

FANTASY

By Jason Hall

Contact:

www.halljas.com

Characters:

Michelle, late 40s.

David, late 40s, her ex-husband.

Jack, 16, Michelle and David's son.

Paul, 40s, Michelle's fuckbuddy.

Colin, 40s, Jack's fuckbuddy.

Note on performance:

All actors are onstage throughout unless otherwise noted. To play a scene the actor will step into the action.

PART 1: MICHELLE

(David and Michelle read from sheets of paper.)

David "So we're gonna do stuff."

Michelle "If you want."

David "I do."

Michelle "You wanna do stuff?"

David "Yea."

Michelle "Cool."

David "What we gonna do?"

Michelle "Whatever you want. Just tell me."

David "Um. I want to you to control it all tell me what to do etc."

Michelle "Good boy. Smiley face." *(A prompt.)* "Smiley face."

David What do I...(say here?)

Michelle Say... "winking face."

David Winky face?

Michelle That's what it is.

David I'm not saying Winky face.

Michelle *Winking.*

David Whatever, I'm not –

Michelle David, please.

David I'm not.

Michelle Just say it. Please. Please.

David Fine.

Michelle Let's go from "Um."

David "Um. I want you to control it all tell me what to do etc."

Michelle "Good boy. Smiley face."

David "Winking f - " This is ridiculous, what are we – ?

Michelle Just say "winking face!" Say it!

David "Winking face."

Michelle "You wanna talk first or just go into it?"

David "Question mark."

Michelle "Like you wanna chat etc. meet me get to know each other or I just grab you at the door and go."

David "Whatever you want."

Michelle "I think it's hotter to grab you at the door."

David Jesus.

Michelle Read on.

David Michelle.

Michelle Read on.

David No, this is, I feel very uncomfortable / here.

Michelle Well that's the point.
No?
Fine.
"...think it's hotter to grab you at the door."
"Grab me at the door and...what?"
"That would be telling."
"Gimme a clue."
"Winking face. Hand over your mouth, eyes, drag you into bedroom."
"Mmmm. Then what?"
"Fuck that ass, / make your teeth rattle."

David Jesus Christ, Michelle!

Michelle Do you see? Now? Do you see why I was so...

David This is terrible.

Michelle I *know*, I *agree*. So what do we do?

David What do you mean what do we do?

Michelle What do we do about Jack?

David Jack?

Michelle Yes David, Jack, who else are we talking about?

David I'm talking about you.

Michelle What?

David *(The papers.)* How did you get these?

Michelle How do you think?

David What I think is you got them from his computer.

Michelle Yes, exactly, that is where the internet is / on computers.

David Which means you were *on* his computer.

Michelle David I think you're missing the point. Read what it says?

David This is just chat. This is just / fantasy.

Michelle Oh really? This is just chat? *(She hands him some more paper.)*

David *(Reading, quietly to himself.)* "Yesterday was fun."

Michelle *(Jumping in, even though this is clearly not what David intended.)* "You had a good time?"

David "Yea."

Michelle "Yea me too. You're really hot."
(David is now reading ahead, ignoring her.)
 "Thanks."
 "No prob."
 "You're hot too."
 "Cheers."
(She has trouble with this.) "Your flat is really lovely."

David Fucking hell.

Michelle This is what I'm talking about.

David How many of these do you have?

Michelle This is one of the only ones he saved I think, I couldn't find any other chat histories really nothing like this just stuff about music and boys and –

David Well how hard were you looking?

Michelle I was as thorough as I could be.

David (*Angry.*) It certainly looks that way!

Michelle (*Realising his anger is directed at her.*) Are you still...? Do you understand what you're holding?

David Yes. I'm basically holding my son's diary, his private thoughts and (*Continues.*)

Michelle Oh please.

David desires which his mother has scoured through and copied (*Continues.*)

Michelle You really (*Continues.*)

David and printed and read out for everyone to hear.

Michelle need to stop for a second and think about this. Our son. Our sixteen-year-old son. Has met this man – says he's twenty nine, looks thirties, I can show you a photo, but trust me it'll turn your stomach – Jack's met this man, this stranger, and this man had...he slept with our son. In a horrible, violent...(*way.*)

Now. We need to do something about this.

David Like what?

