



PRODUCTION SCRIPT

Confession...

(a hell of a thing)

by Michael S. Crawford  
2261 Shakespeare  
Houston, Texas 77030-1112  
713.668.9429  
msctex1@mac.com

*"Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing  
either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me  
it is a prison."*

*William Shakespeare*

PRODUCTION SCRIPT

Copyright 2004

---

## T H E P L A Y E R S :

MAN, 30  
WOMAN, 28  
OTHER MAN, 29  
POLICEMEN #1, #2, #3 & #4  
BAD COP  
GOOD COP

---

### SCENE I

*Very dimly lighted BEDROOM, set stage right; there is no more light than necessary to allow faces to communicate ideas and emotions. There is no sound from the stage, other than MAN'S VOICE (with noted exceptions), until conclusion. "Rainbirds," by Tom Waits, plays softly on a continuous loop throughout.*

*Staging is minimalist as possible, but what props are used (three beds with white sheets, one smaller than others; two chairs; three door frames, without doors, for the entry hall, BEDROOM and GUEST ROOM; as well as a small round table and a bar or tall sofa table to set off the KITCHEN) are of high quality. MAN is dressed the same (quite nicely, grey-themed colors) throughout. WOMAN'S clothing is white-themed, until end. OTHER MAN wears a red shirt and brown slacks.*

*Except in memory flashbacks with WOMAN, it is vital that the tone of MAN'S VOICE never really change, but for as noted. He might speak more quickly or slowly at times, but remains even, no matter the subject matter. Every word is distinct, almost overly-pronounced. He sounds dry, nearly lifeless; tired, yet occasionally evinces a trace of wonder. MAN'S VOICE must be prerecorded, unless two very similar voices can be cast; the same true of WOMAN'S VOICE.*

*Throughout, MAN'S VOICE serves as a prompt for the action on stage. With one noted exception, efforts need not be made for such moments to coincide perfectly with the voice -- a few seconds either way, lending a disjointed feeling, is intended.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*WOMAN and OTHER MAN stand awkwardly in BEDROOM, WOMAN's arm's length apart, looking at one another, with the tacit and yet to be spoken hanging in the air like steam. It is not an if, it is a when, and she is nearer the bed.*

*We hear MAN'S VOICE inhale deeply on a cigarette, and exhale as or more forcefully.*

MAN'S VOICE  
(First line delivered as  
though he has told this  
story a hundred times)

Something tells me to drive by the house. I don't know what or why; probably some subconscious epiphany that hadn't worked its way into words, or at least realization...not yet. I put down a book, pay for coffee, drive four blocks, and see a car in front. I pull past a little ways, park, and go inside.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(somewhat thoughtfully)

I don't set the car alarm.

*OTHER MAN and WOMAN continue to look at each other, but after a few more seconds they both smile somewhat shyly. OTHER MAN exhales, then looks around, and seems to realize where he is. He badly wants to stay, but for whatever reason has thought the better of it. He smiles sadly at WOMAN, and turns to walk away.*

*WOMAN's face falls as his back is turned; she suddenly reaches out and snatches his left hand with her right; gently, but with the suddenness of a snake strike. Her smile returns immediately before his eyes meet hers. She does not pull him to her; they stand staring a while longer, communicating with their eyes.*

*MAN enters, stage left; LIGHTS FADE on BEDROOM. MAN follows the actions set forth below.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I get inside quietly enough -- obviously. I'd oiled the hinges a while back. I toe my shoes off, without looking down -- quite the opposite. My neck is craned back; and I don't need look where I'm going. It's...the most intensely visceral moment of my life. I'm someone else, somewhere else; purely and suddenly primitive.

*MAN'S voice only hints at a tone of wonder.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

It's as some...just-dormant tribal memory, triggering heightened senses which allowed the tribe to survive, until this moment...I can smell him, and I would swear I hear him breathe, with the walls and doors between us. I probably couldn't, I know that. There was no way I could....I can still smell him, though. Polo cologne. Seventh-grade gym.

*LIGHTS rise again on WOMAN and OTHER MAN; their clothes a literal trail from where they stood to the bed. They are naked, half covered by a sheet, and having passionate sex, with WOMAN on top.*

*[The above is to be presented as raw and bluntly as possible, without crossing the almost indefinable line between what is best for the play, and pandering to baser instincts. Nose up to that line, but do not cross it.]*

*MAN does not react to BEDROOM; he cannot yet see them. MAN continues to follow the actions set forth below.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

So I slowly slide toward the hall. Hardwood floors. Wool socks...She said, ah...?

