

How to Catch a Boyfriend

Jessica E. Powers

*To the Gertie in everyone.
We all know she's the real star here.*

8-20-15

Dear valued customer,

My name is Amanda Gerture but most people just call me Gertie. I am fairly normal. I'm in eighth grade, won't have my braces off for at least three more years, wear my hair in pigtails, and fall in love with every boy I see. It's my only affliction, besides the braces, glasses, and my inability to laugh without snorting. So you see, I'm just like you! I'm here to congratulate you on winning your very own personal love expert . . . me! (I say personal because no one else seems to have responded to my various posters, Facebook posts or 13 foot billboard advertisements.) This was Mary-Ann's idea so she had better not be lying about their existence. Anyway, let me start by warning you how NOT to get guys. This is my area of expertise.

Rule #1 Don't follow them to their house.

Some people find mild stalking to be attractive-even romantic. This does not seem to be the case with the average middle school boy. (If you do in fact find this urge irresistible see the attached pamphlet for tips on how to peer through windows without being caught.)

You can tell a lot about a boy by his house. I would not advise future stalking - sorry, fan-following - if he owns a bulldog. I speak from personal experience. It is of course perfectly normal to stick clay in his locks and use it to mold your own key to his house. **Helpful Tip:** Don't show the boy the necklace you made out of his unsolicited house key and now keep close to your heart at all times. For whatever reason this tends to end the relationship.

Rule #2 Don't profess your love in public places.

Let's just say I have a *friend* who barricaded herself in the principal's office and used the intercom to declare her love for Bobby Williams. She then proceeded to sing "I will always love you" by Whitney Houston. Although I found it brave and touching, he did not. Lots of people had something to say about it. In my principal's words, "This is the reason you have no future!" Don't worry though, he's my best friend, I'm sure we can move past this little snag - not that it was me! In any case, public displays of affection are banned for a reason.

Now here's some advice on things you *should* do in order to get a boyfriend.

Rule #3 Choose your outfits carefully

Although it took a long time to convince me of this (and I'm sure you'll find it just as hard to believe) rainbow suspenders are a no-no in the fashion world. It's better to choose something to draw the guy's attention, like a homemade necklace of braided jump ropes! Also, no one bothers telling people this, but mascara is for eyelashes, not eyebrows. Trust me, some people don't realize that.

Rule #4 Don't wait for them to ask you out.

I've never been asked out, but that doesn't mean boys don't like me. Make the first move. It doesn't have to be romantic, but you can give them a lock of your hair if you like. No matter what, don't give up. They will come around eventually. **Helpful Tip:** If you have braces you may need to ask them out through hundreds of notes stuffed in their locker to make sure they understand what you're trying to say.

This technique ALWAYS works. The most times I've ever had to ask a guy out before he responded was 12,487. We only went on one date but I got a souvenir restraining order out of it.

Rule #5 Apply flirting techniques.

Twirling your hair is good, but more effective if you twirl both pigtails at the same time. Don't be afraid to get in his personal space. Look directly into his eyes and try not to blink. Stay nose to nose until he compliments you. Sometimes guys are very oblivious to social convention and don't realize this is how it works.

Rule #6 (Only use If all else fails) Catch yourself a boyfriend - It's not kidnapping if it's true love!

If you love him, you surely know when, where, and for how long a time he's alone each day. Capitalize on this. It's good to have a supply of duct tape on you at all times. Make sure not to let anyone see-and don't tell your parents. They probably won't approve of your undeniable love for one another. The attic or basement is a good place to keep your boyfriend. Don't forget to feed them or you may have to start burying "time capsules" in the backyard. After three or four, people start to get suspicious.

Everyone is capable of finding their true love, sometimes it just takes a little chloroform.

Hope this helps!

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

Mary-Ann, my parole officer would like to add a note here. I told her it was fine.

Thank you so much for participating in Gertie's "business." We are currently using it as therapy to help her become less violent and obsessive. She will begin meetings with a counselor next week. If this gets out of hand please contact me at my work address: M-ann@CALpen.org

8-25-15

Dear valued customer,

No word yet on when I'll get to meet my counselor. The anticipation is killing me! Since homecoming is just a month away I thought I'd start by helping you prepare for it now. (My school is 7-9 so we get homecoming but not PROM.) The groundwork for catching (sorry) *finding* a date is tricky and time consuming. Are you up for the challenge?

