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*This play is dedicated to Aileen Wuornos,
and all those whose names we don't know.*

Cast of Characters

Women:

JOLENE PALMER (JO)	Prostitute on death row for the killing of seven johns
LU	The lover who turns her in
CHASTITY & DAYTONA	Two strippers: the first suspects
PANDORA	Their cohort
LEEANN	Born-again woman who adopts Jo in jail
JEAN	Jo's overworked public defender
CASSANDRA CHASE	Famous feminist
ANNIE AMES	Hollywood producer
CORONER 1	
CORONER 2	
CORONER 3	
REPORTER	
WALDREN'S GIRL	

Men:

CAPTAIN	The man in charge.
BUCKET & DRUMS	Two undercover cops
MARTY	A decent john. She doesn't kill him.
JUDGE	
SHRINK 1	
SHRINK 2	
PROSECUTOR	
FLAKY LAWYER	
CAMERAMAN	

These roles can be played by eight actors, with Chastity, Daytona, and Pandora forming a Thanatos/Eros Greek Chorus of sorts, doubling as Strippers, Coroners and all other female roles as follows:

CHASTITY / REPORTER / JEAN / CORONER 3 /
WOMAN 1

DAYTONA / CORONER 2 / CASSANDRA CHASE

PANDORA / WALDREN'S GIRL / LEEANN / CORONER 1
/ WOMAN 2

LU doubles as ANNIE AMES.

The men double as follows:

CAPTAIN / BYSTANDER / MARTY / JUDGE / GUARD

BUCKET / SHRINK

DRUMS / SHRINK 2 / PROSECUTOR / FLAKY LAWYER /
CAMERAMAN

Setting

This play is envisioned with a two-level set, with three playing areas below: *center*—Jo's jail cell, with a payphone nearby; *stage left*—the suggestion of a police station; *stage right*—the hotel/apartment spaces. All this should be accomplished with as little furniture as possible. The courtroom scenes are down center. The *upper area* serves for the phone surveillance scenes as well as any characters who have to appear and disappear suddenly, like the coroners. *Two poles*, of the sort seen in strip clubs, essentially separate the three downstage areas, and at either side of the stage a *television set* is suspended, where the act titles and occasional newscasts appear.

Production Notes

This should feel like a ninety-minute play. Ninety-five minutes is good to aim for. An hour forty is probably what you'll hit, and at

that velocity, it'll feel like ninety. But somehow, at an hour forty-five, it feels like a two-hour play. More than most, this play lives and dies on pacing. It should flow more or less seamlessly from start to finish, a stream of quick cuts. Earn beats within scenes by not taking them in between. Find the individual rhythm, but your baseline is speed. "Blackout" within an act is a cut, not a fade. Between acts, just long enough to read the title. A couple of specifics: in the first moments, the women should be able to "pass" as coroners. Please stick to overly-high black pumps; if exotic footwear is deemed necessary, mask with long skirts. The Act Five video is the one place where music is needed but not specified in the text. Be aware that video is necessarily an alienating medium. Take care with moments that need to "land," like Chastity's final appearance, and especially "Woman Two." She is the only one to speak for the dead; please give her strength and dignity.

Acknowledgments

Self Defense, or death of some salesmen was first produced by Perishable Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, on November 3, 2001. It was directed by Vanessa Gilbert; the set was designed by Monica Shinn; the costumes were designed by Susan Reid; the lighting was designed by Deb Sullivan; the sound was designed by Peter Hurowitz; the video was designed by Tom Sgouros; and the production stage manager was Christina Lowe. The cast was as follows:

JO.....	Lynne McCollough
LU.....	Casey Seymour Kim
CHASTITY, JEAN, etc.....	Anushka Carter
DAYTONA, CASSANDRA CHASE, etc.	Marilyn Dubois
CORONER, LEEANN, PANDORA, etc.	Wendy Overly
CAPTAIN, MARTY, JUDGE, etc.....	Paul Buxton
BUCKET.....	Kerry Callery
DRUMS, PROSECUTOR, FLAKY LAWYER, etc.....	Richard Noble

It was subsequently produced by Frank Theatre at The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis on February 7, 2002. It was directed by Wendy Knox; the set was designed by Steve Rhode; the costumes were designed by Kathy Kohl; the lighting was designed by Michael P. Kittel; the sound was designed by Reid Rejsa; the video was designed by Mark Tang; and the production stage manager was Ron Schultz. The cast was as follows:

JO..... Phyllis Wright
 LU..... Kim Shultz
 CHASTITY, JEAN, etc..... Sandra Struthers
 DAYTONA,
 CASSANDRA CHASE, etc..... Bianca Pettis
 CORONER, LEEANN,
 PANDORA, etc. Maria Asp
 CAPTAIN, MARTY, JUDGE, etc..... Tom Sherohman
 BUCKET.....Ron Menzel
 DRUMS, PROSECUTOR,
 FLAKY LAWYER, etc..... John Riedlinger

The New York premiere was produced by New Georges and Reverie Productions at HERE on May 25, 2002. It was directed by Randy White; the set was designed by Lauren Helpert; the costumes were designed by Lee Harper; the lighting was designed by Tyler Micoeau; the sound was designed by Stefan Jacobs; the video was designed by Daniel Kleinfeld; and the production stage manager was Sara E. Friedman. The cast was as follows:

JO.....Lynne McCollough
 LU.....Carolyn Baeumler
 CHASTITY, JEAN, etc.....Carolyn DeMerice
 DAYTONA,
 CASSANDRA CHASE, etc..... Melle Powers
 CORONER, LEEANN,
 PANDORA, etc.Dee Pelletier
 CAPTAIN, MARTY, JUDGE, etc..... Stephen Bradbury
 BUCKET..... Mark Zeisler
 DRUMS, PROSECUTOR,
 FLAKY LAWYER, etc..... Dan Illian

Self Defense was commissioned with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, and developed in residencies with Mabou Mines, The Playwrights' Center, and A.S.K. Theater Projects, and with the assistance of a TCG extended collaboration grant.

While this play is a work of fiction, it is inspired by events in the life of Aileen Wuornos, who was executed by the state of Florida on October 8, 2002. It takes texts or inspiration from courtroom transcripts, newspaper accounts, televised interviews and the book *Dead Ends* by Michael Reynolds. Many thanks to Phyllis Chesler for her comprehensive and passionate essay, "A Woman's Right to Self-Defense" in her book, *Patriarchy*, and to Nick Broomfield for creating the stunning documentary film, *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer*.

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Self Defense, or death of some salesmen was first produced by Perishable Theatre in Providence, Rhode Island, on November 3, 2001.

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Seven Acts:

- 1. PARANOID AND PUSSY-CRAZY**
- 2. THE LAST RESORT**
- 3. BULLSHIT WEAPONS CHARGE**
- 4. CONFESSION**
- 5. JESUS TOLD ME TO WRITE TO YOU**
- 6. SELF-DEFENSE**
- 7. DEATHWATCH**

SELF DEFENSE OR, DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN

by Carson Kreitzer

Prologue

(Dim spot rises on a lone woman in a jail cell.)

JO. I try to remember a time when I was not ashamed.
I gotta go pretty far back.
I don't even know...if I just can't remember back that far or if there
never was one.

They take your baby away at fourteen, that's a...

Even before that, when I was a kid, I was ashamed. An' gettin' beat.

All's I know is, when I was takin' care a you, I was not ashamed.
Of anything I had to do.

'Cos I had a reason. I had you to take care of.

Like an angel on this earth, breathin' next to me.

And nothin' I did could leave a stain on me.

'S the only time in my life I have not been ashamed just a livin'.
What I had to do to keep my own miserable self breathing.

But if I was alive so you could live, well that made sense.

An' if I gotta die so you can live, that makes the most sense a any-
thing I've heard yet.

(She lights a cigarette. Lights up on BUCKET, testifying in court.)

BUCKET. Well sir, bodies in the swamp off I-95 are not too un-
usual. So it took us quite a while to make the connection, between
the five counties involved, that there could be a serial killer at work.

(Seven shots. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. Simultaneous with the last three shots, lights up on three coroners, all female. Lab coats, glasses, hair up. High heels.)

JO. You know, tonight is the beginning of a war?

CORONER 1. The remains are those of a nude, Caucasian male.

JO. And it'll be eight o'clock in the morning in Iraq. And there's gonna be the bombing and they're checking out for terrorists in the United States 'cos they're probably planted.

CORONER 1. The skin and soft tissue is absent from around the mouth and eyes.

JO. They're infiltrated all over the United States and they're just gonna start some shit.

CORONER 1. There is no external ear tissue present.

JO. They been waitin' for this, you know. Just waiting for us to make that aggressive move.

BUCKET. In the first case, we determined the course of our investigation based on certain behaviors.

CORONER 2. (*Stepping up to examine the body:*) The genitalia are missing. Though whether removed or simply decomposed or chewed off by animals is impossible to determine.

JO. And they can start all their terrorist missions. Blowing shit up. And quiet stuff, too. Puttin' chemical warfare in the air conditioning systems. Poisoning people's brains. They know how to do all that shit.

BUCKET. Victim was found to frequent topless bars in the area, as well as frequenting prostitutes.

CORONER 3. X-rays reveal six metallic projectiles. Small-caliber bullets. One in the clavicle.

JO. 'Cos we taught 'em, right?

CORONER 3. Three in the back, one of them imbedded in the spinal column.

JO. Thought we could just give 'em this knowledge, our special CIA tactics, help 'em win their little war. Didn't think they'd be gettin' all cocky and turn around and put fuckin' legionary's disease in the air conditioning.

CORONER 3. One on the left side. Two in the chest.

JO. Biting the hand...that was feeding them all those years.

LU. (*Voice on phone:*) Why don't you just get it over with and tell them what you done?

JO. Louise. I didn't *do* anything.

BUCKET. He was last spotted at the 2001 Odyssey, a, uh, gentlemen's club.

(Lights and music up sleazy, INXS's "Suicide Blonde." The CORONERS step forward, shedding glasses and lab coats as in a porn film, revealing stripper outfits below. Two attach themselves to the strip-bar poles stage left and right [CHASTITY and DAYTONA], the third [PANDORA] wanders off to sit with someone.)

(The TV monitors proclaim:)

1. PARANOID AND PUSSY-CRAZY

(Lights up on police station.)

CAPTAIN. Not much to go on with this Waldren guy. I think the drug angle is a bust, then we've got him changing his locks every six months or so, then we've got the topless joints.

BUCKET. And the dating service.

CAPTAIN. So he's paranoid and pussy-crazy, with bad business habits.

BUCKET. Yeah. And dead.

(Spots pick out the two strippers at either side of the stage.)

CHASTITY. So you know about the locks? Changing the locks? He was just weird about things.

DAYTONA. He gave me a TV an' a VCR.

(Spot picks out WALDREN'S GIRL—PANDORA in a pink waitress uniform.)

WALDREN'S GIRL. Well, he was obsessed with pornography, extremely paranoid, drank heavily, smoked a lotta weed. He could be so sweet, and then the next minute he'd turn around and...scare the hell outta you.

(Beat.)

What else can I tell you? You know about the locks?

BUCKET. Yes, Ma'am. Was he the type who would pick up hitchhikers?

WALDREN'S GIRL. Well, if they were female, yeah. You know?

(Blackout.

Spot on JO: Jail cell.)

JO. I am not a difficult person. I'm not a fighter.

Often, with my clients, I'd talk about Jesus or I'd talk political. Or both at once. And we never got into arguments.

So you see, there was no need for them to go—looking for the nearest weapon, to try to use it on me, to—

(Beat.)

If it was in Western days they'd put me in a noose and watch...let the town watch me die.

(Police station. CHASTITY in slinky Lycra dress, CAPTAIN and DRUMS.)

CHASTITY. He wanted to date me, but I told him I'm gay.

