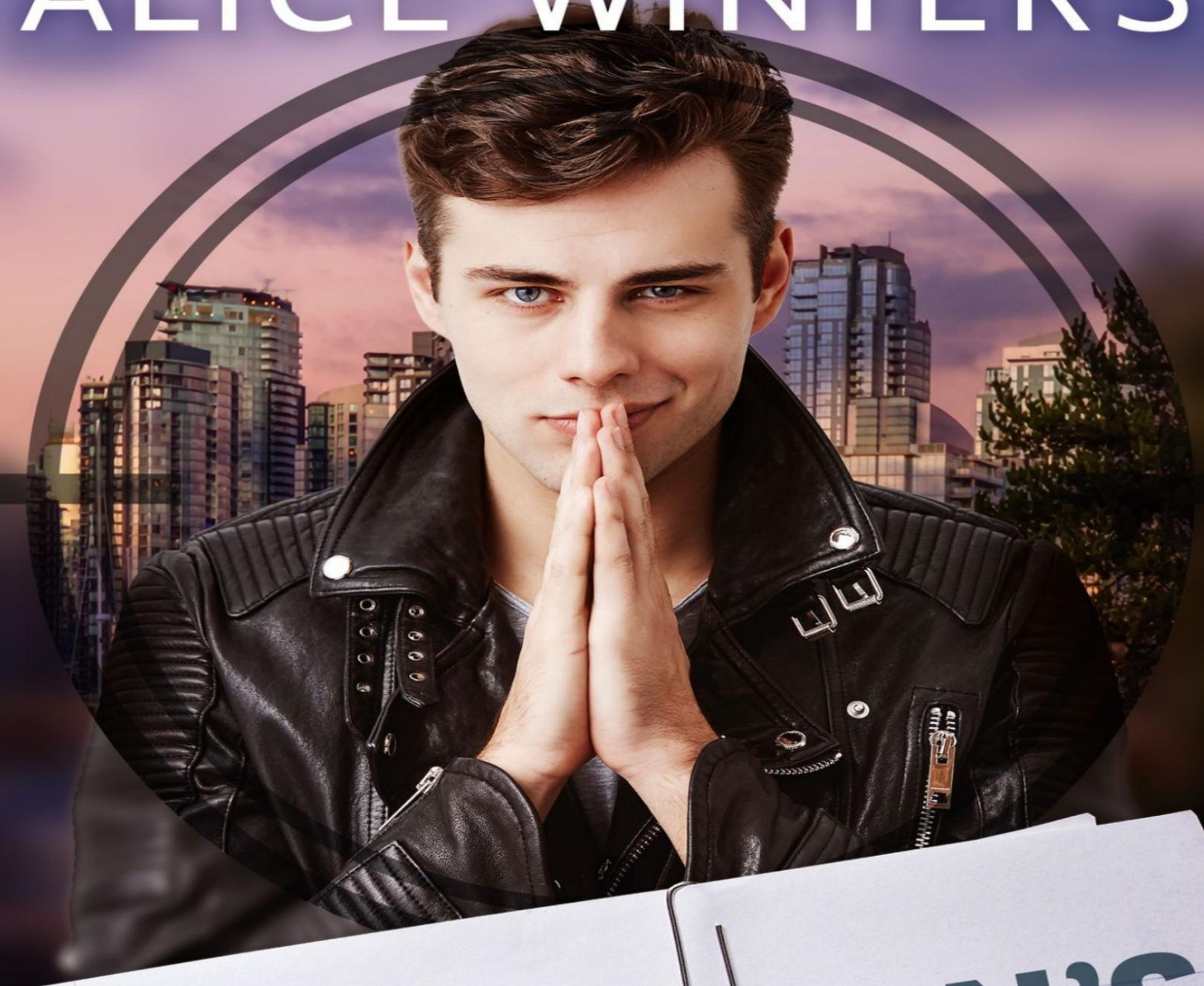


# ALICE WINTERS



## THE HITMAN'S GUIDE

*To Mayhem and Modeling*

## The Hitman's Guide to Mayhem and Modeling

To be read after The Hitman's Guide 4

Alice Winters (please don't share)

Lightly proofed by Courtney Bassett

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Me: Cassel.

Cassel: He's not here right now. If you'd like to harass him, please leave a message.

Me: This is texting, not a voicemail.

Cassel: Leland... I have some very important news to tell you.

