

Behind the Lie¹

By Nick Rongjun Yu²
Translated by Claire Conceison³

TIME: The present

LOCATION: A place suitable for interrogations

CHARACTERS:

POLICEMAN, police detective, male, 30–40 years old. The interrogator

DOCTOR, psychiatrist, male, 35–45 years old. The interrogated

Nick Rongjun Yu (aka Yu Rongjun, Nick Yu) was born in Yu village in Anhui province in 1970. China's most produced living playwright, he has written thirty-five plays in a range of genres, including pop-culture comedy, psychological drama, absurdist tragedy, documentary theatre, literary adaptation, monologue, and physical theatre. Trained in rehabilitation at the Shanghai Physical Education Institute, his career path changed radically after seeing a production of Othello at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and joining its staff in 1995, quickly rising through the ranks as director of programming, publicity, and marketing, and now deputy general manager for the company and a highly respected voice in China's theatrical world. Despite censorship from the Chinese government, Yu skillfully approaches taboo subjects in both direct and subtle ways, playing with alternative forms of dialogue, structure, and staging. His plays have won numerous awards in China and been translated into several languages and staged at international theatre festivals. He is also founder and director of the annual Asia Contemporary Theatre Festival and the Shanghai College Theatre Festival.

¹*Huangyan beihou* (谎言背后) can be translated as "Behind the Lies" or "Behind the Lie"; the translator has chosen the latter. The play was written in 2001 and produced at the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre, 7–29 March 2003 (with a total of twenty-one performances in the Drama Salon that seats 220), directed by Xiong Yuanwei and featuring Yin Zhusheng as the doctor and Wei Chunguang as the policeman. Subsequent productions in China include: Triangle Experimental Space (2005), Shanghai Left Bank Drama Studio (2008), Shanghai East District Performing Factory (2008), Zhejiang Dream Factory (2008), and Shandong Theatre Company (2008). This English translation, commissioned by the Asian Cultural Council, premiered in a staged reading at Tufts University on 21 November 2004, directed by the translator and featuring Christopher Bonewitz and George Rausch. Subsequent staged readings outside of China include Typhoon4 International East Asian Playreading Festival, London (2005), Pushpush Theatre Company, Atlanta (2010), and Duru Tiyatro Theatre Company, Istanbul, Turkey (in Turkish, 2009). *Huangyan beihou* was published in the journal *Plays (Juben)* in 2004, and in an anthology of Yu's plays in 2008 (*The Insane Asylum Next to Heaven: Collected Plays of Yu Rongjun* (Shanghai: Jingxiu Wenzhang Publishing House).

²Yu Rongjun chose the English name "Nick" in middle school, is known by the name Nick Yu among foreigners in China and abroad, and uses the official full name of Nick Rongjun Yu for his published work outside of China.

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Scene One

Lights up on a simple but constrained interrogation room, with several large pipes inexplicably cutting across the ceiling, making one feel stifled. Painted in white strokes on the pipes are strange letters, symbols, and a skull and crossbones, causing one to wonder what once took place here. Dim light seeps out from cracks in the pipes, frail and cowardly in the dark space. Drops of water ooze out from the pipe—collecting, falling, crashing to the floor, bursting—their melodious sound constant and monotonous, making the space seem as if it is pushing beyond its cramped confines. Thus, the tiny space seems increasingly surreptitious and unstable.

A man quietly sits on a chair, his back perfectly straight, as if pondering something deeply or as if his mind is elsewhere. From the look of his uniform, he is a police detective, or at least he strikes one as an interrogator of some sort. After a long while, he seems to come up with an idea, and from his bag he draws a pack of cigarettes, takes one out, lights it, and takes a heavy drag as if trying to inhale all the smoke into his stomach. Then, he takes another long drag that rises up in circles like a demon under the light, coldly fixing its gaze on him and circling around him.

The POLICEMAN extends his hand as if to flick the ashes off the end of his cigarette, but his hand trembles and the ash falls outside the ashtray. This gives the impression that he is nervous. He takes another heavy drag, trying with all his might to control his nerves, but unexpectedly chokes, suddenly coughing violently.

The POLICEMAN looks at the cigarette in his hand, hesitates a moment, then puts it out. He stands up and continues walking, his boots striking the floor with a clear sound. His wavering footsteps make it appear he is searching for something, and finally he seems to find it as he stops in front of the circuit breaker at the corner of the wall. He pushes the lever, making a banging sound. The lights come on, and the huge wall facing him has a glass wall, behind which suddenly appears an isolation room.

Along with the strong light and isolation room, the DOCTOR suddenly appears in the interrogation seat. He raises his hands to block the light—they are in handcuffs. This makes him seem impatient and frightened. He stands up, starts walking, slowly adapts, and suddenly it seems as if he has arrived somewhere and so he stops walking and carefully listens to something. Then he walks over to the glass wall, leans on the wall and strains to see something with his pale, twisted face pressed against the glass.

The POLICEMAN lights another cigarette and smokes it with utmost calm, flicking its ash as if right in the DOCTOR's line of vision.

The POLICEMAN walks over to the wall and puts his face very close to that of the DOCTOR. He carefully sizes up the DOCTOR inside, as if observing a captured animal. The DOCTOR seems to sense something, and his face is cold and expressionless.

The DOCTOR finally gives up and sits down, seeming dejected, perhaps pretending he is dejected. He mechanically fiddles with his handcuffs, somewhat preoccupied, and the metallic sound is dull and drab in the room.

Suddenly, the POLICEMAN makes up his mind and swiftly extinguishes his cigarette.

POLICEMAN: (Sternly) Tell me!

The DOCTOR is surprised, lifts his head and looks around, searching for the source of the voice, and at last seems to be staring at the POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN: (*Sternly*) Why did you kill her?

DOCTOR: (*Timidly*) I . . . I didn't kill her.

POLICEMAN: Then who did?

DOCTOR: I don't know.

POLICEMAN: You don't know?

DOCTOR: I honestly . . . don't know.

POLICEMAN: You honestly don't know?

DOCTOR: I . . . I really don't know.

POLICEMAN: Then what do you know?

DOCTOR: Me?

POLICEMAN: Who else should I be asking?

DOCTOR: I don't know.

POLICEMAN: You don't know much, do you?!

The DOCTOR remains silent.

POLICEMAN: I'll remind you: just today at dusk, someone reported that your wife had been murdered.

DOCTOR: That was me who reported it.

POLICEMAN: Is that so?

DOCTOR: Yes . . . that is . . . very important.

POLICEMAN: You made the report—that helps cover it up, doesn't it?

The DOCTOR remains silent.

POLICEMAN: This evening . . . no, it was dusk. Someone . . . no, it was you . . . fuck! (*Tries to calm himself down*) At dusk, you made the report . . . said your wife had been murdered in your home.

DOCTOR: I only said she was dead.

POLICEMAN: She was murdered.

DOCTOR: I never said that. I only said she was dead. I couldn't tell whether or not she had been murdered.

POLICEMAN: (*Compromising*) Fine. Dead, then. When they rushed to the scene, you were sitting on the sofa, is that true?

The DOCTOR remains silent.

POLICEMAN: Tell me, is that true?

The DOCTOR suddenly stands.

DOCTOR: (*Loudly*) Yes, because it took them so long to get there—I couldn't just stand there the whole time—that's true! When I entered the room, I saw her collapsed on the bed with her mouth full of blood.

POLICEMAN: On the bed?

DOCTOR: *(Pauses for a moment)* Yes, on the bed. I walked over—no, I ran over—and I reached my hand out under her nose, then I checked her pulse on her throat. She was dead.

POLICEMAN: Very professional.

DOCTOR: I'm a doctor.

POLICEMAN: And then?

DOCTOR: Then I walked over to the telephone, grabbed the phone, dialed, and waited for them to get there. The time went by so slowly, minute after minute passed . . . I was definitely standing, and she was lying on the bed nearby. Her face was white, but the blood was so red . . .

POLICEMAN: The blood was red? Then she hadn't been dead very long.

DOCTOR: Right.

POLICEMAN: Now, when you went upstairs, did you see anyone suspicious?

DOCTOR: Did I . . . ?

POLICEMAN: *(Loudly)* Did you or not?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: But . . . *(Glancing at the notebook in his hand)* The windows in your home were open.

DOCTOR: When it isn't cold out, we always sleep with the windows open. *(Suddenly thinks of something)* Maybe he could have climbed down along the drainpipe.

POLICEMAN: He who?

DOCTOR: The suspicious person you mentioned.

POLICEMAN: Climbed down from that high? You think?

DOCTOR: You think a panicked Pig will jump off a bridge?

POLICEMAN: What did you say?

DOCTOR: Nothing, nothing . . . I was sitting on the sofa—I couldn't just stand there forever.

POLICEMAN: You were sitting on the sofa, your wife was lying on the bed, she was dead, her body was still warm, and you are sure you didn't see anyone—but you insist that it wasn't you who killed your wife . . .

DOCTOR: You—what do you mean by that?! *(After a while)* And how do you know her body was still warm?

The POLICEMAN is slightly taken aback.

POLICEMAN: *(Suddenly losing his temper)* Am I questioning you or are you questioning me? *(Agitated)* Yes, her body was still warm—they touched her . . . would you like to know where they touched her?

The DOCTOR suddenly stands up, as if he has discovered something, and also infuriated.

DOCTOR: *(Sits back down)* I'm sorry, I, I didn't mean—I was just wondering how they knew? I'm not comfortable with them—Never mind, pretend I never asked.

The POLICEMAN switches off the light in the isolation room.

Silence.

The POLICEMAN paces back and forth.

POLICEMAN: Why don't you say something?

DOCTOR: Why did you turn off the light?

POLICEMAN: I turned off the light because you are not human.

DOCTOR: *(Suddenly. His body is pressed tightly against the glass, as if he wants to pass through it. He says loudly)* Are you trying to insult me?

POLICEMAN slams the lights back on.

POLICEMAN: *(Gazes at the DOCTOR, laughs coldly, says in a low voice)* Insult you? She was your wife, wasn't she? She died, and you don't seem at all heartbroken. Do you consider yourself human?

DOCTOR: *(Pointing to his chest)* My heart is broken, but my heart is in here, in my chest—you can't see it.

