

SHORT STORY

A

ROGUE

IN SIGHT

ALICE WINTERS

A Rogue in Sight-Short story

-Do not read the short story before you finish reading A Rogue in Sight (contains huge spoilers).

Alice Winters

Edited by: Courtney Bassett

“No, no, come on... please... please don’t do it... please,” I beg as I lie on the floor. Why would she do this to me? Why would she torture me like this?

I reach out for her, *needing* this. Needing it more than anything.

She collapses onto the ground and I sink down, exasperated.

“Noooo, Zacia, it was going to be such a cute picture! Is it a requirement for you to stop doing cute things every time I pull out my camera? Are you allergic to allowing me to capture everything cute you do?” I ask the cat.

She yawns, which is equally cute, so I snap some pictures of that, and then she closes her eyes, which also requires at least ten pictures.

“You alive down there?” August asks when he comes in to find me halfway under the kitchen table, lying flat on my stomach as I try my hardest to photograph the cutest cat known to mankind. Of all of the cats in the world, how did I end up with the best one?

“She had a ball and was like... whapping it... gosh, August, it was really cute, don’t judge me,” I whine.

“No judging happening. The attack must not have been too bad for you to be back already.”

“Ohhhhh... yes.”

“Yes? You... you *are* back, right?” August asks.

“No... Deus did say something along the lines of a villain attack. Something like, ‘The demonic forces from Earth’s core have risen to abolish the lungs from which we breathe, blah blah blah.’ I didn’t listen to the rest. I just assumed he was like... having trouble with the toaster or something.”

“Um... no... there was an attack... that Valerie needed you both for.”

“Eh, Deus has it.”

“There were thirty villains involved,” August says, looking a wee bit shocked that I thought Deus could handle this.

I hesitate. “You know what, August? I might just go... check it out. I mean... maybe if someone had *told* me, you know... I would have... gone... there.”

August picks up my phone and flashes me the group text I received from Valerie.

Valerie: Urgent, Landon, we need you and anyone else who can assist. We have counted at least thirty villains and could use all the help we can get. It looks bad... so bad, in fact, that I’m grudgingly allowing you to bring Deus with you.

“Weeeeird. That was totally not there before. I bet there’s like a villain whose power is to mess with my texts.”

“You replied with a picture of Zacia, so that’s why I thought you guys were done and came here instead of going there!”

I quickly put on my shoes and hurry out to the car. “We really need a friend who can teleport or fly. Do you know any of those?”

“I do not,” August says as I throw the car in reverse and hurry down the street. August starts yanking at my shirt, and I glance at him.

“Oh, honey... this is so forward of you. Do you want me to show up naked? Only if you do as well,” I tell him.

“I’m trying to put your suit on you!”

“Feels more like you’re trying to grope me. But you know what I always say... grope away.”

“Do you say that?” August asks.

“August, I honestly don’t remember what I said yesterday...”

“What book did you read when we went to Florida four months ago?”

“Oh, I remember that. I actually read *four* books and they were—”

He jerks the top part of the suit over my head, strangling me a little in the process before going, “I think I put it on inside out.”

“What? After all of that?”

“It’s fine, no one will notice. How do I get the pants on you while you’re driving?”

“I can do it,” I say as he unbuttons my pants and I pull the leg I’m not using out. With my adaptive cruise control in place, I whip my pants off and throw them to August. They end up wrapped around his face.

“Oh my, August, are you smelling the crotch of my pants?”

“Not my plan. Are you wearing underwear with my face on it again?”

“I have like seven pairs now, August. What can I say? I like sitting on your face. I only feel happy when my ass is on your face. I’m so romantic.”

“Is that romantic? Or is that weird... no one knows.”

“Beyond romantic,” I say as I manage to get one leg into the suit a moment before we pull up to the skyscraper that the police are surrounding. Luckily for us (and probably the people stuck inside the building), it’s only ten minutes from our place.

“See? It looks like Deus already has it all under control,” I comment an instant before I watch Deus get thrown out of the fifteenth (I’m guessing here) floor window.

August freezes time while I shove through the car door and grab someone else’s car with my mind. I throw it up into the air as time starts again. Deus doesn’t seem to care that he’s plummeting to his death as he shoots two guys, likely the ones who’d tossed him from the building, then he flips and shoots a third guy from a floor lower before landing on the car with fucking finesse. Like is he a cat? Why does he act like he knew that car was going to be there? And why’s he got this fucking sexy-ass pose down?

“That... was impressive,” August says.

I plan to lower Deus down *with* the car, but instead, he shoots a window and just *leaps through it* and rolls out of sight.

