

An Excerpt from

Double Crossed

Play the Hand You Are Dealt

by Anthony Anthamatten

Tony and JC were in the office watching the news. A story aired about a group providing Thanksgiving dinners to the homeless. JC could not believe his eyes when he saw the reporter interviewing Stenson Beckett. Stenson's talk about giving back to the community made JC sick. He reached into the desk drawer and pulled out the gun Tony had given him and shot the TV.

Big Tony jumped and looked at JC like he'd lost his mind.

JC screamed, "That son of a bitch Stenson thinks he'll help the homeless? I'll show him! He's giving away a hundred turkeys? Tony, I want you to buy us a thousand turkeys!"

"A thousand turkeys? Don't you think that's too many?" Tony asked, making sure he heard his friend correctly.

"I am ten times better than he is, so I want ten times the birds! And while you're out, pick us up a new TV!"

Zabrina walked through the door wearing a bright blue wig. Tony liked her new style, but JC sarcastically said she looked like an alien—and not the illegal kind. Tony excused himself before the blue-haired alien slapped JC to another planet.

Zabrina noticed the television with a bullet hole in the screen. She asked JC if her assassin had missed killing him. He disregarded the remark and told her about the Thanksgiving story he had seen. He said he would show Stenson by giving away more turkeys than he did. He told her the news coverage would be great for the club. Besides, he looked better on television than that hillbilly. JC asked Zabrina to create a press release and send it to all the media outlets. She knew it was a crazy idea but wasn't in the mood to argue with JC and agreed to do it.

A few hours later, Tony returned to the club dragging a large TV box into the office. He told JC he had to rent a refrigerated tractor trailer. Then he had to drive to fifteen different grocery stores to buy every turkey they had.

JC walked outside with Tony to where the trailer was parked in front of the club. Tony opened the trailer doors to reveal a mountain of frozen poultry.

Seeing that many turkeys made JC wonder if he might have overthought this. Then he asked Tony how much it had cost. Tony guessed he spent about \$20,000 for the turkeys and the truck rental. JC shrugged and said the press coverage and appearing more generous than Stenson Beckett would be worth it.

Zabrina walked out with the press release. She looked at the truck full of turkeys and asked JC, "Are you crazy?"

"Relax, Zabrina. I got this. You'll see. We'll get so much great publicity from this and the community will love us!"

Thanksgiving morning, JC woke up in a great mood. He could not wait to get back at Stenson. He

expected to see people lined around the block when he met Zabrina and Big Tony at the club. But the parking lot was empty except for their cars and the tractor trailer full of turkeys. JC walked inside and found Zabrina and Tony sitting at the bar. He asked Zabrina what time the media would arrive.

“They won’t,” Zabrina flatly replied.

“They what?”

“They aren’t coming, JC. They said Stenson had a more personal story, so they’re at his event.”

“Oh hell no! Where are all the people?”

“We only sent press releases and didn’t spread the word to the community. And we are in the middle of an abandoned industrial district if you didn’t realize. Even the homeless people don’t hang out here,” Zabrina surmised.

“I have a thousand turkeys sitting in a truck outside. You mean to tell me nobody is coming here to pick them up and we have no media coverage?”

“That sums it up,” Zabrina replied.

“I’ll fix this. You ever hear of social media? Zabrina, film this on your cell phone while Tony and I give away turkeys. This will go viral!”

JC climbed into the cab of the truck with Big Tony driving. He told Zabrina to follow them to Bourbon Street. They passed O’Malley’s bar on the way and saw a line of people receiving free Thanksgiving meals and people doing interviews with the media. Stenson looked up to see JC flipping him a middle finger as their truck drove by. Stenson shook his head and handed out another box of food.

JC told Tony to park in front of Pat O’Brien’s. They got out of the truck while Big Tony opened the rear doors of the trailer. A police officer soon pulled up

and told JC they couldn't park there.

"We're giving away free turkeys for Thanksgiving. You want one?" JC asked the officer.

"I don't care if you're giving away Fort Knox. You can't park that truck here."

