

The Housewife Assassin's Handbook

by Josie Brown

Chapter 1: Please Read and Follow Directions Carefully...

Any woman can be both the perfect housewife and an accomplished assassin, because both functions require the same qualities: creativity; a never-say-die attitude; and an attention to details, no matter how small . . .

All I really needed to know about being a freelance assassin I learned before my youngest daughter, Trisha, started kindergarten.

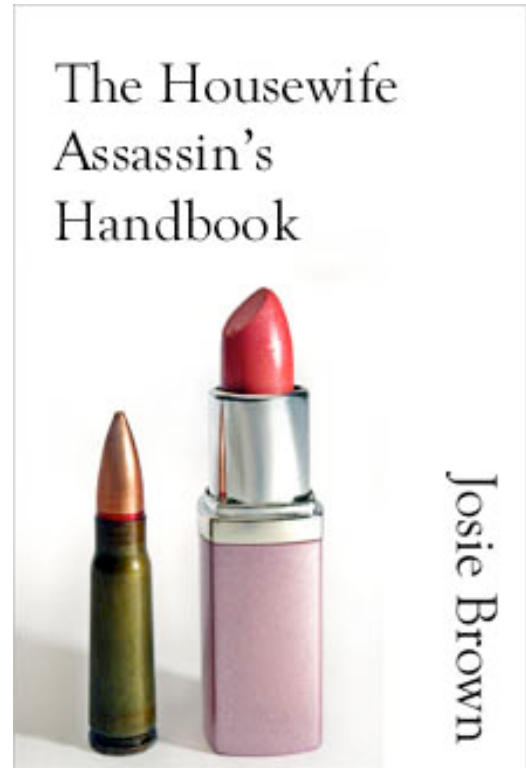
I've come to that realization as I lay naked and handcuffed to the bed of my target *du jour*, a sleazebag by the name of Yuri Petrovich.

Yuri has just downed a couple of Viagra with the last of his Starbucks *venti*-sized non-fat decaf caramel macchiato. This is to ensure us both that his attempt to mount me will have all the gusto of a broncobuster breaking in the wildest filly in the corral before heading on into the sunset. (In truth, we are in a hillside suite at the Chateau Marmont. But considering Yuri's attitude toward women, the cowboyspeak sums things up quite nicely.)

Believe it or not, everything is going just as I planned, and right on schedule.

At least, that is what I tell myself as I watch him unzip his rock star-tight leather pants and squeeze out of them as quickly as he can because his erection, which seems to be growing by the nanosecond, has him wincing in pain. (And in Yuri's fantasy if anyone is going to get hurt, it's going to be me. The handcuffs are proof of that.)

Like, say, eighty-eight percent of all my targets, this Russian mafia boss, who came here to unload a cache of AK-103s on some Idaho Neo-Nazis, has an obsessive-compulsive personality. In Yuri's case that means staying in the same suite at the Marmont every time he hits Los Angeles (although his Slavic accent and pockmarked greaser looks has hardly earned him an iota of the ass-kissing accorded aging rock





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stars, budding celebutantes, or out-of-town actors); doing the down-and-dirty with some rent-a-whore, both before and after the arms sale; and drinking macchiatos nonstop, even during his favorite sex act, the Tantric position euphemistically called “the ostrich’s tail.” (Don’t ask, because you really *don’t* want to know.)

Acme Industries, one of the many new post-9/11 CIA-sanctioned subcontractors that handles any and all dirty tricks that won’t pass a Congressional panel sniff test, contracted me to be the honeypot who takes Yuri down. My assignment is as follows: First, I was to stall on the sex until the skinheads showed up. Next, I was to plant a GPS system on one of them, so that ATF can track and apprehend them during the pick-up. And finally, as a show of tit-for-tat diplomacy with Uncle Sam’s publicly acknowledged new best friend Russia, I was to see to it that Yuri never left his hotel room alive.

Oh yeah, and one more *very* important point: All of this is supposed to be accomplished before three o’clock, the time in which I have to pick up my ten-year-old, Jeff, and a carload of his teammates for an after-school baseball game. Otherwise I’d have to face the wrath of two other mothers for having blown the team’s shot at taking the state title without a play-off game—

Which is why I pray that the 405 isn’t a nightmarish backup by the time I head home.

