

UNDERNEATH THE HOUSE

A play by Thaheera Althaf

CHARACTERS (*in order of appearance*):

GIRL – A young child, preferably less than ten years of age

MAN – A young man, in his late twenties

MOTHER – A lady in her late thirties

POLICE OFFICER ONE – A man, any age

POLICE OFFICER TWO – A man, any age, burly in appearance

POLICE OFFICER THREE – A man, any age, tall, lanky

POLICE OFFICER FOUR – A man, any age, small, stout

Notes

“Underneath the House” presents a startling image of humanity whose plausibility we refuse to acknowledge. Taken into account issues such as paranoia, the effects of prolonged abuse, discrimination, misjudgements, and others, and stretching these to their extremities to produce a chilling portrait of human nature you may never forget.

The characters do not have any concrete names, or excessive descriptions, which means that you are allowed to go on a journey, guided by your imaginations as you shape the characters on stage, or in your mind.

The lack of concrete character names and descriptions is also to allow actors from all ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds to be able to portray the characters, and understand that what “Underneath the House” seeks to portray is not a situation that is particular to a certain culture, but prevalent across the entirety of the human race.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

Curtains rise. Lights on a bed in the middle of the stage, in which there is a small girl child, tucked into sleep. To her left is a lamp emitting a soft, yellow glow. A soft lullaby can be heard, and the scene lingers for a few moments before it is interrupted by three, sharp knocks on wood.

GIRL *(waking up suddenly)*

Mummy? Is that you?

Silence. Then a man's voice answers, whispering. The man remains unseen for the whole scene. Only his voice can be heard.

MAN

Hello? Is anyone there? Can you hear me?

GIRL *(confused)*

Hello?

Silence.

GIRL *(walking up to the source of the sound, clutching to her teddy bear)*

Hello? Are you a monster?

MAN *(confused)*

What?

GIRL *(shaking her head in agitation)*

I asked, are you a *monster*?

A few moments of silence and then, the man chuckles.

MAN

What? No. No, I'm not. I'm not a monster.

GIRL *(squinting her brows)*

Then, what *are* you?

MAN

I'm a person. A man. Look, child, is there anyone with you? Or are you alone?

GIRL (*hesitant*)

My mummy says that people who ask me such things are monsters. So, I think you are a monster.

The girl waits for an answer, and the man, taken aback by her response, takes a few moments to think of something to say.

MAN (*trying to find the right words*)

Look. I am not a monster. Let me, let me rephrase my words. I am a man, just an ordinary person like you and I need help. I somehow found myself in a place underneath your house and I need help to get myself out. Will you help me?

The girl does not speak.

MAN (*slightly exasperated*)

Okay. Let me ask you again. Can you hear me?

GIRL (*nodding*)

Yes.

MAN

Good. Now can you answer my questions?

GIRL

Okay.

MAN (*very slightly relieved*)

Do you live with your parents?

GIRL

Just me and my mummy. Who are you?

MAN (*sighing softly*)

I am a man who got lost and somehow found myself underneath your house and I need help to get out. Can you tell your mummy that?

GIRL

Does mummy know who you are?

MAN

No, she doesn't. But she will know what to do.

GIRL (*nodding*)

Do you know who mummy is?

MAN

No, I don't. But I know... I *think* she might be able to help me. Will you do this for me, child?

A few moments of silence before the girl speaks.

GIRL

Who should I tell mummy you are?

MAN

Just a man who is trapped underneath your house. Tell your mummy that and she'll know what to do.

GIRL

What shall I call you by?

MAN

You can call me... your friend.

GIRL

Friend?

MAN

Yes. Friend.

GIRL

Okay.

MAN (*steadying his voice*)

So, do you know what to tell your mummy?

GIRL

Yes.

MAN

Can you tell me?

GIRL

No. You are not mummy.

MAN

No, I am not. I mean, can you tell me what you are going to tell your mummy?

GIRL (*steadily*)

You are not my mummy.

MAN

Okay. Tell her this. Tell her that I am a man trapped underneath your house that needs help to get himself out. Understood?

GIRL

Yes.

MAN

Will you promise me to tell your mummy that?

GIRL

Okay.

MAN (*sighing with obvious relief*)

Thank you so much. You are an angel that descended from heaven.

GIRL

No. I am a girl who lives with my mummy.

MAN (*softly chuckling*)

Yes, you are. I mean, thank you for helping me.

GIRL

Okay.

The man stops speaking as the girl skips with her teddy bear in hand, humming the lullaby, to stage left.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT ONE SCENE ONE.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

Curtains rise. Lights on centre of stage, where there is a middle aged woman standing by a sink, washing dishes. The girl child skips to her mother, entering from stage right, and tugs at her sleeve.

MOTHER

Yes, darling?

GIRL *(looking up at her)*

What are you doing mummy?

MOTHER *(smiling at her fondly)*

I'm washing the dishes, dear.

GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

Why are you not asleep, honey?

GIRL

I woke up, mummy. That's why.

MOTHER *(smiling)*

What woke you up, sweetie?

GIRL

I think I forgot.