POLICEMAN: *(Smiles coldly)* Is that so?

DOCTOR: *(Both hands touching the glass, looking straight into the front room)* I am heartbroken, but what am I supposed to do?

POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR, then returns to his chair and sits down. He takes out a cigarette, considers lighting it, but puts it back.

POLICEMAN: You! Sit down!

DOCTOR looks at him, but does not move.

POLICEMAN: You can't just stand there forever, right?!

DOCTOR looks at him. At last he obeys and sits down on the chair.

POLICEMAN: You came from Orinoco?

DOCTOR: Yes.

POLICEMAN: Did you raise mules?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: Then how did you get to be so stubborn?

DOCTOR: *(Jumps up)* I'm warning you, do not insult me.

POLICEMAN: You are stubborn. Otherwise, why were you standing for so long just now?

DOCTOR: I can't sit forever either, can I?! Also, you never offered me a seat.

POLICEMAN: Offered you a seat—you think you're a guest!

DOCTOR: Yes, it's you who invited me to come here—it wasn't my idea.

POLICEMAN: Is that so?

POLICEMAN glances at him, lights his cigarette, takes a drag.

POLICEMAN: Come clean! Why did you kill your wife?

DOCTOR: I did not kill her, and this is the last time I will answer that question.

POLICEMAN: Now . . . she, yes, your wife . . . today she wore so little clothing. All she was wearing was a silk nightgown, a very thin gown, a pink gown. It wasn't cold today, but it wasn't hot either, was it?

DOCTOR: I don't know . . . I guess it wasn't hot.

POLICEMAN: Then why wasn't she wearing more clothing?

DOCTOR: She was at home—she can wear less clothing at home. Maybe she thought that way . . .

POLICEMAN: That way what?

DOCTOR: *(Somewhat angry)* Maybe she thought that way she'd be more . . . sexy, are you satisfied?

POLICEMAN: *(Smiling with evil intentions)* Sexy? Sexy—she was lying on the bed—were you two . . . making love?

DOCTOR: Don't be stupid! I had just gotten home from work.

POLICEMAN: I'm stupid? You had just gotten home from work?

DOCTOR: Yes, today I had just finished up . . . uh . . . a patient . . .

POLICEMAN: You're a surgeon?

DOCTOR: . . . ? *(He raises his head, seeming to stare right at the POLICEMAN)*

POLICEMAN: What's wrong?

DOCTOR: *(Ignoring him)* One of my colleagues had something to do, so I finished up for him.

POLICEMAN: Your colleague had something to do?

DOCTOR: Yes. I drove in the driveway and from a distance I saw that the door was closed, so I beeped the horn—she was definitely home, so I knew she would open the door for me.

POLICEMAN: Why would she do that?

DOCTOR: Because she's my wife. She called me this afternoon to tell me her cousin was coming over, so she wanted me to come home a little earlier. But I had two patients . . .

POLICEMAN: But you still came home early anyway?

DOCTOR: One of my patients canceled.

POLICEMAN: You mentioned her cousin just now. Did you see him?

DOCTOR: No. I found her dead as soon as I got home, and I called right away, and you know the rest. And now . . . you are interrogating me.

POLICEMAN: What about her cousin? What does he do?

DOCTOR: The public thinks he is a CEO, but insiders know he is a crook. If it weren't for the fact that they are cousins, my wife wouldn't have been able to marry me.

POLICEMAN: Why not?

DOCTOR: Because he has a thing for her.

POLICEMAN: And you . . . ?

DOCTOR: He gave us our house and a lot of money. And she promised me right in front of him that it was over between them.

POLICEMAN: (*staring at the DOCTOR*) Did her cousin do it?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: How do you know?

DOCTOR: Because he liked her.

POLICEMAN: That's no reason.

DOCTOR: You like being a policeman, right?

POLICEMAN: Yes, so what?

DOCTOR: You could resign.

POLICEMAN: If I like it, why would I resign?

DOCTOR: If he liked her, why would he kill her?

POLICEMAN: (*Understands, walks anxiously over to the glass wall, roars ferociously*) You better watch it.

DOCTOR: I only said he wouldn't kill her for that reason!

POLICEMAN: (*Angrily*) You! (*Slams off the lights in the room. He is obviously upset, but at last he turns the lights back on, tries to calm himself down*) What's her cousin's name? What does he do? How can I get in touch with him? Tell me!

The DOCTOR looks outside. It seems he can feel the POLICEMAN's anger; he gets a bit timid, and begins to fumble in his pockets.

POLICEMAN: (*Picking up his jimmy club*) Hey, what are you doing?

The DOCTOR finally pulls out a business card and presses it against the glass.

POLICEMAN: (*Stands up, walks over, takes a look at the business card. Slowly*) He killed your wife, then . . . then framed you for it. Or maybe you were happy to take the blame and be imprisoned for him, in exchange for favors from him. So, how long are you prepared to serve? Five years, ten years?

The DOCTOR starts to laugh and sits back down on the chair.

POLICEMAN: (*Angrily*) What's so funny?

DOCTOR: If you lose your job, you won't need to collect unemployment—you can just write a novel to support yourself.

POLICEMAN: You're quite pleased with yourself, aren't you?

DOCTOR: I just admire your imagination. (*Suddenly quite sorrowful*) What do I have to be pleased about? She was my wife, and now she's dead.

POLICEMAN: If it was not her cousin, then tell me, why would you want to kill your wife?

DOCTOR is silent.

POLICEMAN: Tell me, why would you do it? She was beautiful, wasn't she? She was wearing her nightgown, you could see her nice figure through it. What did your wife do for a living? (*DOCTOR ignores him*) She didn't have a job? You two . . . oh, yes, he would give you money, he had lots of money. It didn't matter whether he was a legitimate businessman or a crook—as long as you are a drug peddler and weapons dealer, you can be rich. That way, your wife wouldn't have to work, right? (*DOCTOR doesn't reply*) Why did you kill your wife? Did she get in your way? Did you have another woman, or did you just hate her cousin? You probably wanted to kill her all along, didn't you?

The DOCTOR still does not speak. The POLICEMAN resolutely extinguishes his cigarette in the ash tray and then slams off the lights to the isolation room, leaving the DOCTOR sitting in the dark. He walks over in front of the glass and softly knocks on the glass wall.

POLICEMAN: You can tell me now! No need to be self-conscious. (*Suddenly raises his voice*) Tell me!

The POLICEMAN walks to front of table and takes out a cigarette, lights it.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: (*Quietly*) Tell me!

The POLICEMAN turns on the lights, and the DOCTOR is relaxing on the chair, looking at him with a faint smile on his face.

DOCTOR: I already told you, I will not answer your groundless question again.

POLICEMAN: (*Nodding*) Okay, then what do you want to say? You always have a little something to say, don't you? (*He grabs a pen*) Say it!

DOCTOR: They say that when men are at their most pretentious, they smoke—what do you think?

POLICEMAN: Did your wife smoke?

DOCTOR: She did.

POLICEMAN: Then she was pretentious?

DOCTOR: No, she was a woman. Someone once told her that the way she smoked was very elegant. I'm sure it was a man who said that.

POLICEMAN: *(Pause)* A man? Why couldn't it have been you?

DOCTOR: It wasn't me.

POLICEMAN: You didn't care about your wife?

DOCTOR: Why do you say that?

POLICEMAN: Because . . . if it wasn't you who killed your wife, how is it that you have no idea why someone else would murder her?

DOCTOR: I have no idea, and I won't think about it. That is your job and taxpayers pay you to do it.

POLICEMAN: Did you two . . . argue a lot?

DOCTOR: No, we were very affectionate.

POLICEMAN: Affectionate?

DOCTOR: I took good care of her, and she took good care of me. Some would call that love.

POLICEMAN: Love?

DOCTOR: Yes. It is the truest love. But the kind of love you imagine is just the ending of a fairy tale—it only exists in one's memory, and it would wither in real life. When it comes to most husbands and wives, I think sometimes love is merely something they make, because, aside from making love, there is no mutual affection to be found in their daily lives.

The POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR, terrified. He seems to be in deep thought.

DOCTOR: What is it? Did I say something wrong?

POLICEMAN: Your wife just died and you are completely indifferent, and full of glib talk.

DOCTOR: You're the one making me talk. Just now, before your interrogation, they questioned me for hours and I didn't say a word.

POLICEMAN: Why?

DOCTOR: Because the questions they asked were too callous, but you have feelings—I like that.

POLICEMAN: You like that?

DOCTOR: Yes, but be careful to keep your emotions in check.

POLICEMAN: What do you mean?

DOCTOR: Take me, for instance. I'm a surgeon, but if my mood is not stable when I operate, I could cut out your testicle while operating on your bladder.

POLICEMAN: Are you insane?

DOCTOR: I can't promise, but I am quite certain I am not.

POLICEMAN: Shut up!

DOCTOR: I didn't want to say anything—it was you who made me talk, and now you want me to shut up. You are much more powerful than them: just now they wanted me to talk, and now you want me to shut up.

POLICEMAN: (*Very angry*) You . . . you sit down.

The DOCTOR looks intensely in the POLICEMAN's direction, then sits down calmly on the chair.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: Okay, talk about your wife! How did you meet? What was your marriage like?

Silence.

POLICEMAN: (*Seeming to lose patience*) Didn't I ask you a question?

DOCTOR: Didn't you tell me to shut up?

POLICEMAN: You want to make things uncomfortable, don't you? Damn it, tell me!

DOCTOR: Tell you what?

POLICEMAN: About your wife.

DOCTOR: Me and my wife?

POLICEMAN: Why not?

DOCTOR: But that has nothing to do with this case.

POLICEMAN: I want to hear about it.

DOCTOR: I have the right to remain silent.

POLICEMAN: Not here with me you don't.

DOCTOR: Really? (*Seems to give up arguing*) All right, you win. I don't want to become a stubborn ass like you. Back then, I was an intern at the hospital. One night, I saw a woman lying on the side of the road when I walked by the dissection lab on my way home from the hospital . . .

POLICEMAN: (*Writing this down, and somewhat doubtful*) Is this a story?

DOCTOR: Yes—her story, and my story.

POLICEMAN: Continue.

DOCTOR: (*Smiling*) How can you have so little faith in yourself?

POLICEMAN: (*Loudly*) Go on.

