

The Murder Play with Jack & Melissa

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By  
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A cabin on a mountainside, high above civilization. Outside, a storm rages on. The cabin, though lived in, is mostly empty aside from a coffee table in the living-room, a beaten up loveseat, a dining room chair with arms, and a few children's crayon drawings in frames on the wall. Upstage Right is an open doorway to the bathroom, which we can see is completely covered in clear tarp taped to the walls and floor. Upstage Left is a closed door to a bedroom. In the Stage Left corner is an open kitchen nook with a small fridge and stove. By the front door are men's rain-boots and poncho which hang next to a dresser/table. The front door is littered with various locks, all locked and bolted.

MELISSA sits unconscious in a second dining room chair, her wrists and legs zip-tied to it. A single rope is tied around her chest and a band-aid on her forehead. From the bathroom, the loud buzzing of a power tool turns on. The buzzing cuts into something solid. Meat. Blood sprays onto the tarp in the bathroom. Eventually, the buzzing stops and the power tool is put down. The sound of plastic-wrap being pulled and cut, then wrapped around something solid and squishy. A small flash of lightning. Another flash of lightning. Thunder rumbles, loudly.

MELISSA stirs and moans. She slowly lifts her head. She stares off, groggily. She looks around, confused. MELISSA begins to realize her situation. Unseen by MELISSA, JACK, wearing a butcher's apron, a plastic face-shield, yellow sanitation gloves, shoe covers, and giant industrial earmuffs, all of which are covered in blood and specks of meat, walks to the wall inside the bathroom. He takes all the protective covering off and hangs them up. By the time JACK takes off his last article of protective covering:

MELISSA

*Help! Somebody help me! What the fuck?! Anybody! Help!*

JACK emerges from the bathroom.

JACK

You're awake!

MELISSA screams. JACK screams. They  
scream at each other for a few moments.

MELISSA

*Who the fuck are/you?!*

JACK

*It's okay! It's alright!*

MELISSA

*What the fuck's going on?!*

JACK

*You're safe! You're/alright!*

MELISSA

Okay. Oh my God, just...*please* don't hurt me, okay? *Please.*

JACK

(Confused)

Hurt you?

MELISSA

I don't know where I am or how I even *got* here and/I just--

JACK

Hey. Hey-hey-hey, I'm not gonna hurt/you--

MELISSA

I've *never* been good with being tied up *or* pain and I just/want to--

JACK

I'm *not* gonna hurt you, okay? I promise!

MELISSA

...You're not?

JACK  
Of *course* not!

MELISSA  
Oh. Okay. Well, then--  
(Re: pain)  
*Ah! Shit!*

JACK  
*What?* What is it?

MELISSA  
(Strained)  
Jesus *Christ*, my *head*.

JACK  
Your head?

MELISSA  
God, it's like it's in *labor* or something.

*Ooooh*. Right. From the fall.

MELISSA  
The what?

JACK  
From the...when you hit it, earlier.

MELISSA  
(Confused)  
Hit it? Whaddya mean I *hit* it?

JACK  
When you...you don't remember this?

MELISSA  
(Strained)  
My brain's all...*fuzzy* right now.

JACK  
...Huh.

MELISSA

Hooooo, shit.

MELISSA takes a deep breath, eyes closed.

MELISSA

Okay. Fine. Then if you're not gonna hurt me, can you *please* help me get the fuck outta here before whatever psycho tied us up comes back and does *God* knows what to us!

JACK

(Confused)

Psycho?

MELISSA

And how the hell did *you* get untied?!

JACK

Whaddya mean?

MELISSA

How'd you get outta these zip-ties?! Whoever did this zipped these fuckers so God damn tight I can barely feel my hands!

JACK

Ah, that's...yeah, sorry about that. I didn't have anything else I could use and the rope wasn't long enough to get your feet *and* your hands, so, zip-ties were all I had, so...that's, ya know...my bad.

MELISSA

What're you talking about?

JACK

Tying you up.

MELISSA

*You* tied me up?

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

*You* tied me to this chair?

JACK

Yes.

MELISSA

O-kay, and, uh...this is probably a stupid question, but, um...*why*...did you do that?

JACK

*Right!* No, that's...that's a very good question. *Well*, I did it for your safety.

MELISSA

My *safety*.

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

And, uh...how is tying someone to a chair...for their *safety*? I guess that's where I'm a/ little--

JACK

*Right. Yes.* Another good question. Um. *Well*, after you *fainted*, I figured when you--

MELISSA

Whoa-whoa-whoa.

JACK

What?

MELISSA

I didn't *faint*, okay? I don't *faint*.

JACK

But...you *did*--You really don't remember all this?

MELISSA

I don't remember *anything*!

JACK

Huh. Okay. *Well*, it was actually kinda awesome. You were standing in the bathroom doorway, not, um...not looking at anything in particular or unusual at all, and then you sorta just tipped forward and, like...*boop*...hit your head on the sink in there. Which doesn't sound *that* crazy, but you should see how far the sink is from the doorway. I'm telling you, it's like, a *seven-foot* distance to the sink from where you were standing, so, that's pretty impressive. As far as *I'm* concerned, anyway.

MELISSA

Still not quite sure how tying up a fainted person is good for their safety.

JACK

*Right. Yes.* That's...yeah. So, I knew that when you came to you'd probably bolt right outta here the first chance you got, right? Like, "Gah! Spooky cabin? No, *thank you!*" Totally get it. But with the storm as bad as it is *and* us being as high up as we are, one wrong step out there and you'd fall right off the side of the mountain. And/that fall is *not* something you wanna--

MELISSA

Wait-wait-wait-wait-wait, hold on a God damn second. The *mountain?*

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

I am *currently* at the top of *the* mountain right now.

JACK

Pretty close, yeah.

MELISSA

How the *fuck* did I get all the way up here?

JACK

Wow. You must've hit your head a lot harder than I thought.

MELISSA

*Apparently!*

JACK

What, uh...what *do* you remember?

MELISSA

Well...I remember...

(Thinking)

Okay, yeah, I remember *driving*. Going up an incline for what felt like forever.

JACK

Okay.

MELISSA

And then it started to *rain*.

JACK

Rain, yeah.

MELISSA

And then the road got too narrow next to the cliff, so, I remember getting out of my car and walking down a long driveway towards...a cabin? But...yeah, then it goes dark.

JACK

So, you don't remember...*anything* else?

MELISSA

No. I think that's it.

JACK

Okay! Great!

MELISSA

Wait. Why?

JACK

Hm?

MELISSA

Why? *Should* I be remembering something else?

JACK

Oh. Pff. *Nah*. You, um...you ready to get outta that chair?

MELISSA

Yes. Definitely.

JACK

Great! I'll be right back.

JACK enters the bathroom. Unseen by MELISSA, JACK stands in the doorway, puts on shoe-covers from a dispenser and walks deeper into the bathroom.

JACK

(Off)

I'm Jack, by the way!



Melissa. MELISSA

JACK  
*Melissa.* It's nice to meet you, Melissa.

MELISSA  
Yeah. You...you, too.

JACK comes back into view a few moments later with a boning-knife covered in blood. He wipes the blood onto the hanging apron. He takes off the shoe-covers, also covered in blood, and exits the bathroom.

JACK  
Alright!

MELISSA  
(Unsure)  
Okay!

Something tugs at MELISSA's memory. JACK walks over to the chair and studies the zip-ties.

JACK  
Hm. I really *did* yank these tight, huh?

MELISSA  
(Thinking)  
Wait a second. This seems familiar.

JACK  
What does?

MELISSA  
You and the *knife*. It seems familiar.

JACK stops.

JACK  
It does?

MELISSA

Yeah. Why do I vaguely remember you with a knife? In the...in the *bathroom*, yeah! You were standing in the bathroom, holding a knife, *that* knife, and you were standing over something. What were you standing over?

JACK

You, uh...you remember that, huh?

MELISSA

It looked...*red*. Kinda big. I remember feeling--

(Beat)

Wait a second. Was it...*Preston*?

JACK

(Confused)

*Preston*?

MELISSA

Oh, my God. It *was* Preston!

JACK

He said his name was *Brent*!

MELISSA

(To herself)

He was on the ground with *blood* all over him and-and-and it looked like his *throat* was cut!

JACK

Why would you use a fake name like *Brent* if your name is already *Preston*?

MELISSA

*Hold* on, just-just-just wait a fucking second, here!

(Beat)

Did you...did you...*kill him*?

JACK

(Unconvincing)

...*Whaaaaaat*?

MELISSA

(Breathing heavily)

Oh my...oh my God. Oh my fucking *God*!

JACK

Now, I know that doesn't sound great, *but*--

MELISSA

You murdered him! You fucking *murdered* him! You're a *murderer*!

JACK takes a step towards MELISSA.

JACK

Okay, well, it's a little/more comp--

MELISSA screams.

MELISSA

*Please don't kill me! Please! I don't wanna die, okay?! I don't!*

JACK

*Hey-hey-hey!* I'm not gonna/kill you!

MELISSA

I'll-I'll-I'll forget I ever saw you and-and-and I'll pretend like I was never here! I don't even know where the fuck here *is!* *Please, I swear!*

JACK

I'm not gonna *kill* you, alright? I *promise!*

MELISSA

How do *I* know that?! *I* don't fucking know that! What reason do I have to believe that?!

JACK

Don't you think if I wanted to kill you I would've done it while you were zonked out and *not* tied you up?

