



Getting Rid of Bradley

By Jennifer Crusie

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High school physics teacher Lucy Savage is finally getting rid of Bradley--and his hideous green recliner. In fact, her front lawn is littered with her cheating ex-husband's belongings. Because despite standing her up in divorce court, Bradley is out of her life for good. Or so she thinks.

When her sister takes her to lunch to celebrate Lucy's single status, all their talk of a no-good louse named Bradley catches the attention of a cop--who wants to arrest the very same Bradley for embezzlement. And O[fb03] cer Zach Warren figures the lovely Lucy can lead him straight to his target.

When someone shoots at Lucy and then blows up her car, Zach insists she needs twenty-four-hour protection. What does he think her three dogs and attack cat are for? Still, he insists on moving right in to Lucy's house....

Now there's danger lurking outside and in her own kitchen, bathroom-- and bedroom. Or maybe Zach, who looks like a bad boy with that shaggy dark hair and black leather jacket, is really one of the good guys, and just what Lucy needs.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Jennifer Crusie has a marvelous writer's voice -- funny and dead on realistic at the same time." -- *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

About the Author

Jennifer Crusie is the New York Times, Publishers Weekly, and USA Today bestselling author of Tell Me Lies, Crazy for You, Welcome to Temptation, Faking It, Fast Women, and Bet Me.

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"I've never known anyone who was stood up for her own divorce before," Tina Savage told her sister. "What's it feel like?"

"Not good." Lucy Savage Porter tried to smooth her lowered skirt with a damp hand. "Can we go? I'm not enjoying this." She gave up on the skirt and clutched her lumpy tapestry bag to her as she glanced around the marble hallway of the Riverbend courthouse. "Bradley signed the divorce papers. We don't even need to be here."

Tina shook her head. "Psychologically, we need to be here. You had a ceremony when you got married, you need one when you get divorced. I want you to feel divorced. I want you to feel free. Now sit over there on that bench while I find Benton to tell me why this is taking so long."

I'd feel a lot freer if you'd stop ordering me around, Lucy started to say, and then blinked instead. She'd been having rebellious moments like that a lot lately, but they were hard to hold on to, especially since the only time she'd actually followed through on one, it had been a disaster. Right now she was sitting under a brassy head of curls because she'd decided to go blonde as a symbol of her freedom. Some symbol. She looked like Golden Barbie with crow's-feet.

Maybe the problem was that she wasn't an independent kind of person. Other than the hair fiasco, every time she'd decided to be more independent, logic stopped her cold. After all, Tina was right. She did need the closure of hearing the divorce decree. And the bench was the best place to sit. It would be illogical to disagree just for the sake of disagreeing.

No matter how good it would have felt.

She went over and sat down on the bench.

Tina was gone already, trying to find her hapless attorney in the flood of suits that washed around her. Poor Benton. He'd gone beyond the call of lawyerness in ramming Lucy's divorce through the courts in two weeks, but that wasn't enough for Tina. Tina wouldn't be satisfied until Benton brought her Bradley's head on a platter. Lucy had a momentary image of Tina, dark and svelte and dressed in her white linen suit, standing in front of a flustered Benton who was offering her Bradley's handsome head on a turkey plate.

She liked it. Tina always did have the best ideas.

Tina suddenly appeared before her, parting the suits before her like the Red Sea. "There's some kind of delay. It'll be another hour, but then we'll go have lunch."

Another hour. "All right. At Harvey's Diner?"

Tina shrugged. "Whatever you want."

"Thank you." Lucy dug her physics textbook out of her bag.

"What are you doing?"

"I have to teach Planck's constant tomorrow." Lucy paged through the book. "It's a tough one to get across. I'm reviewing."

"You know, the next thing I'm getting you is a new job," Tina said, and disappeared back into the suits.

A new job?

"I like my job," Lucy said, but Tina was already gone.

Okay, that's the last straw." Lucy closed her book with a thump. Nobody's ordering me around anymore. From now on, I'm going to be independent even if it is illogical. I'm going to be a whole new me.

That's it.

I'm changing.

"OKAY, THAT'S IT. I'M quitting," Zack Warren said to his partner. His shaggy dark hair fell across his forehead, almost into his eyes, but he was too mad to brush it back.

"Don't tell me, tell Jerry." Tall, cool, and controlled, Anthony Taylor nodded toward the man who had just pulled a gun on them.

Zack turned back to the gun, wavering now in the hands of the balding, middle-aged embezzler who stood quivering in his bad suit behind his empty desk. Jerry watched them warily, as warily as a cautious man might regard two big guys he was holding a gun on.

"I'm quitting, Jerry," Zack said. "You can let me go because I'm not going to be a cop anymore. You can have the badge."

He started to reach into his worn black leather jacket, and Jerry squeaked, "No!"

Zack froze. "Okay. Fine. No problem." He gauged the possibilities of taking Jerry there in his office. They weren't good. Jerry was very nervous and the office was very small, leaving them no room to maneuver and nothing to take cover behind. It was furnished only with a metal desk, two plastic chairs, and Jerry. The furniture was marginally more interesting than Jerry, or had been until he'd reached into his desk drawer and pulled out the gun.

They deserved this. Just because the guy was pathetic, they'd gotten careless. Zack looked at the gun wobbling in Jerry's hand with respect. A .45. The office currently had no windows, but Zack knew it could have a couple at any minute, a .45 being the kind of gun that left large holes in walls.