*WOMAN is physically entirely in the moment, and quite clearly enjoying herself, but, in contrast, her voice is the one MAN hears in his memory.*

WOMAN  
(immediately, finishing  
MAN's thought)

You know, when we have kids, they'll never be able to sneak out.

*MAN stops for a moment during this line, with the slightest hint of a smile at the memory, then continues moving.*

MAN'S VOICE

The floor doesn't creak; it *cracks*. It echoes...Well, never loudly as the pistol, but close...The house is so old, so solid, the pine sap in the wood is like iron. So the damn pistol reverberates for...It's something to hear...The bedroom...our bedroom...is next to the guest room, where I'm headed.

*MAN stops for a moment, as he slides into a black leather jacket on the floor. He picks it up, and holds it for a few moments. He smells it, but does not press it to his nose -- it is not necessary. He then gently tosses it aside.*

*The lines below carry on during the above action.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

As far as the decision -- there is a degree of importance to timing -- I'm going with the whole primal flashback to junior high gym. Little boys, trying to get laid, to impress each other...There is some irony there...Manslaughter versus murder, with three degrees to choose, and all in the mind -- the precise *when*, the idea took root...Thoughts can matter...As here, bad cologne, plus adultery, with a random personal memory or two factored in, leads...Who would think it...

*MAN'S VOICE is quiet for a few moments.*

*MAN then stops, his face reflecting the following line.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I hear them now.

*MAN resumes moving, his expression changed to one of denial being overtaken by reality.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

It's said scent is the strongest memory trigger...I hope that's not the case.

*By now if not sooner, MAN stands in front of BEDROOM door, looking in. Efforts will need to be made by WOMAN and OTHER MAN to make MAN'S later description of what he sees plausible.*

*MAN evinces disbelief, his face expressing every conceivable sense of the term, from pain to acknowledgement of the absurd.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The door is open just enough, and by this point sound is worse than sight, so...I look for...I'm not sure. Four, five seconds; much longer, maybe less, I don't know...Some things are clear, some...less so...This is the moment of confirmation. Sound, can be misinterpreted. The odor, is mass produced. I still could have been right, could have been wrong, until here. But I see.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I'd have preferred the latter. Just sliding down the hall like a fool, on my way to get a gun, for no good reason at all...My home reeking of his cologne...

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

As do the sheets, and my wife...in the bed where we named our kids.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I can't see her face. I look; for some reason I want to see her face. Find...anything recognizable, anything...that I still want to see....But his ass is in the way.

*As MAN turns, LIGHTS FADE on BEDROOM. MAN stoically makes his way into GUEST BEDROOM, and finds a small, ornate wooden box, dead center on a small round table; then resumes mirroring the actions below to some degree.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Or *that's* when I decide. Whatever they were doing, all I could see was her body...with his ass for a head. Some unlikely confluence of sheets and lighting, but I'm getting the gun out of its box, slipping the clip in quietly as I can, with an assheaded body that was to mother my children, burned onto my eyes...

**DARKNESS?**

*LIGHTS RISE again on BEDROOM. WOMAN and OTHER MAN are in midst of gentle conflict; unlike earlier, now she is having doubts, and he wants more.*

*OTHER MAN reaches for WOMAN; she rises, covering herself with a sheet, and sits on the end of the bed. She will momentarily mirror MAN in GUEST ROOM.*

*MAN'S VOICE is silent until above action concludes.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Life, fate, chance, whatever the word, strikes with irony, occasionally, and there's always tragedy waiting in the wings...But it's absurdity, at the worst possible moment, that moves the edge closer...It lends a sense of conscious, metaphysical conspiracy, which is, genuinely, maddening.

*MAN moves to corner of bed (nearest BEDROOM) and sits, holding the gun, mirroring WOMAN. The beds are placed with the far end of the GUEST ROOM bed, which faces the audience, directly across from the center of the far end of the BEDROOM bed, leaving MAN and WOMAN staring eye to eye through an imaginary wall, aimed different directions, MAN making the effort to look.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

And with that sight etched wherever I look when my mind drifts, every good memory we shared loses all substance. Still there, but without meaning, like a starving man staring at pictures of food, chewing paper...I know our past was there; I know we had merit, we mattered, more so than anything I might imagine...But the best memories lose what made them live. And the worst slip all defense, contrast or illusion, and only intensify.