DOCTOR: She was unconscious, gripping a lab test result in her hand—she was pregnant.

POLICEMAN: Her cousin's child?

DOCTOR: (*Nodding*) She was very weak. I found an empty bottle of sleeping pills near her. Maybe she tried to kill herself because she was pregnant. Then I took her to

the emergency room. Because of all the sleeping pills she had taken, she had a miscarriage. After a few days, she was released from the hospital and I took her to her home, and that's where I live now. In a luxury house on the hillside in the city. When we got there, she wouldn't let me leave—she said she needed me. Later, on the bed, she made a man out of me.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: *(Thinking about something)* It was she who seduced you?

DOCTOR: Yes it was.

POLICEMAN: And then?

DOCTOR: Then we lay on the bed, naked, and waited for her cousin to come home.

The DOCTOR suddenly stops talking, puts his head in his hands, hunches his back.

POLICEMAN: *(Stands up, walks in front of the glass wall)* What is it?

DOCTOR: *(Raises his head, his eyes are filled with tears)* It was probably around 9:00 PM when the sound of the door opening woke me from a dream—her cousin, a guy around fifty years old, walked in. He didn't look surprised when he saw me. He knelt in front of her at the side of the bed and asked her to slap him.

POLICEMAN: And then?

DOCTOR: She slapped him, as hard as she could. Her cousin's face swelled up like an apple. But I noticed he was smiling, smiling as he looked at her. Then he left. *(Slight pause)* As for me . . . it was as if I didn't even exist in his eyes.

POLICEMAN: And then?

DOCTOR: She gave me everything: money, a car, the house, as well as her body and her love.

POLICEMAN: And then?

The DOCTOR ignores him and slowly walks in front of the glass wall. He seems to be in agony. Suddenly, he pounds on the wall with all his might.

DOCTOR: *(Crazed)* And THEN? Shut the fuck up. And then we got married, and then she was killed—are you satisfied, you sicko? What else do you want to know? Go ahead, ask—I'll tell you. Don't you want to know how we made love? ASK ME!

The POLICEMAN continues to stare at the DOCTOR, then suddenly stands up and, also crazed, opens the door and enters the room. He seizes the DOCTOR, pulls him out, and shoves him into the interrogation chair. The DOCTOR lifts his head and looks at the POLICEMAN ferociously. They stand off like two lions about to tear each other apart.

POLICEMAN: *(Sternly)* Tell me your full name, your age, your occupation *(as if pulling teeth, then loudly)* Damn it, tell me . . .

DOCTOR: *(Giving in)* My name is Frank . . .

Lights down.

Scene Two

Lights up.

The POLICEMAN violently pushes the DOCTOR onstage. The DOCTOR is in handcuffs and is staggering somewhat, practically falling down but just able to keep himself standing up. The POLICEMAN enters with him and seems extremely unhappy. They look at each other in silence. After a while, the POLICEMAN seems disinterested. He goes over and sits in the chair, grabbing the coffee cup from the counter in front of him; he looks at it, discovers there is no coffee in it, then puts it down. His movements are mechanical.

POLICEMAN: So? Pretty hard to take, huh!

DOCTOR: (*Peeking through the glass wall to look inside the room*) I'm fine!

POLICEMAN: Your time here has really dragged on. Holding out here won't do you any good.

DOCTOR: I've said everything I was supposed to say; I've said things I wasn't supposed to say. What more do you want from me?

POLICEMAN: But you still haven't gotten to the point.

DOCTOR: (*Laughs coldly*) The point? What point? You want me to say I killed her? I almost want to say it, too, but it's not true.

POLICEMAN: Be honest with me!

DOCTOR: I am being honest with you. There is a difference between lying and telling the truth—what do you want from me?

POLICEMAN: Sit down.

The DOCTOR walks directly in front of the POLICEMAN. Somewhat provoked, he slowly sits down in the interrogation chair, then carefully sets up the restraint bar on the chair.

DOCTOR: Ok, go ahead and ask!

POLICEMAN: Ask what?

DOCTOR: Ask the questions you've thought up! I'm sure you didn't sleep a wink last night.

POLICEMAN: Is that of particular interest to you? Does it make you feel like you're at the office?

DOCTOR: What do you mean?

POLICEMAN: What do I mean? Aren't you the one who has to think up all the questions, and then go ask them to your patients?

DOCTOR: Show a little more respect for my work.

POLICEMAN: Work? Playing with monkeys? Didn't you say yesterday that you are a surgeon?

DOCTOR: You said that. I just didn't correct you.

POLICEMAN: I looked into it. You are a psychiatrist.

DOCTOR: *(Silent, then a bit later)* I am! So what?

POLICEMAN: So what? Are you lying?

DOCTOR: I was just trying to cooperate with you, because, the way you see it, doesn't being a surgeon make me seem more like a murderer? Doesn't it give you that feeling of the surgeon's ice-cold knife cutting into skin?

POLICEMAN: But lying won't do you any good.

DOCTOR: It will do you lots of good, though, won't it?

The POLICEMAN slowly stands up, walks in front of the DOCTOR, stares into his face in confrontation. Suddenly he ruthlessly boxes the DOCTOR in the ears.

DOCTOR: *(Jumps fiercely to his feet, covering his face)* You hit me?!

POLICEMAN: The way you see it, doesn't that make me seem more like a policeman?

DOCTOR: You goddamn . . .

POLICEMAN: I've given you grounds for a grievance, haven't I, goddamn it? Yes, I hit you in the head, and I'll even write it in my notes—that way, if you sue me later, you'll have proof.

DOCTOR: I will sue you.

POLICEMAN: I believe you will. But right now I'm not too worried about it.

Silence.

After a while, the POLICEMAN stands and walks over behind the DOCTOR and presses his shoulders, moving his palms as if he will strangle him.

DOCTOR: *(Getting nervous)* What are you doing?

POLICEMAN: *(Relaxed)* Nothing! Do you want to know what it tastes like when someone gets strangled?

DOCTOR: Were you abused as a child?

POLICEMAN: What? You want to psychoanalyze me?

DOCTOR: Did your father beat you?

POLICEMAN: No, my father loved me.

DOCTOR: Well, someone must have hurt you.

The POLICEMAN ignores him. He presses his hands around the DOCTOR's throat, and the DOCTOR's face turns red, but he does not say a word.

It is as if one can hear the sound of vertebrae moving.

It is as if one can hear the sound of time passing.

The POLICEMAN slowly loosens his grip, and the DOCTOR coughs uncontrollably.

Silence.

DOCTOR: Why did you . . . ?

POLICEMAN: Because I despise you!

DOCTOR: Despise me?

POLICEMAN: Such a good woman, and you suddenly kill her?

DOCTOR: I didn't do it!!

POLICEMAN: Is that so? You seem so sincere.

DOCTOR: You can look right into my eyes—you must believe me!

Silence.



The Policeman chokes the Doctor while interrogating him in *Behind the Lie* (2003). (Photo: Courtesy of the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre.)

The POLICEMAN lights a cigarette, takes a drag, then puts the cigarette in the DOCTOR's mouth and the DOCTOR starts smoking it. Because he is anxious, it makes him choke. The POLICEMAN lights another one.

DOCTOR: *(Suppressing tears)* People die eventually, right? It's just a question of sooner or later.

POLICEMAN: Did you love her?

DOCTOR: *(Nods his head, distressed)* Yes, I loved her—she didn't give me any choice.

POLICEMAN: Didn't give you any choice? Here, I'll give you a choice: was her death an accident or wasn't it?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: Why not?

DOCTOR: Because the house had no signs of a robbery.

POLICEMAN: Maybe she had a mishap?

DOCTOR: Impossible.

POLICEMAN: Why?

DOCTOR: Because you said she was murdered.

POLICEMAN: I . . . Let me ask you, could she have killed herself?

DOCTOR: No, she embraced life. She loved wine and lobster, and sex, and casinos. A woman who loves to gamble would not kill herself. And besides gambling, she also loved me.

POLICEMAN: She loved you?

DOCTOR: Yes.

POLICEMAN: You're so sure?

DOCTOR: We shared the same bed every night. I am sure.

POLICEMAN: Sure of her?

DOCTOR: When she was not beside me, I couldn't sleep. You know, she made me stay in this city—this heartless city. She's all I had. She was everything to me.

POLICEMAN: That doesn't prove you could trust her.

DOCTOR: I didn't have any reason not to trust her.

POLICEMAN: Intuition?

DOCTOR: No, a permanent feeling deep down. You can't rely on intuition anyway: right now, your intuition is telling you that I killed her, but it's wrong.

POLICEMAN: You don't seem to be very worried about getting stuck in here.

DOCTOR: Of course, because I didn't kill her.

POLICEMAN: But you don't have conclusive evidence, do you? You don't have any proof that you didn't kill her.

DOCTOR: That's your problem. You should find conclusive evidence to prove that I did kill her. Otherwise, who knows if I might have killed her or if someone else might have killed her, right?

POLICEMAN: You are quite the psychiatrist, aren't you?

DOCTOR: Oh, I'm not that good.

POLICEMAN: You think this is all fun and games?

DOCTOR: Fun? Who's having fun?

POLICEMAN: You want to play mind games with me?

DOCTOR: This is ridiculous. You drag me in here, interrogate me, and won't let me leave—and now you say I'm the one playing games? Why would I do that? My wife is dead—why on earth would I play games with you?

Silence. The POLICEMAN stands up, pours a cup of water, and places it in front of the DOCTOR. The DOCTOR stares at him, then takes a drink from the cup of water. The POLICEMAN watches him the whole time.

DOCTOR: *(Suddenly lifting his head)* Do you have a wife?

POLICEMAN: *(Takes exception)* What are you doing?

DOCTOR: I'm just asking. Are you going to answer?

POLICEMAN: *(Seeing the confrontational expression in the DOCTOR's eyes, says decisively)* Yes, I have a wife.

DOCTOR: Do you love her?

POLICEMAN: Love? I don't know.

DOCTOR: The word love—it's so hypocritical, don't you think?

POLICEMAN: How so?

DOCTOR: Because sometimes it doesn't even exist. It's just like a fairy tale. People are willing to believe in it precisely because it isn't real. But life—that is real. You know, at the hospital, I'm a pretty good doctor.