And people.

"Why do we do this?" Zack asked Anthony, scowling at the gun. "Life isn't depressing enough, we have to

do this, too? I'm not kidding, I'm quitting."

"Stop complaining." Anthony carefully picked a speck of nonexistent lint off his tailored tweed sleeve, keeping his eyes steadily on Jerry the whole time.

"You're the probable cause of this anyway. You walked in here in that black leather jacket, looking like you hadn't shaved in a week, and Jerry probably thought you were some lowlife." He smiled at Jerry, an oasis of perfect calm in a very sweaty situation. "I'd have pulled a gun on him, too, Jerry. I understand. Why don't we talk about this?"

Jerry shook his head, but he kept his eyes on Anthony, listening to his even, relaxed voice. Zack moved very slowly a few inches to his right, taking care to seem as if he were only shifting on his feet.

Jerry suddenly shifted his eyes to Zack, so Zack picked up the conversation. "Oh, and if we'd both been dressed in pimp suits like you, he wouldn't have pulled the gun. I ask you, Jerry, was it the jacket that made you pull the gun? Or the badge?"

Jerry narrowed his eyes at Zack, and Anthony moved slightly to the left.

"Just don't move," Jerry said as he swayed back and forth. "Keep your hands up."

"We're not moving, Jerry," Anthony said soothingly.

"You are. Relax. You'll feel better."

"Don't get smart," Jerry said, and the gun wavered between them again. "I'll shoot."

"You don't want to shoot us, Jerry." Zack spread his hands apart. "The hassle from shooting a cop is enormous. You wouldn't believe it."

"Oh, yeah." Jerry looked at Zack as he talked, distracted by the movement, and Anthony eased another couple of inches to the left. "And the hassle from stealing thirty thousand from your boss is nothin'."

"Well, it's not like shooting a cop," Anthony said, and Jerry's eyes darted over to him. Zack moved a little more to the right. "Shooting a cop?" Anthony shook his head slowly. "They throw the key away. We don't want that. Put the gun down, Jerry."

"I don't think so." Jerry breathed a little faster and shifted his eyes to Zack. "I don't think so. And you guys are moving." He closed his eyes as he aimed the gun at Zack and squeezed the trigger.

Zack dove for the floor as he fired, and Anthony yelled, "Jerry!" and Jerry swung the gun toward where he'd been. Zack threw himself over the desk as Anthony flattened himself on the floor, and Jerry put a bullet neatly through the center of the door.

Then Zack slammed Jerry down on the floor.

Anthony rolled to his feet to help. "You all right?"

"Me? Oh, I'm as good as I get," Zack said, breathing a little heavily as he reached for his handcuffs. "Which is a hell of a lot better than Jerry is right now. How about you?"

"There were people in that hall." Anthony went out the door to see what Jerry had hit on the other side while

Zack cuffed him.

"You have the right to remain silent, you jerk," Zack said and finished reciting Miranda sitting on top of him. Anthony came back and lounged in the doorway. "Congratulations," Anthony said to Jerry when Zack was finished. "You shot a water fountain."

"Up yours," Jerry said, but it came out more embarrassed than defiant.

Zack stood and glared down at him. "We've got to start hanging out with a better class of criminals."

"Actually, this is the cream," Anthony said, checking his jacket for damage. It was, as always, spotless. "You want to work Vice or Homicide?"

"No," Zack said. "I want to arrest polite people who don't point guns at me. In fact, I don't want to arrest anybody anymore. I want to hang out with good people. Is that possible? Are there any good people anymore?"

"Well, there's you and me," Anthony said patiently.

"We're supposed to be the good guys. Are you sure you're all right? You've been acting strangely lately."

"Could you guys hurry this up?" Jerry whined from the floor. "I'm not real comfortable down here."

"You know, Jerry—" Zack was suddenly soft-spoken as he looked down at him "—I could kick your brains out very easily right now." He gently nudged Jerry's head with his foot. "Resisting arrest. Don't push your luck."

Jerry shut up.

"Here's some advice, Jerry." Anthony reached down and hauled him to his feet with one hand. "Don't get smart with a guy you just pointed a gun at. He's likely to be feeling hostile. And frankly, Jerry, we didn't like you much before you pulled the gun."

Jerry closed his eyes. "I was kind of hoping he'd resist arrest," Zack said. "No, you were not," Anthony said. "You have plans for lunch. You're arresting a master embezzler at Harvey's Diner. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing." Zack pushed Jerry into the hall. "The weather. I hate February. And I hate office buildings." He looked around at the smooth gray walls. "Maybe I will quit. Get a nice job out in the open someplace. No guns. You think I'd make a good forest ranger?"

"You know, you worry me," Anthony said.

"That's your problem." Zack moved down the hall, prodding Jerry in front of him. "So, Jerry, what'd you do with the money?"

LUCY SAT SLUMPED across from her sister in a battered turquoise booth in Harvey's shabby diner and tortured her salad.

Tina scowled down at her own salad. "Are you sure it's safe to eat here? I think turquoise Formica is bad for you, and I'm positive this lettuce is. It's white." She tapped a cigarette from the pack on the table and lit it smoothly, like a forties' movie star.

Lucy leaned forward to put her chin in her hand so she could prete...

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Lonnie Bowers:

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