CAPTAIN. By date, you don't mean go to the movies, have dinner...

CHASTITY. No. Sex. You know. Have sex.

CAPTAIN. For money.

CHASTITY. Yeah.

CAPTAIN. Alright, Chastity, just trying to establish a few things here. You don't have to worry. We're Homicide, not Vice.

CHASTITY. Right.

CAPTAIN. Okay. So, he propositioned you, you refused.

CHASTITY. Yeah, I didn't want to. I don't do that. I mean, I'm gay. I live with someone, you know? I've got a girlfriend.

CAPTAIN. Do you mean to tell me that you don't have sex with customers at the club?

CHASTITY. Sure. I've done that.

I'm saying I didn't want to. I'm saying I told him no. He kept at me. He said we'd go over to his repair shop in Clearwater. I said I'd do some lap-dances.

CAPTAIN. Lap-dances?

CHASTITY. What it sounds like.

CAPTAIN. This is the last day in November?

CHASTITY. Yes. He said he'd give me a TV and a VCR for some dances at his shop. Me and Daytona, we talked it over, I told him, Okay, if you bring some cash. So he gave me fifty bucks and a nineteen-inch Magnavox and a Fisher VCR...took us out there and back home. I don't have a car. We went in his van. Kind of red or maroon. Then when we were done, brought me back home, hooked up the Magnavox and the VCR and left with her. Wasn't there more than twenty, twenty-five minutes.

CAPTAIN. (*Kindly:*) How about you suck me off or I turn you in on the prostitution?

CHASTITY. I'm sorry?

DRUMS. That's right. You're a sorry sack of shit, that's what you are.

CAPTAIN. (*Still kindly:*) It won't take long. I'm not getting any at home.

CHASTITY. (*Rubs her nose, looks around:*) Well, alright. Will you be needing me for further questioning?

CAPTAIN. That depends.

(Blackout.

Spot on JO.)

JO. Now they're saying that I'm a man hater. That's not true. I don't hate men. Why, some of my best friends are Johns.

But the problem is, the problem was the Gulf War, see? All my regulars were getting called away to the Gulf, to go defend Uncle

Sam in the desert, make sure we got enough oil to keep the semis running.

I mean, oil's a very important thing for this country's economy. Shit, I know that. Make my money long the side of the highway. I know all about the importance a oil to the American economy. But that Gulf War shit, that was taking alla my regular customers away. Hadda move on. Hadda get in cars with strangers that I didn't know very well. And subsequently, on several occasions, I was called upon to defend myself.

(Phone rings. She looks at it, doesn't answer. Phone rings again. Sound of a car crash. She jumps, panics.)

GET AWAY FROM THERE, YOU STUPID BITCH. THAT'S A DEAD MAN'S CAR YOU JUST WRECKED.

Can... Can I get something to drink in here, please? I...I suppose you would call me an alcoholic, because I do suffer when it leaves my system. I'm never...without a drink for too long.

If I'm without a drink for too long I really start to feel it.

Bad.

And I been without a drink too long already. It's only... It's only gonna get worse.

(Police station.)

DRUMS. We got a picture of the other one, Daytona. Note the—

(A spot rises slowly on DAYTONA. Acid-wash jeans, tank top. Tattoos.)

BUCKET. Christ, that's a lotta tattoos.

DRUMS. Precisely

BUCKET. *(Reading:)* "Property of Bruiser" *(Whistles.)* Nice.

DAYTONA. Sure. He gave me a TV and a VCR.

DRUMS. That's a lotta ink on a young girl's flesh.

BUCKET. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

BUCKET / DRUMS. Outlaw Bikers.

DAYTONA. I met Waldren around early November at the 2001 Odyssey. I met him through a girl. Pandora.

(Lights up on PANDORA, pouring a drink behind a bar.)

So named for her box. Which had the power to destroy the world, she said.

(PANDORA smiles. Lights out.)

The next time I see him was late November, and Chastity and I started talking to him about having a good time. We told him we'd each charge three hundred dollars for three dances. He asked us if we'd like a TV and a VCR instead of the three hundred. And we accepted and left with him in a van—I think it was blue or maybe green—and headed for Clearwater. We smoked a joint on the way over and drank some beer. Stopped at a Jiffy store, got some food, and went over to his shop. Went through and we picked out a TV and VCR. A Zenith. He loaded them up in the van and then we all got undressed in his office. Chastity had sex with him and then I went on with her. He took us back about four or it was five. He took me home first, brought in the TV and VCR. Hooked them up for me. Fifteen, twenty minutes and he was gone.

(She walks into scene with cops.)

DAYTONA. My boyfriend is really gonna kill me.

DRUMS. Your cooperation is imperative

DAYTONA. He's just gonna kill me if he finds out what I've been telling you.

DRUMS. Well, there's no way he's gonna find out. We wouldn't want you getting hurt.

DAYTONA. I didn't fuck him.

DRUMS. Okay.

DAYTONA. *(Rubs her nose:)* It was Chastity. I didn't fuck him.

DRUMS. Okay. And he—

DAYTONA. Gave me a TV and a VCR, yeah.

BUCKET. Could we see those, please?

DAYTONA. (*Hangdog:*) Hadda sell 'em.

DRUMS. What?

DAYTONA. (*Precise:*) I had to sell them.

DRUMS. Why?

DAYTONA. Needed the money.

(Blackout.

Spot on JO.)

JO. I told her she should quit her job, 'cos she was making like 150 bucks a week and I was making like 150 bucks a *day*. When I went out. And it was no problem you know, I... I wanted to take care a her.

I liked it that I was able to...that there was somebody I could take care of.

An' you could get all...psychological about it if you want, say it's on account of that baby I had when I was fourteen, that they took away.

(Laughs.)

You'd think I'd learn my lesson. That was the first time I got raped in a car. Cuttin' school, trippin' on acid and a quaalude. Didn't want to go to the cops 'cos I thought they'd know. Give me a blood test or some shit, throw me in jail. Saw that motherfucker around town all the time. He saw me, gettin' big. Musta known. I didn't tell nobody who it was. You'd think you could get in a car with a friend of your dad, right? Somebody you've seen around the house? But you can't...you can't let 'em kill you. You know? You gotta beat it.

Anyway, you could say it was because of that, but I don't think that's it. I think it's simpler than that.

An' she's just the most...good...person I've ever met in my whole life. She's one person out of this whole goddamned life that's actually a good person. And I was just glad I could take care of her.

CHASTITY. (*Appears in spot:*) I know nobody's asking me, but I think it's about time we had a female serial killer.

(Police station.)

CAPTAIN. Done with the interviews?

BUCKET. Yes, sir.

Neither one slept with him, and they both got dropped off first.

CAPTAIN. We have anything solid on them?

BUCKET. No, sir.

CAPTAIN. Let 'em go, keep an eye on 'em. All we can do.
You like 'em for it?

BUCKET. Not really, sir.

DRUMS. They lied. They've got no alibis except each other, and can't even agree on a story...

CAPTAIN. Let 'em go. Keep an eye on 'em. No other suspects?

BUCKET. Not unless someone killed him 'cos he gave a stripper their VCR.

CAPTAIN. Keep on it. Something's gotta break.

(Soft lights up on JO and LU, bedroom. LU lying in bed. JO sitting on the edge.)

JO. *(A low, insistent whisper:)* Honey, I

I killed a man today. I just gotta...I gotta talk through this a little bit. I know it upsets you an' I understand that. Christ, don't I spend my whole life tryin' to keep you clean from all this shit. Keep it away from you. Keep it from touching you. But this is...this is too much.

Today... Out in the woods. I had to make the choice. Him or me. I mean, part of it was instinct, a big part a how I managed it. You just...when you have to. When you know you're gonna die if you don't get this right. But for the instinct to kick in, I had to...I don't know how to explain it. Empty myself out. Of the fear, the attitude of, I'm a worthless piece a shit an' this was gonna happen sooner or later. I had to turn my brain to thinkin' No, fuck this. I am not gonna die out here. I had to decide that.

Shit, I'm so stupid sometimes. Thinkin' you can trust people. If they seem nice an' all. 'Cos he, you know, he seemed...but that was Bullshit. All parta this plan, get me into the woods get me away from where anybody might hear, might happen by. An' he, shit, I'm tellin' you he had this thing planned out. It was...I never been so fuckin' scared. Not in a while. I thought those days were over, me gettin' inta cars like a fuckin' teenager, thinks they're invincible. That's why I just been stickin' to my regulars, years now. I told you that.

But I know. You gotta have your things. An' the cable TV. I know, sweetie, you get bored when I'm not here during the day. I know. I know I gotta take care a you. An' don't you worry, I'm gonna do it. I'll just...keep my eye out. Watch myself.

'Cos I swear, honey, I thought I wasn't gonna make it back to you today.

That's what I thought.

(A light snore from LU.)

Look like an angel when you're asleep, I swear it. An angel.

I'll take care a you. Always.

Don't know what I'd ever do without you.
Baby.

(Blackout. Pinspot up on the CORONER, REPORTER on video:)

CORONER (PANDORA).

Nude white male, between the ages of 27 and 50. Five feet ten inches tall. Can only approximate a time of death: Five days to two weeks.

REPORTER (CHASTITY).

An eight-month string of unsolved murders has left investigators in north central Florida facing the possibility of a serial killer-- or killers-- preying upon highway travelers throughout the region.

The skin is absent from the anterior chest and abdomen,

Since early this year, five middle-aged

as is the vast majority of skeletal muscle and other soft tissues. The inside of each arm from the axilla down to the hands has exposed bone.

white males have been discovered alongside roads and in woods dead from gunshot wounds.

A 66-year old evangelist, missing since January, is also feared murdered.

The latest victim, a former Alabama police chief, was found in September, nude except for a pair of tube socks.

(Police station.)

DRUMS. We know they liked Busch.

BUCKET. Pardon?

DRUMS. Beer. Cans found in the car.

CORONER. Nude white male, between the ages of 30 and 60. Five-foot-nine-inches tall. Time of death: between two and three weeks. Cause of death: nine .22 caliber bullets. Decomposition so severe that even the .22 caliber projectiles have deteriorated.

(BUCKET gives a press conference. DAYTONA leans on a pole.)

BUCKET.

White middle-aged men driving around Florida are targets right now.

DAYTONA.

I danced a lotta the bars around Orlando.

The Circus.

The Booby Trap.

The Candy Bar.

Scores.

All our victims are white males traveling alone.

Motorists are strongly

The Naked and the Dead.

advised not to pick up
hitchhikers.

Make Your Money, Girl.

DAYTONA. That's a lotta laps. Know what I mean?

(Spots out on BUCKET and DAYTONA.

Video up: REPORTER [CAPTAIN is unaware of the video].)

REPORTER. On the morning of July 30, Lane Michaelson left the Gilchrist Sausage Company in Ocala on his delivery route, which would take him through the Ocala National Forest. He failed to return. At approximately four a.m., the dark brown Ford truck carrying a silver refrigerator box with "Gilchrist Sausage Company" painted on both sides was spotted on the shoulder of State Road 19—

REPORTER / CAPTAIN. just south of its intersection with Highway 40—

CAPTAIN. twenty miles east of Ocala. The doors to the cab were unlocked, but the refrigerator box was secured.

DRUMS. This guy got killed making a sausage delivery?

CAPTAIN. Apparently.

DRUMS. And if we *are* dealing with a hooker here. So I mean, this guy *got* it...making a sausage delivery. If you know what I mean.

CAPTAIN. I get it. I just fail to see the humor in it.

DRUMS. Sausage delivery.

Sorry.

It's just funny.

Forget it.

CAPTAIN. I'll try.

DRUMS. Wycowski'll think it's funny.

CORONER. It is in fact a misnomer to label Jolene Palmer the first female serial killer.

