

Paradox

A deconstructive comedy



A classroom. On stage is a well-organized desk, a whiteboard and two chairs. A square, gray rug is spread on the floor, creating a border on stage. For all purposes, the audience members are the students of this class.

Scene 1

(The Teacher, an uptight woman dressed in a buttoned up shirt and a pencil skirt, neatly organizes her desk. From time to time she glances at her watch)

Teacher: Is everyone here? Can I have some quiet, please...? And also, please turn off your cellphones, it's disturbing. We'll start just a moment.

(As she perfects the order of things on the desk, she addresses the audience) You must be wondering about Reuben... As some of you may have heard, Professor Nimrodi is leaving for Boston today, for Harvard University... We wish him the best, best of luck... *(She tidies the desk again, switching between the stapler and the paper clip).*

Reuben says that you guys are a great class... He's sorry that he couldn't come to say goodbye in person, so... he asked me to tell you that... I'll be taking over this class in the meantime... just until the academic committee decides who will "inherit him"... I *(cough)* - for those of you who don't know... *(Cough, cough)* me - I *(her coughing continues until she switches the stapler back with the paper clip)* I have been Reuben's academic assistant for the past few years. I'm a bit nervous... This is my first time. In front of a class, that is! So, with your permission – let's start. *(She writes "Welcome" on the whiteboard).*

So, good evening and welcome to the "Post-Modernism in the Post Modern Era" class! I'm really happy to see you. Those of you who are here, those of you who are not. I know that at this point in the course you must be deep, deep into the "era" and I assume that you're fluent with multiple points of view. POV? Anyone unfamiliar, or doesn't use a Point Of View? It's a rhetorical question, of course. Jesus was black, God was a woman. There is no God. In fact, Jesus was a woman. A woman is both wave and particle; everything is in the eye of the beholder... It's clear, right? Any questions? *(Glances at her watch)* A rhetorical question, maybe? *(Encourages the audience to reply)*

Well then, let's move straight to today's topic: "Deconstruction"! *(Reads aloud)* "If we consider the survival of a text that is a legacy, the narrative or the myth of the Tower of Babel"! *(To the audience)* It's taken from Jacques Derrida's 'Des Tours de Babel'. I don't expect you to understand this at first or second reading. Or third, for that matter. *(Continues reading aloud)* "It does not constitute just one figure among others. Telling at least of the inadequation of one tongue to another, of one place in the encyclopedia to another, of language to itself and to meaning, and so forth, it also tells of the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to compensate for that which multiplicity denies us"!

(Pause)

Before we go any further, I want you to know that a prostitute will arrive soon, and then everything will be much clearer... Let me explain. Deconstruction means taking things apart. Taking apart a concept. Take a concept that you think you understand, but turn "understanding" against the concept! We'll do so because Derrida wishes to unload concepts of their cultural baggage, and perhaps re-assemble them later in a way that works for him.

(She glances at her watch again)

Well, she's late, the whore. *(A better idea comes to her mind – but it's too late)* I should have used a shoe as an example. Simply a shoe. A shoe also has gender and context and different characteristics... *(Bitterly)* And a shoe comes on time!

(There's a knock on the door)

Teacher: Come in...

(A woman enters, dressed like a slightly sexier version of the Teacher, but carrying a flashy, over the top handbag)

Inspector: Sorry I'm late... *(To the audience)* Good evening...Hi there...

(She remains by the door)

Teacher: Come in, come on in.

Inspector: No, please ignore me.

Teacher: God, no. Come, have a seat... I imagine this can't be easy for you...

Inspector: *(Supportive)* No, no. Continue, I'm not here...

Teacher: "I'm not here". Extraordinary. A see-through woman? Meaningless, maybe? For us, you are here! You're here and we're going to find out, who you are exactly! *(To the students)* Apropos Baudrillard, *(Pointing at the Inspector)* reality or simulacra and does it matter? *(Addressing the Inspector)* does it matter?

Inspector: *(Can't quite follow)* Thank you...

Teacher: Just, please step over here. We won't bite.

Inspector: I'm sorry, but that's against regulations... I can't be part of this kind of exercise.

Teacher: Regulations? Too bad... I'd hate to teach this class with you way over there... It'll steer the whole discussion to the right.

Inspector: That's the way it is. Here, I'll sit here. *(Leaves her position by the door and sits in the audience)*. Continue with your class.