From the moment he landed stateside, Yuri’s cell phone calls were monitored. The one to his favorite LA escort service was rerouted to an Acme phone operative, who scheduled Yuri a date with “Precious” (a suitable alias, seeing how I’m trussed up in a push-up bra, a low-cut tank top, and the tight denim micro miniskirt I’d raided from my twelve-year-old daughter Mary’s closet. My gut told me that Yuri would not have appreciated my own Lily Pulitzer twill.)

The fact that I showed up an hour after the appointed time put me just a few minutes ahead of the Neo-Nazis: perfect timing in my book, since it foiled his plan for a little pre-sale foreplay.

Needless to say, Yuri was miffed at me for ruining his timetable. To make that point, he pushed me up against the wall, kicked my legs apart, and frisked me roughly. Really, it was more of a test-the-merchandise fondle. Anticipating that maneuver, I’d left my trusty 9mm at home. That’s okay. In my hooker get-up there was no place to hide it anyway, which is why these kinds of close range hits are always tricky. But then again, that’s why I get paid the big bucks. For this job, my weapon of choice was a tiny, serrated dagger that is appropriately called the “street assassin.” However, I was

willing to bet that Yuri and I wouldn't be anywhere near asphalt when I struck, but between some very expensive 700-count Egyptian cotton sheets.

What a waste. I wonder if the hotel knows that little trick about using meat tenderizer on bloodstains . . .

Not that I planned on sticking around to find out.

I shrugged off his grope with a giggle. "Yeah, the service warned me how much you *love* a little foreplay, so I brought these along." Still spread-eagled, I unhooked pair of handcuffs from the metal belt slung low over my skirt, and jangled them tantalizingly in front of him, in case he needed additional proof that I was his fantasy fuck. That shut him up. It also kept him from noticing my dagger, which hangs as innocuously as any of the buckles on my belt: a great way to fool metal detectors, which, believe it or not, are sometimes used by the bad guys, too.

Then to make sure I had his undivided attention, I rubbed the all too obvious bulge in his leather jeans with one hand and nodded approvingly, while relieving him of his Starbucks cup with the other. As I took a swig from it, one of his two goons snickered out loud. Yuri's eyes blazed at my impudence. He lifted his hand to slap me, but was stopped by a sharp knock on the door.

The skinheads. Perfect timing. "Jeez, nobody said it was going to be a party! But hey, I'm open to anything – as long as you cleared it with the service." I handed the cup back to him, sauntered over to the couch and flopped down as if I owned the place. While Yuri's goons frisked the two Neo-Nazis, I crossed my legs seductively and leaned over so that my cleavage runneth over in plain view for all to enjoy. No doubt about it, the skinheads were appreciative. The fatter, uglier one even had the balls to ask me if my boobs were real.

"Wanna come over here and find out?" I crooked a finger at Ugly. As he slid me onto his lap, I copped my own feel: under the collar of his military fatigue jacket, where I planted a tiny GPS bug.

Seeing me all over Ugly made Yuri even hotter to be done with the business portion of his trip. He yanked me off his guest and shoved me in the direction of the bedroom. "No party. You wait in there," he growled.

I pulled him in close for a deep kiss. Then, as a reminder of all the fun and games I had in store for us, I handed him the key to the handcuffs. That was all the incentive he needed to get rid of the skinheads tout sweet. He closed the door fast, which was fine with me. The tranquilizer I'd slipped into his macchiato before giving it back to

him – a time-release version of Rohypnol – was to kick in sometime within fifteen minutes. I was estimating that he'd need about ten to get rid of the boys, which would leave me five to stall before he fell on his face, making it easy to slit his throat before hightailing it out of there.

The minute he shut the door, I set up for the kill. First I snapped on a pair of gloves – black lace from fingertips to the elbows. Sexy, for sure (in fact, they match my G-string) but because they are lined in a micro-thin flesh-toned latex, I won't be leaving any telltale prints. As I expected, the sliding door to the terrace outside the bungalow was locked and the curtains were pulled, which allowed for complete privacy from the outside. After disabling the alarm with the tiny decoder I keep on my key ring, I went ahead and unlocked the sliding door so that when the time was right I could make a quick getaway.