Michelle I don't know David, that's what I thought *we'd* –

David What do you want to do, *punish* him?

Michelle For a start yes. Maybe. I mean this is reckless, *dangerous* behaviour, not to mention he lied to me. I checked the date. Said he was going to town to see a musical. With a friend. Brought back a programme, told me all about it, the acting, the set, I mean the level of deceit, it just...

David Okay he was reckless. He lied. That's not – (*...the end of the world.*)

Michelle And we need to find out what he's been a victim of.

David Michelle.

Michelle What is it, grooming? Coercion?

David Hang on.

Michelle *Statutory rape?* These are illegal things, we need to address them. With him.

David I read this and I don't see...I see consenting...people consenting.

Michelle You *what?*

David Come on Michelle, you've read this, obviously, are you telling me Jack was tricked?

Michelle He's just a boy.

David He's a young man.

Michelle Are you - I'm a little confused here. Are you seriously telling me this doesn't disturb you?

David Of course it disturbs me (*Continues.*)

Michelle Because you're coming across as pretty *relaxed* about the whole thing.

David just like it would disturb any parent who found out the intimate details of their child's sex life but thankfully most parents don't find that out because they don't go hunting for it!

Michelle I wasn't hunting, (*Continues.*)

David What were you doing then?

Michelle don't make it sound so, so devious. And this isn't about me!

David Don't you think your relationship with him is already a bit...?

Michelle What?

David You know.

Michelle Oh that's nice David that's real nice. Okay. I see. Mister cool Dad, mister every other weekend, (*Continues.*)

David Here we go.

Michelle mister I'm just like you, toys, video games, cinema, okay *fine*.
You don't want to be a parent here? I'm used to that / no
change.

David This isn't parenting.

Michelle You just go back home to Jill and be a Dad there, you be a
father to Jamie and Vince and I'll, as usual, I'll handle all this.

David That is not fair.

Michelle Run along now David.

Jack (*To Michelle.*) Have you been drinking?

David You think about what you're doing Michelle.

Michelle Bye bye.

Jack (*To Michelle.*) Have you, though?

David Just be careful.

Michelle (*To Jack.*) I asked *you* a question.

Jack Seriously though, you have been drinking, right?

Michelle Answer me.

Jack I...

Michelle Well?

Jack Am so...angry I'm shaking, (*Continues.*)

Michelle Angry?

Jack shaking so much I can't even, like, think properly.

Michelle You're angry at me. *You're...* That's (*...funny.*)

Jack Ohmygod, I can barely speak I...how *could* you?

Michelle I asked you a question.

Jack Those are my private, like, my personal, I'm just...

(Goes to leave.)

Michelle You're not, come back here, you are not going anywhere young man, I asked you a question, *(Continues.)*

Jack You actually went into my –

Michelle and you're going to answer me. Who is he?

Jack Kids at school they say it all the time and I'm like come on, they're your parents but now I actually do.

Michelle Don't change the subject / who is he?

Jack I actually totally hate you.

Michelle Jack, tell me who he is.

Jack Who are *you*?

Michelle I'm your mother and I *(Continues.)*

Jack Are you drunk or...?

Michelle am asking you to tell me.

Jack I feel, like, physically sick.

Michelle You feel sick? *Tou*? How do you think *I* feel, I read this, my own son?

Jack That's your fault I never *(Continues.)*

Michelle Oh, is it?

Jack asked you to spy I never –

Michelle Who is this man?

Jack I actually hate you.

Michelle I –

You don't have a monopoly on anger here, okay? You don't –
Imagine you're me. Try for one minute in that little life of yours
to imagine that you're me, you find this, you read this
(Continues.)

Jack "Find" that's good, that's a good one Mum.

Michelle what would you feel, what would you do?

Jack Pennies. Pennies you can find, like change down the back of the sofa (*Continues.*)

Michelle Jack

Jack a sock left in the dryer, my phone charger a frigging letter from school these things you find! This? *This?* You were spying / on me!

Michelle And with good reason. Obviously.

Jack You spied, you *violated* my, my trust, how can I trust you again? Never. Never.

Michelle You have rope hidden in your closet. What's that for?

Jack Get out.

Michelle What's this man done to you?

Paul (*To Michelle.*) Michelle.