MOTHER

Think. And you'll remember.

A few moments of silence as the girl thinks.

GIRL

Oh! I think I remember now!

MOTHER

Tell me, sugar.

GIRL

It was a man.

The woman stops washing the dishes and bends down to the girl's height and looks at her.

MOTHER (*confused*)

A man?

GIRL

Yes! A man!

MOTHER

A man? In your room?

GIRL (*nodding excitedly*)

Yes! A man in my room!

MOTHER (*very concerned*)

How is there a man in your room?

GIRL

Oh, I remember now! He told me to tell you something.

MOTHER (*extremely concerned*)

Tell *me* something?

GIRL

Yes! Tell you something!

MOTHER

Tell me what?

GIRL

That he is trapped underneath our house and needs help to get out.

MOTHER (*more puzzled than ever*)

Trapped underneath our house?

GIRL

Yes! Trapped underneath our house!

MOTHER

How?

GIRL (*thinking*)

He didn't tell me that.

MOTHER (*trying to get her mind together*)

What are you saying, darling?

GIRL

That there is a man trapped underneath our house who told me that you will know how to help him.

MOTHER

How?

GIRL

He didn't tell me that, either.

MOTHER

Who is this man and why is he trapped underneath our house?

GIRL

I don't know. He didn't tell me.

MOTHER

When did he talk to you?

GIRL

Before I walked in here.

MOTHER (*in deep thought*)

How did he look like?

GIRL

I don't know. I didn't see him.

MOTHER

Didn't see him?

GIRL

Yes, I didn't see him.

MOTHER

But, you spoke to him?

GIRL

Yes.

MOTHER

But you didn't see him?

GIRL

Yes.

MOTHER

So he is really trapped underneath our house.

GIRL

Yes. And he says you can help him get out.

MOTHER (*trying to make sense of the situation*)

Does he have a name?

GIRL

No. He didn't tell me.

MOTHER

Darling, why did you speak to him?

GIRL

Because he said he wasn't a monster.

MOTHER

You asked him if he was a monster?

GIRL

Yes.

MOTHER

And he said he wasn't?

GIRL

Yes.

MOTHER

Did he tell you anything else?

GIRL

He told me that he was my friend.

MOTHER

Friend?

GIRL

Yes. Friend.

A few moments of silence pass as the woman tries to grapple with the gravity of the situation, making mental notes on the steps she has to take. She then continues speaking with her daughter.

MOTHER *(picking the girl up)*

Let me tell you something, honey?

GIRL

What is it, mummy?

MOTHER

Let me ask you a question. How do you know when something is real?

GIRL

How, mummy?

MOTHER

What did I tell you?

GIRL *(thinking)*

Oh. Something is real when you can see it.

MOTHER *(nodding)*

So, did you see the man?

GIRL

No.

MOTHER

So, do you think he is real?

GIRL

But I heard him.

MOTHER

But you didn't see him.

GIRL

Okay. So the man is not real.

MOTHER *(relieved)*

Yes. The man is not real.

GIRL

But how did he speak to me, mummy?

MOTHER

It is easy, dear. You were imagining him.

GIRL

Imagining him?

MOTHER

Yes. You were dreaming.

GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

So, the man is not real. Right?

GIRL

The man is not real.

MOTHER

And why is he not real?

GIRL

Because I did not see him.

MOTHER

Why are monsters not real?

GIRL

Because I can't see them.

[she yawns]

I love you, mummy.

MOTHER

I love you too, honey.

The woman hugs the girl and hums a soft lullaby, putting her to sleep as the lights darken.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT ONE SCENE TWO.

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

Curtains rise. The same night. Lights on the middle of the stage, where the girl is seated, busily colouring pictures on her colouring book, her teddy bear at her side. When she reaches the third picture, three knocks are heard again from the wooden floor below.

GIRL *(pausing)*

Is it you again?

The man answers, and once again, he is only heard and not seen.

MAN

Hello, friend. How have you been?

The girl ignores the question and continues colouring.

MAN *(clearing his throat)*

Hello? Can you hear me?

GIRL

Yes, I can.

MAN

I have spoken to you before, yes?

GIRL *(looking up from her book)*

Yes. You have.

MAN

Then why are you ignoring me?

GIRL

Because you are not real.

There is silence as the girl proceeds with her colouring and the man is confused.

MAN

What do you mean?

GIRL *(not looking up from her book)*

I mean that you are not real.

MAN

I am not *real*?

GIRL

Yes, and I am so sorry to tell you that, but you are not real.

MAN *(stammering slightly)*

Wait... I am... I am... real... I am here and I am... talking to you. What do you mean I am not real?

GIRL

Because I can't see you.

MAN

So?

GIRL

So, you're not real.

MAN

I... I don't understand.

GIRL *(shaking her head and sighing)*

My friend, a thing is only real when you can see it.

MAN

Well, I can see myself. I know I can.

GIRL

That *may* be true, but I can't see you.

There is another few seconds of silence and the man laughs softly.

MAN

That's because I am trapped underneath your house, friend. That's why you can't see me.

GIRL

See? That means you're not real.

