom, but after seeing it in all its glory, curiosity overwhelmed me, taking me to the door at the back between the tub and shower. A door that was closed.

But I couldn't do it.

Johnny Gamble had bought me four margaritas. He'd brought me to his home. He'd then given me four orgasms and held me in his arms while I fell asleep (this didn't take long, then again, I'd had four margaritas and four orgasms).

I owed him privacy.

If he offered me a tour of his home, I'd take it.

But those bath salts notwithstanding, there was no indication from him or anything else that I needed to pry just in case he was hiding something.

He might have a woman who was off on a girl's weekend or away for work and he felt safe to go on the prowl and in doing so, being as he was, looking like he did, knowing he'd get lucky, he'd hidden the evidence and forgot the bath salts.

But if he had a woman who used bath salts, there'd be a lot of evidence to hide and there wasn't even an extra toothbrush, much less a stray tube of mascara he missed. Not in my as-non-invasive-as-I-could-make-it perusal that I'd seen.

Maybe he was a man who liked baths or he took them after a massage, when everyone knew you threw in some Epsom salts to help leech out the toxins.

Perhaps he liked to smell good.

He embodied and defied the name "Johnny." He was a man who knew precisely what he wanted in bed, so he took it, and if he had to drag it, position it, stretch it, flex it, brace it, he did.

He could take as many scented baths as he wanted.

I walked out and saw him still at the railing at his balcony. He was standing straight now, but braced into a hand on the railing, holding the coffee mug aloft, close to his mouth, but not sipping, eyes still contemplating the view.

Quickly, I took in his space.

Mid-century furniture everywhere. Not stuff he'd inherited when he moved in. It was new. Handsome. Clean lines. Boxy. No nonsense. In tweeds and leathers and light wood. Everything, including the bed, the copious bookshelves (filled with copious books) and the easy chair in the corner was sparse and sleek, like Johnny had hit an auction of the dressings of the *Mad Men* sets and furnished his home with his buys.

It was unbelievably *cool*.

The kitchen he'd worked with as it was. It had nothing trendy. No cement, granite or marble countertops. No fancy swoosh-closed cabinets. There were butcher-block countertops that were so old, they were smooth everywhere, warped in places, wavy in oft-used spots. Stark-fronted cabinets and open shelves.

Though he'd replaced the appliances with a stainless-steel dishwasher, fridge and stove that were high quality and expensive, if not top of the line.

I spied the coffee. I saw the white coffee mugs on an open shelf above the coffeemaker and a bottle of creamer out on the counter.

I went there and made myself a cup.

As I moved toward the balcony, I saw Johnny was no longer in peaceful contemplation of the verdant surroundings of his water wheel, brilliantly furnished with bathroom-to-die-for home.

He must have noted my movement, maybe even noticed I was out of bed and had gone to the bathroom. But regardless, his regard was now aimed through the wall of windows.

At me.

I opened the glass door and walked out, shutting it behind me and looking back to Johnny, only to stop because he was looking at his T-shirt on my body.

Perhaps the intimacy of that, and me helping myself to coffee (and bathroom, toothpaste and mouthwash) wasn't welcome.

I'd never hooked up. Not in my life. I dated. I had a firm five-date rule before even groping (this mostly due to shyness, but also my prudishness, which I had reason to believe I held on to because it assisted in me being so shy), so I obviously hadn't slept with a man hours after meeting him.

I didn't know the protocol when you woke up in a mostly strange man's bed, no matter how handsome, gentlemanly or what a good listener he was.

"Although I appreciate the unadulterated view of those legs, not to mention that hair, I'd prefer you get your ass over here, Izzy."

This amused command jolted me out of my apprehension and I slowly moved on my bare feet through the cool early summer Sunday morning toward Johnny Gamble.

He hadn't taken his hand from the railing but he did put his coffee cup to it so he could have a free hand to curve around my waist.

This he did, pulling me up tight to his side and dipping his chin into his neck to look down at me.

I liked that. Being tall, I didn't get that often, a man looking down at me, having to go to such lengths to do it as to shift his chin into his neck.

This had to put Johnny at six-two, maybe even six-three.

Yes, I liked that a lot.

I also liked the warmth of his body. I'd noticed just how warm it was in bed last night and it helped things (that his talents really didn't need help with, but still), and it helped them in nice ways.

And last, I liked the solidness of him and this didn't come just from him being built. It came from him looking right into my eyes, taking hold of me right away, making me feel welcome there, like he was glad I used his toothpaste, his mouthwash (even though he didn't know that...yet), helped myself to a cup of coffee, woke up naked in his bed.

He wasn't going to load me up in his truck and take me back to my car in town and be done with me, not looking back.

This was something else.

This was...

It was the beginning of something.

I relaxed in his hold.

"Hey," I whispered.

His mouth hitched.

"Hey." He slid his hand down my side to my hip as he asked, "Sleep good?"

I nodded because I had but also because the movement of his hand had so much of my attention I couldn't speak.

It got more attention when his fingers met the hem of his shirt I was wearing and pulled it up.

Therefore, it came out kind of squeaky when I asked, "Did you? Sleep good, I mean."

I also felt my cheeks getting warm and Johnny didn't miss it. I knew this as his black eyes started twinkling even as the tips of his fingers found the waistband of my panties.

"I slept great," he murmured, and then didn't hesitate to go on, "Panties?"

“Sorry?” I asked, confused at his question perhaps because his fingers were trailing along the waistband of the item of clothing we were oddly discussing and it felt nice.

“Panties,” he repeated, not in a question this time.

“Yes, those are, uh...my panties,” I confirmed.

This got me the bright, white, beautiful smile. “Babe, why’d you put on your panties?”

I blinked up at him.

His fingers slid inside the waistband to lightly cup one cheek of my behind.

My lips parted.

“Sweet, shy Eliza,” he muttered like he was referencing me to someone else even if he was gazing right into my eyes. “Gonna have to break you of that.”

Yes.

Oh God, please let it be yes.

This was the beginning of something.

“You hungry?” he asked conversationally.

I nodded, not really knowing if I was or I wasn’t. Mostly knowing I liked the warmth and possessiveness of his hand down my pants.

“Wanna fuck before or after I feed you?” he inquired.

My legs wobbled.

He felt it, I knew because that got me another smile, this one less sweet and oh-so-much-more sexy.

“Both,” he whispered, his head coming toward mine. “Starting with before.”

“Johnny,” I whispered back, but I did it with my lips moving against his.

His eyes were open, they were close, because I’ll note again, his lips were against mine, when he answered, “Yeah?”

“My coffee,” I noted idiotically.

Sadly, his lips went away.

Then my coffee went away and was set on the railing by his.

Then his lips were back.

“I haven’t even taken a sip,” I announced, again looking in his eyes so close, I could count the (abundant) eyelashes.

“Make you three pots after I make you come,” he mumbled then moved infinitesimally closer.

“Johnny,” I said urgently, again waylaying the kiss for no reason at all.

He was a good kisser. The best. The best I’d ever had.

By far.

Still, I was me.

So I was nervous.

“Izzy,” he replied.

“Yes?” I asked.

“Shut up.”

I shut up.

And then, finally, he kissed me.

**RELEASE DATE DECEMBER 19, 2017**

**THE HOOKUP** available for pre-order now anywhere where books are sold.