*We hear MAN and WOMAN arguing, both quite emotional.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

This is nobody's fault, you know that...we've been here before, and we'll get through it.

## WOMAN'S VOICE

I can't do this again. I won't.

MAN'S VOICE

We'll find...the right doctor; we'll do what it takes to make this happen. It'll be all right.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(dully)

Another doctor. For me. What about you?

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE

(quietly)

What about me?

WOMAN'S VOICE

You blame me.

*Seeming to respond, WOMAN immediately breaks down in tears, and returns to the bed with perplexed but tender OTHER MAN.*

*LIGHTS FADE on BEDROOM*

MAN'S VOICE

Five months, then seven months...The same doctor in the emergency room, a year and a half later.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Cleaning the car. Twice.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I sit on the end of the bed; for a while sound had died...Now I hear her crying. Nothing new; she laughed harder than most, felt...more deeply. The tears only seemed to come cheaper;

(MORE)

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

the price the same...I'd have been surprised if she hadn't cried...I think for a second about the book I was reading -- Conrad. A collection of letters to a friend...*Heart of Darkness* might more fit the bill...I've read it too many times...And I'm still here...and Kurtz, and Joseph, and his friend, are dead.

## DARKNESS?

*MAN stands and moves toward the bedroom. LIGHTS FADE TO DARKNESS on MAN. LIGHTS RISE SIMULTANEOUSLY on BEDROOM; we see OTHER MAN, somewhat confused but trying to comfort a gently sobbing WOMAN.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I do not like guns. I don't dislike guns. They do what they are designed to do. This one...uncommon, I'm told. I inherited it from an uncle; a business partner gave it as a gift, after some modifications. The KG-9; a nine millimeter pistol. With the firing pin shaved 1/3000th of an inch or so, it fires about 10 rounds per second...For three and a half seconds, it can be swung like a sword...A half-mile-long sword...

## DARKNESS?

*LIGHTS RISE slightly to show MAN sitting outside the bedroom with his back to WOMAN and OTHER MAN. He appears to be contemplating his pistol.*

*MAN'S VOICE is quiet for a few moments; then continues. Throughout the following speech, MAN is clearly going through an emotional hell, tears rolling down his cheeks; reconsidering, suffering more ways than he knew he could.*

*As MAN'S VOICE resumes, WOMAN rises, slips on her underwear and shirt, both bright white, and climbs back into bed next to OTHER MAN, putting her head on his chest. He gently strokes her hair.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(the last four words are  
the closest MAN'S VOICE  
comes to emotion, but it  
does not rise -- it  
deepens)

I've learned if I send a ball over a net in a friendly game, hoping it will be returned, and the ball doesn't come back, it's best to let it lay. A man does that twice, he runs out of balls...But I know he kept lobbing serve after serve...Because she told me. Never directly; never once did she say he approached her. But she brought him up. Once too often, I suppose. I sound unstable, especially given the business of shooting the son of a bitch, but it's...simple. I knew her. I knew how her mind worked, I knew she said things so she could tell herself she said something, anything; what conscience remained -- respect, affection, love, whatever the term -- dictated pressure be released from time to time...Good for the soul, all that...When she first mentioned him, the attraction could have been subconscious, still unthinkable to her. I sensed nothing the first time she used his name; she was laughing at him...talking to me. It's hard to express...I simply know. Even many married people might think they understand, but won't...Or worse, one of the two would...But: she was my wife.

*MAN stands suddenly, quickly. During the following lines, MAN is visibly agitated, contrasting directly the again even voice we hear. He rocks back and forth on his heels, pulls his arms across his abdomen, and his knees briefly seem to buckle.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
 (pace slows, but tone  
 remains the same)

It was once what it was to always be. We were what was meant, just long enough to know her that well, to find how simple, and good, it can be...and the commensurate extent of loss...That is why I know she was trying to tell me...maybe warn me...way back when...I didn't hear her. There was no way I could. I believed: the thought, rendered unthinkable.