POLICEMAN: Your boss said that, too.

DOCTOR: I'm very good with patients.

POLICEMAN: I don't get that feeling.

DOCTOR: That's because you're not one of my patients. I have good ethics, and I'm a chief doctor on staff. I make a lot of money. These days there is a lot of pressure in society, a lot of people who need therapy—and so a lot of opportunities for someone like me. Most people see me as a successful person. I have a nice home, a caring wife . . .

POLICEMAN: So I have heard.

DOCTOR: But, outside, the streets are filled with walking corpses. And I am one of them—I don't even feel like I am alive. At every moment—every minute, every second—we just don't know what we really want.

POLICEMAN: No. We are all so busy, rushing around, trying to get places, trying to get things done—every single moment shows how valuable life is.

DOCTOR: That's only from moment to moment—what we waste in between those moments is what we call life. . . . What do you do every day when you get home from work?

POLICEMAN: Me?

DOCTOR: Do you eat dinner, watch TV, have sex, go to sleep?

POLICEMAN: What do you do?

DOCTOR: Same thing, but even worse than you.

POLICEMAN: Worse than me?

DOCTOR: Yes. Every day I'm anxious to leave work. I think about what I will do when I get home, but when I get home I find that it's the same old thing—eat dinner, then watch TV. There are so many channels on TV now—you change channels all night, and they all start blending together. After watching, you check to see what's on tomorrow, and the day after that—if you could, you'd check to see what's on next year. Soon it's time to go to bed. You have sex before you fall asleep so you can get a better night's sleep, because tomorrow morning you have to get up and go to work again. Time passes quickly, and every day you find yourself competing with a time clock. Right up until one day when your teeth are loose, your whole mouth is rotten, and you realize you are old. And you get to the point where you want to go back to change things, but you realize it's too late. *(Pauses for a moment)* That is real life.

POLICEMAN: What is your wife like in your real life?

DOCTOR: Not bad.

POLICEMAN: "Not bad"?

DOCTOR: That's the sense I get—the sense that we can exist as husband and wife. I don't want to admit, nor do I believe, that it's love—because that would be too real.

The POLICEMAN stares at the DOCTOR, signaling to him that he can move. The DOCTOR raises the restraint bar and walks out.

POLICEMAN: *(Walks about, seems to want to make up his mind to do something, then suddenly asks)* Did your wife have a lover?

The DOCTOR suddenly stops, turns around and stares at the POLICEMAN, who looks away. Silence.

DOCTOR: *(Returns to the chair and sits down)* Yes.

POLICEMAN: *(Surprised)* Yes?

DOCTOR: She did.

POLICEMAN: *(Makes an effort to calm himself)* Who was it?

The DOCTOR looks at the POLICEMAN, but as if realizing something, stays silent.

POLICEMAN: What is it?

DOCTOR: (*Covering up*) Nothing.

POLICEMAN: Who was it? Her cousin?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: Did your wife know that you knew she had a lover?

DOCTOR: Yes.

POLICEMAN: She did?

DOCTOR: Yes. It was my idea.

POLICEMAN: (*Shocked*) What?

DOCTOR: Because she needed one.

POLICEMAN: Needed one? Why?

DOCTOR: Because . . . because I have a problem.

POLICEMAN: A problem?

DOCTOR: Yes. In that area.

POLICEMAN: In what area?

DOCTOR: Do you find that unusual? Unbelievable? It's true. It's not a mechanical problem—it's a psychological problem. Look at me: I am a psychiatrist, but I can't cure my own problem.

POLICEMAN: Why not?

DOCTOR: Why not? (*Laughs coldly*) Hmm, I'd like to know that myself. (*Pause*) You've heard of God's will? Well, that's it.

POLICEMAN: (*Paces around, thinking*) So, do you . . . know her lover?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: You don't know him.

DOCTOR: But I know some things about him.

POLICEMAN: What things?

DOCTOR: He's not bad—he treats her well, at least.

POLICEMAN: Don't you want to know who this guy is? What he does for a living? How old he is?

DOCTOR: My heart wants to know, but my mind doesn't, so I never asked.

POLICEMAN: And she never told you? Was she happy with him? How many times did they see each other every week? How did they meet?

DOCTOR: She wanted to tell me, but I never let her.

POLICEMAN: When did your problem begin?

DOCTOR: (*Smiles*) What? You think you can help me cure it?

POLICEMAN: I'm just asking.

DOCTOR: She had heart disease.

POLICEMAN: (*Shocked again*) She had heart disease?

DOCTOR: Yes. One time while we were making love, she fainted; after that, whenever we were close, there was something wrong with me—I had a psychological block. You know, she wasn't supposed to get too excited . . .

POLICEMAN: (*Subconsciously holding his mouth*) No, I didn't know that. (*Catching himself*) Of course, if she had heart disease, she wasn't supposed to get too excited.

DOCTOR: But she was always very easily—excited.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: Okay, look. Let's get this straight. First of all, you have a problem in that area, and secondly, you knew your wife had taken a lover. Both of those things could make someone very jealous, and that kind of jealousy could easily cause someone to commit a crime, especially a man like you with a psychological block. Furthermore, your wife had heart disease—any small thing could kill her, isn't that so?

DOCTOR: (*Smiling*) You want the truth, not a story, right?

POLICEMAN: That should be assumed.

DOCTOR: Do you know why there have been so many wrongly decided cases in history? Because of that kind of groundless assumption. (*Silent*) What else do you still want to ask me?

POLICEMAN: (*Looks at his watch, then looks at the DOCTOR*) We'll pick this up this afternoon. Time to eat.

The POLICEMAN stands up, grabs his notebook and carefully places it in the bag he carries. Then he takes a lunch box out of one of the desk drawers, retrieves two pieces of bread from it, and butters them. The DOCTOR watches all along, as if in appreciation.

POLICEMAN: You're not fasting, are you?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: The door locks from outside, so behave yourself.

DOCTOR: (*Starts laughing*) You think I'd be stupid enough to try to escape? If that were the case, I wouldn't be cooperating with this police investigation at all.

The POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR, turns, and walks out. With the sound of the door closing, the DOCTOR is left alone in the interrogation room. He sits up straight and looks up at the lights. Then, he tests the restraint bar, lightly pushes it, opens it. He looks all around him, then concentrates all his attention behind the door. Finally he finds the circuit breaker, pulls down on it, and the lights in the room go on. He moves the chair into the center, sits down on it with his back straight, then suddenly props his legs up on the table and gazes with terror at the inside.

DOCTOR: (*Imitating the POLICEMAN*) Tell me, why did you kill her?

The sound of footsteps is heard, and the DOCTOR wants to jump up, but it's already too late, so he stays seated. The door opens and the POLICEMAN comes in carrying two cups of coffee. He looks at the lights turned on inside, and quietly, calmly, carefully places the coffee cups on the table, then turns and stares at the DOCTOR.

POLICEMAN: What? It's not fair?

DOCTOR: No, it's not that. But this feels pretty good. Have you ever experienced what it feels like to be in there?

POLICEMAN: No, I haven't. But, I know.

DOCTOR: You don't know. In there, you can't see the outside, you can only rely on your imagination—you are filled with dread and restlessness. But I guess that's just like life in general these days.

POLICEMAN: Life isn't as terrible as you make it sound.

DOCTOR: *(Turns around and gazes at the POLICEMAN)* Are you sure about that?

POLICEMAN: *(Suddenly strikes the table, gives order)* Get up! Take your bread and coffee and get inside—get a little feel for your life.

The DOCTOR does as he is told, stands and takes a cup of coffee and two pieces of bread from the table, and goes right inside the inner room, sitting down on the chair. He doesn't eat, but just stares at the outside. The POLICEMAN slams the inside lights out.

Only the POLICEMAN is left onstage alone. He quietly walks over to the chair, slowly sits down, curls up his body and carefully looks at the ceiling. Steam is seen rising from the coffee on the table. In the space surrounding the POLICEMAN, it is as if his heartbeat is audible. There is a continuous sound of water drops echoing.

Lights fade out.

Scene Three

Lights come up on the DOCTOR sitting straight up in the interrogator's chair. He seems rather free and easy, and is even whistling. He looks at the inner room exaggeratedly.

DOCTOR: *(Loudly)* How does it feel? Unfair?

Silence.

The DOCTOR stands up, goes over and pulls the circuit breaker. Suddenly the bright lights in the isolation room come on. The POLICEMAN is in the chair and tries to look calm, but it is obvious that he is nervous.

POLICEMAN: Ask me!

DOCTOR: It's free. I won't charge you an outpatient fee.

POLICEMAN: *(Coldly)* If you're going to be like that, I'll come out there.

DOCTOR: Okay. I don't mean to act superior, I just like to help my patients relax before curing their illnesses, so I usually . . .

POLICEMAN: (*Standing up*) I'm not your patient.

DOCTOR: Fine. My mistake, okay? Please sit down. I just want to chat with you.

POLICEMAN: (*Sits down again*) Go ahead.

DOCTOR: Let's talk about your wife.

POLICEMAN: (*The POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR, thinks for a minute*) We got divorced—five years ago.

DOCTOR: And you feel . . .

POLICEMAN: Don't try to comfort me, I'm fine with it. We just weren't compatible.

DOCTOR: Not compatible? For thousands of years, whether it's the man who changes his mind or the woman who falls out of love, it basically comes down to the same thing.

POLICEMAN: I was too busy at work and I couldn't give her . . . what she needed.

DOCTOR: That is the crux of the matter.

POLICEMAN: She likes taking walks, playing cards, long talks, but aside from sex there didn't seem to be anything I could give her.

DOCTOR: And what do you like? Working?