MAN *(confused)*

Why?

GIRL

Because I can't see you and so, you're not real.

MAN

Look, I just told you why you cannot see me. I am hidden from your sight for now. Once I am out again, you can see me.

GIRL *(continuing with her colouring)*

But I will not be able to see you.

MAN *(slightly exasperated)*

Why?

GIRL

Because you are not real now and you will not be real. You will never be real because you are not real to begin with.

MAN *(sighing)*

Look. Who told you I wasn't real?

GIRL

Mummy.

MAN

So, you have told your mummy about me?

GIRL

Yes, and she told me you weren't real.

MAN

Why?

GIRL

Because she says I can't see you and therefore you are not real.

MAN

Really?

GIRL

Yes. You are not real. And I am sorry you are not real but I cannot help you.

There is silence as the girl, shaking her head, goes back to her colouring book and the man thinks of something to say.

MAN *(clearing his throat)*

Friend? Can you hear me?

GIRL

Yes.

MAN

Can I ask you a question?

GIRL *(nodding)*

Okay.

MAN

Do you and your mummy believe in God?

GIRL

Yes, we do and we pray to Him every day.

MAN *(there is restored hope in his voice)*

Good. Another question?

GIRL

Yes?

MAN

Have you, or your mother ever seen God?

GIRL

No.

MAN

Has anyone seen God?

GIRL

No.

MAN *(as if he has found a good point to make)*

There. So, is God real?

GIRL *(looking up)*

Of course!

MAN

But how can you say God is real when you haven't seen Him?

GIRL

He is real. Everyone knows that.

MAN

Yes, but, you say the only real things are the things you can see, right?

GIRL

Yes.

MAN

Then why do say God is real? Have you ever seen Him?

GIRL

No. But God is real.

MAN

Can you see Him, though?

GIRL

No.

MAN (*excitedly*)

There! If you cannot see God but you know He is real, then I am real too, even though you cannot see me.

GIRL

But you are not real.

MAN (*his voice wavering*)

What do you mean?

GIRL

You are not real.

MAN

How? And why?

GIRL

Because I can't see you.

MAN

But you can't see God either.

GIRL (*nodding*)

Yes, but I can see the things God has done.

MAN

What do you mean?

GIRL

As in, I can see the things God has created and allowed to happen. I can see what God has done, and is doing. But I cannot see what you have done, or are doing.

MAN

Well, I see your point...

GIRL

So, there, you are not real.

MAN

But you know I *am* talking to you, right?

GIRL

Yes, but you are not real.

MAN

You confuse me.

GIRL

It is not very hard to understand. God is real because although I can't see Him, I can see what He has done, and is doing. You are not real because I cannot see you, or what you have done, or what you are doing.

MAN

Well, I am talking to you now. That is what I am doing now.

GIRL

But I can't *see* that.

MAN

But you *know* I am here, right?

GIRL

Yes, but you are not real.

MAN

But, how am I talking to you, and how you are able to hear me?

GIRL

Because it is just my imagination, my mother says. Little girls play with their imaginations and make-believe friends like I am doing now.

MAN

But I am *not* your make-believe friend.

GIRL

You have to be because you are talking to me even though you are not real.

MAN

Who told you that I am not real?

GIRL

My mother says so.

MAN

And why do you think she is right?

GIRL

Because she is real.

MAN

And have you told her I need help?

GIRL

Yes, but she says you're not real.

MAN (*sighs deeply*)

Can you tell her to talk to me one day? In your room? Can you bring her here one day?

GIRL

Okay.

MAN

Thanks, friend.

GIRL

Okay.

Lights slowly dim as the girl continues colouring in her book in the middle of the stage.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT TWO SCENE ONE.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

Curtains rise. Lights on in the middle of the stage, where there is a woman, the mother of the girl, seated on a sofa, with a phone at her ear. She is talking to someone on the phone, and the voice over at the other line is heard in the background for the audience to understand what is happening.

MOTHER *(on the phone, her voice stammering)*

Hello? Is this the neighbourhood police?

POLICE OFFICER ONE *(only his voice is heard)*

Yes, ma'am. How may we help you?

MOTHER

There is a man causing nuisance in my house.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

May we get more details, please?

MOTHER *(her voice getting louder)*

There is a man who is talking to my daughter in her room and she does not know who he is, or his name. She hasn't even seen him.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Okay, where is your address.

MOTHER

I don't want to say it out loud.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Okay, ma'am, but we need your address.

The woman peers around suspiciously, before cupping her mouth to the receiver and whispering something inaudible to the police officer on the phone.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Thank you, ma'am. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

MOTHER

Yes.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

What is it, ma'am?

MOTHER

The man is a threat to me and my daughter.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

How are you so sure of that, ma'am? Has he done anything suspicious?

MOTHER

Yes. He claims to be trapped underneath our house.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Pardon, ma'am? I don't think I managed to catch what you said.

MOTHER (*slowing down*)

The man claims to be trapped underneath our house and I suspect he might be a terrorist.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

A terrorist?

MOTHER

Yes, a man with a bomb with which he is going to kill me and my daughter.