Sorry if my writing is sloppy, my cell neighbor has thrown his meal tray at me. For some reason it bothers him that I'm reading this aloud as I write to you. The way I see it, the more people who hear my advice, the more who can prosper. I would be happy about the extra tray except Antonio (that's his name) is so hairy it's covered in curly black fuzz - and not the kind you want to artfully stick all over your social studies homework.

He's yelling at me again because I haven't stopped reading aloud. Take your fuzziness somewhere else! I am lighting the way for humanity! Oops, guess I wrote that down. I like to imagine Antonio is an Italian mob member, which, unlike the Russian mob here in California, does not secretly control the police. He won't tell me why he's in here, but we're such good friends I'm sure he'll crack soon. He is missing a piece of his thumb. I wonder if some pizza man they were trying to take out cut it off and ground it up into sausages. Oh dear, this letter is supposed to help you with homecoming and here I am talking about ground-thumb pizza. Anyway, here goes.

Step 1: Select your specimen

It's easier if the boy you want to go with isn't already in a committed relationship, but girlfriends have a way of disappearing around the five high holidays: Homecoming, Winter formal, Valentine's Day, New Year's Eve, and of course PROM. So, do you have the perfect boy picked out? I'm going to assume yes and continue.

Step 2: Setting the trap

Corner him three separate times between now and a week from homecoming. Make him talk to you and apply the flirting techniques I described in my first letter. Subtly hint that you don't have a date yet and would LOVE to go. If he doesn't seem to get the idea you should ask him outright who he is taking to homecoming. If he doesn't know, you're golden. If he says another girl, proceed to step three.

Step 3: Eliminating the competition.

By the time you and I are finished with her Roadkill will be her name. You can't see but I'm grinning now, I just love our friendship! Start by following future Roadkill to her house. Next, lay a trail of kerosene around the yard leading to her open bedroom window. Then, proceed to Wal-Mart to pick up some matches and heavy duty grenades. Tell the guy in the pet supplies department that you know GiggilySparkles (my code name) and he will hook you up.

Mary-Ann has just informed me that if I keep writing this I won't be eligible for parole in four months. It's exactly 5 months until the day I *need* to be out of prison. Better not risk it, but you get the idea.

Step 4: Make yourself available to talk to him at all times.

Mother giving birth? Critical head wound? Who cares? If he calls, you answer. (By this point you should already have secretly entered your number into his phone 100 times with your name and various emojis)

Step 6: Offer him a lock of your hair.

It's very romantic and will let him know you are interested and available.

Step 7: Repetition

If he hasn't asked you by three days to homecoming, repeatedly ask him and his friends if he would like to go with you. He can only say no so many times. And who cares if it's tradition for the guy to ask the girl if it gets you a date? He may play hard to get. If he tells you he has already asked another girl see Step 3. Do this as many times as it takes.

Congratulations! You now have a date to homecoming!

Mary-Ann has been overseeing my letters until I meet with my new counselor (squeal!) She's telling me to wrap this one up. I guess we can discuss homecoming dresses another time.

Remember Step 3 my valued customer,

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

9-1-15

Dear valued customer who-really-should-write-me-back-because-I've-already-sent-you-three-letters-of advice,

It's Gertie again. I added this on at the top to make sure you knew why I am sending you such a short love advice letter. This one contains only one rule: **Don't fall in love with the people you work with.** It would be longer except my new counselor (technically my second counselor because they forbade me to see the one I was waiting to meet last time I wrote) made me cut it short. At least she's still letting me write to you. It's probably just because this whole business was Mary-Ann's idea and not mine. I'm just glad my newest counselor, Cheryl, hasn't pulled the plug on this grandiose operation.

I don't like Cheryl. My old counselor, Andrew, was GORGEOUS. He had the dreamiest blue eyes and a smile like sunshine. If I could I'd spend every minute of every hour of every day of every month of every year for the remainder of my life with him. And then we could be buried next to each other! How romantic. Do you think he'd let me bedazzle his gravestone? But I'm getting off-topic. After 20 minutes with Andrew I was carted back to cell #904. I don't think they'll let me see him again. Why must my life always be reflected by Shakespeare?!? I love him and THEY'RE TEARING US APART!!!!

At this point my new counselor Cheryl came over to check on me and see what I was writing. She made me put in here that Andrew is not in any danger. Of course he's not in danger. Wait a second...THEY must be putting him in danger! Why would she make me write that if he wasn't? In any case, this is why you should never fall in love with people you work with. They probably won't end up being your boyfriend anyway because your boss kills them in secret.