There have been others. Some place the number at thirty-five or so. But Jolene Palmer differed from these cases because she was closer

to male patterns of serial killing. She used a gun. She killed strangers.

Most women killed members of their families, with poison.

(She smiles.

Blackout.

Lights up on JO and LU. The apartment is a filthy mess. LU looks out the window.)

LU. Where'd ya get the car?

JO. Borrowed it.

LU. He didn't have no money?

JO. Borrowed it from a *friend*.

(LU nods. Beat.)

LU. He didn't have no money?

JO. Ah, that's right. You're a laugh riot, that's what you are.

LU. Just kidding. Jeez.

'S a nice car. I always wanted a red Camaro.

JO. 'S a Firebird.

LU. Lemme drive it.

JO. No. I said I borrowed it.

LU. So what's that mean?

JO. That means I gotta keep it in one piece.

LU. Ha ha very funny.

JO. What is this?

(Kicks a bag of chips on the floor.)

You know, I leave you in charge of this place, and look at it!

You can't clean worth a shit. It's no wonder they fired you at that motel.

Prob'ly the shittiest maid they ever seen.

LU. Whyn't you clean up, if you don't like it?

JO. ME?

(Comes right up against her.)

WHAT AM I DOIN' ALL DAY? HUH?

TO PAY FOR A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD AN' FOOD ON THE TABLE? YOU CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT I'M DOIN' ALL FUCKING DAY. TO COME HOME TO A FILTHY HOUSE AN' YOU SASSIN' OFF TA ME?

LU. *(Very small:)* I'm sorry.

JO. Shit, honey. How come you make me get so mad at you like that?

You know I love you.

LU. Yeah.

JO. Look, let's get atta here. How 'bout I take you to Red Lobster.

(LU doesn't respond.)

I'll help you clean up when we get back. Can't get no more roaches than we already got, right?

(LU shrugs.)

Come on, get dressed.

LU. I am dressed.

JO. You don't wear fuckin' sweatpants to Red Lobster. For Christ-sakes. Now you're just tryin' to make me aggravated.

(LU stomps out. JO shouts after her.)

I buy you clothes. Put on somethin' nice! *(Alone:)* Get a nice dinner. Few drinks on the way home. Stop at the Kwik-e-Mart, pick up a buncha roach motels. Have this place cleaned up in notime.

'Sgonna be arright.

(LU comes back in wearing jeans.)

JO. That's better.

LU. I wanna drive.

(Beat.)

JO. Sure, baby. Anything you want.

(Blackout. Strip club back up full: "Suicide Blonde." CHASTITY and DAYTONA at their poles dance casually, not putting much effort into it.)

DAYTONA. You know, I think it's kinda funny we finally got a female serial killer.

CHASTITY. *(Laughs until she snorts:)* Yeah!

I mean, it wouldn't be funny if it happened to my brother.

But if it happened to my stepfather?

That'd be funny.

(Music up loud. CHASTITY and DAYTONA become more suggestive. Money begins to rain down from the sky. Music crescendos into the sound of a car crash. CHASTITY and DAYTONA stop, bend down to collect the money. JO and LU run onstage, disheveled and bloody. JO holds license plates in her ripped-up hands.)

LU. I think I got a c'cussion.

I gotta...I gotta sit down for a minute.

JO. YOU STUPID BITCH. THAT'S A DEAD MAN'S CAR YOU JUST WRECKED.

COME ON.

(They run offstage. In separate pinspots: DRUMS testifies in court, BUCKET is taking a statement from a witness.)

DRUMS. The whole case was finally about to bust wide open—

BYSTANDER. She just ripped them plates off with her bare hands. She's gotta be real strong.

It was her and another girl. I said I had called for help, and they just took off into the woods.

(Blackout.

Lights up on the apartment, only slightly cleaner. LU lying on the floor, watching TV.)

TELEVISION REPORTER. Christian Missionary Walter Thorpe left his home to visit relatives in Arkansas. He never arrived. The

victim's vehicle was found abandoned in Marion County, Florida, after a crash. Two white females were seen exiting the vehicle and leaving southbound on foot. Here are the police sketches, drawn from eyewitness accounts of the two.

(LU stares at the TV in transfixed horror.)

The first is blonde, 25–30, 5'8 to 5'10, last seen wearing jeans and a camouflage T-shirt. Her companion is heavysset, 25–30, 5'3 to 5'5, wearing a plaid shirt and baseball cap.

(LU rocks back and forth, emitting a high, keening whine.)

Anyone with any information on the whereabouts of these two should contact local police immediately. They are presumed armed and may be dangerous.

Repeat: these two women are suspects in the recent string of highway murders. They may be the nation's first female serial killers.

LU. *(Small, scared voice:)* Shit.

(Blackout.

Apartment. JO enters, drunk.)

JO. Lu? *(Looks in the bedroom:)* Lu?

(Beat.)

Aw, shit.

(Blackout. Music: "Runaway," by Del Shannon.)

2. THE LAST RESORT

(Music continues as lights come up on a masculine apartment. Plaid sofa, perhaps. JO stands just out of the shower, dressed but with her hair wrapped in a towel. A nondescript middle-aged man, MARTY, is with her. It's his apartment.)

JO. I can't believe you got this record. I been wanting to listen to this song ever since...

How come you think he blew his head off?

MARTY. I dunno.

JO. 'Cos he only had that one hit?

MARTY. I guess.

JO. Shit, it's a good song, though. A lotta people don't even have that. A song they wrote, that can make people feel things, or remember shit, you know?

Been wantin' to hear this ever since I walked into that empty house. That song's the first thing went through my head.

I swear, I never been so heartbroken in all my life. I been through some shit, but this is the worst. I don't know if I can even go back in there. It's so empty. Everything in there remindin' me a her every second. It's too much to bear, it is.

How about if I stay here for a few days. With you. That be okay?

MARTY. Uh...you gonna charge me?

JO. You gonna charge me *rent*?

MARTY. *(Looking down and smiling:)* Naw.

JO. Well then let's call it even.

How about we try that again.

Hey, Marty. How about if I stay here a couple days.

MARTY. I'd like that.

JO. Well alright then.

Get me outta that house. And we can commiserate about our wives that left us.

MARTY. Okay. *(Pause. He looks at her.)* You wanna Jack and Coke?

JO. That sounds great. I'd love one, Marty.

(As soon as he leaves the room, her smile fades.)

Where'd you go, little girl?
Can't take care a herself.

*(Blackout. "Runaway" swells, then fades.
In darkness:)*

COP VOICE. Ma'am.
You'd better come with us.

(Lights up on LU and the CAPTAIN, upper level.)

LU. I don't want no

CAPTAIN. Now, you've got some rights here we need to read you.

LU. I don't want no rights, I just

CAPTAIN. Right to remain silent, right to an attorney, all that. Like you hear on TV.

LU. I don't want no right to remain silent, I just wanna get all this straight.

CAPTAIN. You waive, then?

LU. Yeah, I waive. I just—

CAPTAIN. You waive your right to an attorney—

LU. I just wanna get all this straight.

CAPTAIN. You waive your right to remain silent on the grounds that it might incriminate you—

LU. That's what I wanna get straight. I didn't have nothing to do with this. I didn't do nothing wrong.

*(Blackout.
Spot on CHASTITY.)*

CHASTITY. The cops around here have been pretty jumpy since Gainesville.

CAPTAIN. (*Addressing his posse:*) Alright, men. We've been trailing this bitch for a year.

CHASTITY. You remember Gainesville, don't you?

CAPTAIN. Makin' fools of us. Six bodies, one missing missionary probably gonna turn up any minute chewed up by swamp rats.

CHASTITY. Got a lotta press. The college students. Five, I think. Creepy shit.

This guy taunting the cops with his knowledge of police procedure. Washing the bodies down with cleansers. One girl got her head cut off, put on a turntable next to her. Just goin' 'round and 'round when the police came in. 'Round and 'round.

Her body posed in a sexually provocative position, whatever that means.

Read that somewhere.

'Course maybe that's just what the crime reporter thought, when he saw her naked and tossed away like...a dead thing.

I'm serious. People take jobs they like.

You think about that next time that nice man is helping you try on shoes.

'Course, then that means I picked that job at Platinum's 'cos I liked it. An' I guess that's true in some ways, not so true in others.

I like the money.

The hours suit me fine.

Guess I like...feelin' like a star, a little tiny bit.

But I wasn't talkin' about me. I was talkin' about those College Girls.

CAPTAIN. Not the kind of thing we want the state of Florida remembered for.

CHASTITY. Daddies burning rubber all over the state, whisking their little girls home from the dorms.

They got him, finally.

Turned out it was 'cos his daddy used to beat him all the time.

(Beat, serious.)

Why would anybody do that to a child?

CAPTAIN. So get out there and bring her back to me. Hog-tied if at all possible.

That's all.

(Spot on ANNIE AMES, a Hollywood producer. She talks excitedly on the phone.)

ANNIE. Now open to page four. What am I— ?
Just do it. Something very intriguing is happening in Florida.
I know, of all places.

(Whoever she's talking to locates the page.)

Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

It's Silence of the Lambs meets Thelma and Louise!
We're gonna have to re-cast Louise, though, my god.
The minute these two are in custody, I'm hopping on a plane. I'm gonna get this for us.

(Spot out.

DRUMS testifies in court.)

DRUMS. My partner had some rather...unorthodox undercover methods. However, he was outstanding at gaining a subject's trust.

(Lights up on the Last Resort, a biker bar. Behind the bar, PANDORA pours a drink: the exact image we saw earlier. Music: The Derailers, "Painful Days and Sleepless Nights." BUCKET and JO are dancing.)

DRUMS. I tended to hang back and let him operate, taking on more of a liase-ing role.

(DRUMS walks into scene.)

BUCKET. *(Leads her off the dance floor, back to the bar:)* What's a nice girl like you doin' at the Last Resort?

JO. Well I suppose it's my last resort, innit?

DRUMS. *(On a walkie-talkie:)* Jerry, we're with her. Sitting over here in a dump called the Last Resort, knocking back a few brews. Jenkins's dancing with her. I'm going back in.

BUCKET. Buy you a beer?

JO. You don' have to ask twice.

BUCKET. Buy you a beer?

JO. Comedian, huh?

(Calls to PANDORA:) Corona.
And don't forget the lime.

(To BUCKET:) It's the little details, you know?
Place like this, got no class. Don't get the little things right.

BUCKET. Ain't that the truth.

JO. Name's Jo, by the way.

BUCKET. Mine's Bucket. This here's Drums.

JO. Thanks for the beer, Bucket.

BUCKET. Oh, anytime, anytime.

JO. What's that sound like... ? Bucket and Drums. Bucket and Drums.

Oh, I know. Don Johnson. Right? Miami Vice.
Crocket and...that other one

(DRUMS blanches, looks panicky. BUCKET doesn't miss a beat.)

BUCKET. Tubbs. Yeah, it's a bit of a personal joke...on the Law, you know?

We're down here to move some product, if you catch my drift.

JO. Uh-huh. Certainly. Certainly do catch your drift.
'Fraid I can't help you out in that department.

BUCKET. Aw, that's alright Darlin', we don't need no help. We know who we're dealin' with.

JO. Better that way.

BUCKET. Only way to do business. But's mighty sweet a you ta even think about helpin' out. Ya see that, Drums? That's what I like about Florida. Everybody's so friendly and helpful.

(DRUMS stands, wooden.)

JO. Well, no reason not to be. I heard that about the North, that everybody's real rude. I wouldn't like that. I'll stick with Florida. Hot, though. Fuckin' huge palmetto bugs. You guys seem alright, though.

BUCKET. Yeah, we're alright.

JO. I think I'm a pretty good judge of character. An' you guys are alright.

BUCKET. Yeah, we're alright.

JO. *(Lifts up her shirt:)* Wanna see where I got shot with a .22?

(BUCKET whistles.)