MELISSA

Maybe you're one of those killers who needs to look people in the eyes when you do it! *I* don't fucking know!

JACK

I'm *not* going to kill you, okay? And, *yes*, I am *fully* aware that you seeing...what you *saw* in the bathroom, there, along with me having tied you to a chair doesn't help right now, but you're just going to have to believe me when I tell you that you are *not* in any danger, okay? I promise.

MELISSA stares at him, breathing heavily.

MELISSA

But...why kill Preston and...not me?

JACK

*That's...not an easy question to answer. Um.*

MELISSA

So you admit it, you *did* kill him!

JACK

(Realizing)

*Crap.* Uh.

(Sighs)

Yes. I...did.

MELISSA

...You killed him.

JACK

Yes.

MELISSA

Preston's...dead.

JACK

(Confused)

...Yes. But *you're* safe! Like I was saying.

MELISSA nods and turns away from JACK.

JACK assume's she's crying and feels guilty.

He doesn't know what to do.

JACK

Hey, I'm...I'm sorry. I mean, not for killing him, but for, ya know...upsetting you about it.

Awkward silence.

MELISSA

(Head turned away)

You...are...

JACK

(Leaning in)

What?

MELISSA

You are *such*...

(Turns to JACK. Angry)

You are such an *asshole*, *do you know that*?!

JACK

(Surprised)

*Oh*. Uh. Okay--

MELISSA

*And* a piece of shit!

JACK

Alright, well, I don't know about *that*.

MELISSA

(Matter-of-fact)

A *psycho* piece of/shit.

JACK

Okay, *that's* a bit harsh,/I think.

MELISSA

A *giant*, *psycho*, piece of *shit*!

JACK

Will you stop calling me a piece of S, please?

MELISSA

No! No, I will *not* stop calling you a piece of shit, you *giant*, *psycho*, *asshole*,/piece of *shit*!

JACK

Piece of S? Yeah, great.

MELISSA

I think this is a very *mild* reaction for someone who is currently tied to a God damn chair and who just found out someone *murdered* their fucking *boyfriend*!

JACK

*Whoa*, okay, just...hold on a darn second, here. That guy was your *boyfriend*?

MELISSA

Well...not *officially*! But we were definitely *leaning* that way!

JACK

What, you never talked about it?

MELISSA

It was kinda new! He said he wanted to take it slow!

JACK

*How new?*

MELISSA

(Annoyed)

*I don't know! Five months?*

JACK

That's not new.

MELISSA

*Yeah, well, some people take longer than others, okay? To, ya know...commit or whatever-  
-But it doesn't matter now, does it?!*

JACK

Why not?

MELISSA

'Cause you *killed* him!

JACK

Ah, yes. That's...yeah.

MELISSA

Of course this happens to me. Of *course* it does. I *finally* find a guy who treats me halfway decent and what does he do? He goes and gets himself *murdered*!

JACK

Hey, listen, you shouldn't beat yourself up over that guy, okay? He was a bad egg. You definitely didn't want to be with him.

MELISSA

Okay, ya know what? I'm not really looking for relationship advice from the guy who just murdered my *whatever-he-was*, okay? Call me crazy, but I think that's a pretty reasonable ask.

JACK

(Hands up)

Okay.

MELISSA

In fact, if you're *really* not going to kill me, I'd appreciate it if you could untie me now so I can walk around or something. Clear my head. 'Cause this is all just a bit much and I feel like I'm about to have a God damn panic-attack any second and I do *not* need that while I'm driving home. My car's already a piece of shit as it is.

JACK

What, you mean, like...let you go?

MELISSA

Uh. *Yeah*.

JACK

(Sucking in through teeth)

Yeeeaah, I can't actually do that now.

MELISSA

What? Why not?

JACK

(Sheepish)

I mean...you know what I look like.

MELISSA

(Confused)

So?

JACK

*And* that I killed your...*whatever-he-was*.

MELISSA

What, you think I'm gonna go to the *cops*?!

JACK

That *is* a concern I have, yeah.

MELISSA

I'm not gonna go to the cops! Why would I go to the cops?!

JACK

Why *wouldn't* you go to the cops?

MELISSA

*Easy!* Because *you* know that *I* know you're a killer! And the last thing *I* need in my life is some *murderer* chasing me down 'cause I accidentally stumbled into his creepy little kill cabin! I mean, I got enough fucked up shit going on as it is, ya know?

JACK

Even if I *knew* you weren't gonna go to the cops, the storm is still *really* bad out right now. If you left, you could easily fall right off the side of the mountain. It's a safety thing, too.

MELISSA

*Okay, well...*you can still untie me!

JACK

Can't do that, either.

MELISSA

Why not?

JACK

Because you could try to escape and end up hurting yourself out there.

MELISSA

Oh, *great!* Now I'm being held hostage by a murderer with a heart of gold!

JACK

Oh, come--you're not a *hostage!*

MELISSA

*No?*

With wide eyes, MELISSA looks at the zip-ties, then back to JACK.

JACK

Okay, look, with all you know about me killing Brent or Preston or whatever, I wouldn't blame you if you *did* try to escape, but the mountain is *really* unstable during storms like this one. I mean, you've got floods, gusts of wind, and *mudslides* that can just *swoop* you right off the side like you're *nothing*. It's happened before! And I don't want that to happen to you if you tried to escape! So, while the storm is still going on, I gotta keep you tied up for now, okay? I'm sorry, but I have to.



MELISSA

*Great. Juuust great. Perfect, actually.*

(Mumbling to herself)

*Stupid freakin' mountain with stupid freakin' psychos on top of it. Stupid.*

Silence. MELISSA fumes as JACK leans against the couch, trying to find the right way to start a conversation.

JACK

So, uh...I...assume you live in town, right? You like it?

MELISSA

...What?

JACK

*Town. Do you like town? You live there, so...yeah, I mean...I don't go there much. Only when I really have to. Not really a fan of people, ya know, so I usually just...stay up here. Take in the sights, that kinda stuff. But it's, uh...it's nice down there. Quaint.*

MELISSA

(Confused)

...What is this? What're you doing?

JACK

What?

MELISSA

Right now, talking about town, what're you doing?

JACK

Oh. I was just...making conversation.

MELISSA

Why?

JACK

Well, I mean...there's not much *else* to do. I just thought it would help pass the time.

MELISSA

Pass the time.

JACK

*Yeah.* And, ya know, if I'm being honest...I don't really get a lot of chances to talk to someone one-on-one like this, like...*ever*. So, I guess I just thought it would be kinda nice if we were to...ya know...*chat*...for a bit.

MELISSA

"*Chat* for a bit?"

JACK

*Yeah.*

MELISSA

...After you've killed someone, tied me up, and then refused to let me go...you want to "chat for a bit"?

JACK

...You wanna?

MELISSA

(Wide-eyed)

*No!* No, I *don't!* I do *not* want to "*chat!*" We've already "chatted" too much in my opinion!

JACK

Well, then, what did you wanna do, just sit here in *silence* the whole darn time?

MELISSA

*Actually?* That would be *perfect*. In *fact*, why don't you go back to doing whatever *creepy* little perverted thing you were doing with Preston in there, and I'll just stay out here, where it's *quiet* and there isn't some *lonely* little psychopath trying to force a conversation on me. *Okay? How about that?*

JACK

(Peeved)

O-kay, ya know what? I was actually really excited when I saw that you showed up here. Like, *really* excited. 'Cause you seemed like someone I could get along with. Even when you were in mid-fall, I remember thinking "oh, *she* seems cool!" But ever since you woke up, you have done nothing but yell, get upset, and say mean things to me, which has led to me currently being *peeved*.

MELISSA

Oh, *you're* peeved?!

JACK

*Yeah!* I'm *peeved* right now! 'Cause I thought the *least* we could do in this situation is have a nice conversation, but you're over here calling me names and stuff! So, ya know what? Maybe you're right. Maybe I *should* leave you out here alone and I'll just go back in there and finish chopping up *Brent* or *Preston* or whatever into little pieces, how about *that*? Is *that* what you want?

MELISSA

Sounds *good* to me!

JACK

*Great!*

MELISSA

*Great!*

JACK

*Perfect!*

MELISSA

*Yeah!*

JACK exits into the bathroom. He angrily puts on all his butcher gear. MELISSA fumes in her seat. JACK stomps off, disappearing into the bathroom.

MELISSA

(Realizing)

Wait. *What?*

The buzz saw turns on. It cuts into meat. MELISSA's eyes grow wide. Disgust spreads across her face. She closes her eyes, trying not to pay attention to it. She tries covering her ears with her shoulders, but can only get one shoulder on an ear at a time. She tries both but just scrunches her neck. The buzz-saw cuts into bone, a gruesome and disgusting noise. MELISSA pulls at her restraints again and bounces in her chair, trying to get out but also to distract herself. She is almost at her breaking point when the buzz-saw stops. MELISSA catches her breath.

The sound of meat being splattered down onto a counter and wrapped in plastic wrap. MELISSA reacts to every splatter and squish with repulsion and disgust.

MELISSA gets an idea. She looks around the room, trying to conceive a quick plan. She leans over and bites on the end of the zip-tie and pulls it tighter. She winces. She tightens the other zip-tie. She takes a breath and tries to relax.

MELISSA

(Sweetly)

*Jack?* Could you come out here for a second, please? I promise I'm not gonna yell or be mean or anything. I just wanna talk.

