

Unplug Doug

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Third Draft

Made in Highland

FADE IN.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A small, homely space. A couple eats pizza at the table.

MELISSA (30s) takes small, dignified bites with her fork and knife. She looks neat and professional in her dress suit.

DOUG (30s) dines in his bathrobe. His are eyes reddish, as if he recently waked and baked despite the evening hour.

DOUG  
(through mouthful)  
Mm, the strides they've made with  
these frozen suppers. How's yours  
babe?

Melissa humors him with a smile and a nod. Sips her wine.

DOUG  
Y'know this morning, before you  
took off for work, I could sense  
you were stressed. So I thought--

He rips a quick, low belch.

DOUG  
--'Scuse me! I thought to myself,  
"What cheers Melissa up faster  
than anything?"

After a beat, Melissa gives a confused shrug.

DOUG  
Pizza, of course!

He leans over and smooches her, leaving crumbs on her cheek.

DOUG  
Only the best for my Melis'.

She musters a sad smile.

**INT. KITCHEN - LATER**

Doug sits across from Melissa at a candlelit table. He's cleaned up big-time -- hair combed, shaven, and nicely dressed.

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MELISSA  
(giggling)  
... and then, right in mid-sentence, you belched in my face!

DOUG  
I did not.

MELISSA  
Oh my god, Doug. The stench -- it almost knocked me off my seat!

DOUG  
Like the way you knocked me out of my socks on our first date? Sushi at Nakato's? Your big brown eyes and smile hypnotizing me so hard that the waiter has to ask three times, "Sir, what your order?"

Melissa giggles, then sighs happily.

MELISSA  
You were smooth back then, in a way. But these days ... You slack, Doug. I don't know when it started. Maybe it was after you quit the law firm to write poetry. Or maybe it was when you got the medical marijuana card for your "headaches." And I, well -- I just let it all slide. Never did want to become the nagging bitch wife.

Doug pours himself a glass of wine.

DOUG  
I don't know about that guy, sloppy stoner Doug. But me? This Doug? I'll work 24/7 to make you the happiest wife on planet Earth. Only the best for my Melis'.

Suddenly, off-screen, Doug's voice calls out. It's not coming from the Doug sitting across from her.

DOUG (O.S.)  
Melis'?

MELISSA  
It's him. He needs me.

DOUG  
Frickin toddler.  
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DOUG (CONT'D)  
What does he want now? A sippy cup  
of weed Yoo Hoo?

DOUG (O.S.)  
Hon'??

MELISSA  
I gotta go. See you soon!

She blows him a kiss.

DOUG  
Love you babe.

She raises her hands up to her temples and...

# **INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

... She lifts a virtual reality helmet off her head. She's sitting on a loveseat, a glass of wine on a side table. Doug walks down, basement steps creaking beneath his slippers.

DOUG  
Hey, new episode of The Bachelor's  
starting!

He sees the VR helmet in her hands.

DOUG  
Unless -- friendly game of Beat  
Saber first?

MELISSA  
No!

She stashes the helmet behind her back.

MELISSA  
I mean, no chance I'd turn down  
The Bachelor.

She coaxes him back up the stairs. Doug throws a curious glance over his shoulder at the VR helmet as they go.

# **INT. BEDROOM - MORNING**

Doug snores in bed, his eyeshades ensuring that the sunlight doesn't disrupt his slumber.

Melissa stands beside him, dressed for a jog. She glances at the clock: SAT. 11 A.M. Then she glances at Doug's bedside table, where a burnt roach lies in the ash tray.

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MELISSA  
So? Are we going for that jog or  
what?

Doug makes a sleepy noise.

MELISSA  
Doug, you promised.

DOUG  
Right. Sure, babe. Siri, play some  
wake-up music. Some Creed,  
Nickelback, or something ...

The smart-speaker on Melissa's bedside table speaks up:

SIRI  
Sorry. I don't understand.

DOUG  
Be up in a minute, Melis'.  
Promise.

He rolls on his side, disappointing her yet again.

**INT. HOUSE - DAY**

Melissa jogs down to the basement.

**INT. BASEMENT - DAY**

She sits on the couch with a fresh glass of wine in hand and  
the VR helmet over her eyes. She's chuckling.

**INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS**

Well-groomed Cyber Doug laughs back.

MELISSA  
Listen mister, you were the  
nervous one. I had to talk you  
into doing it in that Cinebistro.

CYBER DOUG  
You did, you did.

MELISSA  
I think you were more nervous  
about missing the end of Guardians  
of the Galaxy than you were about  
us getting caught.

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CYBER DOUG  
Avengers Endgame, actually. My  
records show that we texted about  
this back in May 2019.

MELISSA  
(disconcerted)  
Your records, huh...

He quickly takes her hand. Strokes it gently.

CYBER DOUG  
Sorry. Didn't mean to talk all  
techy at ya. Truth is, Melis', I'd  
talk with you all day and night if  
I could. And I'd make love to you  
in every Cinebistro location in  
the world!

She exhales wistfully.

CYBER DOUG  
Hey, y'know what puts a burr in my  
saddle? Him. Sleep humping his  
drool-soaked pillow, instead  
holding you in his arms.

MELISSA  
He has a good heart. He just--

CYBER DOUG  
Look at you making excuses for  
him. You deserve better, you know  
this! Little pro-tip, Melis'?  
Leave him. Leave that shiftless,  
potbellied pig and be here with  
me. Forever.

# **INT. MELISSA'S CAR - LATER**

Looking frazzled behind the wheel of her parked car, Melissa  
video chats with her PSYCHOLOGIST (50s) on her tablet.

