



**THE FORMER
ASSASSIN'S GUIDE**

Bonus Content

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The Hitman's Guide to Snagging a Reluctant Boyfriend-Bonus Short
Alice Winters

*Please don't share.

Cassel

"I scratched that fucker off so hard I tore the goddamn paper," I say with a grin as I toss the notebook onto the dashboard.

"You're... keeping notes on what we need to do?" Jeremy asks curiously as he slows the car to a stop.

I beam at his level of interest. "Yes! I made an entire list of things that I missed out on during my childhood and that you might have missed out on to that I want to do together."

"Well... I'm glad we can scratch off 'Go to the fair' then," he says as we wait in a ridiculously long line to drive into the parking lot. "What all do you have?"

I flip the notebook back open, eager to share my plans with him. "Just normal stuff like... have a picnic, go camping without murdering someone, go to a zoo without following a hit, play board games—Okay, I've played board games but after I killed the guy there was blood all over it and it was very disappointing."

Jeremy looks concerned as he glances over at me. "Oh... okay... not where I thought that was going."

"The worst part? I waited until I was winning to off him... I'm a horrible person, aren't I? I just really didn't want to kill him while he thought he was winning... God that sounds awful."

He reaches over and squeezes my thigh. "No, you're an amazing person."

I smile at this wonderful man who always says the right things at the right time. “Thank you.”

“Is there more on there?”

“A lot. Ooh. We’re finally moving,” I say. “I’ll have to share the rest with you on the ride home. It’s only two pages.”

“Oh? Only? Wow...”

I eye him. “You think it’s too long.”

“It’s never too long.”

“That’s what she said,” I say.

He shakes his head while looking mildly amused. “Please stop hanging around Leland.”

I can’t help but laugh as he pulls into the parking spot. “I promise.”

He seems to know that it’s not a real good promise as he smiles at me before leaning over and giving me a kiss. “Perfect. Ready?”

“Yep. Ready to come is my middle name.”

Jeremy snorts, clearly turned on by my middle name as he gets out of the vehicle. As soon as I’m out of the vehicle, I hold my hand out to him.

“You know we might raise some attention holding hands?” he asks, looking a little hesitant.

“It’s okay, I’ll beat them up for you,” I assure him.

“Ah, just what I wanted to hear,” he says, clearly finding me to be awesome at my job of keeping all potential enemies and suitors at bay.

It feels surreal to be walking anywhere while holding the hand of the man of my dreams. How the hell did I get so lucky? I have to be the luckiest person in the world. *NO!* The universe. Years ago, I never thought I’d even have someone in my life and now I have a whole family (a weird family but beggars can’t be choosers and all that).

Jeremy looks over at me and gives my hand a squeeze. “You’re pretty excited to go to the fair, aren’t you?”

“I’m excited to go to the fair with *you*,” I say before horror hits me. “Oh my god. NO!”

Jeremy is savagely jerked to a stop but since he wasn’t expecting any of it, I’m flung a little forward because he weighs more than me and hadn’t quite realized that my cry of anguish meant that he needed to immediately stop.

His eyes dart around. “What’s wrong?”

“Look who’s getting tickets,” I whisper. “No, no, no, how dare they ruin my perfect day?”

Jeremy sees what I’d already seen, and his expression immediately darkens. “Did you... did you tell them we were coming today?”

“No, I kept it a secret!” I say. “I was super secretive.”

“Okay... we’ll just go to a different gate. They currently don’t see us. It’s a big fair, we’ll just avoid them. Simple as that.”

“That’s true!” I say. “We can just... still enjoy ourselves. Hurry.”

I take his hand and usher him toward another gate while hoping that’s the last we’ll see of Leland and Jackson. Jackson isn’t bad, but he seems to always come with Leland.

As soon as we’re through the gate, I look around excitedly. “What do you want to do first? There are horses and sheep and pigs and cattle and—”

“Want to see the cows first? They’re right here,” Jeremy says as he motions at them.

“Sure! Did you know that calling them cows is actually wrong? A cow is a female. So that’d be like calling all horses mares.”

Jeremy just stares at me while letting my strange animal facts sink in. “Huh. That’s interesting. Are you a secret farmer too? Were you raised out

in the hayfield milking cows? Any other secrets I'm missing?"