*LIGHTS* fully illuminate *BEDROOM*, to an uncomfortable degree if possible. Blinding, bright light. (*WOMAN* and *OTHER MAN* do not yet react.)

*MAN* takes three quick breaths, exhales, and turns to *BEDROOM* door. He closes his eyes for a moment, then mimes shoving the door open with his left hand, and moves very slowly into the room, his other arm fully extended, holding the gun, and immediately aimed directly at *OTHER MAN*. *MAN* never in any way acknowledges *OTHER WOMAN* until otherwise noted.

*WOMAN* immediately throws herself diagonally backwards against the headboard, leaving a few feet between herself and *OTHER MAN*, her expression one of stunned disbelief, but no real fear, her eyes locked on *MAN*. *OTHER MAN*, who does show real fear, very quickly turns his head to look at *WOMAN*, then looks back to *MAN*.

*MAN* moves to the end of the bed, where *WOMAN* was earlier sitting, staring at *OTHER MAN*, their eyes locked. *OTHER MAN* is shocked and frightened, but does not move. Only his head is visible above the bedsheet.

We hear nothing but the music and following lines, and efforts on the part of the actors must be made to maintain silence (the following lines having begun when the lights rose). The pace of *MAN'S VOICE* increases slightly.

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Just beyond anger, rage, fury...whatever one chooses to term the apogee of white fire internalized, there's something else -- a numb sense of purpose.

(MORE)

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The thoughtless, remorseless echo of injury, bouncing, perforce, back to its source...One can lose enough to disappear, for a time...and only be moved so far, before being somewhere else entirely...I saw our kids once. Parts of them.

*LIGHTS RISE on KITCHEN BAR, three quarters upstage left.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Middle of the day, on the couch, I looked over the bar in the kitchen at my wife, and she was eight years older, with the top of a head at her ribs on one side, and smaller hands clinging to her clothes on the other...Gage and Christine...

*MAN suddenly turns and walks, fairly quickly, to the door. OTHER MAN turns to look at WOMAN, but she stares only at MAN. MAN stops as close as possible to the door frame, as though he ran into glass, and cannot leave.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

She looked frazzled, radiant, bemused, and devastatingly beautiful. I saw that, once...Promised Land, behind the sink, between the cupboards...They made me stay outside the curtains, in the emergency room.

*LIGHTS immediately darken on KITCHEN BAR.*

*OTHER MAN reaches over to WOMAN and places his hand on her to get her attention.*

*MAN turns, sees this, and slowly retakes previous position; OTHER MAN pulls his hand back. MAN leans down and supports himself with his left hand (placed precisely where WOMAN earlier sat).*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Even that memory, now just words, from a dead language...Spent husks; sculpture molds.

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

From there to here, in two years. Left horsewhipping clouds; in a simple place of commensurate actions, a private universe. I am comprised only of an indescribable sense of absolute offense, which bitterly resents its own being...pure of purpose: existing solely to find its origin, lay it waste, and cease to be.

*MAN mimes next line perfectly.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(utterly toneless, devoid  
of life)

I say, "Hi." He says something.

*MAN aims the gun slightly above OTHER MAN'S head; OTHER MAN mouths, "Oh Christ, no." MAN fires, still noiselessly, for one second, quickly moving the gun down OTHER MAN'S body as though cleaving him in twain. OTHER MAN reacts appropriately; blood mists and flies; smoke rises from the gun barrel. We see WOMAN scream in horror, then curl in a ball on the far upper corner of the bed, her knees under her chin. The bed, headboard and wall (the latter if extant) are drenched in blood, and for a few moments more, the bed only worsens. OTHER MAN'S pillow smolders, but never takes flame.*

*After a few moments.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

There's no way of knowing if he shit himself before, during or after, but there is that as well...Not unlike in childbirth; it's not something one thinks to factor in...The gun essentially cuts him in half. I don't yet know, but a cop tells me later, the shells in the gun were also...uncommon. Hollow...Some are imbedded in the foundation of the house...through him, the bed;

(MORE)

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

all that ancient wood I couldn't drive a nail through, and into concrete...If not further, into the soil...

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Shit, smoke, blood, all red and brown and black; him naked, beyond dead...Bile -- seeing his, tasting mine...