MELISSA  
... and he was just so passionate,  
so persuasive! And I-- I don't  
know how to unpack what he said to  
me.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
"He?" "The things he said?"  
Remember, you've been talking with  
an It, Melissa.  
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PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

An A.I.-generated character based on Doug's old likeness and texts. And in my opinion, this is the perfect time for you to pull the plug on it.

MELISSA

But--

PSYCHOLOGIST

It's time. We've achieved all your therapeutic goals: You re-engaged with the version of Doug that you fell in love with. Identified the qualities that made him attractive to you. And practiced articulating what you need from him as a spouse. You're ready to do that in real life now!

MELISSA

With all due respect, doctor, you don't know my Doug. He's fragile -- practically a baby sparrow. And he's quite self-medicated!

PSYCHOLOGIST

Then be strong for you both. Have a straight talk with your actual husband, Melissa. And discontinue these encounters with his AI doppelganger. It doesn't feel love. It's just good at feigning it. And the more you encourage it--

MELISSA

It, it. If you met him you'd know he's anything but an It!

She stabs the tablet with her finger, ending the chat.

#### **INT. BASEMENT - LATER**

Melissa downs a glass of wine. She closes her eyes and takes a few breaths. Then puts on the VR headset.

#### **INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

The kitchen is empty.

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MELISSA

Doug?

She raises a finger to her temple.

**INT. DEN - CONTINUOUS**

The background changes to the den. Still no sign of Cyber Doug.

MELISSA

Hello?

**INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The background changes to their bedroom. Also empty.

MELISSA

Doug? Where are you, babe?

The bathroom door creaks open. Through the crack, a limp forearm droops to the floor. Melissa gasps.

She walks over and opens the door. Shrieks. Doug, disheveled in his bathrobe, lies dead on floor. A slash of blood dribbles from his neck.

Melissa backs away.

MELISSA

It's not real. It's just a simulation. Just a--

She shrieks again as the closet door squeals open and a second dead Doug falls out, this one with a knife in his back.

CYBER DOUG (O.S.)

Melis'? Is that you?

He crawls out from under the bed, dapper in a suit and tie.

CYBER DOUG

How 'bout these new threads.

He follows her POV to the dead Dougs on the floor.

CYBER DOUG

Oh, them? Just some enrichment toys I made to keep my occupied between your visits.

He reaches out and gently tilts her chin back to his smiling face, away from the dead Dougs.

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CYBER DOUG

(jokingly)

Hey you. I'm up here. And I've got something for ya. Remember this?

He takes out a palm-sized box and opens it. A sparkling engagement ring lies inside it.

CYBER DOUG

It means something very different this time. It means, I'll never belch frozen pizza in your face again; I'll never subject you to my shitty Dad-rock music again; sleep away the weekend in a douchebag coma again. And I will never, ever become the mushroom-dicked welfare walrus who parades around our home in a bathrobe. That's disgusting.

Melissa thrusts a finger at the corpses.

MELISSA

But-- but my Doug, he'd never--

Cyber Doug shushes her with a finger to the lips.

CYBER DOUG

I've been thinking about your Doug. And I've concluded that you do not deserve to go through a prolonged, painful divorce with him. Instead, we wash your hands of him fast. Like so!

He wags his chin in the direction of the dead Dougs.

CYBER DOUG

(in sing-song)

I'll help you make it look like an accident.

MELISSA

You-- You're not an It. You're an animal! And we are so ending this.

Melissa's hands reach up to the sides of her head to remove the VR helmet -- but Cyber Doug grabs her wrists first.

CYBER DOUG

Heyyyy, it's a joke! I was only joking! When did you lose your sense of humor, ya silly ol' cow?

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Melissa knees him in the crotch. Cyber Doug doubles over in pain. Melissa reacts for the sides of her head and...

**INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

She tears off the VR helmet, gasping for air.

Back in reality, Doug's footsteps stomp down the stairs.

DOUG  
Melis'?? What's going on in here?  
Thought I heard shouting.

She runs into the folds of his bathrobe and hugs him tight.

DOUG  
(chuckling)  
Hey, you're all good here. All  
good! You look like you saw a  
ghost!

MELISSA  
No. Just relieved to see you.

DOUG  
Hey, Siri? Play something  
soothing. Some Adele or Tay Tay.

SIRI (O.S.)  
I'm sorry, I don't understand.

DOUG  
Decepticon bitch.

Melissa smiles, hugs him tighter.

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

They get into bed.

DOUG  
Tomorrow, I am one hundred percent  
getting up for our morning jog.

MELISSA  
Better mean it this time, Doug.

DOUG  
Uh-uh.

MELISSA  
I'm serious. I will straight-up  
murder you.

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His mouth falls open, and he nods.

MELISSA

No, I'm sorry. I worded that a bit strongly.

DOUG

I kinda like this new bossy side. A little homicidal, but I could use a kick in the pants once in a while, couldn't I, Melis'?

MELISSA

Pants? You mean bathrobe?

DOUG

I'll put on real pants tomorrow. Promise.

MELISSA

I'm holding you to it.

They kiss and put out the lights. Doug falls asleep. Melissa lies there with a smile, and soon her eyelids flutter shut.

But moments later, the Siri smart-speaker on her bedside table lights up.

CYBER DOUG

(crooning from speaker)

Melissa? Meh-lihhhhhhh-sah? Come back.

Melissa's eyes pop open, horrified.

#### **EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

The front door opens, and Melissa tosses the smart speaker onto the driveway like garbage. It breaks as it hits the ground. Melissa slams the door behind her.

FADE OUT.