Teacher: Ok, whatever works for you...*(The Teacher grabs a chair and goes over to sit right in front of the Inspector, smiling)* So, perhaps you'd like to tell us a little bit about yourself?

Inspector: No, darling, what don't you understand? Ignore me.

Teacher: But why?

Inspector: Don't sit here, stand up!

Teacher: *(She doesn't quite follow, but obeys the order. To the audience)* Ok, let's give her a few minutes... we'll give her a few minutes... *(Drags the chair back to its original place)*... So where were we? Derrida. Doubt. Criticism. Taking apart the premises of Modernity. After world wars 1 and 2, all the big ideologies collapsed. Then came Derrida and crashed the "truth" as well. There's no one truth in Post-Modernism. Certainly not in Post-Doctorate. The "Truth" as we called it when we were kids, is a lie. A good lie, like the knight in shining armor. Derrida easily proves that the truth is partial, moreover, so is the Lie. Truth is a lie, a Lie is also a lie, but not as good a lie as the truth. And this is what I'll try to demonstrate, if you please... *(Seeks the approval of the Inspector)* May I continue?

Inspector: Go ahead!

Teacher: Excellent! *(Takes a couple of earplugs from the desk)* Pay attention, deconstruction, the taking apart of a concept! *(Tries to plug the earplugs in the Inspector's ears).*

Inspector: What are you doing?!

Teacher: Use these. I'm not sure you'll be able to continue prostituting after this class...

Inspector: Excuse me?!

Teacher: I wouldn't want you to be unemployed. The class might spoil prostitution for you...

Inspector: What did you say? No, no, no, it wasn't like that... Whatever I had with him was...

Teacher: *(To the students)* If If prostitution is merely the idea of prostitution...

Inspector: *(Raises her voice)* I'm warning you! You're playing with fire! Let it go!

Teacher: Fine, so no earplugs... *(Submissively puts them back on the desk)*

Inspector: *(To the audience)* Let's stop for a minute, ladies and gentlemen. *(back to her)* What's the point of this "game"? What are you trying to teach? What's your topic? Theme? In one sentence

Teacher: You can't be late for class and then ask what I'm teaching.

Inspector: You're being provocative instead of teaching! Where's the PowerPoint presentation?

Teacher: It's not a provocation.

Inspector: No? What is it, then?

Teacher: Nothing, nothing that hasn't been said before.

Inspector: By whom exactly?

Teacher: Lyotard, Derrida...

Inspector: Lyotard wrote such crap?

Teacher: (*Patronizing*) You can't say it's crap because you don't *understand* it. Only people who understand it can say it's crap.

Inspector: So it *is* crap?

Teacher: No, It's introduction! We haven't even started.

Inspector: So what are you waiting for?

Teacher: For you.

Inspector: Me?!

Teacher: Yes, we need your cooperation...

Inspector: *That* is impossible, sweetheart! (*Softens*) But come here, give me a hug. Loosen up. (*Hugs and shakes her*) Loosen up, baby! (*To the audience*) I'm not a rigid woman, I'm very flexible, you know me.

Teacher: They know you?

Inspector: But enough is enough. No more of this "luftgeschäft". Stick to the subject. I don't have all day and you don't want a bad review. Do you have a lesson plan?

Teacher: (*Picks up her lesson plan notebook*) Of course. Like I explained to you on the phone...

Inspector: What phone?!

Teacher: This class is called "Post..."

Inspector: I know what it's called! I'm one of its founders!

Teacher: You're one of its founders...

Inspector: Yes, I am. Together with Reuben, of course...

Teacher: (*Freezes*) Oh, no...

Inspector: (*To the students, while comforting the Teacher*) She has some very big shoes to fill.

Teacher: (*Mumbles to herself*) I should have used the shoe...

Inspector: And no notebook. (*She grabs the notebook from the Teacher's hand*) I don't like notebooks, I like PowerPoints!

Teacher: I'm so sorry for what I've said...

Inspector: Apology accepted... Now go on, dear.

Teacher: No, it was a misunderstanding, I invited a hooker.

Inspector: I don't want to know! Come on, forget what you prepared, let yourself go, you know the material, now just tell it to us in a way that would make us care... *(She moves sensually)* Charm us!

Teacher: How?