Plastic wrap sounds continue.

MELISSA

Come on, Jack! I just want to apologize, okay? Try to explain myself a little better. *Please?*

MELISSA listens, waiting. Plastic wrap sounds continue.

MELISSA

(Impatient)

*Jack!*

The plastic wrap sounds stop. JACK slowly enters the doorway, arms crossed. He wears all of his butcher gear, which is covered in blood, guts, and specs of meat. MELISSA turns her head.

MELISSA

(Grossed out)

O-kay, that's just...that's unfair. *And* disgusting. *Very* disgusting.

JACK

(Crossing arms)

You wanted to talk all of a sudden?

MELISSA  
(Not looking at JACK)

Yes, I did, in fact.

JACK

Well. What can I do for you?

MELISSA

I just wanted to, uh...I wanted to try and, um...

(Beat)

Okay, I *know* you're doing this on purpose and you've made your point, okay? Can you *please* take that shit off?

Begrudgingly, JACK exits into the bathroom and takes off all the projective gear. He comes back, now in his plain clothes.

JACK  
(Deadpan)

Better?

MELISSA

*Much. Thank you.*

(Smiling)

*Jack.* You're a smart guy. I can tell. So, I know you can see that the circumstances I'm in, they're not really the *ripest* of conditions for a chatty mood, wouldn't you agree?

JACK

...I guess.

MELISSA

*Right.* So, all of this? It just caught me off guard, is all. And to be asked to have a conversation all of a sudden? It's a bit overwhelming. You can see that, right? The smart guy you are?

JACK

...Yeah, sure.

MELISSA

Okay! Great! So, why don't we start over, huh? Clean slate. Can we do that? Can we start over? *Oh!* We can even *chat* for a bit!

JACK  
(Suspicious)

How do I know you're not just trying to get on my good side?

MELISSA

I'm not! I'm *really* not. I'm just telling you the truth, here, Jack. Laying it *all* out for ya. But you definitely don't have to believe me if you don't want to, the choice is totally yours.

JACK stares at her. He mulls it over. He unfolds his arms.

JACK

...Yeah, okay.

MELISSA

Yes!

(Composed)

I mean, *good*, that's...that's *good*.

MELISSA glances at her hands, now turning purple. She tries to muscle through.

JACK

So, uh...

(Hiding a smile)

Whaddya wanna talk about?

MELISSA

That's a, uh...that's a good question! I, um...I don't *know*! What do *you* wanna talk about?

This lands on JACK.

JACK

Wow. Uh. No one's...no one's asked me that in a really long time. Um. I don't...I don't *know*.

MELISSA

(Straining)

*Well*, before we dive into something good, and I can *tell* it's gonna be good...would you mind, uh...undoing these zip-ties a bit?

JACK

I *told* you, I can't untie you!

MELISSA

No-no, I know! I *totally* know! And I don't *want* you to untie me, I just want you to undo the zip-ties on my hands. All the commotion and stuff pulled them tighter on my skin and, uh...they're *really* diggin' in there!

(Laughs)

Hand's kinda turning purple over here, Jack. See?

JACK looks at her hands.

JACK

Oh, wow, they *are* kinda purple.

MELISSA

*Yup!* And if we're gonna be talking for a while, I wanna be able to concentrate, ya know? On what we're talking about, not on my hands.

JACK studies MELISSA. She smiles sweetly through the pain.

JACK

And you're not gonna hit me or something the second your arms are free?

MELISSA

Jaaack. Clean slate, remember?

JACK

(Thinking)

...And you promise you're not gonna try to escape?

MELISSA

Oh, I promise! I *totally* promise!

JACK considers this. He walks over to MELISSA and holds out his pinky. Confused, MELISSA takes his pinky with hers.

JACK

...Okay.

MELISSA

Great!

JACK

Hold on.

JACK goes into the bathroom. Once he's gone, MELISSA's smile turns to agony. JACK re-enters with the boning knife. MELISSA's smile returns. JACK stands in front of her and studies her upstage arm.

MELISSA

I think if I lift my arm up, you'll be able to--

With expert precision, JACK quickly cuts the zip-tie in one go.

JACK

There.

MELISSA lifts her right arm, getting the feeling back into her hand. JACK goes to her left arm and positions the knife under it. MELISSA watches him, carefully. He cuts her arm free.

JACK

Better?

MELISSA grabs JACK's wrist that holds the knife.

MELISSA

(Devilish grin)

*Much.*

MELISSA punches JACK in the crotch. JACK lets out a guttural moan and falls to his knees. MELISSA grabs the knife and cuts at the zip-ties around her feet. JACK falls to his side.

JACK

(Groaning)

*Oh, God!*

MELISSA

(Cutting)

*C'mon-c'mon-c'mon-c'mon!*



MELISSA gets free.

MELISSA

*Yes!*

MELISSA wrestles the rope off herself and runs to the door. She tries the door and realizes it's locked.

MELISSA

*Oh, mother f--*

She puts the knife down on the dresser/table by the door and begins undoing all of the locks, quickly. JACK groans as he rolls over onto his hands and knees. MELISSA sees this and begins to speed up.

MELISSA

*Shit! C'mon-c'mon-c'mon-c'mon-c'mon!*

JACK struggles to his feet.

MELISSA

*So many God damn locks!*

JACK stands up tall, moaning in pain.  
MELISSA finishes unlocking the last lock.

MELISSA

*Yes!*

MELISSA throws open the door and runs out into the storm as JACK stumbles over to the doorway.

JACK

(Strained)

*Wait, no! Melissa!*

JACK quickly grabs his poncho and runs into the storm.

JACK  
(Offstage)

*Melissa!*

MELISSA  
(Offstage)

Stay away from me, you fuck!

Lightning strikes. MELISSA screams. Thunder rumbles. A long moment.

MELISSA  
(Offstage)

Get *offa* me you fucking *psycho!* Get *off!* Let me *go!*

Through the doorway we see JACK wearing his poncho, struggling to hold a flailing MELISSA off the ground, his arms wrapped around her, pressing her arms to her side. When they get to the doorway, MELISSA plants her feet against the outside doorframe. JACK heaves against her, but her feet stay planted.

MELISSA  
(Through gritted teeth)

*No. No!*

JACK  
(Struggling)

Oh, *come on!*

JACK pushes again and MELISSA loses her footing on one leg, kicking the knife off the dresser/table towards the other side of the room. JACK heaves again, stumbling through the doorway with MELISSA, dumping her to the ground. JACK recovers, slams the door, locks a few locks, then drags the dresser/table in front of the door. During this, MELISSA hits the ground, sees the knife close to her, scrambles towards it, and spins around, pointing the knife in JACK's direction. JACK turns around and leans against the dresser/table.

JACK

(Panting)

*Okay!* You're back in now! *Please* don't do that aga--

(Notices MELISSA with knife)

How did you get the...ya know what? Forget it. Just...*please* don't do that again, okay? Please?

JACK takes the poncho off and hangs it up.

MELISSA

Oh, *yeah*, 'cause I'm just gonna sit here and wait for you to *kill* me!

JACK

I'm *not* going to kill you!

MELISSA

Then let me go!

JACK

I can't do that, either!

MELISSA

Well, isn't this just *fucked*, then?

JACK

It's a very difficult position to be in, *yes!* I've never had this happen before!

MELISSA

What does *that* mean?

JACK

It *means*, it's usually pretty simple! They come in, I do my thing, and it's over! But *this* is...I mean,/this is *exhausting!*

MELISSA

Wait-wait-wait wait-wait, hold on a second. You're saying you've done this *before?*

JACK

(Realizing)

*Oh.* Uh.

MELISSA

*Have you?!*



JACK

(Points to fridge)

...You want some water or something?

MELISSA

*No!*

JACK

Can I at least get you a towel? You're soaked.

MELISSA

I can get it myself!

JACK

Right, but...the bathroom's all--

MELISSA walks into the bathroom doorway, gets a brief look at what's in there, and recoils backwards, yelling as she spins around and lands flat against the upstage wall. She pants, heavily.

MELISSA

(Eyes wide)

...Holy shit.

JACK

Sorry, I was trying/to--

MELISSA

That is so much blood.

JACK

Yeah, there's a lot in there.

MELISSA

I mean, it is, like...*all* over the floor.

JACK

Uh-huh.

MELISSA

*And* the walls.

JACK

That happens, sometimes, yeah.

MELISSA

What were those...little *package*-looking things? Was that--

JACK

Preston, yeah. Bits of Preston.

MELISSA

...Huh.

MELISSA closes her eyes and tries to catch her breath. Feeling guilty, JACK takes a step forward.

JACK

Here, why don't you let me--

MELISSA

(Raises knife)

*Don't move!*

JACK

*I just* wanna get you a towel, okay? I promise!

JACK takes a step downstage below the couch and table. For every step he takes, MELISSA moves in the opposite direction, knife out. They slowly circle each other until JACK reaches the bathroom and MELISSA is by her original chair. JACK reaches into the bathroom and takes out a folded towel from a shelf.

JACK

Tarp's over the good towels, so there's nothing gross on 'em.

JACK tosses MELISSA the towel. She dries herself awkwardly while pointing the knife at JACK.

JACK

You don't have to keep pointing that at me.

MELISSA

*Of course* I do! After seeing what you're capable of I'm not letting my guard down for a *second!*

JACK

I mean, *sure*, whatever you want. I'm just saying it looks kinda awkward.

