



# HITCH HITCHCOCK

ON WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ONE OF MY CHARACTERS

**I**T'S NOT EVERY day I get to revisit my characters after finishing their stories. We all go our own ways, me back to my typing and them back to their glamorous, adventurous lives. But lucky for me, Hitch is different. We share the same hometown in western Nebraska, and now that Hitch is sticking around in one spot for a while, he was pretty easy to track down. (What about the time continuum, you ask? Pfft. Writer's trade secret.)

I find him in the hayfield behind J.W. Berringer's ridiculous mansion. In boots and suspenders, sleeves rolled to his elbows, he's busy mending a tear in his biplane's canvas wing. He sees me coming and straightens up, wiping his hands on an oily rag. He squints. I must say, he might look a *little* happier to see me.

As soon as I'm within earshot, I pull out my notebook and get right down to business.

**Long time, no see! Our book just came out, and I need to ask you a couple more questions. Everyone is dying to know—**

Whoa now, sweetheart. [He holds out his hands to stop me in my tracks.] You can't just come tromping back in here without warning anybody. The last time you swung by, everything started burning like the devil's bacon.

**What? You mean you think that was my fault?**

Wasn't hardly mine, now was it? I was just flying along, minding my own business when—whammo!—you get your hooks in me and suddenly I've got sky pirates trying to zap me with

lightning, crazy women kicking me in the shins, and my own brother trying to knock my lights out.

**Oh, come on, I didn't do any of that. You're the one who had backstory issues to work through, heroics to perform, and a really funny cute meet (if I don't say so myself) to endure. All I did was write it down.**

Yeah, uh-huh, not buying that one. [He turns back and crouches next to the Jenny's wing.] I *saw* your story outline. Don't you think having me getting kicked in the shins, slapped in the face, punched half a dozen times, stabbed twice, and conked in the head [he tallies on his fingers] about three times—don't you think that might be just a *little* excessive?

**You were doing some punching—and shooting, too—if I remember correctly. Anyway, I'm not here to argue about that. It's all in the past, right? All I'm here for is to ask a few follow-up questions, just to see how you're faring in your new life on the ground. For instance, I'm sure everyone wants to know how you and Jael—**

Look. [Still crouching, he props his hands on his knees and squints at me again.] That's another thing. Seems like you could have made everything a heap easier for her right from the start. Where'd you get this crazy idea she shouldn't speak English? If she'd just talked proper sense from the start, we could have got that whole mess with Zlo sorted out a lot sooner.

**Yes, well, originally she was going to be a time traveler dying of cancer or something—so maybe you should be thanking me instead, ever think of that? Oh, and she wasn't going to end up with you, she was going to fall in love with a farmer.**

[Finally, that gets a grin.] Let me guess. Just couldn't concentrate on the *farmer* after I came onto the scene, could you? [He winks.]

**Hmp. More like you had way more problems that I had to concentrate on taking care of.**

Yeah, tell me about it. Like the way I talk, for instance. Who says “good gravy,” huh? Tell me that.

**I do, actually. And ... Gary Cooper.**

Who?

**Never mind. You won't see him for a couple years. But watch out for him in *Wings*. It's about pilots. You'll like it.**

Oh, moving picture star. [He doesn't sound impressed. Then he looks like a thought occurs, and he peers up at me.] Yeah, about *that*. I was on Pinterest the other day.

**[Chokes.] You were *what*?**

I saw your casting choices for all of us. Cole Hauser for me? Come on. Who even knows who Cole Hauser is? And that crazy dreamlander guy from your last book gets Chris Pine? How's that work, huh?

**[I can feel the time continuum starting to close in. I start backing away.] You know what, I think I'll come back later with those questions. I'll just pop over and see Jael instead. Maybe she'll give me a quote.**

[He shrugs, but I *swear* there's an evil twinkle in his eyes.]