POLICE OFFICER ONE (*slowing down*)

Are you sure about this, ma'am?

MOTHER

Yes, I am certain.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Very sure, ma'am?

MOTHER

Yes! I even heard him mention something about it once.

POLICE OFFICE ONE

Once?

MOTHER

Or a few times.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Look, ma'am. This is a very serious matter. How sure are you that the man you are talking about has a bomb with him?

MOTHER

Quite sure of it.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

Quite is not enough, ma'am. We don't want to cause any unnecessary trouble to your neighbours.

MOTHER

I don't live near any neighbours which is why I am so scared.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

I understand ma'am... I —

MOTHER *(her fear manifesting in her voice)*

Please help us, officer, it is just me and my little girl living here alone and if anything happens to us, no one is going to know. Please help us, officer, please... Please take this monster away from my daughter and me... We don't have much time... His bomb must be ready now... Please get rid of this monster for me... please... *[her words dissolve into audible sobs as she breaks down on the phone]*

POLICE OFFICER ONE *(realising the gravity of the situation)*

Don't worry, ma'am. Please calm down and wait for us. In the meantime, do not do anything that may cause the man to flee. We will be there shortly and we will do everything to help you and your daughter.

MOTHER *(still in tears)*

Thank you... officer.

POLICE OFFICER ONE

You are very welcome, ma'am.

Lights slowly dim as the woman puts down her phone and calls for her daughter, her eyes on the constant lookout for any signs of the invisible man. She clings to her phone tightly, as though her life depended on it, and waits impatiently for the police to arrive at her door.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT TWO SCENE TWO.

ACT THREE SCENE ONE

Curtains rise. The next day. Lights on the middle of the stage, on the woman who is sitting on the sofa with her legs drawn up towards her, her eyes periodically scanning the room for any suspicious activity. She is startled when her daughter walks in, calling out to her.

GIRL *(calling out)*

Mummy!

MOTHER *(startled, and then placing her hand on her chest)*

Oh, it's you! You frightened me, darling!

GIRL

Why are you afraid, Mummy?

MOTHER

I am not afraid, dear.

GIRL

But you just said that I frightened you.

MOTHER *(shaking her head, steadying her voice)*

You startled me, that's all!

GIRL *(coming closer to her mother)*

Why did I startle you, Mummy?

MOTHER

Because... because, I didn't expect you to come in here, sugar.

GIRL

Why not, Mummy?

MOTHER

Well, you didn't tell me you were coming.

GIRL

Must I tell you when I am coming, Mummy?

MOTHER

No, you don't have to.

GIRL

Then, why were you startled when I came, Mummy?

Silence as the woman ponders the question.

GIRL (*concerned*)

Is there something frightening in the house, Mummy?

MOTHER

No, no, there isn't.

GIRL

Then, why are you afraid, Mummy?

MOTHER (*beckoning the girl to sit on her lap*)

Come here, sweetie.

The girl sits on the woman's lap.

GIRL

Are you going to tell me a story?

MOTHER

Yes, I am.

GIRL

What are you going to tell me?

MOTHER

A story about an evil monster.

GIRL (*gasping*)

An evil monster?!

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Did he have three heads, five eyes and seven legs, and purple fur all over his body, and a big, ugly wart on each on his five noses?

MOTHER

No.

GIRL (*slightly confused*)

No?

MOTHER

This evil monster looked just like any man would. He had one head, two eyes and two legs.

GIRL

He is not a monster, then. He is a man.

MOTHER

No, darling. When you listen to the story I am going to tell you, you will understand that not all monsters need to *look* like monsters in order to *be* monsters.

GIRL (*attentive*)

What kind of monster was he?

MOTHER

A very evil one.

GIRL

Why was he evil?

MOTHER

Because he did one very evil thing.

GIRL

And what was that one very evil thing he did?

MOTHER

He placed a bomb underneath a house and it exploded, killing everyone who was in the house.

GIRL (*confused*)

What is a bomb, Mummy?

MOTHER

A bomb is an object that can explode and kill people.

GIRL

Why are there bombs, Mummy?

MOTHER

Because monsters like killing people.

GIRL

Why?

MOTHER

Because they are monsters.

GIRL

But I thought you told me monsters are not real?

MOTHER

Yes, but they are real in the story I am going to tell you.

GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

Okay. Shall I begin the story?

GIRL

Yes!

The girl draws closer to her mother, her arms wrapped around her neck as she listens attentively.

MOTHER *(dramatically)*

Once, there was a little girl and her mother who lived alone in a little house, far away from any neighbours.

GIRL

That sounds like us.

MOTHER *(nodding and continuing)*

Yes. They were living in the house, happy and comfortable. Just the two of them, happy and comfortable in that little house.

GIRL

Okay. So where is the monster?

MOTHER *(smiling and continuing)*

And then, one fateful day, the little girl heard a voice in her room.

GIRL

That sounds like me.

MOTHER

No, the voice sounded like that of a man.

GIRL

That sounds like my friend.

MOTHER *(continuing)*

The man told the girl that he was trapped underneath their house.