Michelle Tell me who he is.

Paul (*To Michelle.*) Wow.

Jack You stink of gin.

Paul You're looking...

Michelle Thanks.

Paul Great, you really are.

Michelle You too, Paul. (*Beat.*) So, (*Continues.*)

Paul How're things?

Michelle what do you think? What do you think about Jack?

Paul Right. Well. As you know, it's not my...(*specific field.*)

Michelle Of course.

Paul So this isn't...I mean I should say this isn't me 'lawyer' giving you 'client' legal whatever. This is, you know, us, Paul and Michelle having a chat.

Michelle Sure, sure.

Paul So, in that case, we *could* just go to the wine bar over the road or...

Michelle No here's fine, your office is fine, it's not something I want people to, you know...(overhear).

Paul No.

Michelle So.

Paul So the news is this: based on what you showed me, there's nothing, basically, you can do. Sorry.

Michelle But Jack's sixteen.

Paul I know.

Michelle And that...man is something like forty. It's wrong.

Paul I agree. It's horrible. But in the eyes of the law...

Michelle What if he forced him?

Paul Forced him?

Michelle Yes what if this man forced Jack into it?

Paul Forced him to come round or...?

Michelle Yes.

Paul How would he / do that?

Michelle Okay forced him into...doing...it. The acts.

Paul Acts?

Michelle Yes, the acts.

Paul Well, in that case there would be the possibility of a criminal charge.

Michelle Well, well...good. *Good*.

Paul But, Michelle. That's only if that's what happened.

Michelle A jury would tear him to pieces, can you imagine, any mothers on there, any decent normal people. And the police? And in *prison*?

Paul But he didn't force him, did he?

Michelle What if he said no? At the last minute?

Paul Did he? Is that what Jack told you?

Michelle Jack is...I haven't pressured him.

Paul Sure.

Michelle I want him to tell me when he's ready. But something's not right. A mother knows. I mean why else would he come to me with all this?

Paul No, of course.

Michelle Why else would he show me all the chats and things? There's more he wants to tell and I just want to be ready for whatever that is, to know, legally, where we stand so I can say yes this is how we can punish this man. I want to know so I don't give him false hope, so....oh God...

Paul Hey. Hey, sit down.

(*She does.*)

(*He goes to her, gently massaging her shoulders.*)

Paul I was thinking about this and there are some other...*interesting* aspects of the law you might want to be aware of.

Michelle Like?

Paul Like, were there any photos sent?

Michelle Yes. Yes there were. Jack had a photo of him.

Paul And was it, would you say it was, indecent?

Michelle You mean...?

Paul Yes or even partially clothed.

Michelle No. No. The one I found, he's in a winter jacket, up some ski slope.

Paul Found?

Michelle Saw. I meant saw.

Paul Maybe there's more? Ask Jack.

Michelle And if there are?

Paul If he sent or received indecent images, now *that's* illegal.

Michelle But the age of consent, it's...

Paul It's illegal to make or distribute images of people *under eighteen*.

Michelle (*Up.*) So what – he can do things with my son but he can't *take a picture* of him?

Paul Correct.

Michelle That's...ridiculous, Paul. Isn't that *ridiculous*?

Paul It's the law.

Michelle (*She has difficulty with this.*) I paid for his train ticket. That day. I drove him to the station and I thought he should save his money for some McDonalds or something in town so I parked up and walked in and paid and kissed him on the cheek and waved as the train... (*Head in hands – frustration, exhaustion but not crying.*)

Paul (*Putting his arms around her from behind.*) Hey. Hey. Come on now. Don't do this to yourself. It'll be okay. You'll be okay.

(*He rests his head against hers, rocks slowly.*)

(*His hands start to rub over her body.*)

(*His actions become increasingly sexual. He brushes his lips against her neck.*)

(*She finally realises what's happening and pulls herself away.*)

Michelle What're you doing, Paul?

Paul What?

Michelle Don't!

Paul I'm sorry I just thought you wanted...you know.

Michelle Well I don't!

Paul *(Playful.)* My office. After work. That used to be your thing right? Over the desk,

Michelle Paul.

Paul still in your skirt, rip your knickers off.

(He advances, making another play.)

Michelle Paul!