Oh Andrew how I mourn for you.

I send this to you, valued customer, in loving memory of the most-likely-deceased-and-by-deceased-I-mean-picked-off-by-the-Russian-mob-I-am sure-control-the police-Andrew,

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

P.S. We'll have to discuss dresses next week, I am too sad to write.

9-15-14

Dear customer, (I've dropped the "valued" because you rudely haven't written me back yet)

I'm sure you have a busy life, but those of us in the California State Penitentiary don't have a lot going on. I'd really appreciate a letter back. Not that it's all boring here. I have made a few friends. And when I

get bored I can just sing songs at the top of my lungs. My cell neighbor (who refuses to acknowledge we are best friends) has developed an odd habit of sleeping with a pillow over her head. I hope she isn't coming down with anything. (Just to clarify, this is a different cell neighbor than Antonio who was moved last week and seemed peculiarly happy about it.) Her name is Laurel.

We won't be allowed outside for recreational time much longer because it's getting cold and my jumpsuit is rather thin. It's too bad they won't let me keep it once I get out on parole. I just love the color. It seems like something my idol would wear. Loud, different, and absolutely ADORABLE. Of course you know who I'm talking about, Fashion Goddess: Nikki Minaj.

Nicki Minaj is my inspiration for all things fantabulous. Her fashion sense is as sharp as the toes of her high heels. Although this was not the advice I'd planned to give you today, you should take it anyway. If Nicki Minaj wears it-it is worth killing to get your hands on. Fine Cheryl, "killing is bad. I will not kill. I will not tell other people to kill. I will restrain myself from harming others or at very least I will only remove their fingernails." She just made me say that aloud (although I added the last bit). Cheryl seems to think that if I say it enough it will become true. We both know that isn't going to work. Poor, deluded Cheryl.

Now, back to the matter at hand.

I am going to teach you how to find love. It occurred to me yesterday while I was eating gruel that you can't possibly learn how to make someone your boyfriend if you don't know how to pick the perfect boy. I'll let you in on a little secret: You don't pick the boy. And he doesn't pick you. I've read enough Twilight fanfiction to understand exactly how true love works. You have to wait for it to come to you, and that, my dear, is the tricky part.

In case you haven't noticed, I am not the most patient person in the world. The other day I was so tired of waiting for my breakfast because Larry, the fat man in the cell to my right keeps taking my food, that I almost ate my jelly bean eyeglass chain! Just goes to show you what kind of thoughts desperation can lead to. I wasn't willing to wait for food and I certainly wasn't willing to wait for true love to find me. I'll strangle Cupid with a twizzler for making me wait so long for it. But it did eventually happen.

A little under one year ago, on October 21st (the very eve of my 14th birthday) love backhanded me in the most delicious way possible. I was sitting in the front row of my English class, sparkly pencil in hand, trademark rainbow suspenders perfectly in place. Then: HE appeared.

Bobby Williams is the most gorgeous boy I've ever seen or will see. He has sweeping blonde hair that hangs to the tip of his ears and blue eyes like diamonds that I would wear on a necklace if I could. He was tanned from hours on the beach, having just moved from exotic Los Angeles to my own little Irving Jr. High School in Maywood, California. His smile is brighter than sunshine, his laugh more beautiful than all Beethoven's symphonies combined.

Think of the most dreamylicious thing you can in the entire world. Double ice cream sundaes coated in chocolate cherries, kitten sleeping on puppies, a brand new hunting knife that glistens in the starlight. None of these things compare in the slightest way. It's like your heart stops and races at the same time. Every nerve on your body hums and you can't seem to stop staring. Not a blink, not a breath, not ever wanting the moment to end when he looks at you. It's better than rainbows or hippies or trophies. My gum bubble popped and I knew:

It was Love at First Sight.

Don't let anyone tell you it isn't real, my valued customer. You deserve someone as amazing as Bobby Williams. Maybe one day he'll be mine and you will have found your own Bobby. That is, as long as you decide to write me back, otherwise I would advise you to lock your doors. Just because I'm in prison doesn't mean I don't know a guy with access to llamas. I give you fair warning because you have been such a good friend up to this point.

