

# The Break Down

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Short Story

for

Romance Divas Free Valentine's e-book Read

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"Shit, shit, shit!" Reegan McAllister swore, pounding her palms on the steering wheel. Her car made one last choking sound and went silent. This was just great. Not only was she on some god forsaken road, but her cell phone had lost it's signal about thirty miles back.

Impatiently she pushed her OnStar button and waited just a moment before a voice asked her a series of questions. Did she need assistance? Yes. Would she like a tow truck sent? Yes. Was there anything else she needed? Not unless they could deliver a latte, she thought sarcastically.

Her irritation grew the more she thought about her predicament. She wouldn't even be here if that damn arrogant, egocentric client wanted, no demanded, the owner of *Embellish*, to come out in person to decorate his new home. If he wasn't dropping an awe inspiring amount of money, she would have told him to stick it where the sun wouldn't find it.

She drove the 350 miles from her office in Denver this morning and now here she sat, trapped in the middle of nowhere. The long dusty road loomed for miles in front of her and the same view reflected in her rearview mirror.

She was so close too, her GPS indicated her destination was approximately 60 miles ahead. She hit the steering wheel again. Damn it! If she lost this account, she would have to close down her office. The economy took a downturn and the first place people cut back was the luxuries, like hiring a decorator. Things had been so tight; she cut her assistants' hours just to make ends meet. This new account would keep them in operation for at least another year and she couldn't let it slip through her fingers. She worked too hard to get where she was.

Climbing out of the car she held up her phone in one last desperate attempt, turning in each direction before giving up with a sigh. How could there be parts of this country that still didn't have cell phone access? The thought was too much to comprehend.

Crossing her ankles. she leaned back against the car. Her fate was now in the hands of a tow truck driver and how fast he got there to help her. Just fucking great.

She slid back into the drivers' seat and rested her head back against the cool leather; her fingers massaged the dull throb in her temples. She sighed and her eyes drifted closed. This was not a good start to a new client relationship.

The rumble of a diesel engine, what seemed like only a few moments later, broke through the silence. Relief washed over her and she watched the tow truck pull up behind her and stop. Opening the door, she jumped out, eager to grab her things and get going. Swatch books, catalogs, sketches, everything she needed to do her job lay in the back seat. She flipped a lever and the seat sprang forward, allowing her to lean in and gather it all up.

The sound of a man clearing his throat behind her diverted her attention.

"Sorry!" She called from the car, "I'll be right with you."

Arms overflowing, she straightened and stood, turning slowly so nothing would fall from her grasp.

"Let me help you with that," he said.

Grease stained hands reached for her pristine papers and she almost shrieked. Instead, she quickly stepped back out of reach and shook her head.

"I have it thank you." She looked up at last and her breath froze. The man standing in front of her was absolutely gorgeous. No, not gorgeous, rugged, handsome, perfect. Her knees went weak as she looked him

over. My God, he looks like an ad for Wranglers, or a rodeo rider, or a yummy combination of both.

"I, ah, umm, my car, dead, ah, not sure what..." She mentally kicked herself. She sounded like a complete fool, stuttering and tripping over her own words. She was a successful, educated woman, and she couldn't for the life of her even remember where she was!

He smiled and the devastating grin sent shockwaves coursing straight to the spot between her legs. The ache that started the moment she laid eyes on him turned into a raging, full-blown case of horniness. Her nipples hardened painfully, the peaks pressing against the thin fabric of her dress, demanding attention.

What the hell was wrong with her? She had never in her life met someone and lusted after them in an instant. He was a tow truck driver, covered in grease and dirt, he couldn't be further from her type if he tried. So why could she almost feel the way his hands would touch her, the hardness of his body moving against her, inside her. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment at the thought.

She cleared her throat and tried again, "My car died and I really have no idea what's wrong. I am late for a meeting and need to find a rental car place quickly. And a mechanic too if there is one nearby." There! She had managed a complete sentence that was articulate and concise.

"Well, there isn't a rental place within 100 miles, but there is a garage about 10 miles back that could take a look at your car for you

today." His voice ran over her like warm honey, the slight drawl in his speech made her bite her bottom lip to keep from moaning loudly.

She nodded, not trusting her voice at the moment. He turned and returned to his truck, the view of his backside clad in tight denim made her want to sink her teeth into his hot ass.

He pulled the truck out and around and backed it skillfully in front of her car. She watched as he jumped out and started pulling chains out of special holders, hooking them to precise spots on her vehicle. His muscles flexed with each movement and Reegan imagined the feel of his skin under her fingertips. It would be hot and hard, she was absolutely sure of it. He smiled at her, unaware that he was being mentally undressed as he worked.

A low groan escaped and her face flushed hotly. It must be the desert heat that was making her feel so lightheaded. *Are you sure?* her mind teased. The scorching image of a shirtless torso, gleaming in the sunlight, muscles flexing from his labor sprang into her mind and took her breath away.

To her immense relief, he didn't seem to notice her fixation and she quickly covered it up by taking her belongings to the truck, arranging them in the cab as best she could before climbing up in. Get a hold of yourself, lust for him *after* you land this new account, your future could depend on it.