Inspector: *(Shaking her breasts)* Use your personality! Do you have an anecdote?

Teacher: Anecdote?

Inspector: It's always good to start with an anecdote. It relaxes the air, breaks the ice. For example, my partner and I were in Norway last year, where every fjord is a fjord, we step into a restaurant, and how is it called? Spinoza! Oh, how we laughed... Get it?

Teacher: Yes,

Inspector: Come on, don't think, do!

Teacher: OK... like I said, the truth is not popular these days...

Inspector: The truths are not popular these days...

Teacher: Exactly...

Inspector: That's not what I meant by anecdote... Try something personal...

Teacher: OK... I'm Yonat *(Cough)*, I was a computer programmer in the army...

Inspector: And I'm divorced. What's that got to do with it?

Teacher: No, I mean... what I *personally* think...

Inspector: That's more like it... *(Motions to her to perk up her breasts)*

Teacher: What if the truth is *not* extinct?

Inspector: OK, I don't quite follow...

Teacher: *(Struggling to find the words)* what if the truth is still there? Hiding frightened under the table, waiting for the moment when it feels safe enough to come back out into the world; and not wrapped in a Burka, but exposed to the sun, to life...

Inspector: fine... What do you mean?!

Teacher: Take a peach, for example, yes?

Inspector: A peach?

Teacher: A peach is a peach is a peach! It's not subject to context.

Inspector: How can you make that argument?

Teacher: *(Takes an apple out of her handbag)* Here, I'll show you! A peach!

Inspector: That's an apple.

Teacher: Yes, this happens to be an apple, but for argument's sake, it's a peach, it's not a peach simulacrum, it's not a post-peach, if you see where I'm going with this...

Inspector: *(Can't hold it back anymore)* Ok, people, I'm putting a stop to this, give me the apple... Apples in handbags... you're contradicting yourself. Not only are you trying to undermine Post-Modernism but you're failing at it! *(To the students)* You've got to argue the argument, people... Strange, Reuben said that you had potential...

Teacher: Potential? He said that? For real?

Inspector: Yes, for real... *(To the students)* what is real? Is there such a thing as real? You know, Colleagues, we talk... we had a chat in Budapest's convention... Do you have a teaching license, sweetie?

Teacher: No.

Inspector: So give me some sort of ID. *(She fills out a report)*

Teacher: What are you doing...?

Inspector: I have to report to the dean. *(To the audience)* We have a lunch date tomorrow!

Teacher: But...

Inspector: *(To everyone)* and remember - If it doesn't appear in PowerPoint, ask yourselves if you should even talk about it.

Teacher: *(Holds the report)* What kind of colleague are you? This isn't very collegial!

Inspector: I gave you more than enough chances.

(The Inspector turns to leave)

Teacher: *(Grabs the Inspector's handbag and immediately backs off)* It's just that your handbag is quite slutty...

Inspector: *(somewhat bewildered)* ...I think it's fashionable, *(To the audience)* don't you? *(To the Teacher)* It's a shame, you're so fixated... Sign up for my course, Teaching Methods 101... *(Turns to the students)* Adieu. *(Exits)*

Scene 2

(The Teacher is left speechless for a short while and then comes back to her senses)

Teacher: Oh, I forgot to call out names. I'm calling out your names: *(She reads from her notebook the names of real people in the audience)* Sharon Levy, Tom Goldberg, Emily Berg..... And so on and on and on... *(A half-baked idea comes to her head)* Is it necessary, this ritual? Is it? Is it not? Question! Whoever's **here** know that they are **here**. Whoever's not **here** know that they're **not** here, they are not really **here**! Am I here? Who **am** I? Is "I" objective? Subjective? Where are the boundaries, it's hard to say... For example, Reuben said I had potential. **Do** I have potential? Is this potential

objectively **mine**, or is it subjectively dependent on Reuben? Because if Reuben isn't here, where is my potential? Is the potential still here? And potential of what, really? What do you think he meant?

(Knocks on the door again. Pause)

Teacher: *(Bewildered)* Yes?

Prostitute: *(It's the same actress as the Inspector, with a slight change of clothe – her skirt has been replaces with tight, sexy pants and her hair is different)* Good evening, good evening! So many people... Don't think I know anybody here. Wait... I think I know you. Don't you have a purple testicle?

Teacher: Uhm!