Yeah, I done some shit. *(She stands.)* I'monna go play the jukebox. *(Fishes in her pockets:)* Aw, shit. Don't think I have any change left.

(BUCKET hands her a few bills.)

BUCKET. Wouldn't mind some Hank, Senior if they got any.

JO. *(Impressed:)* Alright, you are now officially in my good books.

(She staggers off. DRUMS hisses under his breath:)

DRUMS. I told you those were stupid names.

BUCKET. Shut up.

(Lights up on LU and the CAPTAIN, upper level.)

LU. And she ain't no 5'8, neither.

CAPTAIN. Pardon?

LU. On the news. With them sketches. Everybody said she was five-eight or ten.

That's just how she acts.

She's five-five.

CAPTAIN. Alright.

LU. She just acts bigger.

(JO returns. Hank Williams' "Long Gone Lonesome Blues" begins to play.)

BUCKET. Well, howdy lady.

JO. Fancy meetin' you here.

(BUCKET pulls a pack of cigarettes out of his shirt pocket, offers her one first, which she takes. As she leans in for him to light it, she notices something in his shirt pocket.)

JO. Juicy Fruit?

(BUCKET nods, lighting his own cigarette.)

Well ain't you a boyscout.

BUCKET. Oh, not in a long time.
You 'bout ready for another?

JO. Wouldn't say no.

BUCKET. *(Waving the bartender over:)* "The Last Resort." A colorful appellation.

JO. Nothin' but the truth. Look around you.

(Music down to a faint underscore: Light on LU and the CAPTAIN.)

LU. I'm just scared is all, I'm just scared. I didn't have nothing—
Didn't have nothing to do with all this shit. I'm just scared.
Are you gonna charge me, or—

(No response.)

I dunno, maybe I oughta have a lawyer here.
Whadda ya think?

(Music back up: The Last Resort.)

JO. Y'all gonna stick around for the pig roast? I hear it's really somethin.

DRUMS. I'll be right back.

(Ducks outside to use his walkie-talkie. Static, motorcycle engines.)

The bonfire pig-roast number is going down when it gets dark. You just heard a couple more come in. This place is gonna be crawling with bikers when the sun goes down. I would advise making a call real soon.

COP VOICE. Copy.

DRUMS. *(Static:)* She disappears into a passel a bikers, we're fucked.

COP VOICE. Understood.

DRUMS. WHITE MIDDLE-AGED GUYS ARE AT RISK HERE. I don't wanna hear about another body in the swamp after we let her hop on somebody's bike and bust the state.

(Phone rings next to CAPTAIN. He picks it up.)

COP VOICE. The undercover wants to know what to do about the pig roast. The bikers are coming in.

CAPTAIN. *(Beat:)* Take her.

(Instantaneously, two cops appear and muscle JO out of the bar. "Long Gone Lonesome Blues" fades as they drag her out.)

JO. Hey, what the— Fuckin' Cops. I pay my taxes. Pay your fuckin' salary. What is this bullshit anyway, never get tired a hassling citizens. That old concealed weapon thing? That's not even in this state, whadda you care?

Arright, arright, I'll come with you. I'll come along peaceably. But this is bullshit. You hear me? Bullshit.

(They leave her center stage.)

I've a good mind to sue for harassment an' my constitutional rights or some such.

(Phone rings.)

I don't need no lawyer.

How'm I gonna afford a fuckin' lawyer?

This is bullshit anyway. Outstanding warrants charge. Bullshit. Fuckin' concealed weapon.

(Under her breath:) They ain't got nothin' on me.
No prints. No witnesses. No gun. No nothin'.
They don't even know about that shit.
They don't know nothin' about that shit.

(Blackout. Sound of four shots.)

3. BULLSHIT WEAPONS CHARGE

BUCKET. Sir, we've got nothing.
No prints. No witnesses. No gun. No nothing.

CAPTAIN. We've got her.

(They look over at LU, eating Cheetos and drinking a Sunkist.)

BUCKET. You think it'll work?

CAPTAIN. It'll have to.

(They approach her. Stand over her. She stops eating Cheetos and looks up, apprehensive.)

LU. What?

(Blackout.

Lights up on JO, staring at payphone. Phone rings once, twice. She picks up. Lights up on LU, in upper area, surrounded by cops on headphones: BUCKET and DRUMS plus CHASTITY, DAYTONA and PANDORA dressed as cops. With each blackout, they assume different "surveillance" positions. Empty coffee cups and cigarettes proliferate.)

LU. Jo?

JO. Yeah.

LU. Hey.

JO. I got your message. What are you doin'?

LU. Nothin'. What the hell are you doin'?

JO. Nothing. I'm sitting here in jail.

LU. I came down here to see what the hell's happenin'.

JO. Everything's copacetic. I'm here for a...a...carryin' a concealed weapon back in '86...and a traffic ticket.

LU. Really?

JO. Yeah. It's bullshit.

LU. 'Cos there's been officials up at my parents' house askin' some questions.

JO. Oh-oh.

LU. And I'm gettin' scared.

JO. Hmmmm. Well, you know, I don't think there should be anything to worry about.

LU. Well, I'm pretty worried.

JO. Well, all I can say is just, uh, you know...don't. Okay?

LU. Don't what?

JO. Don't worry. About anything, all right?

LU. Well, it's pretty hard not to worry when—

JO. This...you know, this phone...they listen to everything you say on the phone.

(Beat.)

LU. They do?

*(Blackout.
Lights up.)*

JO. I'm sure this is just all a case of mistaken identity. Somebody musta said at work, Oh, wait this looks like, you know, maybe Lu or...Jo. Probably that...boss of yours, just wants to get us in some shit, 'cos you beat him up that time. You know? I mean, I gotta say, it is something, the way those pictures do look like us, so I guess it could be a natural mistake.

But I'm sure this is all just a case of mistaken identity. That's what it is.

LU. I just don't want my life messed up for something you did.

JO. *(Slowly:)* Louise, I didn't do anything.

*(Blackout.
Lights up.)*

JO. You know we're not the people. This is a bunch of fuckin' bull.

LU. Why do you want to lie about it?

JO. I don't need to lie about it, Lu, I don't... I didn't do anything.

LU. Now you know you told me before—

JO. Lu, I didn't tell you nothin'

LU. Don't lie

JO. What is this shit? You got somebody there listenin'?

LU. No.

JO. I'm telling you. Any...any kind of car that I ever borrowed from somebody was a car because I borrowed it. I do not know anything about this *shit*.

LU. Okay.

JO. And neither do you.

(Blackout.

Spot on JO. We hear her voice on tape.)

JO. *(On tape:)* You know, tonight is the beginning of a war?

And it'll be eight o'clock in the morning in Iraq.

And there's gonna be the bombing and they're checking out for terrorists in the United States.

'Cos they're just gonna...start some shit.

DRUMS. *(Listening to playback:)* What the fuck is this ? Nineteen hours of tape and we got nothin' but her fuckin' *theories* on the fuckin' *universe*.

(LU and BUCKET in the phone/surveillance area.)

BUCKET. Louise, listen to me.

You know all this shit you're sayin'?

Whinin' to her about how the cops are gonna be up your ass?

All that shit you're sayin'?

It's for real.

YOU DON'T HAVE IMMUNITY, HERE. You didn't make no immunity deal. If we don't get her, we got you. Accessory to murder, shit, if she gets outta this, maybe just plain ol' murder. I mean, all we got is your word *she* did it, not you. We got your fingerprints at the scene, you takin' joyrides, wrecking a dead man's car. Doesn't look too good. Does it? DOES IT?

(Miserable, LU shakes her head.)

So I want TEARS. You got one last shot, here. If she loves you, she's gotta confess. Or I'm not shittin' you here, we'll take you in her place. Don't think we won't do that.

(LU nods. Stares at phone.

BUCKET moves a bit away, talks to the CAPTAIN on another phone.)

Chief? Yeah, this is gonna be the day. Yeah. I just gave her a lil' acting lesson.

(Phone rings. Twice. Shaking, LU picks it up.)

LU. Hello?

JO. Hey, I called early this mornin' 'cos I didn't know if you were leavin' or—

LU. *(Starting to cry:)* They're comin' after me. I know they are.

JO. No, they're not. how do you know that?

LU. My whole family...they been talkin' to my sister. I just know—

JO. Honey—

LU. I'm not goin' to jail for something you did! It's not fair! My family is a nervous wreck up there, my mom keeps calling me, she doesn't know what the hell is going on—

JO. Lu? I'm not gonna let you go to jail. You hear me? Lu, listen.

LU. You evidently don't love me anymore.

JO. Lu, why would you say something like—

LU. *(Crying:)* I mean, you're gonna let me get in trouble for somethin' I didn't do...

JO. Louise, I said, I'm *not!* Quit cryin' and listen.

Go ahead and tell 'em what you need to tell 'em, okay? Do what you gotta do. I love you.

LU. I'm not so sure anymore.

JO. I do.

LU. I don't know if I should keep on livin' or...

JO. No, Lu, Lu, listen. Lu, listen. I'm not gonna let you go to jail. Listen, if I have to confess, I will.

(Silent jubilation and high-five-ing from the officers.)

LU. Jo, why in hell did you do this?

JO. I don't know, baby. I don't know. Just hold onto the phone for a little while, please, can you please? I'll probably never see you again, you know that?

LU. Yes.

JO. I love you. Honey, I'm not gonna let you get in trouble. Awww. It's the end of the world, I'll have you know. The end of the world.

CORONER. *(Appears on spotlight:)* I've seen a lot of dead hookers. In my line of work.

(Spot out.)

JO. Hey, you know what? I'm gonna be famous. Like Bundy.

LU. What a way to be famous.

JO. Yep. Like Bundy. And If I write a book or anything, I'm gonna give you the money. You definitely deserve it. You know, I'll never love anyone like I love you. I'll probably die of a broken heart pretty soon anyway. I'll never have another relationship.

LU. I prob'ly won't either.

JO. Well, Lu, I gotta admit I'm glad to hear that.

LU. You turned me against everybody. I won't trust a person for the rest of my life.

JO. That's good! Because you know what? *People aren't right.* Pollution's fucking up their heads...

LU. Why don't you tell 'em now.

JO. You want me to tell 'em now?

LU. Tell 'em now. Get it over with.

JO. Alright.

(They hang up the phones.)

Alright.

(She stares at the phone. As lights fade:)

BUCKET. Guess she really loves you.

LU. *(Beat:)* Yeah.

(Blackout. Sound of three shots.)

4. CONFESSION

(Lights up. Police station.)

JO. Well, I came here to confess to murder.

(Blackout.)

CAPTAIN. I'm Captain Roswell.
And you remember Sergeant Jenkins.

BUCKET. *(Bringing her a coffee:)* They didn't have any cream and sugar, so I put in—

JO. Truth serum?

BUCKET. Sweet-n-Low. I put in some of that Sweet-n-Low.

(Blackout.)

DAYTONA. Although Self Defense was mentioned a total of 43 times in the videotaped confession, those words were never heard in the sections of the tape shown to the jury.

JO. That other girl. She...she didn't have nothing to do with this. She's just...a friend. She didn't know nothing about any of this.

(Lights a cigarette.)

And that's why I'm doing this.
Because I don't need her gettin' messed up for somethin' that I did.

I know I'm gonna miss her for the rest of my life.
She's a real good person.

(Cries, smokes.)

So sweet and kind.

(Spot on CORONER. Confession scene continues, silent.)

CORONER (PANDORA). I've seen a lot of dead prostitutes, in my line of work. A lot. And it's not supposed to be something you get upset about. I am a doctor, after all. A doctor of the dead. And it's like cancer or something, as a doctor, you're not supposed to get upset about it. Curse God or— You're supposed to speak in calm, rational terms. Not alarm the patient. Comfort the family.

