

The Key

A monologue by Pete Malicki

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Jonny: a thirty-something-year-old male wearing a painter's overalls. Bit rough.

I have the biggest surprise lined up for Amy. She is going to go hysterical. I mean she will have no idea this is coming and it's going to blow her mind.

There are a few minor challenges setting it up but everyone knows I don't shy away from one of those. First is I don't have a key to her place. She's been my girl for what – ten months? – but she hasn't given me “the key” yet. (*laughs*) That's going to change quick smart when she realises how devoted I am to her. I am more serious than a brain haemorrhage when it comes to Amy Nelson.

That's why I'm masquerading as a painter standing up the top of the world's shakiest ladder. Not because I'm trying to rob her. I need to slip inside her second storey window without the nosy bloody neighbours calling the cops. As an added bonus she gets a free upgrade from puce to bone on her window frames. Not part of the surprise but she'll be grateful if she ever looks up from the car park.

Jonny looks around.

You know what? No one's looking so I'm going to slip inside. She shuts but never locks this window. “No one can get in, Jonny. It's way too high,” she says. (*climbs in*) There we go. Access *not* denied. Boom!

Ah shit, I got paint on the venetians. They're this really nice shade of avocado. She's going to come in and the first thing she sees'll be bone paint on her avocado venetians. Fuck, this won't do.

I head through to the bathroom and get some paper towels to wipe 'em clean. Smear it everywhere but it doesn't come off. Try a bit of water, then Spray and Wipe, then Ajax then Mr Muscle then fucking turps. Venetians are usually PVC or some kind of plastic polymer and they're meant to clean way easier than this. I scrub all the paint out but I clearly put too much elbow into it 'cause when I was done I'd scrubbed a hole all the way through one of 'em. Jesus, I'm supposed to be surprising Amy, not ruining her décor.

Check the time. I have at least six hours before she comes back. All good, I can multitask. Call Spotlight while I set up in the kitchen. Pull out all the pots and pans I need and raid the spice rack. Amy adores Italian food and she's going to wet her panties when she tastes my tortellini. “Oh, yeah hi. Do you stock vertical venetians? Great, do you have any avocado in stock? Avocado. *Avocado*. Not the fruit, you nong. The *colour*.”

Jonny puts his hand on his forehead.

The clown puts me on hold and I get started on the pasta. Bruschetta for starters, tiramisu for dessert. Amy will go *wild* when she sees this. By the time we get to dessert she'll be mad keen to eat it right off the washboard. (*pats stomach*) Alright, fresh tomatoes, expensive gruyere, field mushrooms. (*into phone*) “Yep, I'm here. Okay, I'm after avocado-coloured vertical venetian blinds. Stocking any? Brilliant, can you deliver to the city? Sweet. I need

them by two at the latest. Three *days*? Fuck, that won't do. Can you send 'em by courier? Don't care what it costs. Fine, I'll hold."

Useless bloody monkeys. Anyways, I spend the next ninety minutes slicing and dicing and garnishing and waiting for the store manager to call me back after I offered three hundred extra bucks for priority delivery. Toppings are ready to go on the bruschetta, pasta is cooked and ready to heat and serve. When the store manager finally gets back to me she says they can't do it! Unbelievable. I tell her I'll head out there my-damned-self as soon as I get on top of the tiramisu.

I leave the front door unlocked as I head off. Drive the ute to the nearest Spotlight store. Fuck me with a bendy tyre-iron, they don't stock avocado blinds here! Have to drive out to Lidcombe. Normally this kind of run-around would make me seriously consider killing a nun but... today is all about Miss Nelson. (*laughs*) What kind of a surprise would it be if she gets this call, like, "Amy, Jonny's in prison. He strangled one of Mother Teresa's bosom buddies with her own habit."

Get to the other Spotlight and have a fairly animated discussion with the clerk there who reckons the length and number of slats I need isn't the standard deal with verticals and I'll have to get them custom made. We go back and forth a bit until I tell the clerk I'll stab her repeatedly in the face if she doesn't get me the damned venetians I want and I decide it's best I leave before she calls the cops. Might have crossed the line a little there, but come the fuck on Spotlight! What's wrong with these homemaking suckers of dicks?