Llamas bite.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

9-29-15

Dear horribly rude customer who should expect a visit from Gerald the llama man within the week,

I am still furious with you so I will spare the kind introductions and get right to the point. You remember what I told you about Bobby Williams right? Well since he was a transfer student he didn't have any friends yet. Although homecoming had already passed (*Sigh*) I figured if I got him to fall in love with me by Valentine's Day, life would be great.

Unfortunately, I wasn't the only one who noticed Bobby's smashing good looks, smarts or the fact he was the best football quarterback the Irving Jr. High Caterpillars had ever seen. Mia Rodriguez and her perfectly blonde, thin, and high heels wearing cronies were out to get Bobby and turn him into another mindless zombie. Mia had tormented me since the start of seventh grade when I moved to Jr. High. I knew this wouldn't be an easy task to complete. So I did what every good girl on a mission does: headed to Wal-mart. Once there I stocked up on craft supplies and returned home. I slaved for hours before hanging the completed schematic on my bedrooms wall. My perfectly glitterized plan had been formulated.

Since Mia was a mini-leader on the junior cheer squad she was insanely popular. Yet *predictable*. After a few stalking missions you'll understand just how *wonderful* predictable targets are. :) I decided to gather more information before following Step 3. Disappearances are somehow always noticed.

To my distress, the next day, Bobby made the horrible mistake of asking stupid Mia on a date. He must have been drugged or something because if he'd been in his right mind he obviously would have asked ME. Next thing I know, Mia and Bobby are spending time together during school. Using my super special stalking skills, I discovered their maniacal plan. . . Bobby was going to take Mia to the MOVIES!!! This was clearly unacceptable and borderline insane so you see I HAD to do something about it. No one here believes me but I'm sure you do (even though you are ignoring me nasty customer). You see, this isn't only the story of my first and only TRUE LOVE. This is the story of how I ended up at the lovely California State Penitentiary.

It's time for my next therapy session with Cheryl. I shall have to continue this story next time, I am sure you are dying to know how I was unfairly incarcerated but think of the waiting as punishment for not writing me back.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

10-2-15

Dear valued customer,

I've realized that you probably have been writing to me and that either Cheryl or Mary-Ann has decided to keep your letters from me. For all of my unnecessary rage, I am sorry. Expect a complimentary CD of my favorite band *Rabid Squirrels in your Car* sometime soon. I don't know if you've heard of them but I will have to explain another time. Oh and by the way. If you would like the llama removed from your bathtub please tell Gerald my code name (I'm sure you remember it's Giggilysparkles). Now that we have that unfortunate snag behind us, I can continue giving you advice on how to get a boyfriend and find true love.

To do this I must continue where I left off with the story of Mia Rodriguez.

So Mia and Bobby had the dastardly plan of going to the movies. I needed to eliminate her before the school day was out but there was very little chance to pull her away from her cronies. Then, magically, we were given outside time during science to look for bugs. Carefully, I followed Mia behind a copse of trees and did what needed to be done. Step 3 my valued customer, she simply had to be eliminated for all of our sakes.

They found her later bound to the tree with jump ropes, a gag of sandpaper stuffed in her mouth. She had very little bruising and it wasn't like she was *permanently* damaged by the small glitter explosions I rigged to go off. Mia is just a cry baby, plain and simple.

Anyway. with Mia out of the way I was free to crash Bobby's date and go with him instead of that absolute worm. I left school early to prepare, another "transgression" on my sheet. (Half of that stuff is made up, I swear.) When I had decked myself out in a silver space age dress, my classic pigtails and added a layer of gloss to my jelly bean glasses chain, I headed out into the world to go on a date with Bobby Williams. When I arrived at the theatre though, Mia's friends were there with him. Apparently I had missed the fact it was to be a double date with Trisha Wise and Shaun Applebee.

I HAD to get them away from Bobby so we could have alone time. The only question was, how to do it? Then a brilliant beyond brilliant idea came to me: Start a Fire!

Of course this wasn't a real fire. I only meant to pull the alarm, but it was behind a glass case and there were far too many witnesses. No, it wouldn't have worked that way. In order to salvage my date I pulled out my trusty pink lighter and grabbed a bucket of popcorn. I only meant to create some smoke so everyone else would panic and leave Bobby and I alone. Sadly, it was not to be. The bucket spilled when

I turned to stare at Bobby's perfect face, catching the rug on fire. The theatre went up in flames. And that's when Bobby called the cops on me. All true love has its trials.