Prostitute: Yeah?

Teacher: What are you doing?!

Prostitute: You invited me, right? Are you Yonat? You invited a postmodern prostitute? not sure what that meant... but whatever, is it not you?

Teacher: Uh... yes, it's me, but you're a whore?

Prostitute: You're the whore, bitch!

Teacher: No, I mean... all of a sudden you're a whore?

Prostitute: There was nothing very sudden about it... It took a couple of years.

Teacher: *(Loses her confidence)* I mean, weren't you just here?

Prostitute: Here? It's my first time.

Teacher: You look so much like...

Prostitute: No shit, I get that a lot.

(The Prostitute takes off her top and throws it at the shocked teacher. She stays topless; her nipples are covered by large star shaped stickers)

Teacher:.. uh.. no, no need... *(in the meantime, the Prostitute moves sensually in front of the class)* Stop it, come, sit *(pulls up a chair for her)* It's just a shame that you're late...

Prostitute: Sit here?! *(She sits down slowly)* I have a slipped disc.

(The teacher showcases the prostitute, relieved that she's finally here)

Prostitute: So what are we doing?

Teacher: Well, to begin with, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Prostitute: Sure, what do you want me to say?

Teacher: Just a few words about yourself, before we begin taking you apart... Start with a personal anecdote, maybe.

Prostitute: Anecdote?

Teacher: About who you are.

Prostitute: *(Disappointed)* Who I am?

Teacher: Yes.

Prostitute: No!

Teacher: Can you tell us a little bit about your background?

Prostitute: I'm sorry, I can't.

Teacher: I see... Perhaps it would be easier for you to talk in the third person?

Prostitute: Person?

Teacher: Third person.

Prostitute: *(Browsing the audience)* Whoever I choose?

Teacher: *(Takes a doll out of her bag. The doll is dressed precisely like the Teacher)*
No, no...Come now, can you tell us who she is? *(Snaps her fingers to get her talking)*

Prostitute: What for, sweetie? You don't want to know.

Teacher: It's fine, it's in third person. *(snap)*

Prostitute: Trust me, it would ruin...

Teacher: It's not you! *(snap, snap, snap)*

Prostitute: Fine, whatever, if you insist... *(The Teacher snaps her fingers again, which really annoys the Prostitute)* Enough already! ...So you're unsure of yourself and you're 22, all alone. And he takes advantage of you and you...

Teacher: No, "you" is in second person.

Prostitute: What?

Teacher: **You** – second person. Third person, **She!**

Prostitute: Is everything ok, sweetie? You're making me nervous.

Teacher: No, no... go on...

Prostitute: But what do you want me to say?!

Teacher: Where she works, for example.

Prostitute: *(Cynically)* She works in Amsterdam.

Teacher: *(In all seriousness)* You work in Amsterdam?

Prostitute: She. Red Light district!

Teacher: Really?!

Prostitute: Sure. She has clean clients, kick-ass boss, kick-ass apartment, shitload of money, a state funded visit to the gynecologist every month, she has people lining up, cool?

Teacher: That sounds great.

Prostitute: It sounds great?

Teacher: For a prostitute...

Prostitute: You think it sounds great?!

Teacher: It sounds like it...very interesting.

Prostitute: What the fuck do you know?! You privileged little bitch! *(Kicks down the chair)*

Teacher: No, no... I didn't mean...

Prostitute: Looking down on me like that, what the fuck do you know, you spoiled brat!

Teacher: No, no, I'm sorry, please, please sit down... please...

(She sits her down)

Prostitute: I'm sorry! I have weak nerves. It's not professional... you have great skin... come, come sit on my lap.

Teacher: No, no...

Prostitute: I'll be gentle!

Teacher: *(Helplessly looks at the audience)* Let's give her a few minutes...

Prostitute: What, I'm not good enough for you?

Teacher: What? No! What are you talking about? *(She relentlessly approaches the Prostitute and sits on her lap. The Prostitute starts to caress her intimately)* What's your name, if I may ask?

Prostitute: ...Crystal.

Teacher: Is "Crystal" your stage name or your "real" name?

Prostitute: "Real"? No. It's a dangerous business. No one should know who you really are.

Teacher: Ok, Anat then. We'll call you Anat, just for now. Anat Moyal, ok? So, Anat... what does it feel like... with men?