Paul There's still people here, though, got to be quiet.

Michelle Paul, fuck the fuck off!

(He stops, hurt.)

Paul Fine. *Shit.* Don't bite my head off.

Michelle That's not why I'm here.

Paul It's why you're *usually* here.

Michelle I'm here as a friend.

Paul Oh friend now is it, what about "let's keep it casual?"

Michelle Paul...

Paul Pop round for a quickie when it suits you, "Fancy a drink?"
 "No, gotta get home."
 And that's fine, totally fine, we both know where we stand,
(Continues.)

Michelle We talked about this.

Paul well maybe you do, I don't know what the hell this is. *(He is trying not to cry.)* Fuckbuddies? Is that what they call it? I mean, you make me feel like trash, you know that?

Michelle Pull yourself / together.

Paul But now, now that it's Jack oh suddenly / we're friends.

Michelle What do want from me Paul?

Paul *(He cannot contain it any more – bursts into tears. He is barely coherent.)* I want to take you for dinner!

Michelle What?

Paul I want to go out for dinner! A drink. You know, a date. Normal.

Michelle Pull yourself together.

Paul Sorry.

Michelle What if I knew who he was?

Paul Who?

Michelle This man. From the internet.

Paul How do you know who he is?

Michelle What if Jack told me?

Paul Did jack tell you?

Michelle You must know people, your line of work.

Paul People?

Michelle Yes, people

Paul Well of course I know people but what kind of people?

Michelle You know what I mean.

Paul I really don't.

Michelle People not, you know, like us. People who don't live in the well-lit law-abiding world. People over there, a bit in the shadows.

Paul You mean thugs?

Michelle No...

Paul You mean criminals?

Michelle No!

Paul Good. Because if you're implying...

Michelle What?

Paul You know who he is?

Michelle What if I do?

Paul Then you shouldn't do a thing.

Michelle Just thinking out loud.

Paul You sure you're not hungry?

Michelle I should really get home.

Paul Or what about the wine bar?

(Jack comes into the scene. He closes his eyes – he is asleep.)

Michelle Paul?

Paul Yes?

Michelle It's not going to happen.

(Michelle watches Jack sleep.)

(She is unsteady on her feet, struggling to stand up straight - she's drunk.)

(Eventually and for no apparent reason she burst out laughing)

Michelle Shit.

(Jack stirs.)

Jack Huh?

Michelle Shh, shh baby go back to sleep.

Jack Mum?

Michelle No, no don't wake up.

Jack What are you doing?

Michelle Nothing. Just sleep, baby.

Jack Mum why are you in my room? Is that...have you been smoking?

Michelle *(Waving air away from herself.)* No.

Jack Get out of here.

Michelle I'm not doing, I'm just watching you sleep baby so lie back down.

Jack You're watching me sleep?

Michelle Thas what mothers do.

Jack To babies Mum, toddlers.

Michelle You're my baby.

Jack Mum I'm naked under here will you get out now please?

Michelle Always. My. Baby. Remember, remember when you chose me, *(Continues.)*

Jack Mum.

Michelle sitting at the table between us, your little football shirt, 'Mummy and Daddy aren't living together any more, where do you want to live?' And you didn't even think about it you just said it.

Jack You're drunk Mum / go to bed.

Michelle You chose me. Me!

Jack Mum, I have school in the / morning.

Michelle Baby, listen to me.

Jack What?

Michelle The worst thing in the world is...sexual violence, / rape, you know what I'm talking about.

Jack Oh. My. God.

Michelle It's the absolute worst.

Jack Don't do this Mum *please*.

Michelle *I've* never, you know / but they say one in four women and that's, it's terrible.

Jack Oh god oh god shut up shut up (*Continues.*)

Michelle What? I'm just trying to be cool with this (*Continues.*)

Jack just stop talking Mum please this is awful.

Michelle since everybody's so cool with everything nowadays I can be cool too, cool just like your Dad.

Jack Mum don't do this.

Michelle Maybe I'll take up carpentry too. Move to the country, make doors. Waddyasay?

Jack I can't even deal with this.

Michelle How could you want to be, to be *violated* / like that?

Jack (*Covering his ears.*) MUM!

Michelle It's kind of a contradiction anyway wanting it, (*Continues.*)

Jack Please please just get out here now.