GIRL

That sounds like me and my friend.

MOTHER

And the girl believed that he was really trapped underneath their house and told her mother about the man.

GIRL

That sounds like us.

MOTHER

And the mother told the girl that the man cannot be real because he cannot be seen.

GIRL

Yes. Where is the monster?

MOTHER

And the girl knew that the man is not real because he cannot be seen.

GIRL

Yes.

MOTHER

However, the man was not actually a man, real or not.

GIRL *(confused)*

How?

MOTHER

Because he had a wicked plan the following night.

GIRL

I don't understand.

MOTHER *(nodding and continuing)*

He had with him a small device that he made by himself.

[she makes a sudden motion that startles her daughter]

A home-made bomb!

GIRL *(screaming)*

Mummy, stop that!

MOTHER *(laughing nervously)*

And he knew what he was going to do with it.

GIRL

Where is the monster?

MOTHER

And... he put a finger to a small, red button that he had fixed on the device.... And...

[she makes another sudden and dramatic motion]

BOOM! The little house erupted into flames with the little girl and her mother still sleeping inside.

GIRL *(screaming and burrowing her face into her mother)*

Stop it, Mummy! Stop it! You frightened me!

MOTHER *(embracing the girl and kissing her head)*

It's okay darling, it's *only* a story...

A few moments pass as the mother consoles her frightened daughter. While her daughter is pressed against her body, she scans the room with her frightened eyes and keeps her hand on her phone.

GIRL *(her voice wavering)*

Mummy, where was the monster in the story?

MOTHER

Which story?

GIRL

The one you just told me.

MOTHER

Oh.

GIRL

Yes. Where was the monster?

MOTHER

The monster was the one who set off the bomb that killed the little girl and her mother.

GIRL (*looking up to her mother*)

The man who was trapped underneath their house?

MOTHER

Yes. The man who *said* he was trapped underneath their house.

GIRL

But he was a man, right?

MOTHER

No, he was a monster.

GIRL

But, he wasn't real, right?

MOTHER

Yes, he wasn't. But he was a monster.

GIRL

I don't understand.

MOTHER (*gently*)

Now my darling, are monsters real?

GIRL

No.

MOTHER

Was the man real?

GIRL

No.

MOTHER

Why was he not real?

GIRL

Because he could not be seen.

MOTHER

So, is he a real man?

GIRL

Which man?

MOTHER

The man in the story.

GIRL

Oh the one who was trapped underneath their house.

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Like my friend who is trapped underneath our house.

MOTHER(*matter-of-factly*)

He is not your friend.

GIRL

He told me he is.

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

The man who is trapped underneath our house.

MOTHER

But he is not real.

GIRL

I know. You told me and I told him.

MOTHER (*concerned*)

What did he say?

GIRL

That he wants to talk to you because he thinks he is real.

MOTHER

But he isn't.

GIRL

I know. But *he* thinks he is.

MOTHER

But he is not a man.

GIRL (*puzzled*)

Not a man?

MOTHER

Yes, he is not a man.

GIRL

Why?

MOTHER

Because a man can only be real.

GIRL

But he *sounds* like a man...

MOTHER

But he isn't a man.

GIRL (*more puzzled*)

Then, what is he?

MOTHER

Remember the story I just told you?

GIRL

Yes...

MOTHER

It is not just a story.

GIRL (*still puzzled*)

It isn't?

MOTHER

Yes. It isn't.

GIRL

Then, what is it?

MOTHER

A warning.

GIRL

A warning?

MOTHER

Yes. A warning to us.

GIRL

A warning to us? Why?

MOTHER

What happened in the story?

GIRL

A monster killed the little girl and her mother.

MOTHER

Yes. And how?

GIRL

By setting off a bomb.

MOTHER

And where was he?

GIRL (*slowly*)

Underneath their... house...

MOTHER

And... where is this friend of yours?

GIRL (*her eyes widening in realisation and shock*)

Underneath... our... house...

MOTHER

So, is he your friend?

GIRL (*shell-shocked*)

No.

MOTHER

Is he a man?

GIRL (*her voice shaking*)

No...

MOTHER

So, what is he?

GIRL *(her voice barely a whisper)*

A... monster...

MOTHER

Yes...

GIRL *(her voice cracking)*

Is he going to kill us, Mummy?

MOTHER *(hugging the girl)*

No, I will not let him do anything to us.

GIRL

How?

MOTHER

I have help.

GIRL

Oh.

MOTHER

And they are on their way.

GIRL *(mumbling)*

Are they strong and brave like a knight?

MOTHER

Yes, darling, yes.

GIRL

Are they coming quickly?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL *(looking up at her mother, in tears)*

Does he know they are coming?

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

The monster who is trapped underneath our house.

MOTHER

No, he doesn't.

GIRL

Does he have a bomb with him?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Is he going to kill us all?

MOTHER

No. Hush darling, don't speak like that.

GIRL

Will we be okay?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Will the knights save us?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Do they have swords?

MOTHER

They have a different kind of sword.

GIRL

Can their swords defeat the monster?