I wasn't worried about the handcuffs, since they were the kind used by magicians and I'd only need a strategic jerk of the wrist to break free. Even if the Roofie didn't kick in before Yuri snapped them onto my wrists, I'd be able to get out of them in only a few seconds.

And finally, I slipped the knife under the mattress, near the right side of the headboard. I'd retrieve it when the time was right.

As minute eight slipped by, I heard a door close on the other side and guessed rightly that Yuri had said bye-bye to his new skinhead pals. During minute nine Yuri instructed his homeboys not to disturb us no matter how much moaning I was doing – and he planned for me to be doing a lot of it.

Then, as predicted, Yuri opened the door ten minutes after he'd left me. Locking it behind him, he smilingly approvingly at my state of total undress: my only attire was my G-string, stilettos, and the lace gloves.

I was somewhat surprised that he wasn't at least yawning by now. Apparently he had the constitution of a rhino. I was hoping that I wouldn't find out if he had the staying power of one as well. It was then that I noticed that the Starbucks cup still in his hand....

Damn! Hadn't he finished that thing yet? Okay, no big deal. So I stall...

To put that thought out of my mind, I envisioned the kill instead: watching his eyes grow drowsy from the drug – or if necessary, closed in the ecstatic throes of passion; yanking my hands free, then reaching under the mattress for the knife—

Yuri wrongly assumed that my sigh was in anticipation of what he pulled from his leather jacket's pocket: my handcuffs. "Okay, bitch. On the bed."

Obediently I dropped onto it and grasped the middle finials on the vine-patterned headboard. As he slapped on the cuffs, he stifled a yawn. (*Yes! Yes! Finally!*) To keep alert, he took a long sip of his macchiato. Then, as if remembering something, Yuri pulled something out of an inner pocket of his jacket...

Ah, yes: the perfect pre-sex appetizer: *Viagra*.

Humph. I wondered what effect that might have on the Roofie . . .

And now that Yuri's striptease is over, it seems I have my answer: not only does the Roofie appear to have been neutralized by his little blue devil, it seems to have accelerated his hard-on –

And from the look of things, acted as a growth hormone to boot.

Not good. At least, not while I'm in my current position – by that I mean naked, chained to his bed, and about to be mounted like a prize rodeo steer.

Not that Yuri seems in any hurry. Nonchalantly he ambles over to the built-in armoire and takes a two-foot-long velvet box from the top drawer, which he lays down beside me with a smirk. Then, opening it slowly, he pulls out –

– A riding crop. *Ouch*. Seems that the cowboy metaphor is becoming more appropriate by the moment. Damn it! Acme had implied that Yuri was into bondage, not sadism! *There had better be a bonus in this for me . . .*

He runs the whip up my left leg until it catches on the thin silky thread that is my G-string. With one quick twitch of his wrist, it snaps right off. *Dammit, that hurt!*

Very slowly he slaps precise little welts onto my belly as he works the whip over to my other thigh, but pauses when it reaches what is left of the G-string, so that I might agonize over the pain yet to come. My wince brings a sick smile to his face. Now *I'm* feeling a bit queasy, even if he isn't. *Stall! Say anything . . . Do anything . . .*

"What, you want the dessert before the main course?" I taunt him. "*Naughty boy...*"

That only provokes him into slapping me all the harder. What is left of the G-string shreds into thin air. With a guffaw, he takes its little lace patch and holds it up like a trophy before flinging it across the room. It lands near the door with a skip.

Suddenly I notice that his eyes are crossing. He sits down on the bed – falls down, really – onto me. All 174 pounds of him. And I don't think he's breathing. So, the combination of Rohypnol and Viagra was a toxic Trail Mix after all.

More like fatal. Still, a hit is a hit is a hit . . .

I jerk at the trick cuffs, but they won't open. With Yuri on top of me, I'm angled all wrong to break their hold. With my chest, I shove him as hard as I can, but for some strange reason, he's not budging. Then I realize why:

The only thing left standing is his erection, and it has him staked between my legs.