POLICEMAN: I don't know. I have enough money, my life is pretty comfortable, and my work is very successful—but even with all this, I don't feel satisfied. I remember when I was a kid, all I wanted to do was watch TV. Then in college, I just wanted to stay in the city and work. When I got married, I just wanted to be a good husband. But once I had all of these things, I didn't know what I wanted at all and that terrified me. Every morning when I'd look at myself in the mirror to shave, I'd ask that strange guy looking back at me in the mirror, "Why on earth are you even here?" I knew if I just took out that thin little blade and skillfully make a cut, I would be free. But at the same time I wasn't ready, because I still had such extravagant hopes for this world. I want to go back to the hopes I had as a child. Even if I can't find that kind of hope, just curiosity would suffice. But every night, all I do is sit in front of the TV and look at those images jumping around on the screen, and it's like I can hear time passing and life passing by—and it makes me feel so afraid, because from tomorrow right up until I'm eighty years old, I'll still be sitting there, doing the same thing over and over. Sometimes I ask myself why I have to think so much, because it's always those who think too much who suffer. I think about the dreams I had as a child and the struggles of my youth, and how now I've traded them in for this thoroughly boring, repetitive life. I long for provocation, so much so that I ravage my own skin while shaving, and I rush to be the first one through a red light. I want to cherish life, but I also don't want to waste time, so I can only go on living in a state of numbness.

DOCTOR: That's a good reason.

POLICEMAN: A good reason for what?

DOCTOR: For living.

POLICEMAN: There doesn't need to be any reason for living, it's just a habit.

DOCTOR: How about loving your wife—was that a habit too?

POLICEMAN: It wasn't at first, but later it was—so, later it just wasn't love anymore.

DOCTOR: Not love?

POLICEMAN: We didn't even love ourselves anymore. This word "love": it's either fleeting or it's eternal, it's either an empty plaything passed down by ancestors or, more often, it's hypocritical and self-deceiving.

DOCTOR: You are so strong. Someone like you has no need for a psychiatrist.

The DOCTOR quietly pulls the circuit breaker, and the lights inside go out.

The sound of water dripping.

Silence.

A moment later, the stern voice of the POLICEMAN is heard.

POLICEMAN: Turn—on—the—lights.

DOCTOR: Now, think about it, what if you had to stay here forever—opening your eyes as wide as you can, searching with all your might, but all around you, you see nothing but darkness. (*Pause*) How would you feel? Empty? Anxious? Desperate?

POLICEMAN: No. At peace.

DOCTOR: At peace? If that's so, then you really don't need a psychiatrist, because those with happy lives are all at peace.

The DOCTOR walks over to the door and opens it a bit. In the light coming through the doorway, the POLICEMAN can be seen sitting in the chair.

DOCTOR: How do you feel now?

POLICEMAN: I think . . .

DOCTOR: I think you're nervous, because the door gives you some hope. Do you want the door open or closed?

POLICEMAN: When I was a child, our home had a wooden door. Every day my mother would wake me up to go to school. Whenever she opened the door, a stream of light would seep in through the crack in the door and fall in my eyes. Outside, the sun was on the trees and the air had the scent of grass—everything was new. But I hated the sound of my mother's voice waking me up, to the point that I wished a day would come when I wouldn't have to hear it anymore, because I liked my comfy bedding and sweet dreams.

DOCTOR: What did your mother sound like?

POLICEMAN: She always had a piece of toast and a glass of milk, and would call to me: "Julio, get up, time to go."

Silence.

DOCTOR: Are you homesick?

POLICEMAN: I don't have a home.

DOCTOR: You don't have a home?

POLICEMAN: *(Suddenly stands up)* Then one morning, I didn't wake up until noon because I didn't hear my mother's voice. The sun burned my eyes. I got out of bed *(the POLICEMAN quietly walks to the door)* and quietly opened the door and walked outside. *(The POLICEMAN opens the door and walks out)* Outside, the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and it was so green and bright you could barely open your eyes. *(The POLICEMAN goes in front of the DOCTOR and sits down, his eyes gazing off into space)*

DOCTOR: *(Quietly standing up, says softly)* And then?

POLICEMAN: *(Puts the DOCTOR in the chair. His voice sounds like it is being squeezed from his throat)* That was the day my mother died.

A deadly silence.

DOCTOR: I'm sorry.

POLICEMAN: It's not your place to say that.

DOCTOR: I was only . . .

POLICEMAN: I was only thinking if somehow, someday, someone could open that door for me again and call to me, "Julio, get up, time to go."

DOCTOR: Do you have any children? *(The POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR as if in a trance)* What is it?

POLICEMAN: *(Comes to)* Nothing, nothing.

DOCTOR: Is that why you got divorced?

POLICEMAN: No, not at all.

DOCTOR: Then what was it?

POLICEMAN: Didn't I already explain that?

DOCTOR: Look, divorce is like an explosion in the stress of married life—there is always a root cause that triggers it.

The POLICEMAN stares at the DOCTOR, his eyes fierce, just like a cornered animal.

DOCTOR: Well . . . let's just pretend I never asked.

POLICEMAN: She had a child.

DOCTOR: A son or a daughter?

POLICEMAN: A son.

DOCTOR: By another man? That's not so uncommon.

POLICEMAN: Is that so? The man is at least ten years my senior, but not as healthy and strong—and as fat as a cow. In the sunlight, the white hair around his temples glistens—showing how old he is. But he has money: with all his money, he can do whatever he wants, like a damn wizard. *(Pause)* And he swears he loves her.

DOCTOR: That's what your wife told you.

POLICEMAN: *(Nodding his head)* Yes. This old man makes her feel safe.

DOCTOR: Does that make you feel like a failure?

POLICEMAN: Don't you feel like a failure when you can't satisfy your wife?

DOCTOR: (*Seeming not to care*) Do you feel guilty?

POLICEMAN: I feel helpless. I know he's not as good as me in bed, but life isn't bed. (*Remembering*) That day, we went hand-in-hand to get our divorce, then we came home together, and that night we made passionate love. . . . The next morning she left very matter-of-factly, leaving the house and all the furniture for me.

DOCTOR: Is that so? But actually she took everything with her, didn't she? Everything you had.

POLICEMAN: I lay there on the bed with my eyes closed, but I could still feel her determined footsteps. Finally, the door closed behind her. My tears dried up and part of me closed with that door.

DOCTOR: You say as a man, you feel helpless? That problem lies with you.

POLICEMAN: Me?

DOCTOR: Don't you think?

POLICEMAN: I don't know.

DOCTOR: You don't know. What do you want me to do for you?

POLICEMAN: You're the psychiatrist, not me.

DOCTOR: True.

POLICEMAN: I would like to see how psychiatrists give therapy to their patients, but right now there are a lot of quacks out there.

DOCTOR: That's nonsense.

POLICEMAN: Well, aren't you a quack?

DOCTOR: Isn't this method fascinating, though! And then . . . ?

POLICEMAN: I found a lover too.

DOCTOR: Is that so? And did this bring back your self-respect?

POLICEMAN: In this trivial life, self-respect isn't worth much. (*Looks at the DOCTOR, as if remembering*) She lived on my beat. One day I responded to a police call she made—she said she was locked inside her home. So I rushed over there, but her door was unlocked. A beautiful woman sat there, full of anticipation, sexy, gorgeous, and feminine. When she looked at me, her eyes sparkled, as if they were filled with spring water. Obviously, she was hoping I would take off my clothes and dive right in . . .

DOCTOR: And did you . . . dive right in?

POLICEMAN: Don't be ridiculous. Such tranquil waters—even though I'm just a duck on dry land, I still wanted to jump in. In this city, the seduction and dignity of women has always been exaggerated.

DOCTOR: In this city?

POLICEMAN: Yes. This city is like a honeycomb: the women are the queen bees and unless the men want to become busy worker bees, they can only buzz around like drones—their only purpose in life is to mate with the queen bee; their dignity relies entirely on throwing themselves into the arms of a woman. Before she left, she wanted my phone number, and after a while she called me to say she wanted more.

DOCTOR: She wanted more? *(Smiles)* A man's favorite thing to hear a woman say is that she wants him, but the scariest thing to hear a woman say is that she wants *more*.

POLICEMAN: *(Ignoring him)* It upset me. At least it made me feel like my life had changed. I didn't want to be a frantic worker bee; I thought for a while I could become a drone.

DOCTOR: *(Starts laughing)* Ha ha, then I am nothing but a worker bee.

POLICEMAN: I guess you are.

DOCTOR: She . . . the queen bee . . . is she married?

POLICEMAN: Yes.

DOCTOR: What does he do?

POLICEMAN: I don't want to know.

DOCTOR: Why not?

POLICEMAN: I think he just services the queen bee.

Suddenly the smile on the DOCTOR's face stiffens. At the sight of the POLICEMAN being provoked, he is at a loss for what to do. After a while, he wriggles his lips.

DOCTOR: And then?

POLICEMAN: I started liking this woman.

DOCTOR: And . . . ?

POLICEMAN: And? The bed became our world. *(Blurts out)* Did your wife ever mention her lover to you?

DOCTOR: Yes.

POLICEMAN: What did she say?

DOCTOR: What are you doing?

POLICEMAN: Trying to see if men's feelings are all the same.

DOCTOR: Because I loved her, I didn't want her to suffer because of me.

POLICEMAN: Selfless?

DOCTOR: No. Helpless.

POLICEMAN: As long as we have the capacity to think, we have reasons to feel helpless. It's like going into a dead-end alley where we are surrounded by walls with doors in them that don't offer a way out. Our only option is to retreat, and more often than not we all end up with the same explanation: helplessness.

DOCTOR: Sometimes we can choose to scale the wall.

POLICEMAN: But in the end you'll still end up here, considered a petty thief and punished accordingly. Okay, doctor, you've asked me enough questions, now what is your diagnosis?

DOCTOR: Boredom-onset paranoia.

POLICEMAN: What kind of folk remedy can you give me to cure this?

DOCTOR: Whether you're a worker bee or a drone, either way you're stuck with the job.

POLICEMAN: Isn't that even more boring?

DOCTOR: But there is a goal—life changes, time flies. Life becomes the process and excuse for whiling away our time.

The POLICEMAN walks over to the DOCTOR and scornfully lifts his face.

POLICEMAN: I am going to call your boss.

DOCTOR: Why?

POLICEMAN: Because you are a quack.

DOCTOR: He'll agree with you.

POLICEMAN: He will?

DOCTOR: Because he is not even a doctor.

POLICEMAN: (*Upset*) You— (*Controlling himself as best he can*) Get back in there!

The DOCTOR looks at the POLICEMAN, turns around and goes into the isolation room.

Black out.

Scene Four

Lights up. The DOCTOR sits alone on the chair. His cheeks rest on his hands, and he seems to be somewhere far away. In the DOCTOR's mind, the innocent sound of his daughter's laughter seems to float by, and it becomes real, reverberating in the space. The DOCTOR stands up, walks unsteadily, and finally sits back down in the chair.