A coroner's main job is to listen.
Find out how this thing happened. Make the call.
Natural causes. Suicide. Homicide.

And these girls who come in, ripped up some of 'em in ways that speak of a hatred I can barely begin to comprehend.

I've been listening to their bodies. For years. Listening to stories of desecrations of the human body not to mention the spirit that I can only call evil. Although I never had much of a dialogue with God or any sort of metaphysical thing. Suddenly I am forced to have this conception of evil. This knowledge.

The listening—adds up. Sometimes I feel it is eroding me, like a high whistling wind over sandstone. I am becoming...mute and rough and rounded.

I didn't come to this job with any fancy ideas about justice. The...orderliness appealed to me. The ability to find truths. Add detail upon detail, layering to conclusion.

Without too many people cluttering things up, if you want to know the truth. I...have a little trouble dealing with people. Figured I could do my job, do it well, have a large degree of privacy in my life. These things are important to me.

The ideas about justice—started springing up at me. After the bodies had been piling up. For a while. Girls, women, who should not have been on my table. Sure, I get some ODs, suicides, but it's the others. The ones who shouldn't have been on my table for another forty years. Who should never have gone through what they went through to get to my table. And they're whispering to me—

Unsolved. unsolved. unsolved. unsolved.

(Spot out. We return to confession.)

JO. I just wish I never would've done this shit. I wish I never woulda got that gun. I wish to god, I never was a hooker. And I just wish I never woulda done what I did.

I still have to say to myself, I still say that it was in self defense.

And I do... I feel bad for the pain I have caused some families. But I do have to say one thing, though, their families must realize that no

matter how much they loved the people that died, no matter how much they love 'em, they were bad. They were gonna hurt me. So, they have to realize that fact, that this person, no matter how much they loved 'em or how good they felt they were, this person was either gonna physically beat me up, rape me, or kill me. And I don't know which one.

I just turned around and did it before they did. Is all.

(Spot on LU, upper area, on the phone.)

LU. Hello?

Mr. Broadstreet? I, uh, I wanted to talk to a lawyer about all this...I was given this number by the detectives who are involved in the case, they said you could help me.

I'm Louise Raines. Yeah. I'm her... Yeah.

I just figured I really need to be talkin' to a lawyer. I never been involved with nothing like this before...

Anyway, that cop said you could help me. That you'd be the best person to talk to.

(Squeezes her hand over her eyes for a moment.)

'Cos you're representing them already. He said—he said you could get us a better deal, like a package deal with Republic Pictures. That we'd get more money than if we all signed separate deals.

I just—I'd feel better knowing you were there to field the...various offers, right? Like, somebody on my side. To make sure I get the best deal out of this.

Right?

Okay then.

(Blackout. Sound of two shots.)

5. JESUS TOLD ME TO WRITE TO YOU

(On TVs: footage of JO being taken from the courthouse and stuffed into a squad car, handcuffed, orange jumpsuit. She smiles and nods to the camera, as though it is held by loyal supporters.

A spot comes up on a woman watching this on TV. She takes pen to paper, composes aloud:)

LEEANN. Dear Jolene:

You're gonna think I'm crazy, but Jesus told me to write to you.

(Spots up on CASSIE, watching the footage, and ANNIE, on the phone.)

CASSIE. Cancel my seminars and get me to La Guardia!

ANNIE. Can you tell me if you have a prisoner there by that name? I'm calling from Los Angeles...

Look, do you have a superior I could talk to?

(Blackout.

Spot warms on JO pacing her jail cell.)

JO. 'Cuz you just hit the one piece a Roadkill wouldn't *fucking* lie down, didn'tcha. Didn'tcha.

Thought you could just let cher foot press heavy on the accelerator. Do what you want. Listen to a woman scream in the woods off Highway 101.

Thought you'd be left with nothing but a splash of guts and hair. Instead your truck comes dead-lock stop, you're heading for your own windshield 65 *fucking* miles per hour.

(Low:) I lay down and I lay down and I lay down but no more.

I stood *up*.

And your world comes crashing to the ground.

(Blackout.

Lights up on JO and her LAWYER. JO is handcuffed.)

JEAN. I'm not gonna lie to you, this is gonna be pretty tough. They've got your confession...

JO. Yeah, I had to do that.

JEAN. I'm going to try to get it thrown out on the grounds that you were intoxicated at the time, but—

JO. Hey, if that works you can ask them to throw out the last twenty years of my life.

JEAN. I don't think it's going to work.

JO. Look, I'm sorry if that confession thing makes your job harder. But, you know, I just told them what happened. I told them I acted in self defense. Can't hurt to tell the truth, right?

(JEAN stares at her for a moment.)

Right?

JEAN. We'd be in a much better position if you hadn't told them anything.

JO. Sorry about that. I said, I had to do it. They had my wife, you know? So I had to tell them she had nothing to do with all this. I had to protect her. Nothin' on earth I wouldn't do for that woman.

JEAN. Jo, there's something I have to tell you.
It's about Louise.

*(Blackout.
Spot on JO.)*

JO. You feel something and you think that makes it real.

I mean, I...I loved that woman like in all the fairy tales, you know? I usedta lay awake an' just listen to her *breathe*. An' she'd...turn over in her sleep, maybe, an' the *feeling* would just well up inside me.

Even if she's looking stupid and drooling on the pillow, still I'd just be all fulla this feeling of being in love. That this is it, you know, she's the one.

What was *she* thinking, lying there in our bed, next to me in the dark? She's just thinkin', well, this'll do for now. Got a roof over my head. An' this crazy bitch willin' to go out and suck cock six, seven hours a day to take care a me.

What kind of a person...is that? That I was in love with.

That I'm goin' to the chair because a her.

(Courtroom. A boom-box sits atop a table, playing the following into the court record:)

LU. Now you know you told me before—

JO. Lu, I didn't tell you nothin'

LU. Don't lie

JO. What is this shit? You got somebody there listenin'?

LU. No.

JO. I'm telling you. Any...any kind of car that I ever borrowed from somebody was a car because I borrowed it. I do not know anything about this shit.

LU. Okay.

JO. And neither do you.

*(Blackout.
Lights up on JO in her cell.
PROSECUTOR and LU in court.)*

PROSECUTOR. The prosecution would like to call to the witness stand—
Louise Raines.

JO. There are, y'know, there are certain...activities that are just known to carry a Death Sentence. I'm not talking about Law here, I'm not talking about being Illegal. I'm talking about the list a activities that, if you pursue them, these could very easily lead to death.

Prostitution, for example. Everybody knows, you sink that low, you got a real good chance a endin' up dead. That's a line a work with a real high mortality rate. Everybody knows that. Except maybe for kids, think they're invincible. Think that doesn't apply to them. That's why I was always so careful, kept to my regulars. 'cos I knew.

All's I'm saying is *I want killing women to be added to that list.* And I'm not talking about a court of law, getting Caught. I'm talking

about right there, at the time. Knowing, this is an activity that, if you engage in this activity, you could easily wind up dead.

'Cos killing women is not on that list right now.

LU. She told me she shot him and covered him with a piece a carpet, and so when I saw that on the news I put two and two together.

PROSECUTOR. What did you say when she first told you she'd killed a man?

LU. I said...I didn't want to hear about it.

JO. An' you know what?

Dyin' to protect someone you love, now that's one thing.

That's a choice I can make. As opposed to dyin' 'cos a trick decides he wants a special thrill, wants to get him somea that hooker murder he's heard so much about. Now that's not a death I can live with.

Dying to protect somebody you love.

Even if you turn out to be wrong. Still. That's a helluva lot better reason.

That's something I can live with.

Not gonna be too long, anyway.

(JO sits, catatonic. Everything about her has given up. JEAN appears in the doorway.)

JEAN. Jo? There's somebody I want you to meet.

(Motions behind her.)

Her name's Cassandra Chase. She's a noted feminist scholar—

(Cassandra Chase—CASSIE—enters, New York bohemian.)

JO. Feminist?

CASSIE. *(Somewhat overexcited:)* It is an honor to meet you. Jo, may I call you Jo? I've been following your case with quite a bit of interest since, well, since before we knew who you were. A string of white

middle-aged men left rotting in the swamp! How outrageous, yet fitting. The ultimate retribution for their crimes—

JO. They all tried to kill me, yeah.

CASSIE. (*Suddenly dead serious:*) I understand. And I'm here to tell you that you are not alone. There are a lot of other women out there who feel the way I do, and we're behind you 100 percent.

JO. The women are behind me? Far Out.

CASSIE. I flew down here at my own expense to help.

JO. Yeah, how're *you* gonna help?

CASSIE. Jo, *I know why you did what you did.*

JO. (*Muttering:*) 'Bout time somebody's talking sense. Seems like the whole world's gone crazy, can't understand a simple thing like I had to defend myself.

CASSIE. We are at war, here, Jo. Women like you are the front-line casualties.

JO. Shit, yeah. It's a war zone out there. It's crazy, man.

CASSIE. I'll be called as an Expert Witness—

JO. What makes you an Expert?

CASSIE. Well—

JO. You'd think by now I'd be the Expert.

CASSIE. Of course.

My testimony will serve to contextualize—

(*She hesitates, switches tactics*) —back you up. Explain how something like this could have happened.

JO. (*Shakes her head:*) You gotta pardon me, but I never thought anybody like you would ever give a shit about me, or what-all goes on at the bottom of the food chain down here.

CASSIE. I care very much. And I'm here to help.

GUARD. (*Appearing at the door:*) Playtime's over, ladies.

CASSIE. I'll be back.

JEAN. And I'll see you in three days. Just don't...don't talk to anybody, okay?

(Lighting shift: courtroom. JUDGE and two SHRINKS.)

SHRINK. You can definitely see that she suffers from mild cortical dysfunction, though to the layperson that might not be immediately obvious.

(In a sudden burst of glorious light, LEEANN BENNETT appears, suspended, holding a gilded harp. She is lowered impossibly slowly from the flies.)

LEEANN. Dear Jolene:

You're gonna think I'm crazy but Jesus told me to write to you.

SHRINK. What with her childhood, home life, as mentioned earlier, the organic factors, genetics, a traumatic blow to the head at fifteen, the cortical dysfunction is not only to be expected, it is to be expected both from organic and inorganic factors—a cortical dysfunction doubly determined.

LEEANN. I was just sittin' there in my daddy's hospital room, prayin' and prayin' for his bypass operation to be successful, and thank the lord he did come through it, Jesus is a fair man he does answer prayers. But when I was there in that hospital room with the stench of death comin' for my daddy, I saw your picture in the paper. An' I thought, she can't have done all those horrible things they're sayin' she did. Look at her. I could see right through to your soul, Jolene, and I could see that you were a good person, a kind person, a person to whom bad things had happened in her lifetime. Not a bad person. An' I just knew—Jesus himself meant for me to see that picture. An' it was Him put those clear, clear thoughts into my head. So I am writin' to you now, to offer the hand of friendship and the support and love of Jesus Christ Himself, through his messenger here on earth, and that is me.

SHRINK 2. I would have to agree with my esteemed colleague on the cortical dysfunction, I might even go so far as to call it a mild cortical impairment.

JO. Motherfuckers. Talkin like I'm crazy, 'r stupid, 'r both all the time. I'll fuckin' cortical impair you.

SHRINK 2. Her repeated courtroom outbursts illustrate my point quite succinctly. She has no concept, not only of what would constitute appropriate behavior, but also that these repeated outbursts are not in her best interest as a defendant—

JO. I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing here anyway, if you're all just gonna go around talking in your fucking made-up language, your fuckin' lawyer talk, shrink talk, what am I doing here? Exhibit Fucking A?

SHRINK 2. Her inability to temper her own desire for what she perceives as power, the voicing of her displeasure with these proceedings, is roughly on the emotional level of a high-school student—

JO. You Mother Fucker—

SHRINK 2. “sassing off” to a teacher or other authority figure—

JUDGE. If you do not restrain yourself, Ms. Palmer, you will be bound and gagged for the remainder of these proceedings.