“What the fuck, man?” I ask as I stand here flabbergasted, holding a car thirteen floors up in the air for absolutely no reason at all. “Why do I feel like he’d still have survived even if we weren’t here?”

“I... don’t know,” August says before he rushes ahead. I pull my pants the rest of the way on and hurry into the building.

The front door has been completely *blown* in, so it’s not hard to get inside. I dash into the elevator when August grabs my wrist.

“Elevators aren’t safe. Someone could be camping it and then you’d be blocked in. Take the stairs,” he warns.

I jab the close door button vigorously, positive I’m not going to climb thirteen flights of stairs when I can just zip up.

“Landon!” August says as I pull free and the elevator doors slide shut and up I go. I mean... come on. He’s going to waste so much time and energy scaling a skyscraper when he could be like me! Look how fast I zoom.

The door opens and a guy with muscles upon muscles looms in the doorway. He fills up the entire exit, completely blocking me in and giving me absolutely nowhere to go. If he crowds into the elevator with me and the door closes, I'm not quite sure what I'm going to do. It's not like I can crush the elevator to get him back with us both in it.

And I can't see what's beyond him, so I just use my mind to grab something and smash it into the back of his head. The coffee cup shatters and chunks crumble to the ground, but I don't think he even twitches. He just reaches into the elevator, grabs me and helps me out.

So kind of him.

Less kind of him to *throw me* at a fucking wall! Like who just throws people, let alone hard enough that my body slots perfectly into the drywall? What if he hurt my hands and I couldn't turn my pages with ease?

I lift a desk with my mind, prepared to drive it into his thick skull with a beautiful threat attached. “You motherfucking asshole. I’m going to tear your head clean off your body and make you regret—”

Deus dashes past, flicking what looks like one of those pins from his “lucky dolls,” and it slams right into the guy’s eyeball. The tall man screams, falls back into the elevator just as the door closes, and off he goes.

I’m left standing here as I realize that Deus is already off on an adventure while I’m reminded why August is generally right.

Speaking of, August zips onto the scene before I can play it off like I have no idea why there’s a Landon-shaped hole in the wall.

“Was everything okay?” he asks as if he’s not seeing me pull myself out of the drywall I ended up in.

“Yeah, just fine. Elevator was definitely the way to go... for *suuuure*. Yep. Definitely sure.”

“Nothing happened?” He seems skeptical. Absolutely no idea why that would be.

“No,” I say while he picks pieces of drywall out of my hair. “Oh, this? I tripped. There was like... this bin... and I tripped...”

“Oh no. That sounds tragic.”

“It was. Deus went barreling that way,” I say as I hear a loud crash in the direction I just pointed.

We hurry into the room where Deus is busy brawling seven guys at once and not at all looking overwhelmed—the manic grin on his face seems to show how much fun he’s having. Even so, August rushes in and I do my

best to knock one or two down by whapping things into the sides of their heads. Really, I feel like I should be allowed to just fling them off into oblivion, but Valerie made Deus and me sit in a “special for us” meeting about how we need to “arrest” the people and you cannot arrest people you launch into the lake using a canoe as a baseball bat.

I rarely agree with Deus on anything, but I do agree that she’s just far too picky.

“Alright, where are the rest?” I ask as I look at the pile of people.

“I threw most of them out of windows,” Deus says. “You should have seen the firefighters running here and there to catch them on their little net thingy. Hilarious.”

I eye him as I wonder just how “hilarious” Valerie is going to find this.

Deus lifts his guns and shoots out a perfectly fine pane of glass.

“See, August, Deus had it all handled,” I say.

Deus grabs a guy and starts dragging him toward the window he’d just shot out when Valerie’s team comes rushing onto the scene to arrest them.

“Well, my job is done,” Deus says as he holds a piece of paper against August’s face and uses his precious face as a desk so he can write his invoice.

“There’s a wall right there... even a desk... honestly, you’re in an office and *surrounded* by flat surfaces, and yet you choose my precious August’s face?” I ask in disbelief.

“Yeah, but there’s blood and... pieces on all of those places. I don’t want my invoice to be dirty,” he says. “There were thirty-seven villains. Let’s times each of them by, uh... I don’t know... what sounds good? I guess I’m feeling nice today. Let’s do a thousand a piece. And then I want to charge two percent for having to see Landon in his underwear.”

“When the fuck did you see me in my underwear? Don’t tell me you saw them when you were falling out of a fucking building, flipping onto a suspended car, and shooting people before diving back through another window?”

“That’s definitely when I saw your half-clothed ass... and your shirt inside out.”