Me: ... Which is?

Cassel: This phone number has been disconnected and is no longer in service.

Me: I will come over and take my car back if you don't straighten the fuck up, ya hear?

Cassel: FINE. What do you want?

Henry: Why the hell am I a part of this conversation?

Me: I don't want you to feel left out ever again.

Henry: Please, I don't mind. Leave me out.

Cassel: So what do you want, Leland? Is this just to show off how many weapons you have again because I'm totally not jealous at all looking at all your amazing stuff that I'm not jealous about.

Me: Henry, I think he's clearly jealous of Jackson.

Cassel: I have Jeremy!

Me: I know. That's why I don't blame you for being jealous of Jackson.

Henry: I know what he's NOT jealous of. Your inability to listen.

Me: Anyway, I want to get Jackson an amazing Christmas present, so I need your help.

Cassel: Henry's? You need Henry's help?

Me: Both of you, if you want.

Henry: We don't want.

Me: Cassel, if you want to keep your car.

Cassel: It IS a nice car... dammit. Fine. I'll be over in half an hour.

Henry: Yeah... I'll be there at some point, don't wait up for me.

Me: Clearly, I need something to hold over Henry.

Henry: No.

Me: Okay, so I'm going to make a photo calendar for Jackson for a Christmas present. So I need you guys to make me look good.

Cassel: Even I am not that good.

Henry must be extremely busy with something like saving the world or something... who really knows. It's the only thing that could logistically keep him from being here.

But when Cassel pulls in with Jeremy, I'm quite ecstatic.

"I did not know you were going to be bringing Jere to the Bear," I say, thrilled to have a second vic—participant.

"Yeah, I told him we were getting ice cream then quickly drove here as he screamed 'The ice cream place is in the other direction! Please! Don't!'" Cassel looks oddly proud of himself as he declares this.

Jeremy, on the other hand, looks quite broody. He should leave the brooding to the professionals.

"The better question is what are you wearing?" Cassel asks as he eyes my jeans and button-down.

"Nice clothes, obviously."

"You think Jackson wants a calendar of you in nice clothes?" he asks like the idea disgusts him. "I gotchu covered." He pulls a bag out of the back seat of his car as I wonder why I didn't call him sooner.

"I'm listening."

"Jeremy's better with a camera, so we'll leave him in charge of the photos," Cassel explains as he heads into the house where he pulls out a maid outfit I'd made him wear as Mr. Cleanyface.

"Where'd you get that from?" Jeremy asks.

"Leland made me wear it and service him," Cassel says.

Jeremy turns his accusatory eyes upon me. "He made you do what?"

"I... I can't talk about it," Cassel says.

"I made him clean," I say. "For money. He got paid. To clean."

"I said to not talk about it!" Cassel cries, like it's hurting him.

Jeremy relaxes at that. "Makes sense."

"Does he clean at your house?" I ask curiously

Jeremy stares at me for a very long time. "He tries."

Cassel's eyes get huge. "Tries? What's that mean? I'm amazing at cleaning! I'm phenomenal. Someone tell me I'm phenomenal."

"Hear that?" I ask as I cup my hand over my ear. "Crickets." Then I drop my pants.

"What the hell?" Jeremy asks.

"I'm getting changed!"

"In the living room in front of the window?"

"Oh, the mailman's seen me naked more than once, it's fine."

"Does Jackson know about this?" Cassel asks.

"Yeah, he invited him in one time. It was awkward and slimy and a bit weird, but okay," I say.

Cassel and Jeremy side-eye each other.

"What?" I ask. "It was icy, and he slipped and slammed into The Fence. We brought him inside and cleaned him up while telling him all about the origin of The Fence. Never saw him again, oddly enough. Got a new guy after that... huh..."

"You ever wonder why people meet you once and then never again?" Cassel asks.

"I actually wonder more about the ones who keep coming back, like you," I say with a sweet smile.

Cassel's eyes narrow. Clearly, he doesn't think I'm as funny. Or maybe he's questioning his own sanity. That sounds more likely, to be honest. I leave him to his thoughts and pull on the maid outfit that's clearly too small for me.

Cassel looks at me for a moment before going, "He... he he.... It's beautiful."

"Really? The noise you just made makes me think not," I say, but Cassel merrily parades me out into the freezing front yard and over to the fence.

"Yip, yip. Get onto the fence," he says before smacking my semi-bare ass.