JO. Is that even legal?

JUDGE. It most certainly is.

SHRINK 1. Though in this metaphorical analysis, the age of a high-school student is deceptively high. I would more often put her behavior in the three-to-five year old range,* with an analogous understanding of right and wrong, ego gratification versus conception of a future, etc.

(Lighting shift: courtroom fades, leaving JO and LEEANN by the end of her speech. LEEANN finally alights, but continues her address straight out to the audience.)

LEEANN. *(Overlapping:)* *Jesus gave me the clear sight into your eyes. To see that maybe you are a sinner, but we are all sinners. Every last one of us. Anyone who doesn't think so is lying to himself. And you can lie to yourself, but you can't lie to Jesus. With His help, I can see that you and I are not so very different. I've had my hard times myself. I didn't kill anybody, of course, but when I was

having my trouble with alcohol, before I got sober, I did some things I'd rather forget. An' I had some BAD THOUGHTS. I did.

JO. (*Looking at her for the first time:*) Lady, you don't know what bad thoughts are.

LEEANN. (*Turning to JO with delight:*) I do. And if I don't, Jesus does. And do you know what? His heart is so big he can forgive everything you got weighing down on you. He could even forgive you if it was worse than it is.

JO. It's pretty bad.

LEEANN. I know. I know it's bad. But we can get through this together.

Take my hand and I will lead you into the clear light of the Lord Jesus Christ's sweet forgiveness.

JO. (*Amazed:*) You know, I musta... I musta prayed for this. 'Cos I remember. When I knew all this shit was goin' down. I remember saying, inside my head, Please, God. Send me somebody to help me through this.

LEEANN. That must be it! You asked Him. He asked me!

JO. Please, God, send somebody who can help me get through this thing. Somebody who could—just once. Just once before I check outta here.

Somebody who could actually love me.

LEEANN. Praise God.

(LEEANN immediately gives a press conference.)

If everybody could know Jolene the way I do, there's not a jury in this land that would convict her. She is truly a good and kind person.

I love her more than I've loved anyone in my life, including my husband.

It's not a homosexual perversion. It's a soul-binding. We're like Jonathan and David in the Bible.

If I was Houdini and could bust her out of that place I'd do it. And we'd roam the country and live like vagabonds and have adventures.

(JO in handcuffs, being transported from one point to another. Runs into BUCKET in the hallway.)

JO. Hey.

LEEANN. But of course I can't.

(Spot out on LEEANN.)

JO. Hey BUCKET.

BUCKET. Uh, actually it's David.

JO. Yeah, well I'm just gonna stick with BUCKET. Okay with you, BUCKET?

So this all part of your master plan?

Buy her a beer, get her a cup a coffee, EXECUTE THE BITCH?

(He looks away.)

Just let me ask you one thing.

BUCKET.

You got files marked NHI down at the sheriff's?

BUCKET. *(After a moment's hesitation:)* No.

JO. I bet you don't have no string a unsolved prostitute murders this year, huh?

In Citrus. In Pascoe. In Dixie.

Since I started doin' your job for you.

How many unsolved prostitute murders you got in the last, say, ten years.

BUCKET. Look, I really don't have the data on that—

JO. I BET you don't. I just bet you don't.

(As she is dragged away:) Well, you just go through those files, there. Look for yourself.

How many unsolved prostitute murders you got on the books this year?

LEEANN. It's clear to me that Jesus is calling her to come home to Him. And this state has the Death Penalty, thank the Lord, so why not take advantage of it?

I tell you, I'd go in a flash, if the Lord was calling to me. But I have not been given the opportunity. So I just have to wait. And do His work on earth as best I can.

DAYTONA. NHI.

Is a police term.

Prostitutes. Biker girls. If no family comes forward to put the heat on. Or if the family is powerless. Poor. Non English speaking.

Goes in a file marked NHI.

No Humans Involved.

(Blackout.

Spot on JO, jail cell, alone.)

JO. I'm an American Citizen.

I go out. Make my money. Support my wife.

I pay her rent. Buy her things. Make sure she's got clothes to wear and a nice place to live and plenty of beer in the fridge. And cable.

Right?

And there's people tryin' to kill me.

Now I got a right to defend myself.

That feminist chick said there's a store owner out in L.A. who killed five times in one year, because his *store* was gettin' robbed.

Shit, maybe they were gonna kill him.

Maybe they were just gonna take a couplea TVs.

You don't hear nobody tell him, well maybe you should stop *selling* your TVs in this bad area. Maybe you should just give up the only way you know how to make a living.

Everybody says, Oh yeah, well, he was defending his *property*. His TVs. And he's not even *from* here. Pakistani'r some shit.

Never charged him with murder.

(JO with CASSIE and JEAN.)

JEAN. I think it's going pretty well.

JO. What are you talking about? They're making me look like an idiot in there.

JEAN. That's not true. It's a matter of the legal language—

JO. I may not know the fuckin' language, but I know when people are making me look like an idiot. Or fuckin' crazy. Why don't *you* call some shrinks, on *my* side?

JEAN. They *were* on your side.

JO. What are you—

JEAN. Jo, you've got to look at what's going to be the most advantageous light to put you in, for the case. You understand—

JO. Understand? Understand fucking what?

Look, you get Cassie in there. Tell 'em the Women are behind me. 'Cos they fuckin' *understand*. What's goin' on here.

JEAN. Ms. Chase is set to testify tomorrow. Battered Woman Syndrome, leading to diminished capacity—it's very compelling stuff.

(Beat. JO turns to CASSIE, stunned.)

JO. *(Soft:)* You fuckin' bitch.

JEAN. Jo—

JO. She's gonna tell them I'm crazy?

JEAN. Diminished Capacity. It's a legal term.

JO. Comin' in here all nice like you're my friend, sayin' you understand—

CASSIE. Jo, I do understand. This is my area of expertise. My testimony on Battered Woman Syndrome will help the jury understand why your history of abuse might lead you to both under-perceive and over-react to later instances of abuse...

JO. I ain't no fuckin' syndrome. This is just shit that happened. To me. And now all I wanna do is tell the people what happened, get right with Jesus, and get outta here.

CASSIE. Is that really what *you* want?

JO. What'd I just say?

CASSIE. I'm afraid your association with LeeAnn Bennett may not be in your best interest.

JO. *(With quiet fury:)* You know what's in my best fucking interests? That LeeAnn—the one truly good person I have ever met in this life— That she's been sent here as a blessing by God, that's what's in my best fucking interests. You know what's not? City bitches like you goin' in that room tomorrow and telling them I'm crazy.

JEAN. Jo, it could mean your life. I'm very serious.

JO. WELL SO AM I.

You are not gonna go in there and tell them I'm crazy. It's not true. If I gotta get myself another lawyer, I'll do it. Don't you worry, I'll do it.

JEAN. *(Takes a deep breath:)* Do you want another lawyer?

JO. No, I want you.

(Beat.)

And I want you to take that bitch off the schedule tomorrow.

CASSIE. Jo—

JO. Are we totally clear here?
I have just unemployed you.
Now get atta here.

(CASSIE leaves, flustered.)

JEAN stares at JO, then follows CASSIE out.

Lights dim to spot on JO.)

JO. If I say I'm crazy, that means they didn't do it. Them bastards with the "suck my dick, I'm a cop" routine. Neither one of 'em was a cop. Well, that one was a retired cop. Other one was a fuckin' security guard or something.

If I say I'm crazy, then none a them bastards tried to kill me. I'm just a hooker got her head knocked around one too many times, went nutso. Up and started shooting men. Then how come it's only seven, motherfuckers?

How come I'm not standing on a pile a 200 corpses?

Huh?

Maybe 'cos *most* of the men I interact with in my daily business do *not* try and kill me.

Only some of 'em, do.

Maybe seven of 'em.

Do.

*(JO stares forward. Lights fade on her.
In twin spotlights, LEEANN and ANNIE.)*

LEE ANN.

Jo—

Of course I don't mind another collect call. They're runnin' up into the thousands, but the Good Lord will provide.

Oh, Jo, you know He will!

Can't you feel His love, shining down on you.

The smiling light of Jesus Christ.

Don't cling to what's meaningless.

I have the truth.

I am offering you life everlasting

wrapped in the embrace of God

ANNIE.

Jo. I'm so glad I finally got you on the phone...

Listen, I want to make the movie of your life.

Don't you understand—

It's gonna happen. It's already happening. Those cops who arrested you are making their own movie

well they sold their story, is what I'm saying.

So now it's your turn.

Your side of the story needs to be told.

I am offering you life everlasting

(JO kneels in her cell, praying. Spots out.)

[Note: Here, with the addition of a lab coat, LEEANN once again becomes the CORONER. This can be done on or offstage.]

Light up on the CORONER, examining a body and speaking into a microcassette recorder.)

CORONER. I would estimate her age to be between fifteen and eighteen. Multiple contusions on the face and neck. Lacerations from a very thin blade, most likely razor or boxcutter. Seven lateral cuts across the face, one across the neck, severing the jugular and the larynx, most likely cause of death, though several of the torso cuts are severe enough to have—

(BUCKET appears in the doorway. She starts:)

Jesus Christ.

BUCKET. Sorry

CORONER. Didn't anyone* teach you to knock—

BUCKET. *(Overlapping:)* *The door was open—

CORONER. detective?

(Beat.)

BUCKET. I'm sorry.

CORONER. What do you want? I sent it all upstairs.

BUCKET. Yeah, I got it. Thanks. There's just—

CORONER. It's all in the paperwork. Anything you might need. All there.

BUCKET. No, it's... Yeah, thank you, it's very thorough. I'm not...uh...my partner is going to be handling the testimony from here on out. I just...

(He reaches in his pocket and takes out a pack of Juicy Fruit. Offers it to her before taking a stick.)

Juicy Fruit?

CORONER. No. Thank you.

BUCKET. I'm trying to quit. Smoking.
They keep...sending me in. I was quit for three weeks this time,
then they sent me in and I had to...you know, you can't be infil-
trating the bad guys chewing Juicy Fruit.

(She stares at him. He puts the gum away. Clears his throat.)

I wanted to ask you a question.

CORONER. Uh-huh.

BUCKET. Is she or isn't she?

CORONER. What?

BUCKET. A serial killer.

CORONER. Don't be ridiculous.

BUCKET. Is she or isn't she?

CORONER. She did not stalk. She did not plan.

BUCKET. Seven.

CORONER. She did not keep trophies.

BUCKET. Yeah, she did.

CORONER. You don't pawn trophies. You keep them.

BUCKET. Number of bullets?

(CORONER does not answer.)

First one was four. By the end, she's using nine.

She had to re-load.

CORONER. She's not here.

(Gestures at the dead girl on the table.)

And she coulda been.

BUCKET. *(Looks at the girl:)* Young.

CORONER. Yes.

BUCKET. So how come Jolene didn't

CORONER. What?

BUCKET. How come she made it to 20, let alone 35.

CORONER. *(Shrugs:)* Good instincts.

BUCKET. And then seven. In one year.

(They look at each other.)

CORONER. Good instincts.

(Blackout. LEEANN's voice:)

LEEANN. *(On the phone with JO:)* You can help out with the horses and live here on the ranch. *(Beat, brightly:)* Or, if they convict you, go home to Jesus.

(Spot on JO, jail cell.)

JO. Now they got their fucking movie coming out, and I haven't even been convicted yet. That's *gotta* be illegal. I swear.

"First Female Serial Killer." And I haven't even been convicted yet. I'm right in the middle of this shit.

An' they got me bein' played by SOMEBODY I NEVER EVEN HEARD OF. they coulda at least got Jodie Foster or something. I know I...ain't that Pretty, but they could rough her up some.