Michelle wanting to be *attacked*, if it's real you can't really want it.

Jack AARRRRRG!

Michelle
Colin. If you don't want to talk to me, maybe whatshisname does.

Jack What?

Michelle Maybe I'll talk to Colin. Surprised? I know who he is.

Jack You're lying.

Michelle I know things.

Jack You don't know anything. Do you? You don't.

Michelle Who pays your phone bill?

Jack You...evil (...*bitch.*)

Michelle Colin something. Pervert is what he is. Got his address too, of course you already / know it.

Jack Ohmygod Mum no what are you going to do?

Michelle Who says I'm doing anything?

Jack If you do, I swear...

Michelle You swear what?

Jack I'm asking you, *begging* you please. Don't.

Colin Jack, you say?

Michelle You just go back to sleep baby.

Colin (*Thinking*) Jack...

Michelle I won't do a thing.

Colin I'm sorry I don't know a Jack.

Michelle Don't you?

Colin No, sorry. / Bye.

Michelle Because I think you do.

Colin (*Keys out, ready to go.*) I've got to get in now, so / sorry.

Michelle Teenager? About this tall? Believe he was here a couple weeks ago? You chat to him online.

Colin (*The penny drops. Terror. Then, unconvincing.*) No. Ah, sorry. You must be thinking of / someone else.

Michelle You know who I mean.

Colin Good bye.

(*About to exit.*)

Michelle I'll tell your neighbours.

(*He freezes.*)

Colin What?

Michelle I'll buzz them, I'll tell them what you did, push notes in with their post.

Colin Who are you?

Michelle I'm his mother.

Colin I didn't do / anything.

Michelle I know what you did.

Colin What...do you want?

Michelle You just stay away from my boy.

Colin Okay.

Michelle Just stay away. Don't bother him any more.

Colin Okay. Okay. It was only the once.

Michelle Is that supposed to make me feel better?

Colin No.

Michelle Don't you think once was enough? You're an adult. You're in a suit. You have a job. Look where you live. He's a boy. *A boy*. And you take advantage of him, (*Continues.*)

Colin Now hang on.

Michelle you corrupt him, you should be ashamed.

Colin He contacted me.

Michelle What?

Colin On the website. I didn't...you have to know I didn't corrupt him, I didn't pressure him to do...anything.

Michelle He's sixteen.

Colin Which means he can do what he wants. With who he wants.

Michelle Have you no shame?

Colin I...You know what? How dare you.

Michelle Excuse me?

Colin You heard me. How dare you come to my home, (*Continues.*)

Michelle Oh this is really...

Colin ambush me on the street, (*Continues.*)

Michelle This is really good.

Colin and make accusations when I've done nothing illegal.

Michelle Illegal, maybe not. But let's say immoral. Indecent. Just plain *wrong*. Shall we ask your neighbours?

Colin Do you have any idea what happened between your son and I?

Michelle Yes and it makes me sick.

Colin Not that, I'm not – typical prude, obsessed by the sex everyone else is having.

Michelle I'm not / a prude.

Colin Your son and I have become friends.

Michelle You only want one thing / from him.

Colin Not true, *not true* we chat about everything. Music. Culture. College. His friends. You. We took him to the theatre, did you know that?

Michelle You...?

Colin He came here first, I don't deny that, but it's not like we *made* him and we certainly didn't kick him out afterwards. We made him lunch, had some tea. Then we caught a matinee. It was a lovely afternoon and he was free to leave any / time he wanted.

Michelle What do you think's going to happen, he'll fall in love with you?

Colin No.

Michelle You're going to date?

Colin Of course not.

Michelle He's half your age!

Colin I'm not - I have a partner. We're / very happy.

Michelle You...this is disgusting!

Colin Oh is it?

Michelle The way you live is depraved, preying on boys / grooming them, god only knows how many others you've gotten your hands on.

Colin I do not prey on anyone and I have just about had enough of you're your accusations.

Michelle I wonder what your 'partner' would think of this?

Colin He was there!

Michelle Oh my God.

Colin You know Jack told me what you're like but this is really...he wasn't exaggerating.

Michelle He told you about me? What did he say?

Colin Talk to him.

Michelle Just tell me!