(The Prostitute slaps the Teacher's butt, who in turn jumps up and goes to bring a laser pen)

Teacher: Ok, let's move on... We're not here for the chit-chat. Can you please turn off the light over there?Here. *(She laser tags different parts of the Prostitute's body)*

Prostitute: What the hell is this?

Teacher: I promise it won't hurt. It's a very simple deconstruction...*(To the audience)* look, Anat's persona can be taken apart into an array of feminine imageries throughout history and back, and to different roles of prostitution determined by patriarchal society.

Prostitute: I can't feel a thing. *(Pointing to her crotch)* Go down there a minute...

Teacher: What is prostitution A word? A concept? Money? Exploitation? Can anyone become a whore? And how? Is prostitution signified or the signifier?

Prostitute: I'm a hooker, not your social worker. Do you wanna talk all day or actually do something?! *(Comes dangerously near her)*

Teacher: *(Backs away)* You're not a hooker. It's just your night job.

Prostitute: *(Offended)* Don't you want me to touch you?

Teacher: No... Yes!... No...

Prostitute: What's your problem?

Teacher: *(Decidedly, ignoring her question)* You're a single mother!

Prostitute: Are you on pills?

Teacher: Your kid has nothing to eat. You'll do anything for him.

Prostitute: I hope to have a girl, God willing.

Teacher: God willing? You're religious.

Prostitute: No, it's a figure of speech.

Teacher: You didn't finish high school.

Prostitute: Why did you ask me here? To humiliate me?

Teacher: What? No...! I, we... needed to know what it's like with...

Prostitute: Did you ever even have sex?

(Pause. The Teacher freezes and then goes over to the desk to tidy it)

Prostitute: Did you? Answer me!

Teacher: What? Did you say something?

Prostitute: It's your first time, huh?

Teacher: *(with an outburst of anger)* No! Not the first time! *(She forces a kiss on the Prostitute, then looks at her startled and wipes her own mouth with a wet wipe)* Not my first time!

Prostitute: Whatever.

Teacher: It's not my first time! *(Jumps at the Prostitute again, clumsily touching her body)*

Prostitute: Relax...

Teacher: I'm relaxed...

Prostitute: You're insane.

Teacher: No, no, I'm sane.

Prostitute: Chill for a second, come, let me show you how it's done...

Teacher: I'm perfectly calm! *(Pushes her away and climbs on the desk in the midst of what appears to be a panic attack)* You're a whore! You're a servant to men... A satisfier of needs. You're desperate, lonely like a dog. You're trash, you're at the bottom. You wait and wait; you call on Saturdays, call and hang up. You go over his texts, look for encoded messages addressed to you, you can't tell reality from fantasy, certain that he's trapped in his bourgeois life. One time you followed his wife to the post office and back. You clean his office, bring him salads, he has very high cholesterol. And a million admirers. Female ones, too... They're all over him, but you're the one writing his lectures and thank you speeches. Asking nothing in return, all you want is to be by his side... but he doesn't... he won't... he doesn't tou... he doesn't want to... no... no...

(The Prostitute helps her down the desk and hugs her for a long while. The Teacher slowly calms down)

Prostitute: Men are shit. Women, too... That's more like it... I really had to feel you.

(The Teacher steps back, confused, and looks suspiciously at the Prostitute)

Teacher: ...What did you say?!

Prostitute: ...That we're out of time!

Teacher: What?

Prostitute: Half an hour. I'm all yours for a whole half an hour.

Teacher: Oh, yeah...sure... Of course... Go... *(The Prostitute takes her shirt and gets dressed)* It didn't work anyway... You didn't surrender yourself to deconstruction... We really made a mess of things... I'll pay you...

Prostitute: No need.

Teacher: *(Insists)* No, no... fair trade...