MOTHER

Yes, it can, sugar, yes it can.

GIRL

What will happen to the monster?

MOTHER

The knights will defeat it and save us from danger.

GIRL

From the bomb?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Are the knights coming now?

MOTHER

Yes. They are on their way.

GIRL

Are they dressed in silver armour?

MOTHER

They wear a different kind of armour.

GIRL

Do they ride white horses?

MOTHER

They have a different kind of horse.

GIRL *(yawning)*

I love you, mummy.

MOTHER

I love you too, honey.

Lights fade out as the girl falls asleep amidst the approaching police sirens. The woman lets out a relieved sigh.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT THREE SCENE ONE.

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

Curtains rise. The same night. Three police officers armed with large, machine guns enter the house, accompanied by four large, German shepherds. The dogs barge into the girl's room, barking dangerously, while the mother signals at them to keep it down while trying to get her startled daughter back to sleep.

GIRL *(startled)*

Mummy, who are they?

MOTHER

They are the knights who have come to save us.

GIRL

Okay. I like the puppies.

MOTHER *(smiling)*

They are big puppies belonging to the brave knights.

GIRL

Are they going to fight the monster?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Will we be safe?

MOTHER *(reassuringly)*

Yes, darling.

GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

You can go back to sleep now.

The mother tells her daughter to go back to sleep and starts singing a lullaby as the curtains fall.

END OF ACT THREE SCENE TWO.

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

Curtains rise. A hole is seen in the middle of what used to be the girl's room. The three police officers and the four German shepherds are standing, surrounding a man, who looks to be in his late twenties or early thirties, with a faded backpack by his side. This man is the man whom the girl had been talking to earlier in the play.

MAN *(visibly relieved albeit exhausted)*

Hey, thank you so much for helping me guys. I was stuck in that hole for God knows how long and it is such a wonderful feeling to be breathing in fresh air again.

The officers stare at him, and whisper something inaudible to one another.

MAN

Hey, I just thanked you all. Thanks for helping me. Where is that little girl whom I have been talking to?

The police officers ignore him, and the man tries to move forward, but is blocked by the snarling dogs.

MAN

Hey, can I please get a glass of water to drink? I am very tired.

Once again, the police officers ignore him.

MAN *(slightly exasperated)*

Excuse me, sirs... I don't know what you are doing, but I think you guys have come here to help me and thank you very much for that. I know that there are some admin stuff that you'll have to do, and I don't want to interrupt you, but I am really thirsty and I would appreciate it if you could just let me pass to the living room for a little while. I am more than willing to answer any of your questions after I take a little bit of rest.

Silence as no one speaks.

MAN *(quite visibly agitated)*

Okay... I'm sorry but if you have anything to ask me, I can answer you now. I just need to let my family and friends know that I am safe. They told me not to go trekking but I didn't listen and I took a wrong turn and fell down a hole in the ground and I walked and walked until I found myself at a dead end which happened to be this house. I just need a few seconds to talk to my family but you have my phone with you.

A few more moments of silence before a police officer, the bulkiest one in the group turns to face him.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Do you have any explosives on you?

MAN *(taken aback)*

What?

POLICE OFFICER TWO

I repeat. Do you have any explosives on you?

MAN

What explosives?

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Bombs to kill people.

MAN *(confused)*

Why would I have bombs to kill people?

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Answer my question. Do you have any explosives on you?

MAN

No, I don't... I don't understand what is happening...

The officer nods, and turns back to the other two officers and whispers something, to which the both of them nod.

MAN

Excuse me, I just said that I don't have any explosives with me.

The three officers ignore him.

MAN

Excuse me sirs... I really need to inform my family that I'm okay... I know that they are worried...

The three officers rummage through the man's backpack, and retrieve a small, black object.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

What is this object?

MAN

It's a torchlight. You can see that. It is just a torchlight.

The officers open up the torchlight to find a fused and melted battery inside. They let out a collective gasp and the burly officer questions him again.

POLICE OFFICER TWO *(holding up the melted battery in his gloved hand)*

What is this?

MAN

Well, it is a battery that has gone bad. You see, sirs, I have been lost for quite a while and I have been using this torchlight for quite a while to keep myself safe and I must have killed the battery.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

This is an explosive.

MAN *(puzzled)*

What?

POLICE OFFICER TWO

This is a potential explosive.

MAN

I know... But—

POLICE OFFICER TWO *(interrupting)*

You have explosives on you. You lied.

MAN *(defending himself)*

Look... This is a torchlight with a busted battery. That's all. Nothing else.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

An explosive.

MAN

Look... Please. I am just a trekker. I got lost. I found myself under this house somehow and now you have got me out.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

A heated battery can explode.

MAN

Look... I—

POLICE OFFICER TWO *(interrupting)*

You have lied to the authorities.

MAN

What... No... wait... look... I —

POLICE OFFICER TWO *(interrupting)*

You were planning to set off explosives underneath this house to kill its inhabitants.

MAN *(in disbelief)*

What...

The three police officers form a circle around him, aiming their guns at him. Another police officer, a tall, lanky one, speaks.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

We are arresting you on account of attempted terrorist activities.