Great. Just great. As I struggle under his limp-but-where-it-counts-most carcass, I hear muffled noises from the other side of the door. It sounds like a skirmish. The two faint thumps I hear next tell me that something is terribly wrong. Someone is trying to break down the door. It gives way, and I see Ugly the Skinhead standing there. As Ugly whips out a 9mm, I realize that Yuri's posse was taken out . . . *And now it is our turn.*

Even from the doorway, Ugly's aim is dead on. As the bullet enters the back of Yuri's skull, the Russian jerks forward and we butt heads. As much as that hurts, it has also saved my life: as my head snaps back, the bullet that just left his frontal lobe whizzes by mine by mere millimeters. Still, that doesn't stop a geyser of Yuri's blood and gray matter from spurting onto my face. I freeze in horror.

"Fuckin' Commie. And fuckin' Commie fucker." Between my temporary paralysis and my Yuri-spattered countenance, Ugly assumes that I'm dead, too, and turns to leave, but pauses at the sight of my G-string. He lumbers over to where it's fallen and squats down to pick it up. After sniffing it, he stuffs it into his pocket. Obviously he feels that is a fitting trophy for his kill – or, in his mind, *two* kills. He stalks out, slamming the door.

Silence.

Shit, I have to get out of here. *Now.*

But that's almost impossible to do, what with Yuri still on top of me . . .

Granted, the Marmont is used to strange noises from behind its many closed doors. Still, it's been a while since a dead body was found in one of its suites, let alone three. Of course, I imagine the worst: That someone heard something, or maybe even saw Ugly the Skinhead leaving Yuri's bungalow, and has called the hotel's staff, which will soon come to investigate;



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That, after tapping on the door and getting no response, they will burst in, see Yuri's dead bodyguards and find Yuri on top of me, then call the police;

That, to my children's horror, I get arrested for prostitution; and that, to Acme's dismay, I will be called as a witness at Yuri's murder trial, which will force them to contract with another assassin to finish the job Ugly started on me.

Worst of all, I imagine my son Jeff's face when he realizes that he'll miss his ball game.

And that once again it's all my fault.

It's this last vision that does the trick for me.

It has been documented that mothers involuntarily demonstrate incredible feats of strengths when their children's safety is threatened. I am living proof that this phenomenon also occurs when their kids' championship games are at stake. Defying Yuri's gravitational pull, I heave myself to a forty-five-degree angle, which finally gives me the leverage I need in order to jerk my wrists free from the cuffs. With my hands now free, I can shove Yuri to one side.

At least, what is left of him.

I stumble to the bathroom. Leaving on my gloves, I shove my face under the faucet and wash Yuri's brains and skull off my face and out of my hair before staggering back out into the bedroom, where I retrieve my handcuffs and the unused dagger from under the mattress. Then I jump back into my hooker attire, which I had dropped onto the plush chair by the bed. As planned, I leave from the terrace door, grabbing Yuri's cuppa joe as I go.

In my now ruined spiked heels I totter up Monteel, the road that meanders high above the hotel, sprinkling what is left in Yuri's coffee onto a thirsty bougainvillea and burying the cup deep inside a garbage can of a neighbor who has left it curbside for pickup. Besides the fact that a mommy mobile like my Toyota Highlander Hybrid minivan would surely stand out in that sea of Jags, Rolls, and Lamborghinis in the Marmont's lot, in my line of work, I could not allow the hotel's valet the opportunity to ID me.

Just my luck: my van is sporting a ticket that is not even ten minutes old. I do that math: that means that the job took a half-hour longer than I anticipated, which means that I'm going to be late picking up the boys for the ball game. The Highlander would have to be the only car on the road (a fantasy in mid-day, mid-week Los Angeles), run

every traffic light, and break every speed record known to man in order for me to get to the boys the game in time . . .

I do have another option: call my carpool partner, Claudette, and ask her to cover for me –

Hell no. That would hurt even more than Yuri's whip. She's bailed me out twice in less than a month: the time I was late getting back after taking out some hothead set on assassinating the Pope while he was here in LA.; then there was that hit I had in Seattle, when I'd booked United on the return flight. (On that one, I should have known better and flown Southwest.)