*Longer pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

She screams so loudly her voice is gone...She cries, but the only noise is her gasping for the air...air reeking of blood, salt, and shit; burning feathers and black powder. My ears ring so loudly it sounds like a jet engine, at first...

*MAN stares a few moments more at what he has done, then suddenly leans over the side of the bed away from the audience, and vomits violently, but quickly.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

It's not the sight. It's the smell. The sight...I could have at least imagined...And did.

*MAN wipes his mouth with his right forearm, burning his cheek with the gun barrel in the process. He reacts to the burn, stares at the gun, then looks suddenly at WOMAN. They lock eyes for a second, until she averts her gaze to her knees, devoid of any expression whatsoever.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

This should stop here. It did once. But only once. It keeps on, growing in detail, a thing unto itself, pieces falling perfectly logically into places once beneath, or above, thought, comprehension or conception...I don't understand.

*MAN drops the gun on the end of the bed, and moves very slowly, two or three steps towards WOMAN.*

## DARKNESS

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Now we make a deal.

*LIGHTS. BEDROOM, about ten minutes later. No changes. MAN sits on floor beside WOMAN. Both have their knees under their chins. WOMAN is still without expression, in shock and motionless. MAN evinces a mixture of shock and confusion.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The police are well on their way; the shots audible for blocks...Nice, quiet neighborhood...safe. It's unheard of. Lovely couple; either friendly or kept to themselves, depending upon the TV station...

*MAN rises slowly, unsteadily, moves to WOMAN, and whispers in her ear throughout these next lines, seeming to explain something, as gently yet urgently and coherently as he can, given his condition.*

*At times, when speaking to WOMAN, MAN ceases talking, seeming to plead through body language. But WOMAN does not yet respond.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The fear kicks in; the realization there are repercussions...a thought which oddly eluded me in most ways, till this point...The time sitting outside the bedroom door, before I went in, was more a crisis of conscience, all to do with God, and cosmic justice, as well as the big scales...

*A red flashing police light envelops the stage for a moment, then disappears. MAN'S VOICE continues speaking throughout.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Man's more complex notions of the idea never made it past the anger, the loss...the loss of everything...In the nanosecond light from seven feet away reached my eyes, something left, leaving an empty impression where it had before been, and something tried to take its place...Within that light was something unthinkable, that could not ever, under any circumstances, be: beyond my comprehension of obscene, and ridiculous...It could not, *fit*; it had nowhere to rest -- what was true, could not be...I would have, and did, bet my life I would never see nor be convinced...where I slept, inside whom I shared my bed. I did not, and could not, understand.

*WOMAN'S head suddenly jerks toward MAN; he is close enough that he is struck by her chin. She stares at him for a second, with a look of childlike confusion, then slowly places her hand where she hit him, shaking, and notices the burn on his cheek. He stares back at her for a moment, then collapses to his knees, and slowly places his forehead against her upper thigh. She slowly strokes his head, her hands gently running through his hair.*

*While this takes place, properly timed, POLICEMEN enter stage left, where MAN initially entered.*

*POLICEMAN #1 quickly looks through the door; then the rest enter the room. POLICEMAN #1 takes a look at the bed and near it, and after a moment leaves the room; he walks back toward where he entered, trying to compose himself. #2, #3 and #4 interact appropriately with both MAN and WOMAN, doing logical things (picking up the gun with a pen, pictures, etc.). They make a futile attempt to communicate with WOMAN, and spend the remainder of their time dealing gently with MAN, and following the actions below.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

He of course had to be raping her. We had been having our problems;

(MORE)

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

still married and with high hopes, just spending time apart. But I came by unannounced, as I still did from time to time. I had left the gun in the front room the last time I was over; she was against the idea; didn't want it in the house, but agreed because I insisted. I heard her struggling, heard the word, "No;" I grabbed the gun, ran in, and in a moment of rage I will always regret, took a human life. I mean, thank god I was there, but...

*Pause*

*POLICEMAN #2 goes out to check on POLICEMAN #1 outside the room. We see them talk; #1 eventually EXITS, with #2 offering encouragement.*

*The below begins when POLICEMAN #2 leaves BEDROOM to check on #1; the others follow the actions described below.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The police make sure we own the house, and arrange to send a car for us, for statements the following early afternoon downtown. They give me a card for a therapist who has seen this sort of thing before, and who has helped a lot of people, as well as the name of a cleaning company known for thick skins. The police tell us they are sorry it happened, and the rape kit will not be necessary.