MELISSA

I'm *fine*.

JACK

Okay.

MELISSA continues to awkwardly dry herself, knife raised, not taking her eyes off JACK.  
JACK watches her struggle.

JACK

Seriously, if you want to use both hands, I promise I won't move, okay? I'll even turn around.

(Turns around)

See? How's this?

MELISSA

...Go in the corner.

JACK looks back at MELISSA. She raises the knife. JACK goes to the corner. Hesitantly, MELISSA puts the knife on the chair. She dries herself with the towel. After a while, she relaxes, feeling warm and dry, almost safe within the towel.

JACK

Can I ask you something?

MELISSA

*No.*

She continues to dry herself, not in the same zone as before.

MELISSA  
(Sighs)

What?

JACK  
I was just wondering, um...what were you doing out here, anyway? I mean, I get that you followed Preston up here, but...what did you think you were going to find?

MELISSA  
(Annoyed laugh)  
Well, certainly not him stacked in neat little piles in your *bathroom*, that's for sure!

JACK  
Okay, well...*no*, probably not. But...you had to follow him for a reason, right?

MELISSA  
I don't know. He was just...being all...*weird*.

JACK  
Weird how?

MELISSA  
I don't know, just...*weird*. *First* he said he was meeting some of his business friends for a late game of tennis, but I knew he was full of shit, 'cause we both knew it was gonna storm all day and he *hates* indoor courts. Then I saw him get in a *taxi* which he *never* does 'cause he always drives his stupid sports car whenever he can, so...*yeah*. I followed him halfway up this God forsaken mountain until he randomly got *out* of the taxi and walked in *here*. And...that's when I finally admitted to myself that he was probably coming up here to...meet someone.

JACK  
Meet someone.

MELISSA  
Yes. *Meet* someone.

JACK  
What kind of someone?

MELISSA  
Oh, come--the *sex* kind of someone!

JACK  
Right. Okay.



MELISSA

I never pegged him as the cheating type, but...

(Laughs bitterly)

I've been wrong *before*, so...I wanted to see for myself. I parked my car down the driveway, came in *here*, and that's when I saw...

(Cringes)

But now that I know he *wasn't* here for the sex kind of someone, I kinda hate you even *more*. I mean, if he was trying to buy some drugs off you or something, that's still not *great*, but at least he wasn't planning on *cheating*. That shit is *unacceptable*.

JACK

Yeah, uh...I don't mean to be a jerk, but, um...he kinda *was* up here for the sex kind of someone.

MELISSA

...He was?

JACK

Well, *he* thought so, anyway.

MELISSA

...Oh.

(Realizing)

*Oh.*

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

(Scoffs)

...Of *course* he was.

Silence. JACK turns back to her.

JACK

...Sorry.

MELISSA

No, it's...

(Beat)

I should probably be used to this kinda shit by now.

MELISSA sits in the chair. JACK wants to say something, but doesn't. He turns back. Silence.

MELISSA  
So, is that, like...what you *do*?

JACK  
Is *what* what I do?

MELISSA  
You lure guys out here, pretending you want to have sex and then you kill them?

JACK  
(Turning around)  
*What?!*

MELISSA  
You said he came out here to have sex with someone!

JACK  
*Yeah!*

MELISSA  
And you're the only one here, so I assume he thought he was coming up here/to have--

JACK  
No-no-no, he wasn't *gay*!

MELISSA  
He wasn't?

JACK  
*No!*

MELISSA  
(Relieved)  
Oh.

JACK  
I'd never hurt someone just because they're *gay*! Whaddya think I am?!

MELISSA  
Uh, a *serial killer*?!

JACK  
Yeah, but not of *gay people*!

MELISSA

So, wait, hold on. If he wasn't here to have sex with *you*, then who the hell *was* he here to have sex with?

JACK

A *girl* named *Jackie*! He thought he was meeting a girl named *Jackie*!

MELISSA

*O-kay, that* makes more sense.

JACK

But he obviously *didn't* get a thirteen-year-old Jackie, he got *me*! *And* a knife to the neck!

MELISSA

Wait...*what*?

JACK

What?

(Realizing)

Ah, *crap*.

MELISSA stares at JACK, suspiciously. A smile spreads across MELISSA's face and she begins to laugh. JACK looks around, confused.

MELISSA

(Wagging a finger at JACK)

Okay. Alright. *I* see what you're doing here, Jack. Very clever. *Very* clever, indeed. But it *ain't* gonna work, bub.

JACK

What're you talking/about?

MELISSA

I almost didn't even realize what you were doing at first. I mean, I probably would've believed the whole gay thing, but...“sex with a *thirteen year old*?!”

(Laughs)

*Come on*. That's a bit much, don't you think?

JACK

I'm...confused.

MELISSA

*I know* you're just making this shit up, Jack! Trying to get me back for punching you in the nads or escaping or something!

JACK

I'm not making anything up. It's true.

MELISSA

(Mocking)

*Oh! Yeah!* 'Cause I'm gonna believe the *serial killer* over here! *He's* a reliable source!

JACK

I mean...I can prove it, if you really want.

MELISSA

(Crossing arms)

You can prove you're full of shit. *That's* what you can prove to me, Jack. How about that?

JACK

(Confused)

...Okay.

JACK goes to the bathroom doorway and reaches for a shelf. He comes back with a cheap cellphone. He opens it and taps away on it. He holds up the phone.

JACK

Here.

MELISSA

What is that?

JACK

Preston's phone.

MELISSA

That isn't Preston's phone.

JACK

Not his *normal* phone. It's his *burner* phone. He was using it to talk to me. All our emails are on this one.

MELISSA

(Mocking)

Oh, you mean all the emails with a "*thirteen year old?*"

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

*Okay, Jack. Sure.*

JACK

See for yourself.

JACK tosses the phone to MELISSA.  
MELISSA realizes something, but tries to hide it.

MELISSA

Yeah. Yeah, okay. I'll just...look at the emails.

JACK

There's no signal up here if you're thinking of calling or/texting anyone.

MELISSA  
(Through gritted teeth)

God dammit, *fine*.

(Under breath)

*I knew it couldn't be that easy. Stupid.*

Begrudgingly, MELISSA reads from the phone for several moments, unimpressed. Something grabs her attention. She keeps reading, now more intently. She looks up at JACK.

MELISSA  
(Suspicious)

What is this?

JACK

I told you.

MELISSA continues reading. Her body shifts, uncomfortable. She looks somewhat grossed out.

MELISSA

This is...this is...

MELISSA continues reading for a long while.  
Her eyes grow wide. She looks up at JACK.

MELISSA

What the fuck *is* this?!

MELISSA continues reading, faster now. She  
recoils in horror, dropping the phone in disgust.

MELISSA

*Oh my God!*

MELISSA stares at it, frozen and repulsed.

MELISSA

That's...that's *bullshit*, right? That's bullshit?

JACK

No.

MELISSA

That was a-a-a picture of his--

JACK

Uh-huh.

MELISSA

And-and-and he was talking to a--

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

This is just...is this some kinda elaborate plan to get back at me or something?

JACK

What? Of *course*/not.

MELISSA

Just to fuck with me?

JACK

When would I have had the time to/think of all that?

MELISSA

Is it because I punched you in the nads and tried to escape? 'Cause I'm *sorry*, okay?! Any normal person would've done that!

JACK

I'm not mad about the nads!

MELISSA

But this is a *fucked up* thing to do if you're trying to get even with me, Jack!  
(Feeling sick)

A real...a *real* fucked up--

JACK

I'm *really* not trying to get even with you, I *promise*! You wanted me to prove it, so I--

MELISSA gags, loudly. Covers her mouth.  
JACK reels back.

JACK

*WHOA!*

MELISSA

(Strained)

*Oh, God.*

JACK

That came outta *nowhere*!

MELISSA

I think I'm gonna puke.

JACK

Really?

MELISSA fans her face quickly with both hands.

MELISSA

(Strained)

I don't know. I *think* so.

JACK

Are you getting the mouth sweats?

MELISSA

(Strained)

I don't know, I usually don't, but--

MELISSA gags.

JACK

*Ah!* Okay, uh...

(Looks around)

Just...hold on a sec'.

MELISSA sits in the chair, leaning over her knees. JACK grabs a box of garbage bags from inside the bathroom and opens one. He crosses to her, quickly. MELISSA raises the knife.

JACK

Oh, *stop*.

MELISSA keeps the knife pointed at him. Suddenly, her eyes grow wide, she snatches the garbage bag, and leans into it, heaving loudly. No puke. She breathes, heavily.

JACK

...Anything?

MELISSA

(Weakly)

No. I haven't eaten today, so my stomach is pretty empt--

She heaves, again. Heavy breathing.

JACK

You're doin' good. You're doin' great, just take some deep breaths.

She breathes in and out several times. Thunder crashes overhead.

JACK

Any better?

MELISSA

A little.



MELISSA takes a few more breaths hunched over the bag. All of a sudden, she takes off one of her shoes and throws it at the bathroom wall. JACK jumps back.

MELISSA

(At wall)

*Preston*, you disgusting piece of *shit*! You deserved what you got and I hope it hurt and was really drawn out!

(To JACK, still angry)

Was it really drawn out?

JACK

No, it was pretty quick.

MELISSA

(To wall, still angry)

Well, *fuck you*, anyway and I hope you rot in hell you piece of shit pervert!

