

I Claudia

Do you know any decent hitmen? Seriously. I'm asking.

It's not as if I can look on the Checkatrade website for killers for hire, or search the internet for assassins with a five-star Trust Pilot rating. I mean, where do you find these guys? Assuming hitmen are men, of course. Not that I've got anything against female killers; I'd happily employ a fellow middle-aged crazy woman if she could get the job done. I'm not fussy. Just insanely angry. Well, that's what my psychiatrist reckons, and he should know. Although it didn't stop him making a pass at me when I told him my husband had left me for his female business partner. His *young* business partner, I might add. The one with the fake tan, tits and eyelashes. Obviously.

When I say he's left me, Gary's not actually left the house yet or even admitted to the affair. And I can tell that Dr Rosencrantz is dubious about my suspicions.

He said to me: "Now then, Claudia, you are taking your clozapine, aren't you?"

I said: "Of course." [*wink emoji*]

It's all right for him, but he's not the one putting on weight and suffering from a dry mouth and constipation. If I'd wanted to shit bricks and drink endless cups of tea all day I'd have become a builder, not a pharmacist. Besides, my subscription to the Craft Gin Club counts as medication, doesn't it?

Dr Rosencrantz thinks I'm imagining the affair. But a woman knows, doesn't she? It's those telltale clues. Quite apart from the stray blonde hair on his jacket, the lipstick smear on the waistband of his boxers, and the scent of Miss Dior permeating everything, it's the chest waxing, nipple piercing, teeth whitening, fat reducing, body shaping, eyebrow threading, fake tanning, and ultrapeeling beauty treatments; not to mention the gym-going, the clothes buying, the late working, the defensiveness, and the furtive WhatsApping. And the happy smile. Especially the happy smile. What's Gary got to be happy about? He's an accountant married to a psychotic middle-aged woman with frizzy hair and paranoid delusions – according to the doctor.

By the way, if you're in the market for a dodgy accountancy firm, the business is called Alcock and Bull. He's Alcock – or behaves like he is – while she's full of bull. Did I tell you her name's Alexa? Fancy being called Alexa. That's a potential disaster in this age of the 'internet of all things'. You mark my words, it's just a matter of time before one smutty demand too many sets off the leaf blower in the shed.

So, do you know any decent hitmen?

When I say decent I mean *reliable* – someone who takes a bit of pride in their work. Someone who plans meticulously and covers their tracks – and mine. And cleans up afterwards; I do hate mess. I did find someone promising on the Dark Web; promising in the sense he was full of promises, providing I paid him in bitcoins first. But how does that work? It's not as if I can stroll into my NatWest branch and withdraw a handful of non-fungible tokens along with the housekeeping. Why bitcoins? It's taking all the vicarious pleasure out of planning an assassination. What's wrong with stuffing a Tesco carrier bag full of used tenners and leaving it behind Professor Moriarty's tomb in Highgate Cemetery? Sometimes the old ways are the best ways.

As for the would-be hitman, he called himself TheManOnTheGreasyKnoll. I'm not sure if he realised it was actually the *Grassy Knoll*, or if he was just trying to be satirical, but he didn't seem to have much of a clue, or a sense of humour. You've got to retain a sense of the absurd when it comes to killing people, haven't you? I mean, look at Jean-Paul Marat – if only he'd asked his plumber to install a shower the French Revolution would have turned out differently. Arguably. Anyway, I asked the Greasy Knob Man if he did special offers.

“What do you mean?” he messaged me back.

“Well,” I said, “my main target is that cheating husband of mine. But I wouldn't mind if Alexa gets hers as well. Do you do Buy One Get One Free deals, like Aldi?” He got the arse after that and didn't get back to me. Very unprofessional.

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I'd do it myself but, as I said, I hate mess. In fact, I can't stand the sight of blood, which I think you'll agree is a major setback for anyone planning a career as an assassin. It's called hematophobia, so any death involving the shedding of blood is an absolute no-no as far as I'm concerned. That rules out stabbing; or shooting, due to my hoplophobia. I've thought about strangling him with a rope, but that's out because of my linonophobia. And I can't drown him, as I'm aquaphobic.