"How the hell did you guess? I had a gun in one hand and milk pail in the other," I tease, which makes him laugh, especially when I try to mime it with a finger gun and a motion that's *really* supposed to look like milking a cow but somehow looks very perverted.

"I think you need to put those weapons away before you do some harm," Jeremy says, so I take his hand again. As we walk down the aisle of the cattle barn, Jeremy looks over at me. "Now, do you know the breeds too?"

"I do! White and black moo, gray moo, brown moo."

"Ah... wow, that's impressive. Thank you for your knowledge."

I grin at him. "You're welcome."

"Shit..." He jerks me to a stop and my eyes snap up in time to catch onto Leland and Jackson turning into the other end of the barn. "How'd they get here so fast?"

"They're drawn to people doing normal things so they can ruin them. Quick! Hide!"

Instead of hiding, Jeremy ushers me out of the barn and into another one that has horses.

"Did I tell you that I once had a hit on this guy who rode polo ponies? I had to pretend I knew about horses and did all this crazy research and then he put me up on a horse and I had no damn idea what I was doing. It ran away with me, but I never fell off."

"Your... life... like what?"

"Sadly, I never shot someone during a tornado like Leland, though. That'd be awesome."

Jeremy stares at me. "You... you do realize that's not true, right?" he asks.

I think about it. The logic part of my brain is going “Duh, Cassel, this isn’t true” but the part of my brain that deals with Leland is going “It’s motherfucking true.”

I decide to say nothing and just smile, which makes him immediately smile in return.

“Look, a foal,” he says, and I rush over to see the foal sticking his muzzle through the bars. I scratch his lip as he wiggles it around and his soft whiskers brush my fingers.

“I want one.”

“I’m not sure where you’ll keep it but have at it,” Jeremy says.

“You’re supposed to be the voice of reason,” I remind him.

He shrugs, obviously not too fond of his title. “Eh, you’ve also taught me that I need to live a little. Not be so uptight all the time while expecting the worst.”

“I taught you something?” I ask excitedly. “Was it that your cock can glow?”

He’s clearly not as excited about this information as I am. “There are children around.”

I glance around, glad when it looks like I traumatized no children early. “Whoops. I meant... your chicken can glow!”

“We promised never to speak of that again.”

“I... don’t... remember making that promise. I’m pretty sure you either asked me in a moment of bliss where I wasn’t thinking straight or when I wasn’t listening,” I inform him.

He bumps his shoulder into mine, making me grin. “Maybe.”

“Is anyone looking at us funny yet?”

“You want to beat someone up, don’t you?”

“Just a little bit. I feel like it’ll make me sexier in your eyes.”

“I’m not Leland. You’re plenty sexy just being you,” he assures me. I think about that for a moment. “So if I were to throw down with Leland, pin him on the ground, that would be...”

“Extremely sexy.”

Proud of him, I give him a huge smile that he returns.

“Sometimes, I feel like your smile is brainwashing me. It’s like when you smile at me, it’s such a wonderful smile, I have to smile back, and even though my brain is going, ‘You’re agreeing to something sketchy, pull back, retreat,’ I just smile instead.”

“Good. My evil plan is working.” And to top it off I give him an evil laugh.

“Want to see the pigs?” he asks.

“Not unless you do. They freak me out.”

“Why do they freak you out?”

“Lucas told me if I ever needed to hide a body to toss it in with the pigs, and they would *eat it*.”

Jeremy’s eyebrows scrunch. “I kind of feel like you have a very odd idea of what... pigs do.”

“They’ll nibble on you. They’ll start with the toes.”

He looks like he doesn’t believe me at all. “People... people have pigs as house pets.”

“Yeah, and when they start nibbling, they think it’s cute. They’re just biding their time. Ever read *Animal Farm*?”

“So... all the information you have is based off things a psychopath said and a book that really wasn’t even about animals?”

I point at him. “Correct.”

“Let’s just go pet one.”

Why must this man torture me the way he does? Why can he not listen? *Buuuuuuut* he's sexy and I love him, so I let him drag me off to the murder pigs. When we walk inside, he points out a little girl of about three sitting on her pig as it naps.

"Ooh, scary," Jeremy says, sounding ridiculously sassy.

"It's just waiting for the right moment to strike."