She takes off her other shoe and throws it at the wall. She plops down in the chair and cries softly, holding herself. Silence. JACK looks at the shoes on the ground. He walks over to them, picks them up, and sets them down near MELISSA. He picks up the phone, puts it in his pocket, and walks back to his previous spot. Silence.

JACK

You okay?

MELISSA

(Through tears)

No, Jack. I'm really not.

JACK

Yeah.

Silence.

JACK

If it makes you feel any better, he was never with a kid while you two were together. This would've been his first time in a/while that he--

MELISSA

*It doesn't.*

JACK

Yeah, no, I just thought I'd, ya know...say that. Just in case.

Silence.

JACK

Can, uh...can I get you anything? Dry clothes or something?

MELISSA

No.

JACK

How 'bout some food? Didn't you just say you haven't eaten all day?

MELISSA

I don't have an appetite right now, Jack.

JACK

Okay. Yeah, I get that.

(Beat)

I *do* have some gumbo, though. *Homemade* gumbo. And I don't mean to brag but, uh...

(Smiles)

It's pretty good gumbo.

MELISSA

No.

JACK

How 'bout I heat some up and you see how you feel? Hm? How 'bout that?

MELISSA

(Shrugs)

...Fine.

JACK

Okay. Okay, great.

JACK goes to the kitchen nook and takes a plastic container out of the fridge and pours the contents into a small pot on the stove. He turns the burner on.

He twists an egg timer and puts it on the counter. MELISSA picks up her towel and puts it around her shoulders, staring off, sadly.

MELISSA

Why do I always end up with the biggest turds in the whole bunch?

JACK

I'm sure that's not true.

MELISSA

Oh, no, *it is!* Every guy I have ever dated has had some kind of crazy red flag sticking out of his face or hidden up his ass somewhere that I either *completely* ignored or should've seen earlier! It's like I fucking blind myself to guys' bullshit, only to turn around and discover they collect their own *toenail* clippings or-or-or they flip off *elementary* school children or they call their *mother* after we finish fooling around! And now *Preston*?! I mean, you'd think I'd be a God damn *master* of people's bullshit by now, but *nope!* Same old shit. I mean, all I've *ever* done, even since I was a little kid, was overlook people's fuckery. And from there it's just gotten worse and worse with every guy I meet! I mean *every. Fuckin'. Guy!* Not like it can get any worse than *Preston*. How could it *possibly* get any worse than *that*?

(To wall)

*You sick fuck!*

JACK

*Well, I did* kill a guy once who kept little girls chained up in his basement. So, *that's* pretty worse.

MELISSA slowly turns to look at JACK.

MELISSA

...What the *fuck* does that have to do with *fuck*?

JACK

No, I'm just saying--

MELISSA

What, like I should thank my lucky stars I only had a *standard* pedophile on my hands and not Basement McGirl-Hostage?

JACK

*No*, I'm saying that I know it *feels* like it can't get any worse, but there are some *really* terrible people out there! People who are a *lot* worse than *Preston*!

MELISSA

And I'm just *destined* for them, huh? Is that what you're saying over there? In your stupid fucking kitchen?

JACK

*No!* I'm saying it's *good* you recognize that you might be attracted to terrible guys *now* so you can work on that part of yourself before you end up with someone *really* bad! Like, maybe you *needed* something this messed up to happen to you to shake you out of it, ya know? Really knock you off your current path! 'Cause you could've kept on, business as usual, going about your life, finding terrible guys. Until one day, you find a guy who *isn't* a complete turd. Could even be Mr. Perfect, this guy. You fall in love, get married, cute house, big dog, three kids, and all seems *great*. Then, out of the blue, *BAM!* The FBI kicks down your door 'cause *Mr. Perfect* has an online kiddy-porn empire. Killed a guy like that, too. So, what I'm *saying* is, this could really knock you off your pattern which might stop an even *worse* thing from happening *later*, right? So, isn't this, like...technically a *good* thing?

MELISSA stares at JACK.

MELISSA

(Begrudgingly)

I...I don't know.

JACK

Just a thought.

Silence. JACK pulls out a tray, silverware, napkin, and bowl. MELISSA takes a few breaths, trying to compose herself. She gets a thought.

MELISSA

So...wait...do you *only* kill people who've fucked with kids or is that just, like...a coincidence?

JACK

Oh, no, just people who've hurt kids, sexually or otherwise.

MELISSA

Okay. Soooo...*I* was never in any real danger is what you're saying.

JACK

(Turning to MELISSA)

*Wha--*That's what I was trying to *tell* you!

MELISSA

Well, Jack, don't you think you could've just, ya know, *said that*?

JACK

And what the heck was I *supposed* to say, exactly? "Oh, don't worry, Melissa, the three or four dozen people I *have* killed were all *monsters*, so *you're* fine! No need to worry!"

MELISSA

(Wide-eyed)

Say *WHAT*?

JACK

(Realizing)

*Gah*, I keep *doing* that!

MELISSA

Jesus Christ, I don't even *know* that many people!

JACK

I, uh...I was *exaggerating*! Definitely not that many!

MELISSA

How do you even *find* that many people?! Are you, like, a *cop* or something?

JACK

What? No, I just use the internet.

MELISSA

*Really*?

JACK

Yeah, I just--Okay, ya know what? I'm not talking about this anymore.

MELISSA

*What*? Why not?!

JACK

*Because!* I've already said too much! And I don't know what's gonna happen here, so I can't be giving you any more specifics! *Besides*, you just experienced a *serious* emotional trauma that I think you should process a little longer before we talk about--

MELISSA gags. She immediately puts a fist to her mouth and holds up a hand to JACK as if to say "I'm good." JACK doesn't know what to do. MELISSA composes herself and sits up straight.

MELISSA

(Diplomatic)

*Jack.* I am *aware* that the situation we're in right now is...well...*fucked*, okay? And I totally understand you not wanting to tell me anymore about all this. But after what I just learned...

(With difficulty)

About *Preston*...I am, at present, still teetering on the edge of barfing on myself. And as fucked up as it is, you talking about what you do seems to be distracting me from doing that as I am weirdly very curious about all this, so, if you could...*please* keep talking as it'll stop me from ralphing all over the place. Okay?

JACK eyes MELISSA.

JACK

You...really wanna hear all this?

MELISSA

Yes.

JACK

And...not just 'cause you don't wanna barf?

MELISSA

It's a very large factor, but no, not *just* 'cause I don't wanna barf.

JACK

(Smiling)

...Okay.

JACK stares at MELISSA for a long moment. She looks around, confused. JACK snaps out of it.

JACK

*Right! Yes!* I was about to, um...

(Clearing throat)

*Yeah.* So. What I, uh...what I *do* is, um...I start by going to the twenty-four hour internet cafe' in town, right? The one by the diner?

MELISSA

Okay.

JACK

I go in every other week or so at three or four a.m. when no one's really there. Except Marv, the owner, but he's really old and thinks I'm looking at porn.

MELISSA

Huh.

JACK

And what's great about *this* cafe' is they automatically wipe their internet history at six a.m. so there's no trace of what I did just sitting there for a full day. So, once I'm settled in, I stalk around on these different forums that are most likely to attract these terrible people and I do what I call "the clueless kid."

MELISSA

The clueless kid.

JACK

*Exactly!* I pretend to be these kids who don't know any better, like they just *accidentally* stumbled into these creep forums, ya know? Works every time. *Then*, I wait for these guys, it's *always* guys, to take the bait and strike up a conversation with me. It's usually not long after that when they suggest meeting up. *That's* when I know they're serious. But I've still gotta *confirm* that they've actually done stuff before and not just curious about it, which means doing some research on them.

MELISSA

What *kinda* research?

JACK

Ya know, go through different databases and stuff. Some of them just openly admit what they've done before like it's no big deal, which, *hey*, makes *my* job easier, right?

MELISSA

(Unsure)

Yeah. Sure.

JACK

*So*, once I get confirmation, I tell them I wanna meet up, but they have to come to *me*. Most guys come from all over the country, *some* are within a few states of here, but *sometimes*, they're like Preston and come from close by!

MELISSA  
(Flatly)

Lucky.

JACK

I know! I *then* lay out the *final* step of the trap by telling them I live all the way up the mountain, that my parents are gone for the weekend, and if they *really* wanna see me, they need to take a taxi halfway up and then walk the rest of the way so none of my neighbors see their cars. And if they actually go through *all* the trouble of getting up here, then it's a pretty good sign they mean business.

MELISSA

And they're just...*cool* with all that?

JACK

Oh, *yeah!* *Sometimes*, though, guys get cold-feet on the walk up and turn back, which is a pain for *me* 'cause then I gotta go catch them, finish them off, and then haul their bodies all the way back up here. *Exhausting*. I mean, you should've seen me in the *early* days, I did *all* my killings outside, but it was easier for them to run off. Heck of a lot more hassle, but it *did* get me in great shape, let me tell ya.

(Laughs)

*But*, nine times outta ten, they've made up their mind and they strut through the front door with all the confidence in the world. And once they do? That's when I...ya know...do my thang.

JACK grins, proud. MELISSA stares at him.  
Getting self conscious, JACK clears his throat  
and his smile disappears.

MELISSA

That's...weirdly...*fascinating*, Jack.

JACK

(Surprised)

Ye...yeah?

MELISSA

Uhhhh, *yeah!* I mean...*huh*.