"Where's your holiday spirit?" JC asked.

"It's at home waiting on me to finish this shift. Now move it!"

"Fine, asshole."

"What did you say?" the officer demanded.

"I said, watch out for that hole," JC muttered as he walked back to the truck.

Tony shut the trailer doors. JC suggested they drive through poor neighborhoods and give away the turkeys. He asked Zabrina if she had filmed the cop. He wanted that ungrateful officer on YouTube. She said she got it.

They drove around the Lower Ninth Ward, stopping along the way to give a turkey to anybody they found on the street. When JC handed a turkey to a homeless man, he asked, "How am I supposed to cook this? I don't have an oven."

"I don't care. Build a fire in a barrel," JC said as he shoved the turkey in the man's chest.

The homeless man threw the turkey at JC and walked away while cursing him. JC picked up the turkey and put it back in the truck.

At the next stop, JC handed a person a turkey and said, "Happy Thanksgiving on behalf of Club Empire!"

The person said, "I'm a vegetarian," and handed the turkey back to JC.

JC shoved the turkey back and said, "Not today!"

It was late when they returned to the club. JC asked Big Tony how many turkeys they'd given away. Tony

said technically they gave away five. But it was four if they didn't count the one the guy threw in a ditch.

"Dammit! What am I going to do with 995 turkeys?"

"It was your bright idea to get a thousand turkeys, dummy. You figure it out," Zabrina smarted.

"I don't need this right now. Go edit the video you took today and see if we can salvage something positive out of this. Tony and I will figure out what to do with the rest of these turkeys."

"Me?" Tony asked.

"Yeah, you. I can't keep paying \$1,500 a day for this truck. We need to move these birds to the kitchen cooler."

After they unloaded the 995 frozen turkeys, JC sat at the bar eating a turkey sandwich. He scribbled notes on several napkins while he ate.

Afterward, he walked into the office and handed the napkins to Zabrina. "I need you to print this."

"What is it?" Zabrina asked.

"It's our new menu," JC replied.

Zabrina looked at the notes. "You must be kidding. Let's see, under appetizers you have Turkey Nachos, Turkey Egg Rolls, Turkey Meatballs, Turkey Chili, and Turkey Lettuce Wraps."

"Right."

"Main courses, you have Turkey Casserole, Turkey Burgers, Turkey Pot Pie, and Barbeque Turkey."

"Continue."

"Under vegetarian, you have a This Can't Be Turkey Burger."

"Clever, isn't it? It's a burger made from ground turkey. I can't wait for our vegetarian customers to say it tastes just like turkey."

"For dessert, you have Turkey Soufflé?"

“Sounds delicious, doesn’t it? And it only took me an hour to figure out how to get rid of 995 turkeys and charge people for it,” JC said proudly.

“You have got to be the stupidest person I have ever met in my life!” Zabrina snapped.

The next day, JC kept getting questions from the waiters and waitresses. “JC, I have a customer who wants a salad without turkey on it.”

“Fine, put it on the side.”

“JC, one of my customers does not like turkey and wants a steak,” another waiter said.

JC walked into the kitchen and returned with a plate. “What table is it?” The waiter pointed and JC walked over and sat the plate in front of the man.

“What is this?” he asked.

“It’s a turkey steak. Enjoy!”

“But I don’t want turkey,” the man said.

JC held up his hand to the man’s face as if to tell him to be quiet and then walked away. At the end of the night, he asked Jesús how many turkeys they had left. When he said 989, JC screamed. He walked into the office and plopped down in a chair.

“I never want to see another turkey for the rest of my life! How did the video turn out?”

Zabrina played the video she’d uploaded to YouTube. It showed JC confronted by a police officer, homeless people refusing to take his turkeys, and JC assaulting a vegetarian. JC became so frustrated after watching the video that he pulled out his gun and shot several holes in the ceiling.

Big Tony looked at his crazy friend, thinking he never should have given him a gun. The next thing he’d hear would be JC sending him to the hardware store to buy more ceiling tiles.