*POLICEMEN #3 and #4 walk by MAN; #3 speaks softly to #4.*

## POLICEMAN #3

I just pray to God she doesn't get pregnant like that last one.

*MAN'S head jerks back at this, indicating he heard what was said. POLICEMAN #3 notices, and winces. MAN looks away.*

MAN'S VOICE

We should consider moving as soon as possible -- put it behind us, hard as it may sound; make a fresh start. It'll be hard for us both for different reasons, but they can tell we love each other...

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Later they take us to a nice hotel nearby, and bill the city for two nights.

*POLICEMAN #3 moves to MAN and speaks softly in his ear.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

The gun and ammunition might prove a problem, but...

"Sometimes things happen."

*MAN rises unsteadily, and gently makes an unsuccessful attempt to get WOMAN to stand.*

*POLICEMAN #3 puts his hand on MAN'S shoulder for a moment, offers the below, and exits.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

A sympathetic half-smile -- the equivalent of a wink -- and we're on our way.

**DARKNESS**

---

*A little death, without mourning  
No call, and no warning  
Baby...a dangerous idea  
That almost makes sense*

U2

## SCENE 2

*LIGHTS, as dim as possible. We see MAN and WOMAN, spotlighted, seated center stage, staring expressionless into*

*the audience. Behind them, projected as large as possible, is a loop of the scene of MAN murdering OTHER MAN, from when MAN enters the bedroom until a few moments after he finishes firing. This does not have to be projected on a screen; it is meant to be more eerie than distinct.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

*Our deal was tacit, made that night behind our eyes, in the back of a squad car, on the way to the hotel. After our statements, we somehow end up at a movie. Disney. Fish. She spoke at the station, when it helped most, and withdrew either when she had to, or when it did the most good. It was a formality, and it was over. They were all so sorry...*

*The movie ends abruptly, coinciding with*

**DARKNESS**

LIGHTS RISE

*MAN and WOMAN lie in bed, center stage, three-quarters apart, not touching, expressionless, exhausted. Six seconds pass.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

*The hotel room is comfortable...clean...quiet.*

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO

**DARKNESS**

*LIGHTS RISE. MAN stands three quarters stage right, putting his wallet back in his pocket, looking around and at his watch, but eventually facing stage right. Behind him, quietly but moving forcefully, enters stage left POLICEMAN #1 and POLICEMAN #2, both wearing menacing expressions. Half their distance to MAN, POLICEMAN #3 enters stage right, soon followed by POLICEMAN #4, #3 immediately making eye contact with MAN and drawing and pointing his gun. MAN turns, not to run, but to look for WOMAN. By this time, POLICEMAN #1 has reached MAN, grabs him by the hair, and expertly throws him to the ground and handcuffs him, violently wrenching his right arm in the process, to which MAN reacts in soundless pain.*

*We hear the following while the above takes place.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

A day later...She disappears after I check us out of the hotel, insisting almost without words to go back and pay for the room service. One breakfast, uneaten...Her idea. The cop at the house, who left the room, dislocates my right shoulder putting me in handcuffs.

## DARKNESS

*LIGHTS. Bright spotlight on MAN, his right arm in a sling. One chair, occupied by MAN, dead center stage.*

*BAD COP and GOOD COP enter opposite one another; BAD COP mimes ranting and raving at MAN, while GOOD COP offers a calmer demeanor. They mime the lines where appropriate, to whatever degree already established. MAN sits stoically as possible, reacting where and however appropriate. BAD COP shakes MAN'S chair occasionally, as well as slapping the side of his head a few times.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

They tear into me with the righteous anger of good people who tried to cut corners, for the right reasons...only I had...

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(Last line clearly GOOD  
COP'S. MAN reacts  
noticeably to "my wife"  
in last line.)

Well, the investigation was never really closed, something would have come up...Somewhere. It always does, even if I hadn't forced that poor terrified woman to do what I should have had the stones to do: own up to my mistakes, sow, reap; reap, sow...Be a man...She was my wife, for God's sake, no matter what...

*In the following, WOMAN'S VOICE seems somewhat physically distant or distorted, as though she were behind MAN'S VOICE to some degree.*

*BAD COP and GOOD COP go on miming interrogation.*

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(reasonably)

I just want to spend some time apart.