JACK

(Pleasantly surprised)

That's...*thank you*. I'm--

(Laughs lightly)

Yeah, I'm glad you think so.



MELISSA

Yeah, sure.

(Beat)

And, uh...when you're finished with all that is when you, um...

MELISSA awkwardly indicates the bathroom.

JACK

Yes! Exactly. That's stage two. *Removal.*

MELISSA

Removal. Right.

JACK

Bit of a long process. Lots of different steps. Kinda messy.

MELISSA

Sure.

JACK

Lots of chopping and hacking/and--

MELISSA

Yeah, no, I got it.

JACK

*Right.* Sorry.

The egg timer goes off.

JACK

Ah. Perfect.

JACK goes to the kitchen and tastes the gumbo. He approves. JACK pours the gumbo into a bowl, puts the bowl on the tray, and brings the tray over to MELISSA, setting it in her lap.

JACK

Here ya go! Wait.

He grabs the salt and pepper and puts it on the tray.

JACK

Just in case. Can I get you anything else? Ginger ale?

MELISSA

No, thanks.

JACK

You sure? It's got Stevia.

MELISSA

I'm good.

JACK

Okay. *Now*, I don't know if you've ever had gumbo before, buuuuut...this is the *best* you're gonna get. It's an old family recipe, but I added a little secret ingredient to really make the flavor pop.

MELISSA's eyes grow wide.

JACK

Give it a taste! Let me know what you think.

MELISSA stares at the gumbo.

MELISSA

*Yeeaahh*, um. This is...probably a silly question, but, uh...

(Beat)

There isn't, like, um....*people*...in this...is there?

JACK

People?

MELISSA

Yeah, in the, um...

MELISSA looks down at the gumbo then awkwardly back at JACK.

JACK

*What?! No!*

MELISSA

(Relaxing)

Oh, thank God.

JACK

Why the *heck* would there be *people*?!

MELISSA

I don't know! You just said something about chopping up bodies, handed me freakin' gumbo, and then you said there was a "secret ingredient" in it!

JACK

It's *garlic salt*!

MELISSA

Oh, for fuck's/sake.

JACK

Kosher, organic, *garlic salt*!

MELISSA

Well, you didn't make that very clear! You segued from chopping people up and went *straight* to gumbo! What the hell was I *supposed* to think you did with the pieces?!

JACK

I *burn* them!

MELISSA

Okay,/well--

JACK

In a *furnace* out *back*!

MELISSA

I mean, *yeah*, that makes a lot more sense!

JACK

What the heck's a matter with you?! *Eating people*?! Like I'm some kinda cannibal *freak* over here?!

MELISSA

I don't know your life!

JACK

Okay, ya know what? Gimme the gumbo.

MELISSA

What?/No.

JACK

I want it back, you can't have it, anymore!

JACK reaches for the tray. MELISSA crouches over it.

MELISSA

No, I want it now!

JACK

*Well, too bad!*

JACK reaches, again. MELISSA slaps JACK's hands away multiple times.

MELISSA

Stop it, ya crazy!

JACK

You said you weren't even hungry!

MELISSA

Yeah, well, I've changed my mind!

JACK

Okay, ya know what? Fine! *Fine!* Eat your "people" gumbo! See if I care!

JACK stomps back to the kitchen nook and furiously cleans up. MELISSA stares at JACK, then to the gumbo. She pushes it around a bit. Hesitantly, MELISSA takes a bite. She is confused by how good it is.

MELISSA

...Holy *shit*.

She takes another bite.

MELISSA

(Genuinely)

Jack, this is...this is *really* good!

JACK

*Oh!* Patronizing me now, huh? That's nice! That's *rich!*

MELISSA

No, Jack, I'm serious! This is incredible!

MELISSA takes a few more bites. JACK sees this.

MELISSA

I honestly had no idea what gumbo *was*, but I guess it's like if soup and rice had a baby, huh? And you were right, the garlic salt really *does* makes the flavor pop.

MELISSA continues to eat. JACK watches her, suspiciously.

JACK

How do I know this isn't like the zip-tie thing? Just tryna get back on my good side or whatever.

MELISSA

I've already shoved half of this into my gullet like a troffed pig, Jack. This is fucking *delicious*.

MELISSA spoons more into her mouth. She finishes.

MELISSA

Hoo, *shit*!

(Laughs)

I was hungrier than I thought!

MELISSA wipes her mouth with the napkin as JACK watches her, unsure.

JACK

...Do you...want some more?

MELISSA

I mean...yeah, if you got it.

JACK

I do, I just...gotta heat it up first.

MELISSA

You don't have to. I'm sure it's just as good cold. Like gazpacho or something.

JACK

It...it *is*.

JACK stares at MELISSA. He snaps out of it, goes to the fridge, and takes out the container. He brings it over to MELISSA and fills her bowl.

MELISSA

Thanks.

JACK

You're welcome. And you're sure you don't want a drink?

MELISSA

Ya know what? Why not?

JACK

Why not!

JACK puts the container away in the fridge and pulls out two ginger ales. He goes into the living room and hands MELISSA her ginger ale as she's taking a bite.

MELISSA  
(Mouth full)

Mm!

(Swallows)

Thank you.

MELISSA opens her soda, takes a sip, and puts it on the table. She eats more gumbo. JACK sits on the chair and opens his ginger ale.

MELISSA

Hey, um...sorry 'bout the whole...“people in the gumbo” thing.

JACK

Oh. That's okay.

MELISSA

I guess I just figured...“*hey*, guy’s got bodies to chop up! Gotta get rid of them *somehow!*”

JACK

Yeah, no, I...I get it.

MELISSA

Yeah.

(Beat)

But, yeah, no, furnace makes a lot more sense.

MELISSA takes a few more bites. Something pops into her head. JACK sees this.

JACK

What?

MELISSA

What?

JACK

No, you just...you kinda...made a face.

MELISSA

Oh, no, I just...it’s nothing.

JACK

It’s okay, you can say it.

MELISSA

No, I just...I don’t know, I guess...if you’re just gonna *burn* ‘em, why chop ‘em up first?

JACK

Pieces burn easier.

MELISSA

Ah.

JACK

A furnace will burn up a whole body *eventually*, but different parts burn faster than others so burning a body in one piece is...well...a mess.

MELISSA

And they just...*burn up*? All bloody like that?

JACK

I wrap 'em in plastic wrap first so it catches. But the wrapped pieces might still be slippery and stuff, so I put *those* in garbage bags, which are *super* flammable. I put the garbage bags in a wheelbarrow so I don't throw my back out carrying all the bags, and then I put each bag into the furnace one at a time. A few hours later, no more body, and your back's good!

MELISSA

(Captivated)

*Wow*, that's...kinda fucked up, but still pretty cool!

JACK

The only bad thing about furnaces, though, is you can't use 'em when it's raining. Which this mountain does *a lot*.

MELISSA

What about the smoke and stuff? Doesn't burning carcasses make smoke all black and gross? So, it's pretty obvious you're not burning wood or coal or whatever.

JACK

*Right*. So, what *I've* done is I've built a ventilation system into the furnace that filters the smoke out a bit, making it come out grey,/which blends in with the clouds.

MELISSA

Which blends in with the clouds!

JACK

Yeah!

MELISSA

That's really fuckin' *smart*, Jack!

JACK

(Smiling)

Thank you.

MELISSA

*And* handy.

JACK

Yeah, well...I had to figure *something* out. Burning the bodies is really my only option up here.

MELISSA

*Right*. Muddy and stuff.



JACK

And you can't bury things in mud!

MELISSA

Oh, yeah, you don't wanna bury things, anyway. People think just because you can't see the body means it's gone forever,/but--

JACK

It actually *preserves* it.

MELISSA

*Exactly!* People get caught all the *time* 'cause of that shit and I'm just like, "what were you *thinking*, man?"

JACK

I know!

MELISSA

That's how they got John Wayne Gacy.

JACK

The clown guy?

MELISSA

Dude had, like, *twenty-nine people* buried under his house.

JACK

Dang.

MELISSA

His *house!* Just *sitting* there, all preserved-like!

JACK

(Shakes head)

Amateur move.

MELISSA

*I know!* I mean, what do you even say when they find that many bodies?

JACK

"How did *those* get there?"

MELISSA

(Laughing)

*Right?* "Uh. Uh. Indian burial ground! Indian burial ground!"

JACK  
(Laughing)

Exactly!

MELISSA  
I mean, come *on!* Buy a freakin' *furnace*, guy!

JACK  
*And* a mountain.

MELISSA laughs, choking on her ginger ale.

JACK  
(Laughing lightly)  
You okay?

MELISSA tries to recover, waving her hand and wiping her face, still laughing.

MELISSA  
No, that was just...it was funny.

JACK  
(Smiling)  
...Huh.

JACK smiles to himself, proudly. MELISSA lets out a few more chuckles. Remembering her situation, MELISSA's smile disappears. She clears her throat and looks away. JACK notices. Awkward silence. MELISSA puts her empty bowl on the tray.

JACK  
All finished?

MELISSA  
Yeah. Thanks.

JACK gathers the belongings on the tray.

MELISSA  
And thanks, again. For the food, I mean.

JACK

Yeah, of course.

MELISSA

It was...yeah, it was really good.

JACK

Thank you. Wasn't the *fresh*est I've ever made it, but...it'll do.