We know she can play a hooker. She was real good in that Taxi Driver. Actually, I looked...well, I looked a lot like her when that movie came out. Don't look nothing like her now. Maybe I would, if I got to go home after shooting, instead a... 'Course, at that time home was a car out in the woods. Fuckin'...*freezing*. I was cold all my life, Florida always sounded like a good deal.

Anyway, we know she can play a hooker, we know she can get raped. How about coming full circle and we see her packin' a little Justice? Huh? Now there's a movie I'd pay money to see.

Not some fuckin' bullshit lying-ass TV crap fuckin' Marg Helgenberger fuckin' Alyssa Milano. Who the fuck are these people?

(Blackout.

Lights up on the courtroom. The PROSECUTOR speaks.)

PROSECUTOR. The evidence is clear. This man-hating lesbian became a prostitute for the control over men. And when that thrill was no longer enough, she moved on to the ultimate control—murder.

She lured Tom Waldren into the woods in order to kill him and steal everything he had—his car, his personal possessions, even up to and including his life.

JO. What in hell is he talking about?

PROSECUTOR. Possessions belonging to Mr. Waldren were recovered from the OK Pawn shop and Lucky Pawn, both in Tampa, including a Polaroid Impulse Camera, a Remington Micro-screen Razor, and a Toshiba Videocassette Recorder.

JO. What the fuck? Is this guy insane?

JEAN. Shhh.

PROSECUTOR. In addition, in a mini-storage unit owned by the defendant, police recovered a plaid hunting jacket identified as belonging to the victim, as well as a set of tools belonging to—

Oh, I'm sorry, the tools did not belong to Mr. Waldren...

JEAN. OBJECTION!

JUDGE. Sustained. Watch yourself, counselor. Stick to the issue at hand.

PROSECUTOR. Yes, sir.

Blackout.

JO and JEAN.)

JEAN. You *did* steal their possessions—

JO. What was I supposed to do, leave it laying there? These, of course, were instances where I was not getting paid for my time. What, I had some big moral imperative after these guys tried to kill me, not to fuckin' take their *stuff*?

JEAN. It just doesn't look good.

(Beat.)

JO. You gotta let me take the stand.

JEAN. I'm not at all sure that's in your best interest.

JO. How else are they gonna understand what happened? I'm the only person that can tell them exactly what happened that night.

JEAN. If you take the stand that's going to leave you open to a cross-examination. It's gonna be pretty brutal.

JO. I can take it.

(Beat.)

It's what I want to do.
You just go set it up.

(Blackout. Spot on LEEANN, press conference.)

LEEANN. At ten-fifteen this morning, all the paperwork was completed and we got the final stamp makin' it legal—I have adopted Jolene Palmer as my own daughter. And she has taken me as her adopted mother.

My good friend in Christ Terry McNeil handled the adoption for us.

(Flaky Lawyer smiles and waves.)

He may be a lawyer, but he's going to heaven! Isn't that right, Terry?

Now in addition to our great spiritual bond, I am also her next of kin. Should the occasion arise, it is to me to give her a beautiful Christian burial.

(Spot on JO, jail cell.)

JO. They say If a tree falls in the forest an' nobody hears it, does it make a sound? Well that's a stupid fuckin' question. But I'll tell you the answer, 'cos that was nearly me. An' yeah, you make a lotta sound. Even if it's just your own breathing. And blood pounding an' little twigs under your feet. Even if you don't scream, 'cos you know there's nobody gonna hear you. Yeah, you make a lotta sound. The sound a being alive.

Right up until you're not.

An' if you fire a .22 in the forest, he feels it first.
Then he hears it.
I think.

*(Light up on the CAPTAIN and BUCKET in the station house.
BUCKET is surrounded by files.)*

BUCKET. I've been going through the unsolved prostitute murders—

CAPTAIN. The NHI files?

BUCKET. *(Beat:)* Yes.

Sir, she's right.

There are significantly fewer prostitute murders this year.

CAPTAIN. You're not saying you believe her?

BUCKET. Well—

CAPTAIN. That she happened to be picked up by seven men who are killing prostitutes in the area? What are the odds?

BUCKET. Well—

CAPTAIN. Or that she got the *only* seven?

BUCKET. I admit, it's—

CAPTAIN. They're just plain scared, is all.

BUCKET. Exactly. That's what I was saying.
That maybe that is not a bad thing.

(Beat.)

CAPTAIN. Are you worried about Prostitute Quality of Life, here?
Are you concerned that not enough fucking Hookers will choose
the Sunshine State to ply their trade?

BUCKET. No, sir.

CAPTAIN. We're never gonna run outta hookers.

BUCKET. No, sir.

CAPTAIN. Now, if white middle-aged businessmen pick someplace else to live and work and spend their hard earned vacation dollars, THEN we're in TROUBLE.

BUCKET. Yes, sir.

(Blackout. Sound of a shot.)

6. SELF-DEFENSE

(Lights up. Courtroom.)

JEAN. In your own words, tell us what happened next.

JO. We both started to get undressed. I said Tom, I can't do this without rubbers...he went back to the trunk of the car to get some...I started to take off my clothes first, I always do this to let them know I was all right, I'm honest... He came back...and he's unzipping his pants...then he says he doesn't have the money. He said I only got a little for breakfast and gas. And I said Tom, no way, we've got to call this off and started to get my clothes out of the back...and out of the corner of my eye I saw him coming toward me...he put a cord around my neck...he said Yes you are, bitch, you're going to do everything I tell you or I'll kill you like the other sluts I done before. I don't care. Your body will still be warm for my huge cock. You want to die, slut? Are you gonna do what I tell you to do and I just nodded yes. He tied my hands and tied them to the steering wheel...he got out of the car and told me to slide up...said he was going to see how much meat he was going to pound in my ass.

I'm sorry. This is very difficult for me. I don't—this is very embarrassing. I'm sorry.

He got undressed and threw his clothes on the floor...he lifted my legs all the way up to where my feet were near the window. Then he started having anal sex. He's doing this in a very violent manner... And then I don't know if he came...or climaxed or whatever...I don't know what the proper word is, I'm sorry, I talk street talk...But he took himself very violently out and put himself very violently in my vagina. I was crying my brains out...he said he loved to hear my pain. That my crying turned him on.

He got out and went to get something from the trunk. He got a red cooler and a blue tote bag...there were two liter bottles of water, a maroon towel, a bar of soap, a tooth brush, and a bottle of Visine. I said to myself, this guy is going to kill me or dissect me, I don't know.

He said the Visine bottle was one of my surprises. It turned out to be filled with rubbing alcohol. He emptied it into my rectum. It really hurt bad because he tore me up a lot. And he squirted it in

my vagina. Which really hurt bad. And in my mouth. He pulled back my head and squirted it in my nose. He said I'm saving your eyes for the grand finale.

He put the Visine down on the dash. And I was...really pissed.

I was yelling at him, and struggling to get my hands free. Eventually he came back and untied me, put a stereo wire around my neck and tried to rape me again. He's chokin' me and I grabbed his hand and he slapped me real hard in the face and I got both feet against him and pushed him away.

And he got up on his knees and said, "You're gonna be a lot of fun."

An' I jumped up real quick and spit in his eyes. And he's wipin' his eyes, he says, "You're dead, Bitch." and I lay down real quick and grabbed my bag, pulled out my .22 and started shooting and I shot as fast as I could. I shot two times, I think.

And he lurched toward me
and I shot him some more.

And he stopped moving.

(Silence.)

JEAN. No further questions.

LEEANN. *(Tears in her eyes, absolutely honest and true:)* Jesus is calling you, Jolene. He wants you to come home to him.

JUDGE. Do you need to take a break?

LEEANN. He's waiting for you. Waiting with his loving, open arms.

JO. No...I'm...I'm alright.

JUDGE. Cross?

(The PROSECUTOR stands. BUCKET appears downstage in spot.)

BUCKET. When I saw what happened to her in that courtroom, I almost wished...we'd missed her.

Woulda been hell on my record, but I never woulda had to see that.

PROSECUTOR. That was a very moving...story.
But isn't it true you have six other cases, just like this one, pending against you.

JEAN. Objection!

JUDGE. Overruled.

JEAN. Your Honor—

JUDGE. You put your client on the stand. You know Prior Bad Acts are—

JEAN. Alleged prior bad acts. My client has not been convicted of anything—

JUDGE. Overruled.

(Blackout.)

(Spot on LEEANN.)

LEEANN. He's waiting, Jolene. Waiting to take you into his bosom and forgive.

(Lights up on courtroom.)

JUDGE. Do you have anything else to say before sentence is passed?

JO. Just that I am sorry for the pain I have caused, and if you feel that I need to die for my acts of self-defense, so be it. I have made my peace with the lord Jesus Christ.

JUDGE. Jolene Palmer, you are sentenced to die for the murder of Tom Waldren.

(Beat.)

JO. Mother fuckers.

JUDGE. Ms. Palmer—

JO. I was raped. I was raped and you say I gotta die?

JUDGE. Sit down.

JO. You know, I just hope someday you *know*...

JUDGE. Ms. Palmer—

JO. I hope your wife and daughters get raped in the ass.

JUDGE. Bailiff—

JO. *(To the jury:)* SCUMBAGS OF AMERICA!

(Blackout. Spot on DAYTONA.)

DAYTONA. Yeah, he gave me that TV and the VCR. Didn't have the three hundred in cash. Hooked 'em up for me and everything.

You ask me how I feel, how do I feel about him bein' dead. Well, it's weird anybody you knew even a little bit winds up dead. So I feel bad. But you know what? I'm not surprised.

How about that. The kinda stuff he was into, the kinda *impulses* he was useta gettin' satisfied, I'm not surprised the man is dead.

So now it's my turn to be not surprised. Just like people are not surprised when one a my kind turns up dead. Cops, people. Not unless it's College Students, oh a Nice Girl got her fuckin' head cut off, then everybody's surprised. Everybody's up in arms, doing shit. Mobilizing special police task forces. Yeah, maybe if I was a college co-ed somebody'd give a shit if I wound up dead. Somebody'd try and figure out how it happened.

But I ain't no fuckin' College Girl. My body winds up in a ditch, they're not gonna waste too much of a day on it. And whoever it was that decided I didn't count and no-one would give a shit if he dumped me out by the side of I-95, whoever it was driving the last car I got into, he's hangin' around going to the grocery store, playing with his fuckin' kids maybe, watching the five-second blip about it on the evening news and probably none the worse for wear.

He had, that Waldren guy I'm talking about now, had what you call bad impulse control. So usedta throwin' around money, acting like the big man. I mean, this is the kind of guy wants what he wants. If he doesn't have the three hundred in cash, he'll go open up his repair shop and give you somebody's TV and VCR they're probably waiting to have fixed. Tell them there's been a break-in or some

shit, I don't know. I mean, he never hurt me, but those things are tricky. You never know what's gonna set somebody off.

So yeah, I'm not surprised Mr. Waldren met with an untimely death. I feel bad for the guy, but I'm not surprised.

LEEANN. You shouldn't have said that. I'm very disappointed in you, Jolene. the way you behaved in court. Calling those people...the you-know-whats of America. That was not very Christian of you. I'm just...I'm just very disappointed. That's all.

I would almost think you don't *want* to go home to Jesus.

JO. Yeah. You might think that, huh?

DAYTONA. An' I'll tell you why they're not buying that Self-Defense.

What Self?

Plain an' simple.

Ask any one of 'em. They don't see a self there to defend.

They even say—she sold herself for money.
Sold her Self. No right to fuckin' defend it now.

(Blackout. Sound of six shots.)

7. DEATHWATCH

(Spot up on FLAKY LAWYER.)

FLAKY LAWYER. Having performed Ms. Palmer's adoption by my dear friend in Christ, LeeAnn Bennett, I have been asked to take over her criminal defense as well. And yes, we do have a strategy.