Prostitute: No need... *(Takes the money)* I'll just put a few business cards here, ok? *(To the audience)* Not on Shabbos... *(Exits)*

Scene 3

Teacher: *(Unnerved, searching for words)* What a... Woman... That went by fast, didn't it? Did you get any of this...? Because it wasn't quite what I had planned... What I mean is... When Jacques Derrida talks about deconstruction... or maybe should I call him Redida? Or perhaps Dardelai? Why not? *(Grabs on to a new shred of thought)* Everything's allowed, right? Do you think he would like us to deconstruct his *name*?! To undermine his glory? A man in pursuit of honour? A very gentle man, in fact, who killed hundreds of thousands of people! On the inside... You wanna know who I am?? I am Yonat. My name is Yonat. So what? What does it mean? For example, after the army, I was a programmer... in Hi-Tech. Media suppression. You know, the whole sleepless life thing, pizzas at 4am, huge paycheck, apartment in Ramat-Gan. But there I was, all alone. I decided it was time to invest in myself... take care of myself, examine, who am I? What am I? I went back to school, to study art and philosophy with Reuben, Prof. Nimrody... we explored the individual, the notion of the "self", "I vs self", "self vs. me", "I think therefore I am" and before I knew it, I was sucked into this "fascinating" world of opinions and counter opinions. Theories and post-theories, BA, MA, lots of questions, different perspectives, doubts.

(The door opens dramatically)

Teacher: Doubt is the number tool of research...

Officer: *(The same actress who played the Inspector and the Prostitute re-enters. She's now wearing a policewoman's belt on top of what she wore before. Her shoes and hair are also different)* When was the last time you saw Reuben? *(The teacher is confused)* Did you hear what I said?

Teacher: What?

Officer: *(Enters the room)* Where were you the night before last?

Teacher: You're back?!

Officer: Who's back? No, I'm not who you think I am.

Teacher: How do you know who I think you are?

Officer: I know a lot of things.

Teacher: Oh, yeah? Like what? Who are you?

Officer: Let me answer with a paradox. A ship leaves one port on its way to another. Along the way, one of its planks breaks and is replaced with another, then another one breaks and replaced. Then another and another until all the planks have been replaced. So by the time it arrives at the new port all its parts are different.

Teacher: The parable of the ship... I was just about to teach that...

Officer: Question is – is it still the same boat? After all, none of its original parts remained.

Teacher: *(Losing her patience)* So what's the name of this "ship", if you don't mind telling me... *(Points at the Officer)* does this "ship" have a name?!

Officer: Of course. Crystal. *(Having a laugh)* Crystal Moyal. My pseudonym.
(Commandingly) Sit down. *(The Teacher obeys)* By the way, do you have an alibi?

Teacher: An alibi? What for? Do you walk around with an alibi? Do prostitutes work with alibis?

Officer: Let's stop for a minute, ladies and gentlemen. Did I say I was a prostitute?! No. I'm not a fucking prostitute.

Teacher: But isn't it strange that you look exactly like the prostitute and that other woman before her?

Officer: Did they look like one another?

Teacher: Yes.

Officer: So no, it's not strange.

Teacher: *(Completely confused)* You know what I think? I think you're in my head...

Officer: You're on to me!

Teacher: Yes. That's what I think... *(Surprised)* What?!

Officer: *(possibly cynical)* That's right. I'm in your head...

(The Officer takes out a roll of police tape and uses it to mark part of the stage like a crime scene)

Teacher: What are you doing?!

Officer: Can I ask you a few questions? Why did you buy a plane ticket to Thailand?

Teacher: What?

Officer: Are you running away to Thailand?! I've been following you for 24 hours now. *(She spills the contents of the teacher's handbag, then photographs the objects as evidence)*

Teacher: You've been following me? What do you mean?

Officer: I'll ask you again – when did you last see Reuben?!

Teacher: Is it me, or are you accusing me of something?!

Officer: *(Cynically)* It's not you.

Teacher: There's got to be some mistake!

Officer: Your mistake, definitely. To fall in love with your professor, your boss, no less!

Teacher: If I said something before that...

Officer: Even though many women fancied Reuben, the evidence speaks for itself. The draft of your doctorate, bound in gold... the fountain pen with the personal inscription *(She picks up a pen from the cluttered objects)* What's Reuben's pen doing in your handbag?!

Teacher: This pen? It's mine. What makes you think it's Reuben's?

Officer: What?! Try the fact that it was found stabbed into Reuben's heart, in Reuben's office, in Reuben's faculty!

Teacher: My pen in Reuben's faculty?

Officer: In his heart!

Teacher: ...So what's it doing in my handbag?

Officer: (*unsure*) That's definitely a question for Reuben, if only he weren't dead!

Teacher: Reuben is dead...?! But what... How...?

Officer: That's what happens with a pen and a heart.