“I saved your life!”

“Maybe I’ll charge three percent. It was pretty scarring. But I did have fun brawling bad guys with my friends there at the end, so I’ll take like thirty bucks off.”

“We’re only worth thirty bucks, August. Thirty bucks.”

Deus taps his pen against August’s forehead as he thinks. “And then for getting to see August’s beaming face, I’ll take off a thousand.”

“Wait... so the thirty bucks was for *me*? I threw a motherfucking *car* under you and saved your life.”

“You’re so fussy, Landon. I think that’s why I love you. I’ll make it thirty-five. Alright, looks good. Let’s go.”

I glower at him and question why I even try. “We can take the elevator down,” August says.

I stare at the elevator and question if the man with a pin in his eyeball is still in it. But before I can voice that I’m totally fine taking the stairs, the elevator door opens. The guy is indeed still wallowing in there as Deus steps on his hand and pushes the button for the first floor. He sits on the guy’s shoulder while the elevator descends.

“Are you guys hungry? I’m kind of hungry. I think I could do with... ooh, tacos. I want tacos. Do you want to buy me some tacos?” he asks the guy he’s sitting on.

“S-Sure,” he whispers.

“Thanks, man. You’re an alright guy,” Deus says as he fishes out the man’s wallet, pulls out all of the money, and slips just a dollar bill back inside. Then he presses the wallet against the guy’s mouth. He hesitates before opening his mouth and allowing Deus to slot the wallet into it. Deus seems pleased and stands up as the doors open and heads out. The moment he sees Valerie and Ellison he quickly climbs back into the elevator, prepared to leap out a window to escape their glowers, but Ellison throws his illusions out.

Aspen wraps his arms around Deus’s neck and ushers him out of the elevator. “Oh boy, oh boy, Ellison is mad at you. You’re definitely getting a spanking tonight.”

Deus grimaces. “Ellison, my sweets.”

Ellison’s eyes are almost as sharp as his suit. “You *fell* out of the fucking building.”

“Are you sure I did? I don’t remember that. Does anyone else remember that?”

“You are out of control,” Valerie growls.

Aspen seems to be enjoying this, even if Ellison isn’t. “You are so fucking sexy. Ellison wants to tell you that too but he’s trying to stay mad,” Aspen says as he kisses Deus’s cheek.

Deus shuffles forward and wraps Ellison up in a hug. “I had everything under control. And that nice guy there said he’d buy us lunch. Come on, My Lord of Suits. Let us feast.”

Deus tapes an invoice to Valerie’s lips and then ushers his boyfriend off, and I follow after hearing of the promise of tacos.

“They already have pictures up,” Aspen says, flashing Ellison’s phone at us as we dive into our tacos.

I look at the picture of Deus standing on top of the car looking like a proper badass. The comments under it are all:

I don’t care if he might be a villain, he can come into my bed any time he wants.

I wish my husband looked half that good.

I thought about hiring a villain to attack me just so he could hold me.

Deus looks repulsed. “I should dispose of them all,” he decides.

“What? Why would you dispose of them? Of course they’re saying... stupid shit, it’s the internet,” Ellison says.

I wave it off, knowing he just needs time to get used to it. “I have to deal with fighting people off my man all the time. People love a bad boy who’s kind of good. It’s only because they don’t know you personally,” I explain. “Once they got to know your personality, no normal person would still want...” I eye Ellison, who is glowering at me. “Gosh, don’t murder me with your eyes.”

“I’m with Asmodeus on this,” El says as he appears. But I have an odd feeling that the reason he’s behind this is because he doesn’t want others looking at Deus.

“Hon, there’s a picture of you too!” August exclaims before he clicks it. Then he quickly presses the phone down on the table so I can’t see it.

“August... honey... why did you slam the phone down like that?” I ask as I try to pry it up. August probably would have broken the phone

trying to hide it from me if it wasn't Ellison's phone, but I manage to pry it up and look at the picture.

I gasp when I stare at the picture of me in my underwear, one leg in my pants. I'm doing this strange squat thing that makes my ass stick out and my face is all scrunched up.

"It's fine, people take bad pictures of me all the time," August reassures me.

"YOUR FACE," Deus says as he laughs manically.

"Look at the comments, August... LOOK AT THEM," I say.

"No, stop reading them! People can say mean shit but you can't let it get to you—"

"They all want my underwear. Look. They're all jealous of me. Ha. Sorry, fuckers. I got a patent on them. August's face is on my underwear only," I say as I cackle, pleased with myself.

August sighs and decides to just eat his taco without another word.