I keep trying to explain that I didn't mean to torch the theatre and the bombs planted beneath Mia Rodriguez's house were just a backup plan-but no one believes me. Cheryl tells me Bobby has a restraining order against me but I'm sure that's just the world trying to keep us apart. Bobby would never try to keep me away. He's too perfect. And we're MADLY in love.

So you see, that's why I'm in here. (And because once they opened up my closet they had to confiscate a LOT of stuff...hopefully not my rainbow suspenders. They may not be stylish but I can't bear to give them up.) I'm here because Mia Rodriguez forced beautiful Bobby Williams to ask her out. And that's why I need parole. Because, once I get out, Bobby and I can be together. I just know he's waiting for me.

Since I've found someone so special I feel duty-bound to find you your own Bobby Williams. We'll find him, don't you worry.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

10-21-15

Dear valued customer,

Life is good for me and I sincerely hope it is going well for you too. Sure it's rather cold at night in my steel bed. Sure my neighbor bestie Laurel has been screaming in her sleep. And yes, the warden confiscated my jellybean necklace after Cheryl deemed me "A danger to myself and others." But I refuse to let these minor setbacks bring me down. I will stay strong. I will stay smart. I will stay sparkly. I cannot spend all my time moping about Bobby. I plan on using my precious time in the California State Penitentiary to do some good.

Yes, yes, I know what you're thinking, "But Gertie you're already doing so much good by guiding me through the guillotine of love and relationships." And of course I agree. But it's not enough. I've set my sights on another goal. A goal more important than world peace or a clean gun collection. A goal that will change mankind for the better and be a light to future generations. I, Amanda Gerture, known to all as Gertie (and occasionally GigglySparkles) will personally write and direct a prison-wide musical. *Eeeee!* I'm so excited!!

I already have your ticket for the musical reserved! Can't wait to finally meet you in person!

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904

11-4-15

Dear Valued Customer,

I've made progress! Now, Cheryl and I only have sessions thrice a week instead of five times. I do miss our quality gal-time. Cheryl usually wastes our precious gab-sessions with questions about me that are probably court-mandated. She always wants to talk about my 12-step plan to nonviolence or check my numbers on what she calls "The Obsessive Chart". It's taken time, but I've finally learned all the correct responses to Cheryl's questions. It kills me a little on the inside to answer them incorrectly but I know I must.

So now when Cheryl asks, "Is it okay to kill?" I sadly respond, "No."

When Cheryl asks, "Are fire and glitter grenades a good way to solve our problems?" I sadly respond, "No."

And when Cheryl asks, "Is it ever okay to kidnap someone or force them to love you?" I sadly think of Bobby Williams and the reason I need parole, lie through my teeth, and respond, "Never." This always makes Cheryl smile. Even though she's smiling because of my fake answers it makes me happy. Cheryl should smile more. Cheryl deserves happiness-even if she is completely bonkers on the whole not killing thing.

This is totally off-topic but I've been simply *dying* to tell you how the musical is going! I've been in auditions all week. I must say the male talent pool here in the California State Penitentiary is extraordinary! I've chosen a group of Japanese hit men for my ensemble and a heavily tattooed bank robber for the male lead!

I've had no such luck with the female talent. Laurel would have been a shoo-in as my best in-prison friend but well...she just rocks back and forth on stage and mutters. Not exactly a show stopper. It seems I may be writing, stage managing, and performing the female lead in this show.

This is going to be FABULOUS!

Well, back to rehearsals. Stay sparkly my dear.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

11-19-15

Dear Valued Customer,

I'm terribly sorry for not writing in a few weeks but I've been simply swamped with rehearsals! The show is coming along magnificently if I do say so myself (which I do). I can't wait for you to come see it.

During rehearsal the past few weeks my ensemble of Japanese hitmen have been gathering together and whispering ominously. Sometimes they mime sharpening knives and glance at me sneakily.

I think they're throwing me a surprise party!!!

OMG!!! I've just had the most fantabulous idea ever! If you get THE NICKI MINAJ to sing at *my* getting out of prison surprise party I will die of happiness! Make that happen and I will love you FOREVER. When I say forever, I mean *forever*. I will be there for every birthday, Christmas and Valentine's day with the most exquisite presents. I will do your makeup for PROM, Homecoming and special events. I will never leave your side out of eternal gratitude to you. My deeply valued customer, I will serve you until the day we die of a malfunctioning glitter grenade, lying side by side for eternity. *If* you bring me **Nikki Minaj**.