"You're going to make Jeremy jealous and he's going to try to off me," I say.

"You'd just love that, wouldn't you?" Cassel says as I hop up onto the top of the fence, skirt fluttering. I wish Jackson was here so he could see how easy it is.

“Should I hang off it with my ass out like Jackson?”

“Sit on it first,” he says as he hands me two guns. “Hold them like Hollywood gangster style.”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“You know, like fake gangster. Like in the movies where they’re all like twisting the gun sideways and stuff,” he says.

I force my arms in odd positions before Cassel grabs my knees and spreads my legs.

“Dear god,” Jeremy grumbles.

“Jeremy just got turned on,” I warn Cassel.

“Oh, Jeremy gets turned on no matter what I do,” Cassel says.

“There... perfection.”

That’s when I notice the mailman reaching our mailbox. He slows gradually, stares at Cassel shoving my legs apart, the gun, the maid outfit, and clearly thinks “Man, these guys know how to have fun.”

“Sup!” I say as I watch him scurry off. “We must not have any mail today.”

“Yeah... I’m sure that’s what that meant,” Jeremy says. “Can I just take this picture yet? It’s cold out here.”

“What do you think about my poor balls?” I ask as I wave to them. “Cassel, warm them up with your cheek until Jeremy gets into position.”

Cassel grabs my leg and jerks me up, nearly sending me sailing off the back of The Fence. “When I get disgusted, I try to flip things,” he warns.

“It’s fascinating how tiny yet mighty you are,” I say as I hook my leg around his neck in a choke hold. “Jeremy, take the picture! Hurry!”

“Goddammit,” Cassel yells as he smacks against my leg while Jeremy lazily takes the pictures.

“Jeremy, you *help* me when I’m in peril, not take pictures,” Cassel says as he finally slips free.

“Yeah, but the lighting was really good with the splash of cloud cover over there,” Jeremy says like getting the perfect shot was more important than Cassel’s wellbeing.

“Jeremy, the more I’m around you, the more I like you,” I decide.

“Ah.”

“Excuse me, what’s that mean? You’re supposed to be like ‘Oh. My. Gee. I love being around you *too*, Leland!” I say.

“When did Jeremy turn into Micky Mouse?” Cassel asks.

“That’s how I hear his voice constantly in my head,” I explain.

“Do you want these pictures to look good?” Jeremy threatens.

“I mean ‘Oh. My. Raging Rod. I motherfucking love being around you *too*, Leland,” I say in the manliest voice I can muster.

“Now *that* sounds like him,” Cassel says. “Alright, flip over, onto your stomach, ass toward me.”

“This is how I found Jackson on that fateful night,” I say.

“We’re aware,” Cassel says. “Was he also wearing a maid outfit?”

“Sadly, he was not,” I say as I hang on the fence.

“Leland, look sexy. You look like a carcass. Like look back at us or something. Do I have to do everything around here?”

“Just thinking that the memory is going to get less and less fresh brought a tear to my eye.”

“How many months are there in a year? Hopefully just one?” Jeremy asks.

“Right? We have at least ten more to go,” Cassel grumbles as he grabs my skirt and tears me off the fence. “Go put on a different outfit. Come on, I’ll pick it out.”

As he forces me to change into a pair of his shorts that look absolutely ridiculous on me, he takes a pair of scissors to one of the shirts he brought, making it into a crop top. Once he’s fully satisfied with that, he heads downstairs.

“So... Jeremy... have any run-ins with a mighty lighty sword lately?” I ask.

His eyes narrow. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Your boner beacon.”

Cassel takes that moment to reappear with a crop in hand.

“You *told* him?” Jeremy asks in shock.

“Of course. He was very proud of my funnies,” Cassel says with an adorable beam on his face as he smacks Jeremy on the ass with the crop. “Let’s go, my glowing rod of ecstasy.”

Jeremy grudgingly heads back outside as Cassel points to Jackson’s car. “Stand in front of it, back to us.”

And because I clearly don't *run*, he starts smacking me with the crop. Once I'm in place and the abuse stops, he aims me toward the hood, puts the crop in one hand, a gun in another and tries snapping my neck off by making me turn to look at Jeremy.

"Hmm... hold it... hold it... not perfect yet." He grabs a belt loop of the shorts and yanks them hard enough that I'm positive I'll never retrieve them from my crack. "There we go! You getting this, Jeremy?"