The POLICEMAN comes in. He methodically arranges his things.

POLICEMAN: How was last night?

DOCTOR: Great!

POLICEMAN: Is there anything you need from me?

DOCTOR: They asked me—they said if I wasn't happy with you, I could switch, but I told them you're not bad.

POLICEMAN: Is that so? Am I supposed to be grateful to you?

DOCTOR: That's not my intent.



The Policeman confronts the Doctor in *Behind the Lie* (2003).
(Photo: Courtesy of the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre.)

POLICEMAN: Oh, I spoke with your boss.

DOCTOR: Did he say I'm a quack? He . . .

POLICEMAN: I told him you were cleared and you'd be back at work soon.

DOCTOR: Am I supposed to be grateful to you?

POLICEMAN: No. (*Somewhat upset, trying to stay calm*) . . . according to the rules, you can have a visitor today—of course, it's up to you to decide whether or not you wish to see anyone.

DOCTOR: They already told me.

POLICEMAN: So, what did you decide?

DOCTOR: I'd like a visitor.

POLICEMAN: Who?

DOCTOR: My daughter.

POLICEMAN: (*Shocked*) Your daughter? You have a daughter?

DOCTOR: My wife gave birth to her, not me—you don't have to be so amazed.

POLICEMAN: Why did I never . . . how is it I never heard about her before?

DOCTOR: She didn't kill anyone. There's no need for you to hear about her.

POLICEMAN: How old is she? Where is she? What will she do now that this has happened?

DOCTOR: She is nine—no, fourteen. She doesn't live with us.

POLICEMAN: Then where does she live?

DOCTOR: (*Not answering the question*) She'll be here any minute.

POLICEMAN: When she finds out her mother . . . she might . . . how should I tell her?

DOCTOR: Are you trying to impress me with your good conscience?

POLICEMAN: I'm not trying to do anything, it just came out naturally. She might cry when she gets here—I have a child and I never know what to do when he starts crying . . .

DOCTOR: (*Imploring him*) Do you have to talk about your child now? (*Suddenly*) What? You have a child?

POLICEMAN: Of course I do.

DOCTOR: Then why did you say you didn't?

POLICEMAN: (*Painfully*) Because I might as well not have one. Let's stick to your daughter. I'm sure she's going to cry.

DOCTOR: She won't cry.

POLICEMAN: Are you sure?

DOCTOR: I'm her father.

POLICEMAN: Are you sure you are—

DOCTOR: (*Cutting him off*) I am sure I am her father.

POLICEMAN: Let me finish what I was saying. Are you sure you are a good father?

DOCTOR: I'm . . . I'm sure I'm not.

POLICEMAN: How can you be so sure?

DOCTOR: Do you cook dinner when you get home from work? Do you go to pick up your son from school? Do you take him to the park on weekends? Do you quietly watch him play?

POLICEMAN: Sometimes.

DOCTOR: Well, I don't. I like to stay in that stark white clinic and listen to those patients chatter away, with a cold expression on my face.

POLICEMAN: Do you regret that?

DOCTOR: Not now.

POLICEMAN: Did you before?

DOCTOR: A long time ago. We're talking about children, aren't we? At one time they are an inessential part of your body: and then, if you are not careful in satisfying your desires, you create this life. Life really is a miracle, isn't it? Whether you are willing or not, life exists, great and selfless—it just exists in your body and the body of another. But when it becomes a continuation of your own life, it is a source of pride and responsibility.

POLICEMAN: A father is always proud of his child's life. I am, too.

DOCTOR: But a child is rarely proud of its father's life. Like mine.

POLICEMAN: Mine, too. Pride is part of a father's love, a kind of catalyst for expressing parental feelings.

DOCTOR: But sometimes fatherly love can become self-blame and self-pity.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: What time did you arrange for her to come?

DOCTOR: Right about now.

POLICEMAN: I'll go talk to them outside and tell them to notify you when she arrives.

DOCTOR: There's no need. She'll find me.

POLICEMAN: Well . . . how is it?

DOCTOR: How is what?

POLICEMAN: Your mood.

DOCTOR: My mood?

POLICEMAN: Your mood—the anticipation.

DOCTOR: Oh, it's marvelous. In a minute, my daughter will be here, and I'll say to her: "My child, your mother has been murdered." And when she asks me who killed her, all I will be able to say is, "Now, you see, this police detective suspects me."

POLICEMAN: You could be a bit more tactful and subtle about it—she's your daughter. You should think about her temperament and her ability to accept all this.

DOCTOR: There's no need for that. She is very strong.

POLICEMAN: That's cruel.

DOCTOR: It will make her even stronger.

POLICEMAN: Anticipation is not such a bad thing. Our lives are spent in anticipation. I remember when I was waiting outside the delivery room for my son to be born, it was such an extraordinary feeling. A woman is screaming: she has accepted all the pain and torment of labor, and there is nothing you can do to help even though you want to. Sometimes when I call myself a father, I feel like a fake.

DOCTOR: Anticipation is something beautiful, but also cruel. Anticipating love can be so joyful, but then when love comes, you don't know what to do with it, and it's torture.

POLICEMAN: You can wait for it to come along again, anticipate the next lustful moment.

DOCTOR: *Lustful* moment? But don't you think everyone is anticipating—their *last full* moment? Anticipating that very last breath they'll ever take! Anticipation is what life is all about, but some people can't stand to wait and they take a shortcut to go meet God.

POLICEMAN: Your wife could not have killed herself. (*Staring at the DOCTOR*) And it wasn't you who killed her.

DOCTOR: How do you know?

POLICEMAN: Your attitude.

DOCTOR: My attitude?

POLICEMAN: Yes. A father recognizes this in another father.

DOCTOR: What do you mean?

POLICEMAN: Because you love your daughter. Maybe you are pretending you don't, but this kind of love is so obvious. And you don't seem to be at all nervous just before seeing your daughter—in fact, you seem so calm. If you had really killed your wife, you wouldn't be so calm. This is just how I see it, it doesn't decide anything—but there is some evidence working against you.

DOCTOR: What evidence?

POLICEMAN: You need to learn that for yourself. It doesn't match what you've been saying.

DOCTOR: This is entrapment. I am going to tell my lawyer.

POLICEMAN: But I didn't say a word! (*Lifts his wrist to look at his watch*) Maybe she's not coming?

DOCTOR: (*Calmly*) As long as there is anticipation, there is hope.

POLICEMAN: But if hope doesn't materialize?

DOCTOR: (*Giving in*) You're right. It's too late now—what am I hoping for?

POLICEMAN: What's wrong?

DOCTOR: Nothing.

POLICEMAN: Maybe she isn't coming. She feels ashamed of your behavior, and she's not willing to see her father this way. Maybe she already knows what happened—she should know, right?

DOCTOR: She doesn't know.

POLICEMAN: You didn't have your lawyer notify her? If we knew you had a daughter, we would have told her.

DOCTOR: I don't want her to know.

POLICEMAN: But she is going to find out sooner or later.

DOCTOR: No, there is no way she will find out.

POLICEMAN: Don't you plan to tell her? If you murdered your wife, you could get the death penalty, and of course she would know anyway. And, aren't you waiting for her right now? If she comes here, she'll know.

The DOCTOR gazes at the POLICEMAN, his eyes full of contempt.

DOCTOR: None of this is going to happen, because I did not kill her.

The POLICEMAN feels uneasy under the gaze of the DOCTOR, so he goes to pour himself a glass of water and drinks several gulps, trying to cover up his discomfort.

POLICEMAN: She is definitely not coming. I bet she is studying and her teacher wouldn't let her leave school. What grade is she in?

DOCTOR: I think she's in ninth grade.

POLICEMAN: You think she's in ninth grade? What kind of father are you? You don't even know what grade she is in.

DOCTOR: What grade is your kid in?

POLICEMAN: Sixth grade—he just started middle school.

DOCTOR: Congratulations. Let me ask you something—how often do you have situations when you are waiting for your son, like this?

POLICEMAN: Never . . . wait, once I did.

DOCTOR: When was it?

POLICEMAN: After my divorce, his mother didn't approve of him spending time with me. But I wanted to see him off to school on his first day, so I stood by the entrance to the school and waited for him. I don't know why, but I got so nervous—I stood there terrified. I had all kinds of things ready to say to him—questions to ask him, praise to give him—I wanted him to know how proud I was of him. I had a red envelope in my shirt pocket for him with five hundred bolivares in it—that's right, five hundred, a lot of money. I didn't want him wasting money at his age, but I had to show him somehow that I loved him, and money was one way I could express that as his father. It is strange, but sometimes the most precious things can only be expressed through money. That day it was very windy, and it was raining—the umbrella I was holding wouldn't stay open. But I was so happy: "That's my son, he's all grown up." I hadn't had many chances before to let him know how much I loved him, but this time, I would definitely make him proud in front of his friends—show them he has a father who loves him so much.

Silence. The POLICEMAN's eyes are vacant, as if he can't find a space to put himself in.

DOCTOR: What happened?

POLICEMAN: He arrived.

DOCTOR: And?

POLICEMAN: A BMW drove up and stopped in front of me, and his stepfather opened the door to help him out. They got out of the car just like a real father and son, holding hands, chatting and smiling. At that moment, I looked at that old man and he didn't seem old at all.

DOCTOR: Didn't you call out to him?

POLICEMAN: I let them walk past me. They didn't see me, and their faces were full of smiles. Suddenly I felt like my existence was as worthless as air, and the wind grabbed the umbrella right out of my hands. I wanted to melt into the rain and pour down into the city sewer and disappear. It was a huge storm, but I ran into the middle of the street as if I didn't notice, and people started blowing their horns and swearing at me. I ran like mad, and realized something was stuck to me—it was the red envelope. I opened it and tossed the money in the air . . . *(Pause)* They said I was crazy, but I know I'm not crazy. Although my heart was empty, my mind was alert. Then, I collided with a car that couldn't brake fast enough and I fell into a puddle. But I didn't get hurt, and through the raindrops, I saw the red envelope stuck in the mud near me. And something flowed from my body and merged with the red paper, like a watercolor painting—it was my blood.