If I have to hear Claudette Bing's smug barbs again, I'll cry. "Really, Donna, what is it this time? *Another* tennis lesson? My gawd, you'd think, after all that time on the court, you'd *finally* find your backhand. Maybe you're *using* from the wrong pro. It's Fernando, right? . . ."

The inference being that I'm lying. *Again.* And for the wrong reason: that reason perhaps being that I'm two-timing my husband, Alex, with the local country club's tennis pro. Fernando, with his bulging biceps and swarthy grin, leaves many of the club's female members panting, both on the court and in the bedroom.

Considering the number of times I've disappeared in the middle of the day, the assumption has merit to Claudette and her gossip-mongering clique. As if I *could* be unfaithful to Alex . . .

Well, *fuck her.* I hit the road, tossing on a sweatshirt as I drive. At the longest turn-light on Sunset – the one at Beverly – I wrangle on my jeans under Mary's miniskirt before yanking it off. The trucker to my left hoots his horn loudly to show his sincere appreciation.

Miracle of miracles, I pull up only four minutes late! Relief floods Jeff's face. The Terrible Two – his buddies Carson and Cheever, Claudette's little angel – have already been giving him a rough time. My tardiness is infamous. But now it's my turn to be smug.

Mary is standing there with them. Usually you would not catch her anywhere near her little brother and his friends, but Carson's older brother, Trevor, is also hitching a ride to the game, and he's a hottie, what with all that blond curly hair and those soulful eyes. To keep them peeled on her, Mary tosses her long flowing main whenever he glances in her direction. Watching her, my heart leaps into my throat. At twelve, she's already a first-class flirt. Just like her mother, under the right circumstances.

The kids clamor into the back of the van and we're off. Mary, who, on any given day would have taken the passenger seat up front, chooses the two-seat row in the middle instead, with Trevor. I maneuver around a Porsche going too slow for my taste, and in the process get honked by a bus. The driver is miffed because we've killed any chance he has of making the light.

"Cool driving, Mrs. Stone," Trevor's approval wins me a temporary reprieve. Then he smiles shyly at Mary. "So, you and your dad will be at the Parent-Student dance this Friday, right?" This eighth grade rite of passage is one of the highlights of the school year. Two years from now, it will be my turn to go with Jeff. Although it's Mary's turn, Alex won't be there to take her, so she will miss out.

But then again, Jeff and Mary's father is never there for them, no matter what the occasion.

"Heck, no, I wouldn't be caught dead there! It's for dorks – " And certainly not for a girl who hasn't seen her father in years. But Trevor doesn't know this. Seeing his crestfallen face, Mary falls silent. She is angry at herself. No really, at Alex.

I run the last light between the baseball field and us. *Yes! Yes!* We're only nine minutes late! I've won Jeff's approval. I know this because he stops to me a quick kiss on the cheek. Then he asks: "So Mom, you brought my athletic cup, like I asked, right?"

"*What?* But I – I don't remember – "

I rummage through the athletic bag that was packed this morning: uniform, hat, glove, cleats . . . but no athletic cup.

"I – I called and asked you to get it from my underwear drawer! Like, *four times!*

"The caller ID on my cell confirms this. Because of me, Jeff will be benched for the whole game. League rules: no one plays without a cup. *Not even if you're the team's star pitcher.*

And there is no way I can make it to the house and back in time. We both know that. "Jeff...gee! I'm sorry – "

As a tear rolls down his cheek, he staggers to the back of the van. He can't stand to hear my lame excuse. Hell, why should he? He's heard them all before.

"Hey, Mom, what's my denim skirt is doing back here – " Mary holds it up to me, accusingly, before shrieking "*Ewwwyuck!*"



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I glance over and notice that it is sprayed with some sort of white goo. One of the larger chunks is covered in hair follicles.

Yuri's.

But that doesn't seem to bother the Terrible Two. Otherwise they wouldn't be mimicking Mary's high-pitched squeal as they toss her skirt back and forth like a hot potato.

Once again, I'm back in the doghouse with my kids.

At least, until I outrun a Ferrari or something.