"Grudgingly."

That's the moment I hear sirens and glance over as a police cruiser pulls in behind Jackson's car, ruining the shot.

"Drop the weapon and put your hands up," Henry barks through the speaker.

"Henry has finally come!" I announce as I rush over to him. "Daddy!"

Henry gets out of the car and folds his arms over his chest. "We just got an alert that a madman was waving guns around."

"Really? Where, I'll get him," I say.

"He's talking about you. Your mailman must have called the cops on you," Cassel says.

"What a stupid little nark. Aw, Henry, did you come to join my photoshoot? I'll sit on your lap! Jackson will definitely love that."

"No. I came so you don't get arrested."

I gasp and catch Cassel's eyes.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" I ask.

Cassel nods. "I'm not sure what you're thinking, but I know what I'm thinking," he says. "Henry, I need you to cuff Leland and take him to jail for the night."

"No! Pictures of me cuffed!" I say. "Obviously."

"Oh..." Cassel seems less ecstatic about that one.

"I'll pose on the police car," I decide as I look at the flashing lights. "Turn the sirens on."

"That's illegal," Henry says.

"Not if you're looking the other way," I say as Cassel holds his hand out like he expects Henry to plop the cuffs right into them.

I turn to Henry and delicately take his hands into mine. "Henry, from the day I was born, there was only one thing I ever wanted. And that was for you to handcuff me and hold me against the police car," I say.

“So you were just straight out of your mother, seeing light for the first time and thinking ‘You know what would make this day better? An older man handcuffing me and pinning me to the car while I torment him by calling him daddy and two other grown men who aren’t my husband watch’?” Henry asks.

I gasp and step back. “He’s a mind reader.”

“I always knew he was magical,” Cassel whispers.

Jeremy’s just nonchalantly taking pictures of all of it, like he’s really embracing his role as a photographer.

“I have handcuffs in the house,” I say as I dart off to retrieve them. When I return, I see Cassel is lying on the ground behind the police cruiser’s tires while a neighbor who’d clearly been enjoying a jog is standing in the road watching.

“He was trying to leave, Leland! I threw my body behind the tires to keep him from going!” Cassel says.

“Cassel, you’re my favorite,” I declare as Henry grabs his foot and easily drags him off. “I just wish you weighed a bit more.”

“I have to go,” Henry says as Cassel gets up.

I snap the handcuffs on one arm and while Henry is preoccupied dragging Cassel, I snap the other handcuff on his right wrist and stick the key in my underwear. “Oh no... I guess we have to take just one picture.”

“I swear to god,” Henry says as I throw my own body against the car and look at Jeremy as he snaps away. “Give me the key.”

“You’re with me forever and ever,” I say with a wicked grin.

Henry pins me against the car while grabbing my shorts like he’s prepared to retrieve the key himself as I see Jackson’s park my car on the side of the road. He gets out, looks between us and narrows his eyes. “Do I even *want* to ask?”

Jeremy snaps another picture.

“Jackson, good, the key is in his underwear. Retrieve it,” Henry demands.

Jackson seems highly uncertain. “Do I *want* to? Or do I want to get back in my car and slowly drive away?” he asks. “Can anyone explain what’s happening?”

“Nothing of interest, really. Normal day in the neighborhood kind of thing,” I say.

“Uh-huh,” he says, clearly unsure about that as he sticks his hand in my pants while Jeremy snaps another picture. He pulls the key out and tries to set it in Henry’s hand. Henry grimaces but takes it, unlocks his hand then snaps the handcuff shut on a pole on the mailbox before walking away.

“Hold on... Henry... Henry!”

Jeremy snaps one final picture of me stranded at the mailbox.

“Do you guys want some coffee?” Jackson asks.

“Yeah, sure,” Henry says. And I watch as the lot of them head off.

“Guys! You forgot something very important!” I say.

“Oh shit, right,” Henry says as he rushes back and turns the lights off the cruiser before heading into the house.

“Cassel? Cassel, my best friend ever!”

“I don’t have the key, sorry,” Cassel says as he rushes after them.

“Jackson! My love!”

“Yeah?” Jackson asks like he might not have an idea what I’m calling about.

“Save me.”

“Okay! I’ll be right there,” he says before kissing my cheek and hurrying off with the rest of them. Thankfully, he returns after a while but if it was summer, I have the odd suspicion they’d have left me there.