MELISSA

(Scoffs)

I can't imagine it "fresh," then, 'cause that was one of the best meals I've ever had.

JACK stops and really takes this in.

JACK

(Beaming)

...Really?

MELISSA

Yeah. Really.

JACK doesn't know what to say. He smiles at MELISSA. She returns the smile, despite herself. A moment.

JACK

(Re: tray)

I should, um...

MELISSA

Yeah. Sure.

JACK takes the tray to the kitchen, putting the dishes in the sink. MELISSA watches JACK for a few moments and then sits back on the couch. She takes in the cabin in its entirety for the first time. Her eyes eventually make their way to the front door. She realizes she has a clear shot to the door and turns to JACK, who has his back to her. She looks back at the door, considering. She makes her decision and turns back to the room. She glances back at JACK.

MELISSA

So, um...did you *always* know you could kill people or was that, like...something you *discovered*?

JACK

(Thinking)

I don't think I *always knew*, but violence and stuff never really bothered me.

MELISSA

Really?

JACK

Yeah. I remember seeing other kids break bones or need stitches and just being like, (Shrugs) "*Sucks*".

MELISSA

And you've *always* been that way?

JACK

Since I can remember, yeah.

MELISSA

Huh. And did something, like...*happen* to you?

JACK

Happen to me?

MELISSA

Yeah, like...something traumatic. Something that might've *numbed* you to that kinda stuff.

JACK

Oh. Well. Could be when I watched my parents die.

MELISSA freezes.

MELISSA

...What?

JACK

I mean, that'd be *my* guess, anyway.

MELISSA

You...watched your...

JACK

When I was about nine, yeah.

(Realizes)

*I* didn't do it, if you were...ya know...

MELISSA

Jesus *Christ*, Jack, that's...I mean, that would *definitely* explain you being numb to violence and stuff!

JACK

It would?

MELISSA

*Yeah!* That's some pretty traumatizing shit! And something like that happening at such a young age would *definitely* do it!

JACK

Huh. Yeah, I...guess that makes sense.

MELISSA

Okay, so, like...how do you go from realizing blood and violence doesn't really bother you to calculated serial killer?

JACK

Well...I, uh--

MELISSA

(Laughs lightly)

I mean, that's a *helluva* leap, right?

JACK

Sure...I, um--

MELISSA

Were you just like, "hey, I'll use this numbness to violence for *good!* But how the heck do I *make* violence good? Oh, *I* know, I'll just kill some fucking pedophiles!" Something like that?

JACK

Um. No, not...exactly. Uh.

MELISSA  
(Excited)

Then what?

JACK

No, I just...um...

(Beat)

I...had...a sister.

This hits MELISSA hard.

MELISSA

...Oh.

JACK

Yeah.

MELISSA

And she...okay. Um...

(Beat)

Yeah, no, we don't have to talk about it.

JACK

Okay.

Awkward silence. JACK stares at the ground.  
MELISSA opens her mouth to speak several  
times, but stops herself.

JACK  
(Realizing)

I'm sorry, I feel like all we've done is talk about me this whole time.

MELISSA

Oh. *Pff*. Do *not* even worry about that, Jack.

JACK

But I wanna know about *you*!

MELISSA  
(Laughs lightly)

Ehhhh. You really don't, though. Trust me.

JACK

I *do*! I'm interested!

MELISSA

I have no real friends, I work a boring desk job, and I eat the same microwaveable meal basically every single night. *Nothing* about my life is interesting, Jack, I *promise*.

JACK

Okay, but none of that tells me who *you* are!

MELISSA

(Sighs)

What could you *possibly* want to know?

JACK

Ya know, like...who *is* Melissa? What makes her tick? What/is her--

MELISSA

Why does she fuck pedophiles?

JACK

(Wide-eyed)

...No, I...I wasn't going/to ask--

MELISSA

I'm *kidding*, Jack.

JACK

Oh.

(Nervous laugh)

Okay.

MELISSA

But, ya know...also...*not*.

MELISSA laughs, nervously. She turns serious.  
JACK realizes this.

JACK

*Hey*, that's...let's not talk about that, okay?

MELISSA

Why not? I think that tells you a lot about me, doesn't it?

JACK

What does?

MELISSA

Well, it takes a certain kinda idiot person to fall for someone like Preston, right? Someone so *fucked up* they can't even see all the *very* obvious bullshit right in front of them? I mean, holy *shit*, Jack, okay, you wanna know more about me? Look no further than the fact that I am so fucked up that I *convinced myself* this shiny fuckin' turd of a person was a God damn *gemstone*, how about that? What does *that* tell you? I'll *tell* you what it tells you, it *tells* you that I'm a fucking *mess*! That all my bullshit has turned me into the kinda person who could fall for a fucking *pedophile*!

(Breathing heavy)

I mean, you're numb to violence and gore and shit, right? Well, what the *fuck* do I gotta do to be numb to *feelings*, huh?! What do I gotta do?! 'Cause I would do that shit in a heartbeat! A fucking *heartbeat*! 'I mean, *fuck* those things, ya know?! *Fuck* 'em! I--

MELISSA's breathing is very heavy. JACK notices.

JACK

Are...you okay?

MELISSA

Yeah, no, I just...I can't breathe, kinda.

JACK

(Wide-eyed)

You can't breathe?

MELISSA fans herself with both hands.

MELISSA

Is it hot in here? It feels really hot in here.

JACK

*Hot?*

MELISSA

Yeah, just, like...*hoo*, shit, ya know?

JACK

Wow, yeah, okay, um...

(Looking around)

Let me just, uh...



MELISSA quickly flaps the neck of her shirt to cool herself down. She leans over her legs, fanning herself again with both hands. JACK stands up, looking around for something that could help. His gaze stops on MELISSA, getting an idea. He leans forward and starts blowing on her. MELISSA reacts positively to the sudden burst of cool air, though still looking down.

MELISSA  
Oh, *wow*, that's...yeah, that's nice.

JACK  
Yeah?

MELISSA  
Uh-huh. Keep doing that.

JACK  
Okay.

JACK sits on the couch next to MELISSA, blowing on her the whole time. MELISSA eventually notices.

MELISSA  
*Ah*. You're blowing on me.

JACK  
I'm sorry. Should I stop?

MELISSA  
I don't know. It's...kinda nice.

JACK  
Okay.

Hesitantly, JACK starts blowing on MELISSA, again.

MELISSA  
(Relaxing)  
Oh, man, yeah. *Weird*, but...nice.

MELISSA leans back on the couch, JACK continues to blow on MELISSA's face. A few moments.

MELISSA

Okay, that's...yeah, I feel better now. Thank you.

JACK

Yeah, of course.

MELISSA sits up and takes a few breaths.

JACK

Is there, um...anything else I can do?

MELISSA

Uh.

(Laughs lightly)

I mean, unless you got a time machine to stop me from ending up like this? Then, no.

JACK

I mean...I can always ask Marv down at the internet cafe'.

MELISSA

(Laughs lightly)

Oh, yeah?

JACK

(Smiling)

*Yeah!* He's *always* cookin' up some sorta crazy crap down there.

MELISSA

(Amused)

And you think an elderly internet-cafe' owner in bumfuck nowhere cracked the space-time continuum?

JACK

*Hey*, stranger things have happened!

MELISSA

(Laughs lightly)

Yes. They have.

MELISSA glances at JACK. They lock eyes. Their smiles slowly fade as they stare at each other in the close proximity. MELISSA slowly inches forward, JACK is still. MELISSA stops, snapping out of it. She leans back, quickly.

MELISSA

Oh my God. Oh my God, what am I doing?

MELISSA stands up and distances herself from JACK.

MELISSA

What the fuck am I doing?!

JACK

What?

MELISSA

No-no-no-no-no-no-no!

JACK

What's wrong?

MELISSA

What's wrong? What's *wrong*? I almost tried to *kiss you*, Jack!

JACK

You didn't, though! You just kinda stared into my eyes for a while!

MELISSA

I can't be staring into your eyes, Jack! I can't be doing *any* of this shit, okay?! I can't!  
(To herself)

Oh my God, this is so fucking stupid! *I'm* so fucking stupid!

JACK

You're not *stupid*!

MELISSA

(To herself)

Can't get any worse than a pedophile, huh? *Well*, Melissa, why don't you just go ahead and like a fucking *serial killer*, how about that?!

JACK  
(Genuinely)

I don't think that's worse.

MELISSA  
(Wide-eyed)

*You don't get an opinion, Jack!*

JACK  
(Hands up)

Okay!

MELISSA

*I think it's all pretty fucking bad!*

JACK

I'm just saying a *pedophile* is probably a little more--

MELISSA

*Nope! Nope-nope-nope! Fuck this, I'm done, alright? I'm done!*

JACK

Done? Done with *what*?

MELISSA

With *this*! *All* of this! This *mountain*, this *cabin*, this whole God damn situation, I'm *done*! I'm not doing it anymore!

JACK

What does *that* mean?

MELISSA

It means, mother *fuck*, you gotta make up your God damn *mind*!

JACK

I...don't understand.

MELISSA

You and I *both* know there are only two options here, Jack. And now it's time to choose, okay?

JACK

*Choose? Choose what?*

MELISSA

Oh, *come on*, Jack! We can laugh, eat gumbo, and play our creepy little version of house all we want, but you and I *both* know that you're either gonna have to *kill me* or let me go!