MAN *(shocked)*

What... wait... no, I am not... look... I am just an ordinary man who got lost while trekking... Look... I mean nothing at all with the battery... It's just a busted battery.... I mean...

[he starts laughing nervously]

I mean... you guys must have busted batteries before, right? You are officers and maybe you were on a mission or a case... and something happened and you busted a battery?

Silence.

MAN

No? None of you have busted batteries before?

A few moments of silence as the officers whisper to one another. Then, the third officer, a small, stout man, starts speaking.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

You have explosives on you.

MAN (*exasperated*)

Oh... look... please... I'm *begging* you. Let me go. My family is looking for me. I am only a trekker. Nothing else. These are just batteries. Nothing else.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

But they are explosives.

MAN

They are busted batteries.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

Heated batteries explode, don't they?

MAN

Yes... there's the possibility... but —

POLICE OFFICER FOUR (*interrupting*)

So you admit that you were carrying explosives.

MAN

No... look... I —

POLICE OFFICER FOUR (*interrupting*)

These batteries can explode, right?

MAN

Look...

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So they can explode right?

MAN

Yes... Look...

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

These batteries can explode. You were carrying the batteries. Therefore, you were carrying explosives.

MAN *(in disbelief)*

Please... sirs... look...

The officers talk among themselves and after a few long moments, they nod as if they have come to a decision.

MAN

Sirs....

The officers form a circle around him.

MAN *(his voice cracking in fear)*

Sirs... what are you doing...

POLICE OFFICER TWO

We are arresting you on account of attempt of terrorist activity.

MAN

Look... no... I...

Just then, there is a sudden clap of lightning across the sky as a fierce thunderstorm begins. One of the four German shepherds is startled and barks loudly, dashing across the room, tripping one of the officers. The other three dogs, suddenly startled by the barks of the first dog, also begin to bark loudly and run around the room. In all the sudden chaos, all the three officers are scattered across the room, trying to calm the dogs. One of the dogs becomes extremely agitated and leaps at one of the officers, and in the midst of all the noise, a sudden rapid gunfire is heard. The officers all freeze in their spots as the dogs dash out of the room. They look at each other in disbelief and horror, and they walked up to the man, who is now lying face down in the middle, sprawled in an expanding pool of blood.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Oops.

POLICE OFFICER THREE *(in shock)*

Is there a pulse?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR *(bending down to check the man's pulse)*

Oops, there isn't any pulse.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

So... he's dead?

POLICE OFFICER THREE *(turning the collapsed man around)*

I... think so.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

He is dead. No pulse. Too much blood loss. And maybe blood poisoning. Or shock due to blood loss. Or sudden cardiac arrest because of the shock. Or maybe he was exhausted.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Well, what happened?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR *(turning to police officer two)*

You fired your gun.

POLICE OFFICER TWO *(immediately)*

It was an accident.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Yes. Oops. Accident.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

I didn't mean to kill him.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR *(standing up)*

Well, he's dead now.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Yes. He is dead now.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

Well, what do we do?

The three officers stare at each other, confused and shocked and unsure of what to do.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Well, he could have been a terrorist.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

But we aren't sure.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

But he *could* have been.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

True.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

But, we don't know for sure.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Who knows?

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Yes. Who knows?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

Not anyone now that he's dead.

Silence as the three men try to understand the situation.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

What if he *was* a terrorist?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR (*concerned*)

But we don't know.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Yes, we don't know. That's why he *could* be a terrorist.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

I don't understand.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

He means it is possible we could have gotten rid of a possible terrorist.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

But, we don't know.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

But he's dead now.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Yes, so maybe he *is* a terrorist.

A few moments of silence as the officers think.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

You know what?

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

What?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

You may be right.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Or wrong.

POLICE OFFICERS FOUR

Or right.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Maybe.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So maybe he is a terrorist.

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Yes. Or maybe not.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

But I think he is.

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Really?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

He had explosives, remember?

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Yes.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So I think he is a terrorist.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Okay.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So, we have gotten rid of a possible terrorist.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Yes.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So, we are good policemen.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Yes, we are.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

We have saved the little girl and her mother.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Yes, we have.

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

So, what do we do?

POLICE OFFICER THREE

Bury him?

POLICE OFFICER TWO

Leave him?

POLICE OFFICER FOUR

Let's bury him.

POLICE OFFICERS TWO AND THREE

Okay.

The three officers carry the body of the man and proceed to walk out of the room. Lights fade as a trail of blood is seen across the stage.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT FOUR SCENE ONE.

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

Curtains rise. Lights on the middle of the stage, where there is a small mattress on which the girl is lying down, fast asleep. There is also a medium sized cabinet located on the left of the stage. The mother is by her side, softly humming a soothing lullaby. Just then, the four German shepherds that had been waiting outside the house, run back in, barking fiercely and creating a ruckus as the three officers come out of the room, carrying the body of the man. The chaos wakes the girl up.

GIRL *(rubbing her eyes)*

What happened, Mummy?

MOTHER *(looking to the police officers)*

Nothing, sugar.

