THE TWISTED STATE [LA TORTURA]
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Characters:
TORTURER
HIS WIFE
FIRST DETECTIVE
SECOND DETECTIVE
THIRD DETECTIVE

Bedroom-dining room combination with doorway up center.

TORTURER, eating, seated at the table: How many pairs of stockings do you go through in a day?

HIS WIFE, while putting on a pair of stockings: Why do you come out with that now? For Christ's sake, sometimes a pair lasts me a week.

TORTURER: Tell me precisely how many pairs of stockings you go through in a day. No evasions.

WIFE: I use what any woman uses. If you want, I'll go without stockings. They'll talk about you, not about me.

TORTURER: Don't try to worm out of it. Confess!

WIFE: If you like, I will prepare a list of everything I put on, with prices. Maybe I can try to get back the money you spend on other women?

TORTURER: I'm not talking about that. I know your tricks! I know you people!

WIFE: Who? (Pause.) Who?

TORTURER: The meat is tough. The knife won't even cut into it. It's a piece of shoe leather.

WIFE: If you weren't so stupid and asked more for that lousy job you do, I could get you good meat. Top round. (Long pause.) Don't I have pretty legs? If I had thin legs or crooked legs you'd maybe have a right to object. None of your buddies' women have legs like mine. The other day I made a comparison, and I left them with their mouths open. Your own boss...
**TORTURER:** Shut up!

**WIFE:** You're tired.

**TORTURER:** I have a tough job.

*Pause.*

**WIFE:** You worry too much.

**TORTURER:** If I worked in an office, if I were a goddamned bureaucrat, I wouldn't have to worry. But they bring me some guy to make him talk, and I have to make him talk!

**WIFE:** If we went out a little bit, once in a while...

**TORTURER:** To make him talk. Do you know what that is?

**WIFE:** We could have a second honeymoon. You know, the fact is we haven't gotten on so well since we've been married.

**TORTURER:** I have to make him talk. That's all I know. That I have to make him talk.

**WIFE:** I'm still pretty, aren't I?

**TORTURER:** If he talks fast, I go crazy. I don't know what to do. He talks and talks, and I yell at him to talk, and he talks and I yell at him to talk, and he talks and talks, and I yell at him to talk. Sonofabitch! The knife won't cut! Instead of going around primping yourself, you ought to cook some meat that the knife'll go through. Who're you showing off for anyway? For the boss? You're a married woman.

**WIFE:** What the hell's gotten into you today?

*Pause.*

**TORTURER:** Oh, I got a tough one. I got one tougher than a rail. *(He picks up the meat.)* This is a piece of leather.

**WIFE:** If it's a matter of being jealous, it ought to be me, not you. I've heard about your affairs. Both those before and those now.

**TORTURER:** He didn't open his mouth. You got this in a shoe store.

**WIFE, laughing:** They've filled you with stories. That old slob...

**TORTURER:** Why don't you confess? You must've cooked this in acid. What do they want? We've got them surrounded. We know who they are. For Christ's sake, don't they understand?
**WIFE:** That old fool can be your boss as much as he likes, but for me, I don't like him.

**TORTURER:** We gave him the fingernail treatment, and all he did was look at us. He looked at us with the eyes of a cow with her throat cut. All eyes!

**WIFE:** Don't make that noise with your knife. It sets my teeth on edge.

**TORTURER:** All eyes! The eyes filled the room!

**WIFE:** Even if he says he's going to give you a raise, I don't like it either.

**TORTURER:** We burned the soles of his feet.

**WIFE:** I'm sorry I can't help you in this, but I don't like it either.

**TORTURER:** Finally he started to shake. After a real fit of the shakes they always talk. But nothing!

**WIFE:** I don't like it.

**TORTURER:** Not a word. Not one damned word.

**WIFE:** I don't want to hear it. I don't like you to talk about these horrible things!

**TORTURER:** Ahhh. You don't like it?

**WIFE:** No. I don't want to know anything about your damned job. Aren't you able to do anything else? There are lots of jobs in the world. Why did you have to pick the most disgusting? When we got married you told me you worked with the police. But you didn't tell me what you did.