Distracting herself with the sketches in front of her, she waited. Though every item was impressed in her memory already, she ran over them

one more time. Her new client had very particular wants, his taste ran a bit traditional, but she had some ideas that she hoped he would like. Hunting lodge meets Frank Lloyd Wright she called it.

She startled when the driver's door suddenly swung open and the focus of her earlier attentions jumped up into the cab.

"All set. Let's get you going." His smoky blue eyes met hers and he smiled again. Oh she was already going alright, if he didn't stop looking at her like that she was likely to rip off all her clothes and beg him to take her right there.

The truck jumped to life and he maneuvered it into a wide U-turn, heading back in the direction she had come earlier.

15 minutes later, they pulled off the highway and turned into a small gas station. He parked the truck in front of an open garage door.

"Here we are. I'll unhook your car and see about getting it checked over."

She realized with a tinge of regret that he would be leaving soon. His job was almost done. *Just as well, I need to focus and he is a too fine a distraction.* She glanced into the trucks side mirror and watched as he bent to unhook the chains. *Definitely a distraction.*

She stood nearby as he finished, looking around for signs this place was not as deserted as it appeared. If he left her here, she wasn't terribly sure anyone was around to help her.

"Okay then, you're all set. I just need you to sign here please." He held out a clipboard with a paper on it and she signed it with a trembling

hand. He tore off the back page and handed it to her. "Reegan McAllister, that's a pretty name, I've never heard it before."

"Thanks," she stammered and blushed. There was darn schoolgirl again.

"Now, let's take a look at your car." Her eyes widened as he walked over and popped the hood of her Camry. "The problem with these foreign cars is no matter what's wrong, the parts always take awhile to get here."

"You're the tow truck driver *and* the mechanic?" she asked, immediately realizing that was the dumbest, obvious question she could have asked. Of course he was!

"I own this place. I tow, I tinker with cars, I sell gas, a little bit of everything." He talked and looked over her car at the same time. She heard a troubled sigh from under the hood. "This doesn't look good. Let me check one more thing before I ruin your day."

Her stomach clenched, that didn't sound good.

He stood, holding a long black piece of something in his hand. "Your timing belt broke. An easy fix if I had the part, but like I said, these foreign jobs don't take generic replacements, they have to be specific to the car. I can call right now and probably have the part here tomorrow morning. Best I can do I'm afraid."

She sighed. Her future seemed to be slipping away as she watched. "Is there a phone I could use please? I am supposed to meet a client and he isn't going to be happy with the delay."

"Sure, come on inside." He wiped his hand on a cloth and opened the door for her. He motioned behind the counter and offered to get her a drink.

"Bottled water would be great," she said as she picked up the receiver and dialed. She cleared her throat nervously. "Hello? Mr. West please. Yes, Mr. West, this is Reegan McAllister. Yes I know I was supposed to be there an hour ago, I have had car trouble and am at the garage as we speak. Yes, tomorrow. No, I can't rent a car, there are no rental places nearby. The mechanic has assured me the part will be here in the morning, hold on let me check..."

She turned to the man waiting patiently, "How long will it take to fix?"

"Should be done in an hour, two at the most."

"Mr. West, I should be able to make it there by early afternoon tomorrow. Yes sir, I realize your time is valuable, I assure you I will be there." She stared incredulously at the receiver. "He hung up on me."

"He sounds like a real jack ass," the man said and handed her the water.

"I actually don't even know him, he contacted my office by phone and set up this meeting."

He looked at the pile of papers and books resting on the counter and raised his eyebrow in question.

"I'm an interior designer. Reegan." She held out her hand and blushed scarlet. Fool, he already knew her name!

"Kade, nice to meet you." He took her hand in his and sparks shot up her arm. She gasped out loud and her eyes flew to his, widening in surprise. A slow sexy smile spread across his lips and his eyes dropped to her mouth, the look in his eyes instantly causing an absence of saliva. She swallowed visibly and tried to clear her throat, a task nearly impossible with him watching her that way.

"Is there a hotel nearby?" She questioned and he chuckled. Mortification filled her and she stammered, "I mean, not for... I need a room for tonight, until tomorrow, I'm sorry, I didn't mean..." Where was that crack in the earth she could fall through when she needed it!

"I'm afraid that is one thing this one horse town is lacking, along with a grocery, bank, post office, pretty much anything important. Truth is it really isn't a town so much as a stop along the way. What you see here," He indicated their surroundings with a wave of his hand, "Is mostly it."

Her mouth fell open. What was she supposed to do now?

Her hand was still held firmly within his and his thumb was caressing small, lazy circles on her palm. Her knees quaked like they were made of jelly. Incredulous, she tried to figure out what was going on with her traitorous body. He was a complete stranger, someone she had just met and all she wanted to do was get him into bed. Crazy!

She was not that kind of woman, one who had one night stands with just anyone and everyone. Yet, there was something about the blatant hunger and invitation radiating from his eyes that teased the woman deep

inside, tempting her into abandoning every principle she had for a night of what his look assured her, would be hot, hard sex.