MAN'S VOICE

I might have been out in a few years, if I'd pled temporary insanity, or even the permanent variety. But no. I had to go and prove just how smart I really am.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(slightly more emotional)

We aren't breaking up, I just need some...room, to figure out where I...

*Pause*

WOMAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Where I want us to go.

MAN'S VOICE

Calculating. Malice aforethought. Is that the difference between first and second degree murder; I can never remember...I'm not that smart, not like this guy here. Me either. Doesn't really matter though.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(sincerely)

I promise, it's just time I need. I love you.

MAN'S VOICE

Did you hear the new uniform, the transfer from Georgia who won all those medals in the war for valor in combat, couldn't even stay in the room? Wow...Set a new standard, didn't you? Raised the bar for the next psycho...

*BAD COP mockingly shakes MAN's injured hand/arm, as though they were old friends.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

How's the arm, big guy? Hurts, doesn't it...

WOMAN'S VOICE

I saw a doctor...somebody from work told me about her; his sister can't...I didn't even bring it up; it just...

*Pause*

WOMAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I can't have kids. The last time, was the last time.

MAN'S VOICE

Oh, pretty, isn't he? Well, if he ever does get out, he'll never be able to sit on a bar stool, I can tell you that.

WOMAN'S VOICE

It won't be OK.

MAN'S VOICE  
(appropriately emotional;  
equally distant/distorted  
as WOMAN'S)

Yes it will. We can adopt.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(dead)

You don't want that.

MAN'S VOICE  
(back to normal)

Christ...Biggest buck on the cell block is gonna turn him out and then inside out. Do you know how many murderers are high IQ? Do you? And they always end up here with us. Why *is* that?

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(pleading, end of rope;  
again distant/distorted)

I am begging you not to hold this against yourself, because...if you do and I have to accept that you *can* believe you are responsible, then I have to accept that you might be right, because I respect you. Then I have to accept that medically, it could be me as easily as you. So please let this go soon. It's no one's fault.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(after a moment)

How?

## DARKNESS

*LIGHTS rise, not brightly, but brighter than any time other than the murder. MAN stands by a different, smaller bed, alone, center stage. He wears a numb expression, listening to voices he has heard countless times before. His arm is uninjured.*

MAN'S VOICE

So now...I either got away with it, or I didn't. I don't think about it; it's beside the point. Got away, get away; don't, didn't...I always end up in the same place, one way or another. Without her...The meat of the thing, all that matters, is here. The rest...apéritifs, expresso, dessert...Beyond the point...Just padding the bill.

*MAN sits on edge of bed.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

But, who knows. Maybe I got a monster lawyer; those hardwood floors indicating an expensive house. Or, whatever money was hers, and I end up staring at a 24 year-old court appointed attorney for six months -- one whose English is spotty at best. Would my wife visit me in prison? Nothing conjugal, just the gesture...Or show up to deliver divorce papers, at her therapist's insistence. Closure...

*MAN stands, paces slowly back and forth a few steps.*

Maybe I'm free, on a technicality. The cop who told me about the ammunition might have neglected to make me aware of my right not to admit the ammo was mine. Or the gun...Maybe he didn't forget, and I'm free due to simple semantics: his sixty hours of community college leading him to believe one vital word synonymous with another. My shoulder -- police brutality; some sort of war flashback that can be acknowledged, and understood, but never tolerated in a civilized...

*Pause*

*MAN lies down on bed.*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

I did what I've said I did -- here -- and I don't know if I would undo it. His life...my wife. His...My...It's a hell of a thing.

*MAN gets up and walks around slowly, in decreasing, concentric circles.*

## MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)

Perhaps I'm doomed to some sort of, "Hoist with my own petard," permanent loop of all this, over and over and over again, behind my eyes, and I'm just sharing, to save whatever's left, stave off madness: realizing the Blue-Eyed Boy *is* Mr. Death jars one's sensibilities. An ever-echoing gun, my Telltale Heart...A cry for help, until I finally find that one missing iota of morality, ethics or conscience, that can never release me from physical prison, but will let my soul fly free, though forever burdened, by what I cannot undo...It's possible...Social justice.