**TORTURER:** Then you don't like my job.

**WIFE:** No. It makes me sick. I'm ashamed. I can't...

**TORTURER:** Come on. Confess. Spit everything out.

**WIFE:** I can't have any girl friends.

**TORTURER:** But boy friends you can... I'm well informed. Go on. Get it all out.

**WIFE:** I can't look anybody in the face. It's as if I had a sickness.

**TORTURER:** You want to call it a sickness. I call it a job. Whoring.

**WIFE:** I want to explain to people that I don't have anything to do... that I don't like what
you do. I don't like it. These things you do are repulsive to me.

**TORTURER:** But you like the repulsive things you do. (*He knocks the table over violently.*) And you like the food that's paid for with my repulsive work. You like your dresses bought with my dirty work! (*He goes to thedresser and begins to throw out and rip up dresses, stockings, etc.*) All this comes out of my filthy job. A nail torn out by the roots was changed into these shoes, and these stockings came from flesh torn with pincers. (*He tears off his wife's dress.*) Get out! Go on to the boss—naked. You whore, you shitty whore!

**WIFE:** Juan, you're crazy.

**TORTURER:** You have eyes like his.

**WIFE:** Juan, it's me.

**TORTURER:** Your eyes are like his. Just like his. The whole room is filled with eyes. (*He picks up a knife from the floor where it had fallen when he overturned the table.*) So the nails aren't enough, huh? Why don't you confess? Just confess. Why don't you tell me about all the men you have? They come here? Do you do it in that bed?

**WIFE:** Juan...

**TORTURER:** Why isn't it enough with the nails? Why isn't it enough to burn your feet?

*Wife exits through door up center. The Torturer follows her. Stage darkens. When lights come up, three Detectives are on stage.*

**FIRST DETECTIVE:** Apparently they fought every day these last few months.

**SECOND DETECTIVE:** They say she had her own little affairs.

**THIRD DETECTIVE:** The chief used to drool over her.

**FIRST DETECTIVE:** And Juan's promotion was ready. They were going to appoint him bodyguard to someone important (*short pause*) who travels a good deal.

**SECOND DETECTIVE:** Yeh, but... to cut out her eyes.

**THIRD DETECTIVE:** We've had some tough times, but they're gonna pass. Some day we'll be through with them.

**FIRST DETECTIVE:** I hope God hears you.

**SECOND DETECTIVE:** But to take out her eyes.

**FIRST DETECTIVE:** It's a crappy job. You remember Pepe? One day he just started to throw up everything he ate. Finally he vomited blood. He had an ulcer this big.
SECOND DETECTIVE: But Juan seemed to be used to it. He was like the Squint-Eye. The Squint-Eye always said: It's a job, like medicine or butchering. Have you ever seen an honest doctor or butcher? Are they eaten up with scruples? Juan used to go through four or five sessions and come out as fresh as he started. He'd come out telling jokes.

Two detectives enter, cross the stage and leave with the Torturer in handcuffs.

FIRST DETECTIVE: Who'll handle the defense?

SECOND DETECTIVE: Colonel Perez. He'll get him off. He'll make a formidable discourse on feminine infidelity.

Sound of a crowd outside and voices crying "Move on! Move on!" Then a police wagon is heard leaving.

THIRD DETECTIVE: And that sonofabitch never confessed to anything.

FIRST DETECTIVE: Nothing. He died the third time around without so much as a word. It was enough to crack the nerves of anybody.

THIRD DETECTIVE: Not Juan. With him it was jealousy.

SECOND DETECTIVE: Yeh, but to pull out her eyes.

Two attendants come in with a stretcher.

FIRST DETECTIVE: Come on! I can't stand looking at bodies.