My client has accepted Jesus Christ as her personal savior, and therefore would like to confess to her sins and ask pardon for them.

Not from this court, of course, but from the only one who has the power to judge, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Angelic music.)

For this reason, she will be entering a plea of "No Contest" in the remaining six trials.

MARTY. *(Appears on TV:)* I don't know why she didn't kill me, too. I suppose I was in danger for my life the whole time.

FLAKY LAWYER. I am the Dr. Jack Kevorkian of the legal world. I am helping my client to commit suicide, which is what she wants.

MARTY. *(On TV:)* She had Death Row eyes. I don't know what that means, exactly, but that's what I thought. Death Row eyes. I always liked her, though.

(Pinspots on the JUDGE and JO.)

JO.

People think a prostitute can't be raped. That that just means somebody didn't pay. It's not about the fuckin' money. If that was it, you know, I'd say I got *robbed*. It ain't about money. It's about using me to take out all your hate at somebody else, at the world,
No Contest
at whoever made you feel powerless
an' weak an' limp-dick an' stupid,
takin' whatever shit you got inside you out on me. It's about not knowing if this is the time you're gonna die.

JUDGE.

For the murder of Dick Relaford,
how do you plead?

JUDGE.

For the murder of Harry McAdams,
how do you plead?

No Contest.

It's about havin' whispered close in your ear You're gonna die, you worthless piece a shit, an' *knowing* it's true.

Knowing you're gonna die. Knowing you're a worthless piece a shit.

NO CONTEST

It's about having a knife shoved up inside you, having a person deliberately cut down, slicing your cunt open through to your asshole and going to the hospital bleeding through a hotel towel,

NO CONTEST

bleeding on the floor, having them call you a whore while they're lookin' at what that man did to you.

An' you can't go to the cops cos he *was* a fuckin' *cop*. An they don't treat you like you're *anything*.

NO CONTEST.

But I am something. An' if it takes six shots from a .22 to show you that, I'm gonna *do* what it takes.

*(Blackout.
On TV:)*

WOMAN 1. I hope she goes to Old Sparky.

You know who Old Sparky is, don't you? Uh-huh. Old Sparky's just a-waitin' for her.

(Lights fade up on BUCKET, obsessively watching videotape. Open file folders surround him. DRUMS walks by, does a double-take.)

DRUMS. What are you doing?

(BUCKET doesn't answer.)

Case is closed. We got the bad guys.

(BUCKET snorts.)

Seriously, man. What are you looking for in there?

JUDGE.

For the murder of Walter Thorpe, how do you plead?

JUDGE.

For the murder of Lane Michaelson, how do you plead?

JUDGE.

For the murder of Anthony diBlasi, how do you plead?

BUCKET. (*Looks up at him. Beat:*) The one who didn't deserve it.

(*DRUMS just stares. BUCKET continues, placidly.*)

You know. So I can sleep at night.

DRUMS. Jesus Christ—

BUCKET. those of us not Technically Advising any movies have more free time on our hands...

(*Takes TV off "pause."*)

WOMAN 2. My brother never would have picked up a prostitute.

DRUMS. Yeh, right.

(*BUCKET hits "pause."*)

BUCKET. Yeah, she sounds funny, doesn't she? Naïve. But she could be right. You know who her brother is?

(*DRUMS shakes his head.*)

Sausage Delivery Guy.

DRUMS. (*Cracks up:*) No way.

BUCKET. He's my great hope. No priors, no beat-up ex-wives. A sister who loves him. Speaks pretty well for the guy. I'm thinkin' it's him. The one who just triggered off her radar somehow, maybe he was just reaching for something in the glove compartment. She took it as a threat.

(*Takes it off "pause."*)

WOMAN 2. She must have been posing as a stranded motorist, because my brother would never have stopped to pick up a prostitute, but a woman in trouble? He would definitely have picked up a woman having car trouble, dropped her off at the nearest garage.

DRUMS. Oh, come *on*—

BUCKET. Sounds funny, huh?

As implausible as killing seven men in the course of one year in self-defense.

But *she could be right.*

DRUMS. (*Incredulous:*) You got the hots for her.

What are you doing, going down to that cell for a little ten-dollar blowjob, lighten up the day?

(*BUCKET stands. The gesture is filled with menace. DRUMS edges for the door.*)

You're the one should be talking to those shrinks.

Been undercover too long. Don't know you're Cop anymore. Think you're some kinda cowboy for Justice. It's bullshit, Dave.

You're Cop. Just like me. (*On his way out:*) Go home, man.

(*BUCKET returns to his research. Pushes a button on the remote. TV unfreezes to:*)

WOMAN 2. I miss him so.

She's gonna burn in hell for what she did. That is the only comfort I have.

She's gonna burn in hell.

(*JO. Jail cell. Alone.*)

JO. First time. I made it outta that one alive.

An' I made a vow to myself.

Not in words or anything, just in the chemicals in my brain, in the nerves, in the muscles, in my blood. I made the vow that nobody was ever gonna do that to me again.

I was never gonna feel that fear. Again.

Anybody who fucked with me. Was gonna feel that fear.

The only way I could go back out there again. Was knowing. In my body. I'm not gonna die out here.

Maybe you will. I won't.

Took me seventeen years, but

I stood up.

That moment. I became a threat to them.

Couldn't just be kicked around anymore.

Had blood on my muzzle. Blood on my fur.

And it tasted...good.

I knew.

They had to take me out.

(Blackout.

Lights up on DRUMS and LU.)

DRUMS. We been getting some heat on that movie deal. Just “no comment” if anybody asks.

LU. I did the right thing, right?

DRUMS. Yeah.

LU. She was killin’ people.

DRUMS. Don’t see what the big fuss is about. Biggest case a my career. And a subject people naturally want to hear about...

LU. She had to be stopped...

She wasn’t gonna stop.

DRUMS. I told them all the money goes to a victim’s charity fund—

LU. It does?

DRUMS. It does now.

(Blackout.

JO. Jail cell. Alone.)

JO. All this shit never woulda happened.

That damn Gulf War.

Now boys come back with th’ syndrome. ’Cos they been doin’ medical experiments on ’em. Our own boys! This is the greatest country in the world, always has been, but them boys in charge been fucking up pretty bad lately.

(BUCKET approaches.)

BUCKET. Howdy, lady.

(She snorts at him)

Buy you a beer?

JO. Fuckin’ comedian.

(He pulls a Corona from behind his back, passes it to her through the cell bars.)

No lime?

BUCKET. It's a felony to bring citrus fruits into a maximum-security environment.

(She eyes him. Takes a swig.)

Mind if I join you?

JO. Suit yourself.

(He reveals a six-pack in a bag. Takes one.)

So you just come to stare at the animals or what?

(Beat. He takes a drink.)

BUCKET. Or what.

(Drinks again.)

You were right.

JO. What?

BUCKET. Unsolved prostitute murders are down significantly this year.

JO. *(Whistles:)* How much?

BUCKET. Significantly.

JO. Come on, man, give me the number—

BUCKET. Well, you know we don't have statistics or anything, but just simple numbers is, last year was eleven, this year is four.

JO. Holy shit!

BUCKET. Now, that doesn't mean anything—that's just last year to this year, simple comparison—

JO. So I coulda saved as many people as I killed.

(Shakes her head.)

I was just talkin' out my ass, you know.

BUCKET. I know.

JO. But I was right.

BUCKET. Yeah. You were right.

(They drink in silence for a moment.)

I'm leaving the department.

JO. 'Cos a me?

BUCKET. Yeah. My opinions have become rather unpopular around here.

JO. Well, shit, yeah, you'd better find yourself a new place to hang your hat. Before you find yourself goin' in first someplace and your backup never shows. Right?

BUCKET. That's, yeah, that's one a the things on my mind. These boys aren't like that, but still. You want to get along with your department.

JO. *(Takes a swig:)* Well, I'm flattered that you'd get yourself in trouble over me. That's kinda sweet.

BUCKET. Just what I see.

JO. More'n my girlfriend ever did.

BUCKET. Yeah, she's a piece a work.

JO. Must be the economy, man. All these people got nothin' on their minds but takin' advantage of me.

'Cos LeeAnn is really a horse a the same color.

Tellin' me she loves me, an' Jesus loves me. I think she was lyin' for both of them. Love somebody who's not me. Love some perfect good Reformed Sinner. Now I been a sinner, alright. But not in the ways they think. An' not in being still alive, after all that shit I been through. I should get a fuckin' medal just for being still alive.

I tried to kill myself once.

shot myself in the stomach with a .22. But I didn't really want to die, I guess. If I did I coulda just taken the Cops way out, swallowed it.

That's what you cops do, right, just blow the back of your brain out?

BUCKET. Uh, yep. That's what we do.

JO. Maybe I just didn't wanna put nothin' else in my mouth.

(Both smile at her joke.)

An' if I don't get to do it, nobody *else* is damn well gonna kill me.

(An uncomfortable silence.)

Sure woulda been easier, take it lying down out in them woods. Coulda got this whole thing over with a long time ago.

(JO stares forward for a moment.

Blackout.

Spot on LU.)

LU. She said she did it for me.

She didn't do this for me.

She was doin' this before she met me. Since she was sixteen, she said.

But you know, she...she lies all the time.

She said that she loved me. But you know, she loved...that I wasn't good at things. I made her feel important. That's not so great, right?

An' now she's gonna die.

An' nobody is ever gonna love me like that. Again.

(Blackout.

JO in her cell. Asleep on the narrow cot. Two angels float above her. They clearly have CHASTITY and DAYTONA's stripper outfits beneath flowing diaphanous layers of white. And, of course, wings. [DAYTONA is Goodness, CHASTITY is Mercy.]

GOODNESS. Look at her. Sweet thing.

MERCY. Tired eyes.

GOODNESS. Even when she's sleeping. She's tired.

MERCY. I can't do this.

GOODNESS. Yes you can

MERCY. No, I can't

GOODNESS. It's our job

MERCY. Then in His infinite wisdom he should have picked someone who was capable—

GOODNESS. He has

MERCY. Without falling apart entirely—

GOODNESS. You won't

MERCY. I'm going to dissolve...

(JO tosses on the bed.)

GOODNESS. Look what you've done!

MERCY. I'm sorry—

GOODNESS. You're waking her up!

MERCY. I told you! I'm not cut out for this—

(JO sits up in bed, startled.)

JO. Fuck's that?

Get the fuck outta here.

GOODNESS. Hello, Jolene.

MERCY. Hello.

JO. And who are you two supposed to be?

GOODNESS. *(Gesturing to herself and her companion:)* We're Goodness and Mercy.

MERCY. We're here to follow you the rest of your days.

JO. And keep me up nights?

MERCY. I'm sorry. That was me. I just can't—

GOODNESS. She has trouble being objective.

MERCY. It's just so awful.

Look at you. Such a sweet face. And you—

(She touches JO.)

So full of love. And Fear! Ah! And... and... ANGER.

(Pulls her hand away.)

Oh, I feel...ill. I have to sit down.

(She lies on the floor.)

GOODNESS. We know...your path. We are here to guide you at the end.

JO. You friends a LeeAnn?

GOODNESS. Who?

JO. Never mind.

MERCY. *(Sitting up:)* Whew! I don't know how you—
how you—HOLD all that without—

GOODNESS. They're all like that

MERCY. They ARE?

GOODNESS. That's why you have to be careful about touching.
Will you remember?

MERCY. I'll remember.

JO. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my
life

GOODNESS. Yes!

MERCY. Yes! That's us!

JO. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever?

MERCY. *(Looking at Goodness:)* Uh, I guess. Yeah.

GOODNESS. That...that sounds right.

JO. You don't know?

GOODNESS. Well...

MERCY. *(To GOODNESS:)* That must be right! Right? Because the
part about us was right. I know that was right.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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