GIRL

What is that, Mummy?

The woman is silenced as she realises that her daughter is pointing to the body of the man the police officers are carrying.

MOTHER *(trying to calm herself down)*

Those are the knights who have come to save us, honey.

GIRL

I know. But who is that?

MOTHER *(making a puzzled face)*

Who are you talking about, darling?

GIRL *(pointing to the dead man)*

Him.

MOTHER *(cocking her head, confused)*

Who?

GIRL

Him!

MOTHER

I don't see anybody but the three knights.

GIRL

I see the knights too.

MOTHER

Then, who else are you talking about?

GIRL (*pointing at the body*)

Him.

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

The man they are carrying. Is he asleep, Mummy?

MOTHER

Who are they carrying?

GIRL

Him.

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

Mummy?

MOTHER

Yes?

GIRL

Is he the monster?

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

The one the knights are carrying.

MOTHER

The knights are carrying nothing.

GIRL

But I can see that they are carrying something.

MOTHER

I don't see anything.

GIRL (*agitated*)

But I can see him!

MOTHER

Who?

GIRL

Him!

MOTHER

Who is he?

GIRL

The monster!

MOTHER (*confused*)

Monster?

GIRL

Yes. The one you told me about.

MOTHER

Really?

GIRL

Yes!

MOTHER

Where?

GIRL (*pointing at the body*)

There!

MOTHER

I don't see any monster. I only see the three knights.

GIRL (*confused*)

Really?

MOTHER (*convincingly*)

Yes, sweetie.

GIRL

But what did the knights come here for?

MOTHER

To save us from the monster.

GIRL

Where is the monster now?

MOTHER

He is gone.

GIRL

Where has he gone to?

MOTHER

Far away.

GIRL

Will he come back?

MOTHER

No.

GIRL

Not ever?

MOTHER

Never.

GIRL

So we are safe now?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

So, you saw nothing?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Why?

MOTHER

Because the monster is not real?

GIRL

Not real?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Then why are there knights to help us?

MOTHER

To make sure the monster never becomes real.

GIRL

Which monster?

MOTHER

The one you told me about.

GIRL

The one who told me he was trapped underneath our house?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

The one who had a bomb with him?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

The one who wanted to kill us?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

So, he is gone now?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Never to return?

MOTHER

Yes.

GIRL

Okay.

MOTHER

Are you sleepy?

GIRL *(yawning)*

Yes, mummy.

MOTHER *(coaxing the girl back into sleep)*

Good night, darling.

GIRL

I love you, mummy.

MOTHER

I love you too.

The mother sings a lullaby as the girl slowly sinks into sleep. The mother then turns to look at the three police officers, who have been standing at the door with the body of the man, and smiles understandingly. Her smile is indicative of an accomplishment, mixed with relief and satisfaction. After a few, lingering moments, she beckons the police officers to leave, and they do as they are told. After the police officers walk out of the house, she walks up to a cabinet, opens it and takes out a human skull, and starts addressing it.

MOTHER *(speaking to the skull)*

You thought you could send one of your pawns to kill me and my baby? Never. I would *never* let that happen. As long as I live, and as long as my daughter lives with me, I will never let you harm us again.

[her voice becomes louder, almost like the chanting of a spell]

As long as I had lived with you, you kicked me, you punched me, you hit me, you spat at me and yet, you expected me to love you. Never!

[she laughs maniacally]

NEVER! You are just a man. I am a woman, something more than just a man. You could hit me, you could kick me, and yet you claim you love my little girl. She is mine! You locked me in that stupid room and you expected me to love you? And you say you love my little girl? NEVER! She is MINE! She is never yours. She was never yours. She grew inside me. I fed her. I loved her. I clothed her. It is an ancient bond of flesh and blood that she is mine and always will be mine. You kicked me. You punched me. Your hands bathed in my blood. But I don't care. She is mine.

[she laughs again, throwing her head back]

SHE IS MINE! I LOVE HER, AND ONLY I LOVE HER. She hates you and all of your kind. She is a girl who is going to be a woman, like me. Like me, she is more than just a man. You are just a man. Your kind are just men. Nothing else. You like to kick us, punch us, hit us and spit at us and claim that you love us.

[she proceeds to set the skull back into the cabinet, but draws it out again, and talks to it]

You hit me, you punched me, you kicked me and you spat at me, and yet, you claim that you still loved me. I hate you. I shall always hate you and your kind. But you say you loved me and my little baby. I wonder...

[her voice becomes softer and more distant]

I wonder if you still claim to love me after I let that blade kiss your bloody throat that night.

With those words, she smiles, with a single tear rolling down her face, and throws the skull to the back of the stage. She stretches her hands and closes the door of the cabinet, and proceeds to lie down next to her daughter, kissing her on the forehead before closing her eyes as sleep slowly takes her.

MOTHER *(softly muttering)*

I love you, sweetie. I will never let a man harm you. Never. Ever. Ever.

Lights slowly dim out as the mother wraps her arms securely around her daughter, and slowly falls asleep.

Curtains fall.

END OF ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

-END OF PLAY-