Colin No.

Michelle He wouldn't talk to you, why would he talk to you?

Colin You may not understand this but when you're young and...like Jack, sometimes you need a...a guide. When I was his age, younger than him really, no internet, no mobile. It was the bus station, the toilets down by the pier. Some dodgy...let's just say nobody made me tea, no one took me to a show.

 You may not like it but Jack's becoming a...he's not a child. He has desires. He knows what he wants. You might not approve of his...preferences. So what? He likes what he likes. We had some fun. I can be a friend. A guide. Is that really worth all of...*this*?

 I'm going in now.

Michelle Wait! I'll tell your neighbours! I'll do it.

Colin Go ahead.

Michelle I'll tell the police!

Colin	Fine.
Michelle	I'll tell them to search your computer!
Colin	Okay.
Michelle	If they find anything you're over!
Colin	There's nothing to find.
David	So...
Michelle	What did Jack say about me?
David	I think...
Colin	Ask him.
David	I think that's pretty much everything. <i>(Beat.)</i> Think he's just giving things a final...check.
Michelle	Well it's not like I'm going to throw his things away.
David	I know. He knows.
Michelle	How's Jill?
David	She's good.
Michelle	And the kids?
David	Yea, good.
Michelle	They must be excited about...big brother.
David	Pretty excited, yes.
Michelle	I'm sure.
David	How's, uh, I'm sorry I forgot his name, the lawyer?
Michelle	Paul.
David	That's right, Paul.
Michelle	Good. Fine. We're taking it, you know, slow / but yes it's good.
Jack	That's everything. So...we better roll.

David Right. Well. I'll...I'll go wait in the car. Bye, Mich.

Michelle Bye.

Jack So I'll see you next Friday then?

Michelle Okay.

Jack Will you pick me up from the station or...?

Michelle Of course I'll pick you up.

Jack Okay. So...

Michelle And school knows about all...this?

Jack Yep. They might post some stuff or call you for whatever reason so just tell them I sorted it all with Miss Hargreaves.

Michelle Miss Hargreaves.

Jack That's right. I've written it all up it's on the thing by the phone.

Michelle Right. Right.

Jack Better go. *(Gives her a kiss.)* Bye Mum.

Michelle *(Grabbing him.)* Don't.

Jack Mum...

Michelle Enough's enough, it's not a joke any more.

Jack It was never a joke.

Michelle Jack you're not seriously going to...(move out.)

Jack You know I am.

Michelle In the middle of / nowhere?

Jack Yes.

Michelle Leave all your / friends?

Jack *Yes.*

Michelle This is unfair.

Jack I'm not doing this again, we've been / through this a million times.

Michelle Why is it *I'm* the one being punished here?

Jack Bye Mum.

Michelle Because I won't say I'm sorry?

Jack Let go of me, Mum.

Michelle Because I won't *apologise*?

Jack Dad's waiting.

Michelle I've been a good mother, haven't I? Treated you fair, given you freedom, taken an interest? I mean you come to me when you're fourteen – *fourteen* – and tell me you have this secret, you love this boy at school, you think you only love other boys and I listen and I hug you and wipe your tears but after you go to bed who wipes my tears? Because I cried Jack, I did.

Jack Mum –

Michelle Of course that was when you talked to me, back in those days when you'd come home and tell me about your day, when we'd sit together and watch some telly and chat. Now it's the tap tap tap of a keyboard, the vibration of a phone, nevermind the living breathing person sitting right here.

Jack Goodbye Mum.

Jack moves away and slowly leaves the stage, followed by the other actors.

Michelle I don't know what you do, who your friends are, *who you are*. So, yes, I saw your laptop sitting there and I looked. So what? I'm *glad* I did. Because what I found...well, it's just wrong. It's wrong, Jack. And if your parents don't tell you that, if your mother doesn't tell you that, then I'm a failure. I've failed.

To want to do that, to fantasise about...at your age...and then to actually go through with it? With *him*? At *his* age?

I'm sorry you're upset but there is such a thing as wrong. The law might not agree, your father – spineless – he might not agree, everyone else in the world might have gone mad but I know. It's wrong. It just is.

(She is now alone onstage.)

Doesn't anyone else see it?

Am I the only one?

Well?

Anyone?