DOCTOR: It almost sounds beautiful.

POLICEMAN: It was.

DOCTOR: I can understand.

POLICEMAN: Thank you.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: Are you scared?

DOCTOR: Of what? My daughter doesn't have a stepfather.

POLICEMAN: But if you get the death penalty, I think she will need one.

DOCTOR: *(Smiling)* You don't understand . . . *(To himself)* She loves me no matter what.

POLICEMAN: But is she really not coming? Perhaps something delayed her? Maybe she couldn't find the place? *(Takes out his cell phone)* Here, you can call and find out.

DOCTOR: *(Dejected)* There's no need.

POLICEMAN: What is it? Have you no faith?

DOCTOR: No, I just know she's not coming.

POLICEMAN: How do you know?

DOCTOR: Because . . . sometimes . . . there are some things . . . that you must anticipate for a lifetime. *(Retrieves a wallet from his pocket, opens it)* Do you want to see what she looks like? This is a photo of her.

POLICEMAN: *(Goes over to take a look)* Not bad. She looks like you, but she doesn't look like her mother.

DOCTOR: *(Looking at the POLICEMAN)* That's true. She takes after me. This was taken seven years ago.

POLICEMAN: Look at her, she's so cute. She will come.

DOCTOR: Are you sure?

POLICEMAN: It's just a hunch. You seem happy when you talk about her—just think, you have such a good daughter.

DOCTOR: Thank you. I hope she will show up, too . . . *(Muttering)* She'll show up.

Doorbell rings.

POLICEMAN: *(Joyfully)* You see? Not bad. She's here.

DOCTOR: *(Looks at the POLICEMAN helplessly)* Really?

POLICEMAN: Hold on, I'll go get her.

The POLICEMAN exits. The DOCTOR takes the photo from his wallet again and looks it over carefully, then puts it back. He adjusts his collar and straightens up in his seat, as if he truly expects his daughter to come in.

The door opens and the POLICEMAN walks in and sees the DOCTOR sitting upright.

DOCTOR: Well?

POLICEMAN: You . . . I'm sorry.

DOCTOR: That's ok.

POLICEMAN: They told me your lawyer is here. He's waiting for you in the reception area.

The DOCTOR just sits there without moving, as if he didn't hear.

POLICEMAN: *(Walks over to him)* Are you okay?

DOCTOR: I'm fine.

POLICEMAN: She probably had something else to do, or she doesn't know how to get here, or her teacher . . .

DOCTOR: There's no need for that. I'm going.

The DOCTOR is about to go. He turns his head and looks back at the POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN: What's wrong? Oh, don't worry, I'll wait for you here. If she shows up, I'll have her wait here for you, and I won't tell her anything.

DOCTOR: *(Somewhat grateful)* Thanks.

The POLICEMAN sees the DOCTOR out and returns to the interrogation room. He looks all around, then walks over in front of the chair the DOCTOR was sitting in. He adjusts his collar, straightens his back, and sits straight up, piously waiting.

Black out.

Scene Five

Lights up. The door opens, the DOCTOR has something on his mind—he walks to center stage and slowly sits down on a chair. At this time, the POLICEMAN walks in and they silently regard one another. Suddenly, the DOCTOR slowly stands up.

POLICEMAN: What are you doing?

DOCTOR: Nothing. I'm just . . . *(He points towards the inside, indicating he wants to go in)*

POLICEMAN: You sit down. *(The DOCTOR obeys and sits down)*

Silence. The POLICEMAN seems to be looking at the DOCTOR as if he's a stranger.

DOCTOR: *(Uncomfortably)* What?

POLICEMAN: Do you have anything else to say?

DOCTOR: No.

POLICEMAN: Fine then. There is some evidence working against you.

DOCTOR: Really? What evidence? I wish you would produce it.

POLICEMAN: You're quite confident.

DOCTOR: Because there are facts. Isn't that so?

POLICEMAN: The facts are that your wife is dead, and she was murdered.

DOCTOR: Yes, and eventually you will solve the case.

POLICEMAN: If only . . . it were an accident.

DOCTOR: You seem unsure.

POLICEMAN: I remember my mother told me that the most important thing in life is loyalty.

DOCTOR: Does this make you blame yourself?

POLICEMAN: It's very hard to be loyal.

The POLICEMAN takes out a cigarette, wants to light it but he can't because his hand is trembling. He is obviously ruffled and he angrily slams the lighter down on the table.

The DOCTOR picks it up and lights it for him and the POLICEMAN refuses at first, but eventually lights up. He takes a heavy drag from the cigarette, seeming to do all he can to calm himself down.

DOCTOR: What's wrong with you?

POLICEMAN: Nothing . . . nothing. Your . . . how come your daughter hasn't come?

DOCTOR: My daughter? I knew she wasn't going to come.

POLICEMAN: You knew? How did you know?

DOCTOR: *(Taking the cigarette from the POLICEMAN's mouth)* Because . . . *(He makes a smoke ring, but doesn't complete it and chokes on it, thereupon starting to cough violently)*

The POLICEMAN takes out another cigarette, lights it himself, and looks at the DOCTOR in a bit of a trance.

POLICEMAN: Because why?

DOCTOR: Because she died five years ago in a car accident.

POLICEMAN: What? *(POLICEMAN stands up)* She . . . she's dead?

DOCTOR: (*Extinguishes his cigarette in the ashtray*) I want to wait for her, wait for her to come see me—I really do wish she could come see me. I am such an incompetent father, but I really wish . . . (*The DOCTOR suddenly loses control of his emotions and begins to sob*)

POLICEMAN: (*Muttering*) I didn't know, she didn't tell me. (*Realizes what he has just said*) No, I mean, I didn't know. Why didn't I know?

The POLICEMAN stands up, disappointed. He pulls the circuit breaker and the lights go on inside. He slowly walks to the stage entrance.

POLICEMAN: (*Entranced*) She never told me. All I was to her was a drone. (*Ridiculing himself, laughing coldly*) Hah, a drone.

The DOCTOR raises his head and takes note of the POLICEMAN forgetting himself.

DOCTOR: What's going on?

The POLICEMAN suddenly turns his head, and seems to have changed into a completely different person. He walks up to face the DOCTOR, secures the restraint bar, sits himself down right in front of him, and opens up his notebook.

POLICEMAN: (*Loudly*) Name, age, occupation—hey, let's get started—your occupation. Tell me.

DOCTOR: (*Somewhat shocked*) Psychiatrist. What are you . . .

POLICEMAN: (*Loudly*) Tell me! Tell me what happened in your home three nights ago.

DOCTOR: I . . . That day I left work and went home?

POLICEMAN: That day you left work and went home.

DOCTOR: I opened the door and found my wife lying on the bed.

POLICEMAN: She was not on the bed.

DOCTOR: She was on the bed.

POLICEMAN: But I don't believe you. Continue.

DOCTOR: There was blood coming from her mouth, and she was dead.

POLICEMAN: There was blood coming from her mouth, and she was dead?

DOCTOR: She was strangled.

POLICEMAN: She was . . . that's bullshit.

DOCTOR: It is not, and then I reported it to the police, and then they showed up.

POLICEMAN: (*Suddenly enraged*) You bastard. Why are you such a coward? You killed her, you did it—you should just admit it, don't you see that? Be a man!

DOCTOR: I am telling you the truth.

POLICEMAN: (*No longer angry*) Truth? Okay, well then, let me tell you the truth!

DOCTOR: You?

POLICEMAN: That day you left work and went home—no, you should have gotten home earlier, but you had two more patients, right? But then one canceled. So, you got home at around 5:40 PM.

DOCTOR: Right.

POLICEMAN: You answered the phone downstairs at 5:41. We looked up your telephone records.

DOCTOR: (*Surprised*) That's right, my boss called—he wanted me to attend a meeting the next morning.

POLICEMAN: When you finished the phone call, about two or three minutes later, you started to go upstairs. You knocked on the door, but it didn't open, so you pulled out a key and opened the door. Suddenly you saw your wife lying on the floor, as if she had died, but you knew she had a heart condition and that she was just unconscious. At this moment, you were prepared to go revive her—but, for some reason, you suddenly went crazy and strangled her.

DOCTOR: (*Looking at the POLICEMAN coldly*) Is that so? Tell me, why would I do that?

POLICEMAN: Maybe because she was naked, or because of the condom she didn't have time to throw away; maybe because of her tranquil and satisfied mood; maybe because she lied and told you her cousin was coming, not her lover. There are lots of these maybes—any one of them could have caused you to lose your self-respect and sense of reason and make you uncontrollably angry, to the point that your two hands choked her and wouldn't let go until she died.

The DOCTOR looks at the agitated POLICEMAN with surprise.

DOCTOR: You . . . why?

POLICEMAN: Because I can't live a lie.

DOCTOR: And what's behind the lie?

POLICEMAN: Behind the lie is . . . is . . . I'm the one your wife was sleeping with.

DOCTOR: (*Shocked*) You?

POLICEMAN: Yes. I'm that drone to her queen bee. I thought she cared for me, but in the end I realize it was just a need she had—and because you had a problem, you couldn't satisfy her. Besides, a drone doesn't deserve to know too many things.

The DOCTOR slowly opens the restraint bar.

DOCTOR: Is that so? (*Staring at the POLICEMAN*) You—what else do you want to ask me? Go ahead and ask!

POLICEMAN: Why did you kill her?

DOCTOR: Because I loved her, and her love should have belonged only to me. (*Suddenly*) Tell me about the two of you—at least tell me what was going on before I got home.

POLICEMAN: Do you really want to hear this?

DOCTOR: Why not?

POLICEMAN: That day she called me up and told me she . . . wanted more.

DOCTOR: (*Not mindful that his face is twitching*) Really? She told me her cousin was coming over. She never lied.

POLICEMAN: So I went over there. On the bed, we made passionate love, as we often did.

DOCTOR: She promised me she would never have sex with you on our bed.

POLICEMAN: She could be a really good liar sometimes. She said she liked the feeling of having two different men in the same bed. I was always scared you would catch us—but it was a great feeling, it turned me on. And she didn't really care anyway.

DOCTOR: Of course she didn't care.

POLICEMAN: That day I got the same scare, and over her groans I could hear a car engine, then a door closing, then a voice on the telephone.