"You can stay here. There is a small apartment in the back. Not luxurious by any means, but there is a clean bed." His voice was husky and his eyes danced with that open promise again.

"Do you make it a habit of seducing women in the middle of nowhere?" The question escaped before she could stop it. She bit her lip, now that she voiced it, she realized she needed his answer.

"Honestly," he said, his voice thick with need, "This has never happened before. People break down out here all the time. I've never met a woman like you though, that I wanted to drag into my arms and drive into her soft body until we're both exhausted."

His blunt words sent shockwaves of desire shooting through her. She should be outraged, completely offended, but by God, the only thing she could manage was hunger for the image he conjured up in her mind. Her mouth parted and she licked her lips, a subtle acceptance to his invitation.

*Just kiss me and make the choice for me,* her mind screamed at him. If he did that, she would go along with him willingly, anywhere he wanted to take her, but he needed to make that first move.

As if understanding her silent plea, he stepped closer, his hot breath teasing her sensitive skin with anticipation. His tongue flicked out to skim over her lips and she leaned forward for more. He pulled back

slightly, his sexy smile indicated the game he was playing. She had to come and get it, *she* had to make the first move.

Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and aimed for the spot she last spotted his lips. *Crap*. She cursed herself when she felt the tickle of his goatee instead of the softness of his lips. She tried to turn away in embarrassment, but he cupped her face and tilted it up to press his lips against hers this time.

Passion exploded and she gave herself over to the sensations his kiss sent rushing through her body.

He swallowed her moan and deepened the kiss, his tongue forceful and hot, taking control and demanding her absolute submission. She was immobilized against the counter, trapped within his arms, flight not even an option if she wanted to, which she most certainly didn't.

Hunger exploded within her, nothing in her life had ever turned her on like this, every nerve ending sizzled with excitement, every muscle tensed with need. She swayed on her feet, unsure she could even stand anymore.

Her body was suddenly floating and his strong arms held her tightly as he carried her towards the back room. His lips didn't stop their passionate assault until they reached the bed and he helped her regain solid footing.

His eyes blazed fire and Reegan realized she was on the verge of orgasm just from his stare. "Take off your dress." She didn't even think of disobeying.

It took only one tug of the belt for the simple cotton wrap to unwind. Her creamy skin glowed in the darkened room as the dress fell to the floor. She stood before him in a thong, garter belt, thigh high stockings and heels.

A burst of moisture soaked through the silky material between her legs as his eyes roamed over her body, caressing every inch of her without so much as a touch. Her nipples tightened under his gaze, rock hard and aching for attention. Her fists balled at her sides to still the urge to rub them.

He stood and watched her battle for control. "Lie down." Again the command in his voice touched something deep within her and she obeyed without question.

The course blanket felt scratchy against her skin as she lay back, eagerly awaiting his next order. He moved next to her and his hands slipped under the strings of her thong. He slid them down over her legs and dropped them on top of her discarded dress. Then he moved to stand at the foot of the bed.

"Bend your knees and open them, wide." She had never been the recipient of such intense scrutiny in all her life and the thrill of excitement overpowered her moment of embarrassment. She did as she was told, her face flushed with excitement when she looked at him from between her raised knees.

"Play with yourself." He whispered.

A groan escaped from deep inside. She was so close already it wouldn't take much to come, especially with him there watching her every move.

Her fingers slid down her stomach, over the smooth skin between her legs, the contact against her clit both satisfying and agonizing. Her breathing turned shallow as her finger ran circles over the hard bud, the sweet ache inside built swiftly and her fingers were soon slick with her excitement.

The moment centered on her pleasure, on giving in to her bodies' desperate need for release. She lay poised in limbo on the edge of sanity, ready to careen out of control and leave the world behind. Her fingers worked faster.

"Look at me!" He growled and her wild, unfocused eyes met his just as she spiraled over the edge. She screamed out her climax, her body convulsed on the small bed and her back arched until she was anchored to reality where only her head and feet touched the soft mattress.

The bursts of pleasure wracked her body without mercy, her sobs turned to hoarse cries that echoed throughout the small room. Her muscles pleaded for reprieve, stretched taut to the point of bursting, until one final brilliant explosion of white hot bliss filled her and she sank back onto the bed, exhaustion claiming her. Reagan fainted for the first time in her life.

\* \* \* \* \*

TAP. TAP. TAP.

The strange sound broke through the haze of satiated sleep and she opened her eyes, her ability to focus clearly hampered by the complete lack of control she had over her still humming body.

What was that sound?

She turned towards it, confusion marring her face.

Where was she?

There it was again, that TAP sound.

Was that a voice she heard?

She forced a deep breath into her lungs and focused on the noise. Her vision cleared and her gaze met concerned blue eyes through the glass.

Her lips parted in startled surprise. It was him.

Kade opened the door and a blast of fresh air splashed across her rosy face, her senses returning quickly with the cooling breeze.

"Ma'am. Are you okay?"

"Fine," she said, trying to come to grips it had all been a dream and that the object of it now stood before her.

"You needed a tow?" He questioned in a honeyed drawl.

Reegan's smile spread over her face and a delicious shiver spread over her body.

Did she ever.