I go back to Amy's. I'll just deny having anything to do with the blinds. Knowing Amy she won't even notice them for weeks.

Jonny opens the door and instantly becomes alert.

Someone's here. No... some *ones*. There are noises. Noises that sound an awful lot like a couple of people have broken in to Amy's place to have sex. In her bed.

His mood darkens.

These break-and-entering bastards are about to get the biggest shock of their lives. Only *I* can break into Amy's place. I go into the kitchen. Knife? Too lethal. Mallet? Tenderise the bastard's balls! Frying pan? Still too hectic. Ooh, chili powder! That'll show them. Get a big handful of this up the clacker and you'll be squirming for weeks.

I turn around and all of a sudden I'm standing face to face with some naked fella. He's just staring at me, mouth open like a fish who just found out its mother was a lesbian. I tell you, this dopey face and his semi-erect cock make him look spectacularly stupid. It's probably the only reason I don't break his neck on the spot.

"So I'm guessing you're Amy's boyfriend then." He says it all rhetorical-like.

"Who's in the bedroom?" I ask.

Then the penny drops. He wouldn't be asking what my relationship to Amy is if the cunt hadn't just been fucking her. He opens his mouth to reply and I cut him off with (*quiet threat*) "Get out."

“But my clothes.”

“Do you want your clothes or do you want your cock attached to your body?”

He gets the point and fucks off out of the apartment quick smart. I’m so fucking livid I could murder a puppy; I could strangle that nun for real. How could Amy even...? I mean, on the day I cooked a three-course meal for her.

Then Amy comes out of her bedroom, naked. She freezes when she sees me. We stare at each other for a long moment.

“You cheating little slapper.”

“Who are you?” she says.

“Who am *I*? Who was he?”

“You’re in *my* place, pal. You don’t get to ask the questions. Who the hell are you?”

“I’m Jonny.”

She stares at me. “Well, Jonny, I suggest you get a head start on the police.”

Did she really just threaten that? “Look Amy, I don’t care who that guy was. Sure, if he comes here again I’ll seriously break every bone in his body in alphabetical order, but I’ve spent the day making you an amazing three course Italian feast. We should forget about all this and just enjoy it. But I need another fifteen with the tiramisu...”

Out of bloody nowhere, Amy charges across the room and slugs me in the mouth. I drop like a sack. She screams and punches me and screams and kicks me and it’s just a messy fucking blur of noise and violence. I only catch odd words – words like “stalker” and “psycho”; the phrase “how do you know my name?” seems to come up a fair bit.

She lays off and I collapse against the wall near the kitchen door, my arse thoroughly kicked. I wipe my eyes so I can see again but they’re full of blood two seconds later. Before I can even catch my breath, Amy’s kneeling beside me, pressing a teatowel against my bleeding nog. Her naked breast is inches away from my face.

“How about you don’t tell anyone I busted your face and I won’t tell anyone you broke into my place?”

I nod.

“You’re a royal fucking creep, you know that?”

Pause.

I nod again.

“Do you promise you’ll stop stalking me? I mean, God save you if you even *think* about breaking into my...”

I put a hand on Amy's arm. She looks me right in the eyes, furious but also... impressed? "I ruined your venetians. Let me pay for them."

She scowls. *Damn* it makes her look sexy. "Fine. Leave cash in my letterbox but don't come near this place again after."

I nod. Amy disappears for a bit and comes back fully dressed. She wraps a bandage around my head then helps me up and opens the front door.

"Fuck off now, Jonny."

I look right at her. Amy Nelson. My dream girl. Glowering at me like I'm some pervert who wants to fiddle with her nephew. I reach into my pants and take out my business card. "Enjoy the dinner, hey?"

She shoves me out the door and slams it right in my face. But she takes the card.

Few days later, I get the right-sized avocado venetians and ship them to her place. She doesn't call to thank me. I find my card in her garbage three days later.

Jonny thinks for a moment, lost.

Fuck, maybe she doesn't like Italian food as much as I thought. Monitor her outgoings for a couple of months and it turns out she eats a lot of Mexican food.

Well, thank God for that. It wasn't me after all – it was my poor choice of recipes. I look up how to cook with chillies and beans.

Amy's going to fucking adore my nachos.