DOCTOR: The call from my boss.

POLICEMAN: But I didn't want to stop, and suddenly I didn't care—it was almost as if I wanted you to walk in on us. Yes, there we were—in your home, on your bed—and I wanted to tell you: "I like your wife, I want her."

DOCTOR: Then?

POLICEMAN: She desperately pushed me away. She wanted me to climb out the back window, but I didn't want to jump because that is such a cowardly thing to do. I was crazed. I shoved her away from me and wanted to rush over and open the door, but she pulled me back. I struggled with all my might and she tumbled onto the floor, and lay there facing up. Suddenly, I saw the expression in her eyes—what an expression it was: not imploring, not loving, just calmly staring at me, like a wolf under a full moon. Her look frightened me. It did. It was a fear that suddenly multiplied and made me tremble. I grabbed my clothes and ran out in a panic.

DOCTOR: And then?

POLICEMAN: Then I came back to the police station, and I heard that a woman was dead in her home, and to my surprise it was her.

DOCTOR: To your surprise? Who did you think it was?

POLICEMAN: They went to the scene, and you were arrested.

DOCTOR: You fled the scene.

POLICEMAN: No, the scene they described was not the same as the one I fled. She was lying on the bed, not the floor, and there was blood coming from her mouth and her eyes were protruding, and the . . . the condom was gone. All of that was your doing, right?

DOCTOR: Right. She was lying on the floor when I got home, very peaceful—there was this terrifying sense of beauty in her naked body lying there. But that kind of peace did not belong to me. Suddenly I had this uncontrollable impulse: I held her in my arms, but my two hands closed around her neck, and I applied all my strength until a stream of blood ran from the corner of her pale mouth—it was beautiful. I embraced her on the bed, we lay there together as if we were sleeping. Everything around us was calm; the world suddenly seemed to have become so pure. Soon her body got cold, so I tried to use my body to warm her up, but it didn't work. But in my mind I didn't feel the tiniest bit of sorrow or fear—it was as if it was meant to happen.

POLICEMAN: Meant to happen?

DOCTOR: Yes. I am not a saint—of course I wanted to know what her lover was like. But I didn't want to ask her, and she didn't tell me. She said it was just something she needed—like tampons or makeup—just something women need that has nothing to do with men. *(Self-deprecatingly)* Nothing to do with me? *(Rubs his head with his hands)* It was awful: every night, lying beside this woman whose fertile body needed to be ploughed by another man. Inside me, jealousy grew as wild as grass, the suffering multiplied in my veins, and it all made me lose my sense of reason. At first, I didn't know what I would do. What should I do? What could I possibly do? Where was I? Where should I be? Where could I go? In this city with its forest of skyscrapers, I was all alone. *(Suddenly)* Why aren't you taking notes? Why aren't you writing this down?

The POLICEMAN suddenly rushes over and grabs the DOCTOR's neck in a craze.

POLICEMAN: Because . . . because we are both murderers.

They calmly stand facing each other, as if they can hear each other's gasps for breath.

DOCTOR: *(Slowly pulls apart the POLICEMAN's fingers. Quietly)* Can I borrow your cell phone for a minute?

POLICEMAN: For what?

DOCTOR: To make a phone call.

The POLICEMAN thinks it over, takes the cell phone from his pocket and hands it over to the DOCTOR. The DOCTOR opens the door to the isolation room and enters. He closes the door behind him, and the POLICEMAN walks over to the circuit breaker, pulls on it with a bang, and the DOCTOR is exposed under strong light. The DOCTOR holds the phone, dials a number, listens, walking around and saying something. The POLICEMAN stands behind the glass wall, watching him coldly. After a little while, the DOCTOR hangs up the phone and comes walking out. He hands the phone to the POLICEMAN.

They return to the interrogation chairs and sit down across from each other, as if they can hear the sound of air flowing.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: What is it?

DOCTOR: I reported it to the police.

POLICEMAN: *(Stands abruptly)* You—

DOCTOR: I called the police station, and my lawyer too. They'll be here any minute.

POLICEMAN: *(He retrieves the cell phone from his pocket, and looks down at it while pressing some buttons)* What evidence do you have?

DOCTOR: Tape recordings—I taped everything you did with her.

POLICEMAN: You're despicable.

DOCTOR: I am. I am despicable. Why shouldn't I be? That is our business, mine and hers. I like to listen, listen to everything you two do. I never knew who you were, but

I was able to imagine. But now I know, the voice on the tapes is yours. Even though it took me a long time to confirm that that voice is yours, I'm sure they will recognize your voice from the tapes right away. Don't forget those Pig's tracks are on the windowsill, on the water pipe, even on her body—your fingerprints are all over the murder scene. And don't forget, the drone used a . . . condom . . .

Silence. They sit quietly across from each other. Their eyes are locked.

Lights gradually fade to black.

Scene Six

Lights come up.

The POLICEMAN is wearing prison garb and sitting up straight in the interrogation room. The partial lighting allows him the opportunity to hide in a section of shadow. A voice is heard outside the room: "Hey, 603, ten more minutes. Get ready to go."

The POLICEMAN lifts his wrist, but there is no watch on it. Instead there are ice-cold handcuffs. He gives a cold but helpless laugh. He raises his head, the clock on the wall tick-tocks loudly and incessantly, with an exaggerated sound..

A voice is heard outside the room: "603, you have a visitor. Ten minutes."

The POLICEMAN is suddenly standing there. He becomes nervous—he has the impulse to touch his hair, but he realizes he has no hair. He pulls at his collar, straightens up his back, and sits down, at his wit's end.

The door beside him opens quietly, and light comes streaming in, making his form dimly perceptible.

An offstage voice is heard. It says in a remote, gentle, seemingly unconscious manner: "Julio, get up, time to go."

The door closes with a bang, and standing in the doorway is the DOCTOR. He wears a suit and leather shoes, looking sharp. The POLICEMAN stands up in a flurry, and the two men look at each other.

POLICEMAN: *(Sure and steady)* You?

DOCTOR: Hello! *(He briskly walks to the POLICEMAN's side)*

POLICEMAN: What are you doing here?

DOCTOR: I heard that you were leaving today.

POLICEMAN: So what?

DOCTOR: You still have ten minutes—no—nine minutes.

POLICEMAN: Thanks.

DOCTOR: I wronged you.

POLICEMAN: Get out of here!

DOCTOR: I came to see you off.

POLICEMAN: Thanks.

DOCTOR: Twenty years?

POLICEMAN: It seems like a waiting period—I still have hope.

DOCTOR: Hope?

POLICEMAN: Hope that I will be released someday.

DOCTOR: I'm afraid by the time you get out, we'll both be retired.

POLICEMAN: We'll see. *(Pause)* Right now, tell me.

DOCTOR: Tell you what?

POLICEMAN: Why did you kill her?

DOCTOR: Why didn't you appeal?

POLICEMAN: I'm not willing to live a life of degradation. It's probably better this way.

DOCTOR: I'm not willing to live a life of degradation either. *(Silence)* Are you afraid?

POLICEMAN: Afraid? *(Smiling coldly)* You don't understand me.

DOCTOR: This really makes you happy.

POLICEMAN: I made my bed, I'll lie in it.

DOCTOR: I am a psychiatrist.

POLICEMAN: So what?

DOCTOR: I can verify that you have psychological problems.

POLICEMAN: I don't have any problems.

DOCTOR: After all, you didn't kill her.

POLICEMAN: Yes I did.

The DOCTOR waits for him to continue.

POLICEMAN: Because I didn't save her. I left.

DOCTOR: Well then, maybe it was an accident. An accident.

POLICEMAN: It wasn't an accident. She was definitely murdered—to be precise, she was choked to death by you.

DOCTOR: I can verify that you have psychological problems and get your sentence postponed a few years or shortened a bit.

POLICEMAN: There is no need.

DOCTOR: I'm just . . .

POLICEMAN: You're just feeling ill at ease with this, right?! You are a psychiatrist, you should be able to overcome this.

DOCTOR: You win.

POLICEMAN: Win?

DOCTOR: You were winning from the start.

POLICEMAN: I wasn't competing.

DOCTOR: No, this is a competition. An endless competition, in which both competitors will die of exhaustion. I admire you, because you decided to quit, and this made you the real winner.

POLICEMAN: *(Cold laugh)* Winner? No, I'm just a coward.

DOCTOR: *(Sighs)* You know what? There is a prison in my heart, and I will sit locked up in there my whole life.

Silence.

DOCTOR: I asked my lawyer, and he said you definitely have grounds for appeal.

POLICEMAN: Thanks, but that won't be necessary.

DOCTOR: It seems like you're giving up all hope.

POLICEMAN: No, I have hope. At least I won't be wasting any more time in front of the television. I've been to the prison labor camp and it's not bad—at least I'll have something to look forward to. I feel like I've gone back in time, almost like I am a child again—each day is full of hope, and everything is new.

DOCTOR: Will you fight for a commuted sentence?

POLICEMAN: Of course.

DOCTOR: Then . . . don't forget to write to me. *(Pulls out a business card and hands it to the POLICEMAN, who takes it from him)*

POLICEMAN: Thank you.

DOCTOR: When it comes time for you to be released, let me know and I will come get you.

POLICEMAN: Really? That's great!

DOCTOR: That's settled then.

POLICEMAN: That's settled then.

They shake hands tightly.

A voice is heard from beyond the door: "603, visiting time is over. It's TIME TO GO!"

POLICEMAN: *(Speaking loudly to be heard beyond the door)* All right. *(Standing and turning toward the DOCTOR)* Thank you. *(Looks at the DOCTOR, prepares to leave)*

The DOCTOR calls to the POLICEMAN, he turns and quietly walks over to the doorway and opens the door for him.

DOCTOR: *(Softly)* Julio, get up, time to go.

The POLICEMAN looks at the DOCTOR in terror, as if living in a memory.

DOCTOR: *(Suddenly, using up all his strength, blurts out)* Julio, get up, time to go.

Just then, the gentle voice of a woman fills the entire space: "Julio, get up, time to go."

The POLICEMAN's whole body straightens. Standing up straight, like a little child ready for an outing, he steadies his body and, step by step, strongly walks towards the door.

As the lights gradually fade, his shadow is distorted and elongated.

END OF PLAY