JACK

(Struggling)

*That's...no*. I'm...I'm sure there are *other* options!

MELISSA

Then I'd love to hear 'em!

MELISSA feigns waiting to hear his answer.

JACK struggles to think of anything.

MELISSA

*Exactly*. There *aren't* any. So, it's time you chose, Jack!

JACK

But, I...I can't...*kill* you!

MELISSA

*Great!* I'll be on my way, then!

MELISSA moves for the door. JACK blocks her way.

JACK

But you *know* I can't let you go!

MELISSA

*Fine!* Can't make up your mind?

MELISSA notices the knife on the table.

MELISSA

Then we'll make a *third* option!

She picks it up and points it at JACK.

MELISSA

I'll *kill* you!

JACK

...Melissa.

MELISSA

*What?!*

JACK

I mean...come on.

MELISSA

No, *you* come on! 'Cause I'll do it! I'll freakin' *kill* you, Jack! I'll stab you in the God damn head!

JACK

*Melissa*, this is--

MELISSA

I'm *serious*! I'll fuckin' *end* you! Now what's it gonna be?! You gonna let me go or do I gotta cut a bitch?!

MELISSA moves towards the door and JACK, knife extended.

JACK

*Hey*, come on! Stop for a second!

MELISSA

Stop *this*!

MELISSA swings the knife a few times at JACK, who dodges it easily. JACK grabs MELISSA's wrist and puts it behind her back. He is as gentle as possible. MELISSA grunts and flails about, an animal caught in a trap.

MELISSA

Get *offa* me, you piece of psycho shit!

JACK

Just *stop* for a second, okay?!

MELISSA struggles and shoves back against JACK. With every shove they edge towards the bathroom.

MELISSA

*Get the fuck offa me!*

JACK

I don't wanna *hurt* you, so just *stop*!

MELISSA

(Shove)

*Get--*

(Shove)

The *fuck--*

(Shove)

*OFF!!!*

With the last shove, MELISSA throws her head back into JACK's face. He lets go and flies backwards, deep within the bathroom, taking the knife with him. MELISSA turns around and sees what we hear: a loud crash of metal being hit and knocked over, as well as many pieces of meat thumping and splatting on the ground. MELISSA takes a step downstage, away from the bathroom doorway, trying not to feel sick. Wrapped body-parts crash against the wall and bathroom doorway. Struggling and slipping is heard. MELISSA closes her eyes and flinches at every sound of crashing and slipping.

JACK

Melissa! Whoa! *Melissa!*

More slipping and falling as more wrapped body parts shoot across the bathroom and hit the wall and bathroom doorway.

JACK

Ow, *crap!* *Melissa!*

JACK's hands grasp the doorframe and he slowly enters the doorway, struggling to stand up, covered in blood, his nose bloody from the head-butt. MELISSA sees JACK, runs to the door, and begins moving the dresser/table with difficulty. It only budes a few inches.

MELISSA

Come on, ya piece of shit! *Come on!*

JACK  
Melissa, will you just--

JACK slips in the doorway, knocking towels off a shelf to the floor as well as wrapped body parts into the living room. MELISSA continues to pull at the dresser/table.

MELISSA  
(Struggling)  
*What the fuck is this made of?!*

JACK starts getting up in the doorway.  
MELISSA sees this and pulls the dresser/table faster.

MELISSA  
*C'mon-c'mon-c'mon-c'mon!*

JACK  
Melissa, *stop!*

JACK gets his footing and goes to her.

MELISSA  
*Shit!*

MELISSA jumps onto the couch and runs across it to the other side, putting distance between them.

JACK  
Will you just *stop* for a second? *Please?*

MELISSA  
*No!*

JACK  
I think I got Preston-blood in my mouth.

MELISSA  
*Good!*



JACK

I just wanna *talk*, okay?

MELISSA

No! No more talking, Jack! I'm leaving or I'm fucking you up and *then* leaving! Those are the options!

JACK

*Melissa*, just--

MELISSA

I'm *done* with this shit, I'm *serious*!

JACK

*But!* Can't we just--

MELISSA

What's it gonna be, Jack?!

JACK

(Without thinking)

Why don't you just *stay*?!

MELISSA stares at JACK, breathing heavily and confused.

MELISSA

...What?

JACK

Why don't you just...*yeah*, why don't you just...*stay*.

MELISSA

*Stay?* Whaddya mean *stay?* *Here?* With *you?*

JACK

(Smiling)

...Yeah.

MELISSA tries to formulate words, making more noises than anything. She shakes her head and makes an abundance of faces. This goes on for a bit.

MELISSA

*That's...I...*

(Scoffs)

*No!* I can't stay here!

JACK

Why not?

MELISSA

Why *not*?!

JACK

Yeah!

MELISSA

You're covered in Preston's blood and you're asking me *why not*?!

JACK

(Touching nose)

Some of it's mine.

MELISSA

(Ignoring this)

You're a fucking serial killer, Jack! How about *that* for a reason! You chop people into little bits and burn them up!

JACK

*Bad* people! People you said you didn't have a problem with me killing!

MELISSA

That's not the point! You still *do* it!

JACK

That doesn't make me a bad person! I *know* bad people and I *know* I'm not one of 'em!

MELISSA

So, what, you just expect me to hang out in the other room every time you wanna *Gordon Ramsay* somebody?

JACK

*No*, I'd make sure you weren't here!

MELISSA

Oh, how *thoughtful*!

JACK

I *always* know ahead of time when someone's coming up here so I'd make sure you were gone! You could go into town or walk around in the woods or go to the lake! It wouldn't take more than a few hours!

MELISSA

(Struggling)

We...*no*, we are *not* seriously talking about this!

JACK

You'd *never* have to see or do anything gross, I'd cook for you every day, and you'd never have to deal with people who treat you like crap ever again! It'd be *great*!

MELISSA

Jack, you...you can't be *serious*, right now.

JACK

Why not?

MELISSA

*Because*, even if I *completely* ignored all of the *very* obvious reasons why this is a terrible idea and-and-and even *considered* thinking about this, which, I'm *not*...I have a *life* down there, Jack! I can't just *abandon* my life!

JACK

You're not abandoning your life! You're just bringing it up here!

MELISSA

*Jack.*

JACK

Look, I *know* what I'm asking is kinda crazy, okay? This whole *situation* is crazy! But I think this could be really great! For *both* of us! And I know you agree at least a *little* because you're not trying to kill me right now! And if you're being completely honest with yourself, I think you know we've been having a pretty good time together! Despite all the, ya know, blood and fighting and stuff. And from what you've told me, it sounds like you've been having more fun up *here* than you ever did down *there*! Which makes sense 'cause people down there are *mean* and *judgy* and just...*awful*! I mean, why do you think I'm all the way up here? Besides the whole...serial killer-thing. Because I just wanna be *me* and the world down there doesn't really *like* people being their true selves if it makes them uncomfortable! They hurt you and make you sad. And I know you're hurt and you feel lonely, because...I am, too. So...I don't know...why don't we just be those things *together*? Huh? 'Cause I think you'd be really happy here, Melissa. I really do. I know *I* will. So...whaddya say? *Stay? Please?*

Thunder rumbles in the distance.

MELISSA  
(Almost a whisper)

...I can't. I just...I can't.

This breaks JACK's heart. He tries not to show it, but MELISSA can tell.

JACK  
(Nodding slowly)

...Okay.

Silence.

JACK  
Then, uh...then...you should go.

MELISSA  
You're...you're letting me go?

JACK  
...Yeah.

MELISSA  
But...aren't you worried I'll tell someone? The police?

JACK  
I'm not gonna kill you, Melissa. And I'm not gonna make you stay. What other choice do I have? So...you do what you gotta do.

Silence. MELISSA doesn't know what to do.  
Thunder rumbles in the far distance. The rain now taps lightly on the roof. JACK notices.

JACK  
The, um...the storm's breaking up, so...you should be able to make it down pretty easily, now.

MELISSA  
...Okay.

Silence.

JACK

I should, um...I should start getting all those pieces bagged up and in the wheel barrow. Get it ready for the furnace,/so...

MELISSA

Right. Yeah, I'll, uh...

Silence. They both avoid looking at each other, though sneak glances at different times.

JACK

(Re: door)

I'll just, um...

MELISSA

Right. Thanks.

JACK goes to the door, moves the dresser with ease, and unlocks the locks. He opens the door and goes near the kitchen, turning away. The path is open and clear for MELISSA. She stares at it. She looks at JACK who doesn't move. She takes a breath and walks to the door. She stops in the doorway.

MELISSA

(Turning back)

Hey, Jack?

JACK

(Turning back)

Yeah?

MELISSA wants to say something, but changes her mind.

MELISSA

...Thanks for the gumbo.

JACK

...You're welcome.

They stare at each other. MELISSA nods. She exits, closing the door behind her. JACK stares at the door. He picks up the nearest clean towel by the bathroom and wipes the blood from his face and arms. He turns to the living room and takes a breath. He picks up the trash bag from before and throws the bloody towel into it as well as any broken objects. He picks up MELISSA's towel and stops. He looks at it for a long while.

The front door opens. JACK quickly turns to see MELISSA entering, pushing a wheelbarrow. She sets it down. MELISSA shrugs as if to say "Fuck it."

MELISSA

...But we're getting *internet*, okay?

JACK

(Smiling)

...Okay.

MELISSA

(Smiling)

...Okay.

They both beam at each other as:

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.