I'll cut this short so you can get cracking on my "surprise" party and I can get back to rehearsal. Some of the other inmates are getting cranky about my 4:00am start time and attempted to steal my jellybean necklace (which I earned back from Cheryl last week). Can you imagine? How horrible has our society gotten that a prisoner would try to steal a fellow prisoner's jellybean necklace? This makes me terribly upset. Good thing my big solo is the next scene up-you can't be upset when singing Annie! OH NO!! I've given away our Christmas show. May as well explain it all to you now anyways. We are putting on a musical Christmas medley of every Broadway musical....EVER!!!

I call it BROADWAY MANIA Staring Gertie Gerture and Hank Zeffer. (That's the bank robber who is singing the male lead.)

I'd best let you get back to your busy life and get back to my own. My goodness valued customer, when did our lives get so chaotic? Don't forget Step 3 my dear.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

12-6-15

Dear Valued Customer,

Life has been *crazy* since I last wrote! There's so many changes I don't even know where to start!

First off, Laurel has been transferred to a different cell. She's in "Intense Therapy" with several counselors. I made Cheryl tell me what was going on. Apparently Laurel's lawyers are revisiting her case to plead insanity and change her sentence. I'm not sure how all this legal stuff works but Laurel is NOT insane. It's entirely unfair to poor Laurel. I am outraged! Just thinking about it gets me steamed!

But most importantly, I miss my friend.

The Christmas Musical is not going very well. Unfortunately, my ensemble of Japanese hit men was not planning a surprise party for me. There was a messy little snag at rehearsal where they tried to kill me. As you can imagine I was rather disgruntled. My own ensemble trying to choke the life out of me. Really! I thought the California State Penitentiary had higher standards.

Now I'm down a backup choir and dance team with the show fast approaching. But don't worry, the show will go on!

Now that we've covered all the other bases, I can tell you my good news! Please imagine a drum roll in your head. I, Gertie, prisoner #904-am being considered (continue drum roll to cymbal crash!)

For Parole!!!! HUZZAH!

MaryAnn and Cheryl both agree I'm "stable" enough to rejoin the outside world. Yippee! I've been *such* a good prisoner that they're giving me parole for good behavior. Well, they *may* give me parole. It all depends on the lawyers/judges/legal mumbo jumbo I don't understand. Keep your fingers crossed! I'll find out on Christmas Eve and if I get it I can go home for Christmas!!

Don't worry my darling customer. I won't forget you. Cheryl seems to think these letters are helping me so I'm allowed to continue sending them to you after I get out! I know, IF I get out. A Gertie can dream. Cheryl still won't give me your address so I'll have to get it at the show.

Normally I have a long Christmas list but this year it's rather short. Not that I don't still enjoy art supplies and meat cleavers, but I have more important things in mind. I've written it down for you in case you need ideas. And because this is the only paper I have access to.

Gertie's Fantabulous Christmas List

- ★ Get Out of Prison!!!
 - ★ Have the show be Amazing!
 - ★ You coming to the show :)
 - ★ Ice Cream (I haven't had some in FOREVER)
- And, most important of all:
- ★ A BOYFRIEND

That's all I want. Just those five little things. I haven't been able to wish on a shooting star from my cell but if I could I'd wish for my list to come true. That's my advice for this week. Make a wish on a star and true love will find you.

While you're at it, wish on a star for me too.

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return address: 501 South Cotner Blvd.
Cell #904
California State Penitentiary

12-25-15

Dear valued customer,

For the first time ever I am writing to you from the outside world. That's right, Gertie Gerture has parole! This is the most fantabulous thing to happen since Nikki Minaj released "Starships". The snow is so white! The sky is so grey! It's winter and cold and brittle and the most wonderful thing ever because I am finally free!!!!

You would of course have known this earlier if you had bothered coming to my show. Please imagine my face with a very disapproving expression on it. I cannot express to you my disappointment that you didn't come in words. It is like someone has stolen my knife collection and replaced it with string beans. And the show went so well too! You would have loved it.

You'll be glad to know that my rainbow suspenders are safe (*phew*). I was terribly worried about them. Unfortunately, my knife collection has vanished (hence the above metaphor). At least now you know what to get me as a get out of prison present. I'm not upset about the lack of surprise party, I know you have a busy life trying to find true love and all.