Jeremy is convinced I've lost my mind as he leads me over to a pen and reaches inside to scratch a pig. It eagerly comes over to see what he's up to and Jeremy waves at it. "Touch it."

"No."

"Touch it."

"It'll eat me."

"It's not going to eat you."

"Look at it... thinking about how to eat me."

Jeremy's raised eyebrow rises even more. "I will withhold all sex until you touch a pig."

"Why are you so mean? Fine."

I slowly reach out as the pig's nose wiggles and touch the top of its head. It feels weird but it makes no attempt to eat me... *yet*.

"I guess... I guess it's *alright*," I say as it wiggles its tail. "Alright, let's move on to a less murderous animal."

"For some reason... you saying that sounds very ironic," Jeremy says.

I think about that for a moment. "Oh... my... god. You're right. I'm just like a murder pig."

"This just took a strange turn. How about some rabbits? Ever hear of anyone being murdered by them?"

"Not yet. But today might be the day. We'll walk in and it'll just be a blood bath. Bunnacula strikes again!"

“Bunn...icula?”

“It’s a children’s book about a vampire bunny that sucks the blood from everyone, murdering them all.”

“I feel like... that’s not a thing, but you’re cute, so I believe you.”

“Good.”

We head over to the small livestock barn and jerk to a halt as my eyes snap onto Leland and Jackson. “Retreat! Retreat!”

We quickly back out and dart into another barn.

“Why are they everywhere?” Jeremy asks.

“I don’t know but we’re sly motherfuckers. They haven’t seen us once.” My phone beeps and I pull it out.

Leland: Why are you two running around like fucking weirdos? First at the gate, then at the cattle barn, and then again just now. It’s really weird.

Jackson: I think they’re avoiding us.

Leland: There is absolutely no fucking way they’d avoid us. Why would anyone avoid us?

Henry: Why am I part of this group chat?

Jeremy: I don’t want to be here either.

Me: I thought we were being sneaky.

Leland: OMG. Did you hear that Jackson? Those poor souls.

Jackson: I did.

Leland: How pitiful! Sneaky! They were being sneaky!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Hold me, my love, while I laugh!

Me: You’re a bully.

Leland: Would a bully invite you to a face-off at the star shooty carnival game?

I still suddenly.

A carnival game... with guns... against Leland. I could finally beat Leland at something! I could annihilate him. He could bow down to me and worship at my feet.

But I can't. I'm here with Jeremy.

Jeremy: We'll be there in five. Cassel looks extremely excited. You better bring your A game.

Leland: I was BORN with my A game.

Henry: Lord.

Henry: Is there a way to leave this group chat?

Henry: Let me leave. Please.

Me: You're motherfucking on.

Leland: If I win, you have to carry me around on your back like you're a pack mule.

Me: If I win, I get the title of badass motherfucker for a full day.

Leland: HA. As if.

We rush over to the carnival game where Leland and Jackson are already waiting in line.

Leland puffs up his chest the moment he sees me. The asshole is already reaching nearly six foot, so he really doesn't need to try hard to look tougher than me. "I see you showed up. I thought for sure you'd be too afraid," he says.

"I eat fear for breakfast," I whisper to try to make it sound more mysterious.

Jackson just stares at us before stepping over to Jeremy. "Do you ever just stare at them and wonder if there's a part of your brain missing that can't comprehend this?"

"Every day."

"Huh..."

While Leland goes on about how he's going to name his new pack mule Cassel Carries-a-Lot, I watch the people going before us. According to the guy who looks like he hates his life while he runs this, each gun gets about a hundred pellets to shoot the red star out of a card. But what I notice is if you go straight for the star, the card begins to move, making it harder to hit after a while. The only ones getting anywhere are going wider than the star, almost a circle around it like they're punching it out.

"My hypothesis is that Leland will be too eager, Cassel will be too precise..." Jackson says which immediately gets Leland's attention.

"You think you're going to win?" Leland asks.

"I might," he says with a grin.

It's finally our turn so all four of us step up to face off against each other. The fifth spot is taken up by a child of about seven.

There's no way I can let Leland win. There's absolutely no way.

I pick up the gun and line up the sights as Leland blasts off, his pellets shooting out like a damn machine gun. "Hold on... where... where'd all the pellets go?"

"You used them all," the guy manning the booth says.