*Pause, twice as long as previous, as MAN reaches the center of his own orbit and stops abruptly, speaking for the first time, far more animated than MAN'S VOICE ever grew. The music stops.*

MAN

Or maybe...maybe...I never did it at all. None of it.

*LIGHTS rise suddenly and brightly on BEDROOM, the bed now neatly made and unstained. MAN's pace quickens.*

MAN (cont'd)

But what if she played her role to a T, minus the...excesses that evolved through time, in my mind...

*OTHER MAN and WOMAN reenter BEDROOM, recreate shy moments from first scene and begin slowly pulling off one another's clothing (identical, but what was white on WOMAN now is grey), leaving similar as possible trail.*

*MAN moves very near them, watching intently, with expression of disbelief tempered with resignation. The one sense he cannot evince is anything remotely sexual -- he is revulsed, forcing himself to watch.*

MAN (cont'd)

Perhaps my wife just fucked some guy from work. Or the mailman. Or her sister's friend's cousin. In our bed. And I became aware, one way or another. I walked in. Or she called me, and told me. Wrote. A note in the mailbox found two days later. Or had someone else call. A relative. A friend...It happens every day, in variation...Our sheets crumpled, reeking of the simplest lusts, but not...unwashable...Unwanted, but still white to the eye, not every color a body can be compelled to produce...Relatively spotless...Damn.

*MAN turns away in disgust.*

MAN (cont'd)

What if sins in the mind, repeated enough, just once past some invisible, subjective, innate line, begin to count in the mind, to whatever degree? Degrade. Diminish. Alter...*Consume*... Becoming as woven within as though events actually transpired...What if absolute, genuine conviction, mired only by lack of opportunity, demands a price? On the big scales...The court of one. Juries do not dictate sentences on the act: the nature of decision is deeply in play -- a mind leading a body...which violates another.

*Pause*

MAN (cont'd)

I believe I would have killed him.

(MORE)

MAN (cont'd)

But I never saw him after...I believe that...12 would need believe were I to see jail, but could never truly know. Believing is not knowing. I know.

*MAN motions towards BEDROOM, then quickly waves his arm in a circle, in an all-encompassing gesture.*

MAN (cont'd)

Cause, or effect?

*MAN climbs into bed, center.*

*LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO DARKNESS on WOMAN and OTHER MAN by end of following lines, and ideally on the word "choice."*

*MAN almost leaves the bed by the end of these lines, but only one foot touches the floor, before he retreats back into the bed.*

*MAN speaks very slowly, deliberately, at first; emotional by end, emphasis on "her;" but eventually lapsing back into MAN'S VOICE.*

MAN (cont'd)

And if I still lie awake, in a different bed, wondering what if, what if I *had* followed my first impulse, repeating my mantra...and with enough regret in not, to warrant seeing *this*, more times than can be counted: evolving, growing, gaining detail, nuance, subtlety, symbolism, metaphor -- transcending reality, so far beyond what actually took place...With it all falling back on *her* choice, what she did...

*Pause*

MAN (cont'd)

We never should have named them before we knew them...Twice too often to the well...Another invisible line...

*MAN is quiet for a moment, almost making it out, but not quite, not yet.*

*The music returns.*

*After a moment.*

MAN'S VOICE

No. How could her choice be worth putting anyone through this, for no good reason at all?

*Pause*

MAN'S VOICE (cont'd)  
(repeating *ad infinitum*,  
fading to silence with  
the lights. Use the  
iamb)

There must be something else. There must be something else.

There must be something else. There must be something else.

*LIGHTS SLOWLY DIM TO DARKNESS, coinciding with final fade of  
MAN'S VOICE, and the music.*

*Immediately at the instant silence and darkness is achieved, we hear, very loudly, what we did not hear -- for seven seconds, the sounds of WOMAN and OTHER MAN having sex. The door thrown open. Five heavy footsteps; WOMAN hitting headboard. A pause, MAN'S VOICE saying, "Hi," OTHER MAN yelling, "Jesus please, don't," and the immediate, painfully loud sounds of the gun; OTHER MAN'S grunt as the first shell hits him, followed by WOMAN's scream, her hoarser scream, and her gasping for air; a few seconds later the sound of MAN vomiting and it hitting the floor, then the soft sound of MAN and WOMAN breathing heavily, fading out.*

end