Teacher: What? That's impossible... It can't be... I've got to go... see his family... (*To the audience*) Did you know about this? Did anyone hear anything about this? I didn't hear a thing... (*Collects her belongings*) I never got to tell him how much I... (*Turns to leave*)

Officer: Ep, ep, ep... you can't get out of here.

Teacher: Why not? What? Oh, right, sorry... (*To the audience*) I'm so sorry... He really said you were a great class... This is unbelievable... You'll have to excuse me. (*She wants to get out*)

Officer: Ep, ep, over here.

Teacher: Yes, yes... but how did it happen?

Officer: That's just what I'm trying to figure out.... (*Using a chalk, she draws the outline of Reuben's dead body inside the marked crime scene*) Reuben's heart stopped at quarter to midnight the night before last. The janitor found his body at the break of dawn. A silver haired man in a red pool of blood. Very picturesque. An immediate gag order was issued. (*To the Teacher*) A crime of passion! Though you're clearly a virgin...?

Teacher: No... (*Breaks down*)

Officer: That's enough, Yonat, just confess and let's get this over with.

(*The Officer marks a place for the Teacher to sign her name with the chalk, on the floor, next to the outline. The Officer guides the Teacher's hand and they start spelling out "Yonat" when suddenly the Teacher stops*)

Teacher: (*Doubtful*) Reuben is dead? (*Pause. She has an idea*) Reuben what?

Officer: What?

Teacher: Reuben what? What's his last name? (*Pause*) if he's dead, in his office, in the faculty, you must know his last name...

Officer: (*Unsure*) Of course. Reuben... Professor Reuben...

Teacher: Nimrodi?!

Officer: That's right! I had it on the tip of my tongue.

Teacher: I see. Reuben's not dead. *(To the students)* I told you, doubt! Doubt! It works time after time! You can all relax; Reuben's alive and not dead. He's probably at El-Al's business lounge right now, with his wife and three daughters, waiting to take off as we speak. I booked their tickets...

Officer: His wife and daughters flew out last week – you're lying!

Teacher: You're lying! Why are you lying?

Officer: You're lying.

Teacher: You're lying!

Officer: You're lying!

Teacher: *(Hysterical)* Lies! Lies!

Officer: *(Trying to calm things down, changes her attitude)* Shhhh....

(The Officer takes off her gloves, belt, and then reaches down her shirt to pull out the stars that were taped to her breasts)

Officer: *(Friendly)* I'm guessing you found out about Reuben's promotion by accident. In the corridor? The staff toilet? By the water cooler?

Teacher: *(Admittingly)* Whatever.

Officer: Years at his service and he doesn't bother to pick up the phone?! Correct me if I'm wrong...

(A red light in the shape Reuben's dead body appears within the chalk outline, in the designated crime scene)

Officer: At night, you showed up at his office.

Teacher: No...

Officer: He was a little drunk, tired, busy packing. You brought him the fruit of your work, the draft of your doctorate wrapped in gold plus a fountain pen as a gift. You asked if you could teach, if he can recommend you to his colleagues. You mumbled that without him you have nothing! But he just nodded you off, up to his neck in paperwork, he said. You approached him from behind, longing to kiss him for the last - and first - time. He flinched. You couldn't take any more humiliation. After all you've given, you gave him **everything**. You fastened your fingers around the pen and brutally jammed it in his chest, taking your rage out on him.

Teacher: The nerve...

Officer: You pierced his jacket, the white shirt stained with ink. A hole split in his undershirt. Then the skin broke, cracking the ribs, slowly, deeper and deeper. forcefully. With immeasurable violence. "You thought you'd leave me?!" Another inch and another inch of blood and ink! And finally – the heart. Soft. With no resistance. The pen slipped right in and disappeared... Your idol collapsed like the

tower of Babylon. The light at the end of the tunnel was gone. *(She pauses and then snaps out of this dramatic re-enactment)*

You know, that's too bad, because Reuben actually sent out letters of recommendation. To his "Colleagues, Males" mailing list.

(Silence. The teacher bows down her head)

Officer: Are you crying?

Teacher: No...

Officer: Don't you fancy a Shwarma from time to time?

Teacher: What?

Officer: To devour a Shwarma.

Teacher: Shw-arma? What do you mean?!

Officer: Swallow it down...! A Turkish Shwarma!