"Wait... no... the others haven't even shot yet! This is rigged. I'm not a premature ejaculator! I mean... sometimes when Jackson's naked and he's caressing my guns while in the gun shrine I've struggled a little. I mean... can you blame a man... but not this... not like this."

"Ha... loser," I say as I barely touch the trigger and find that the "sights" are a load of shit, and this shoots nothing like a real gun. I try my next shot and steadily get closer to the star and begin to slowly punch it out as Leland steps up behind me, breathing heavily in my ear.

"You... are a loser," he whispers. "You will lose."

"Don't be jealous."

“Look how hot Jeremy looks right now. Oh my god, he just tore his shirt right off!”

“Huh?” I ask as I quickly look over, jerking my gun off the perfect aim I’d spent far too many pellets establishing just to see that Jeremy looks the same as he did a moment ago. He does smile at me, so it makes it semi worth it.

“Look at the way his muscles bulge with each shot,” Leland whispers in my ear.

I glance over at Jeremy again and smile at him some more. He really is a sexy man.

“Look at him... just look,” Leland says.

“Annnd time’s up!” the guy running it says as I look over at my *nearly* perfectly punched out star.

“Wait? What? I didn’t know we had a timer!”

“Ahhhh too bad,” the guy says as he pulls the papers on a rope so he can see them up close.

“Look, Mom! I did it perfectly!” the seven-year-old says as he waves around his perfectly punched out paper. The carnie reaches for Leland’s but Leland snatches it up and tosses it in the trash.

“Perfect, I know,” he says. “Praise me, praise me.”

The carnie pushes him out of the way and checks Jackson’s which is a mess then grabs for mine which still has a point of the star left. “Super close.”

“Thanks,” I say.

Leland leans into me. “I kind of want to push that little kid that won.”

“I don’t think that’s ethical or nice at all...” I say.

“Just a little push,” he says. “His shoelace is loose. Just stand on it.”

“Since both of you suck, I guess you two just have to be nice to each other,” Jackson says.

“I think whoever was closest wins,” Jeremy says.

I love that idea. Jeremy is the absolute smartest. “Ooh! That’s right! That’d be me! Call me badass motherfucker. Do it! Leland, do it!”

Leland looks like he’d rather drown himself in the little duckie pool next door. “You, Cassel, da Cassel... the little guy who is very little, and kind of cute... once upon a timeth knowneth as Cleanyface the Great who couldn’t... actually clean... my spandex-wearing—”

“Leland, you can do it,” Jackson says.

Leland clears his throat for a ridiculously long time. “I think I’m going to pass out. I need to sit down. My heart! Jackson! My heart!”

“You’ll be fine,” Jackson says. “It’s just once.”

“Cassel... the Tiny...”

“Stop just harassing me!” I say.

“You’re a... Badass... Motherclucker. There, I said it.” He grabs his chest. “I can’t believe I did it. How did I become so selfless and amazing?”

“But you didn’t,” I say, in case he was confused.

“Oh, Jackson. We’re gonna have to do the Sasquatch tonight to make up for it. Oh, look at the time. Hurry up, let’s leave. Quickly.” And off they run, leaving the two of us standing there.

“How’d you do?” I ask with a smile as I see Jeremy holding his paper by his side.

“Just alright,” he says, trying to tuck the paper into his back pocket, but before he can, I grab it from him, revealing the paper with a perfect hole punched out of it.

“Jeremy! You did it perfectly! You won!”

He smiles. “I know... *buuuut* the better prize was letting you win and torturing Leland.”

I’m positive my love just consumes my body as I listen to his words. “Why... why are you so amazing?”

“Does it make up for making you touch a pig?” he asks as I take his hand.

“Oh, you’re just the dreamiest of men, you know that?” I ask him. “And I can’t wait to experience everything on my four-page list of things I want to do with you.”

“I thought it was two pages.”

“I thought maybe... if I told you it was *six* pages you’d get a little worried,” I say with a smile.

“Now it’s six?”

“Just stop pressuring me! I didn’t mean to make it ten pages. There’s just so much I want to do with you! *And* to you.” I waggle my eyebrows which makes him smile as we head off to the next thing.

If you’re looking forward to more from Cassel and Jeremy, let me know! I hope you enjoyed!