Do you know the absolute best thing about getting parole? I can *finally* be with Bobby Williams. He doesn't know I'm out yet and I want it to be a surprise. His birthday is January 25 and he always throws a huge party so I have until then to get my plan figured out. I'm going to make it the best birthday of his life, that's what you do for the people you love. I can't tell you more just yet but as soon as it's over I will write to tell you the good news! (Because of course by then Bobby will be my boyfriend.) I promise to write again soon.

Oh and by the way, I finally got a chance to wish on that star. Now all my dreams have to come true!

Sincerely,

Gertie

Return Address: 77 Hulla Lane
Maywood, California
90270

1-26-16

Dear valued customer,

I write to you bearing sad news. Yesterday was Bobby William's 15th birthday. But he does not love me anymore. I am starting to think he never did.

When I arrived at the party my plan was all set to go. I had planted fireworks all over his yard during the night and even hand painted a huge "I Love You Bobby" poster that was rigged to go up when he and I officially started dating. To my absolute horror, Mia Rodriguez was there in a gold leaf dress with matching flats. I suppose at least her abysmal fashion sense matches her soul. But Mia Rodriguez was not important. I had taken care of her back when Bobby asked her out. The important thing was finding Bobby. I skipped about the party, waving hello to my classmates, who were kind enough to part the crowds for me. I pushed my way through the hanging streamers and into the center of the grand hallway. Then I saw him.

Bobby Williams: gorgeous, blonde, and sun-kissed, with blue eyes like diamonds-looked right at me.

And frowned.

I went in for a hug but Bobby pushed me away. "I'm back Bobby! Now we can be together!" I told him. Then I offered him a lock of my hair. He looked at me with disgust and I started to realize something was wrong. "Stay away Gertie or I'll call the cops. Can't you not be creepy for just one day?" He yelled. The party went quiet and I realized everyone was watching us. But it wasn't going how I'd planned, not at all. My finger went to the button to cue the grand finale. Maybe if he saw that he would remember.

"But look what I did for you." I hit the button. A thousand fireworks went off over the backyard, igniting the California skyline. The huge banner rolled out and "I Will Always Love You" Started to play. I'd come to think of it as our song, Bobby's and mine. I didn't get the reaction I expected. The entire crowd started laughing at me and Bobby turned a horrible shade of red.

"Don't you get it Gertie?" He yelled, "I never loved you! You're such a freak! You belong back in prison!" And the people laughed even more. I started to cry. That's when I realized what he was saying. And just how mean it was. How could someone that beautiful say something so ugly? I finally realized what a jerk Bobby Williams was, what a jerk he'd always been. He was just like the rest of them. I ran out of the party and didn't look back.

Don't fall in love, valued customer, all it does is get you hurt.

Sadly,

Gertie

Return Address: 77 Hulla Lane
Maywood, California
90270

1-31-16

Dear valued customer,

Something incredible has happened. After the whole Bobby Williams debacle I didn't emerge from my bed for days. I just didn't see a point. Finally, I decided it was time to stop moping and at least do something. I realized what a bad example I was being to you. I am your personal love expert and I had given up on love. That is *not* sparkly.

Please remember all the things I've taught you these past few months. I hope you find love, I really do.

Anyway, to avoid becoming one with the blankets, I set off on a walk. I live pretty close to downtown so I thought I'd do some shopping, which always cheers me up. Then I realized: the new *Rabid Squirrels in Your Car* album has just come out and I hadn't gotten it yet! This was outrageous so I headed to the record store right away.

I walked to Domino Records and purchased the new album, Killer Kandy Kanes (Or KKK for short, it's a Christmas album). I'm super excited to listen to their new hit single "Murder Meringue" but that's besides

the point. The point is, when I walked out I ran into someone. I landed on my butt on the pavement and a hand reached down to pull me to my feet. I found myself face to face with a handsome boy.

He has dark blue eyes and nearly black-brown hair, thick glasses that are taped together and was wearing rainbow suspenders. This is a fashion no-no but I don't care. The boy straightened his baby blue bowtie and looked at me. He smiled the softest, nicest smile in the whole wide world. I noticed he was holding a copy of Killer Kandy Kanes, too. He looked at me in a way I've never been looked at before, even though I was poorly dressed and my pigtails were a mess. The boy kept smiling.

"Hi, I'm Simon," he said. Then he offered me a lock of his hair.

There is hope after all, valued customer. There is always hope.

Sincerely,

Gertie

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90270