Teacher: I never thought about it.

Officer: I thought so. Take it from me, it would have saved you a lot of trouble... Say, was it worth it? You know you meant nothing to that man!

Teacher: Are you talking about the man who's taking me to Harvard in April, to a Nihilism convention, all expenses paid?

Officer: The man you wrote "From the POV of a point of view" for, which became a best-seller, and you never got a dime for it. Or any credit.

Teacher: And that makes me criminal? So take me in! *(Extends out her arms)*

Officer: *(Ignores it)* Forget about Thailand!

Teacher: What do you want from me? Which Thailand? Do I look like Thailand to you? *(To the audience)* Do I look like Thailand type to any of you? Please, take me to the police station, take me in for questioning, why are we still here?

Officer: I'll take you the minute you give me a confession. You think it's easy for women to get ahead in the force? If I take you now, they'll pass you on to Samson or Meir. No, sweetie, I want the credit for this homicide.

Teacher: Please! Take it!

Officer: It's mine!

Teacher: *(fights the Officer to the last drop)* You insist that Reuben is dead?!

Officer: *(Very persistent)* Reuben is dead.

Teacher: Reuben is clearly alive.

Officer: Reuben is dead.

Teacher: Reuben is dead...?

Officer: Say "I killed him".

Teacher: So prove it!

Officer: Reuben is dead!

Teacher: What gives you the right to stand in front of this class and say Reuben is dead?

Officer: What right do you have to kill a man?

Teacher: I killed him?

Officer: He's dead!

Teacher: You're lying!

Officer: Not at all!

Teacher: And the truth doesn't matter to you?

Officer: The truth that Reuben is dead.

Teacher: You think that if you say it enough times the message will sink in: Reuben is dead. Reuben is dead! *(Starting to crack)* Dead! He's Over! Did you hear me?!

Officer: *(Alert)* So you admit it?

Teacher: I admit nothing! You're all my witnesses! *(Walks to the door)* Will you just get out of here?

Officer: *(Sits on the desk, takes a bite out of the apple)* I'm not going anywhere.

Teacher: Will you get out?! You're interrupting my class...

Officer: I'm staying.

Teacher: Get the fuck out of here!

In a spur of violence, she pushes the officer towards the door. The Officer suddenly starts to cough - in a way similar to that of the Teacher, but then it turns into suffocation.

Teacher: Are you all right?! Anat? Are you ok...? *(The Officer's condition worsens. She drops the apple)* This peach is not poisoned! The peach is not poisoned! *(The Officer wheezes; the Teacher musters up the courage to step outside the lines – and forcefully pats the Officer's back)*

Officer: *(Recovers)* Thanks, *(To the audience)* Don't eat and talk at once... *(Angrily, to the Teacher)* Come here!

(The teacher tries to escape, the Officer forcefully catches her)

Teacher: Let go of me! You barbarian! This is a respectable establishment! Leave me alone. You're hurting me...

Officer: So we have a confession?!

Teacher: *(Pause. She surrenders)* Fine... fine... Yes...

Officer: That's more like it... Come, I'm letting you go... don't do anything stupid... Let's go to the station...

Teacher: Ok, ok...

(They start heading to the door. The teacher can't step out of the line)

Teacher: Just give me a minute... to sum up... intimately... I have a responsibility here...

Officer: One minute.*(She exits, leaving the door open behind her)*

Teacher: *(Steps away from the Officer, to the students)* Well, that was a somewhat challenging... interpretation... A little too confusing... Even for me... There's so much material... Anyway, don't worry, it's all probably... impossible...

Officer: *(Offstage)* Uhhmm...!

Teacher: It should have been a shoe! It would have been simpler... Look, the post-modern paradox, I mean, there's danger in deconstruction... Some even say it's a dead end... Reuben's so going to laugh when I tell him about this...

Officer: *(Offstage)* Uhhmm...!

Teacher: But I don't think I will... He wouldn't be interested... in his "condition"...

Officer: *(from outside, unseen)* Minute's up... *(leaving us to wonder if she's still there)*

Teacher: *(Confused, she peeks outside to see if anyone's there. Than she takes a chair and sits down, exhausted, in front of the students)* I'm not giving you homework... Maybe next time...

(The light goes off. Out of the darkness the red light shines on the floor again, cut in the shape of Reuben's dead body)

The End.