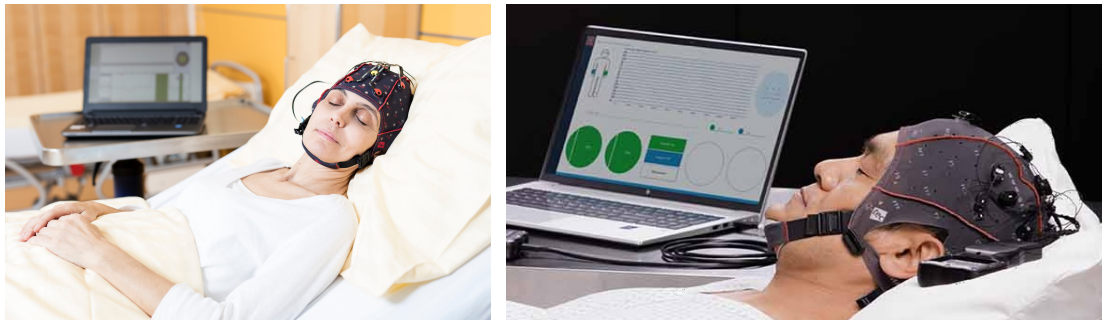




The dingy room is harshly lit by overhead fluorescent lights. The morning sun is barely visible through a shuttered window. Three PATIENTS are all lying in hospital beds and connected to ventilators. Their bodies rise and fall with the ventilators, but otherwise, they appear dead. The PATIENT on the left, PROFESSOR MORRIS, is wearing an electrode cap. *(These two images are examples; image credits at the end.)*



A door opens and ESPERANZA (45) enters with a mop and bucket. She's 5 feet tall, heavysset, with chubby cheeks filled with thick laugh lines and a strong Mexican accent.

ESPERANZA  
Buenos dias, Miss Tibbs!

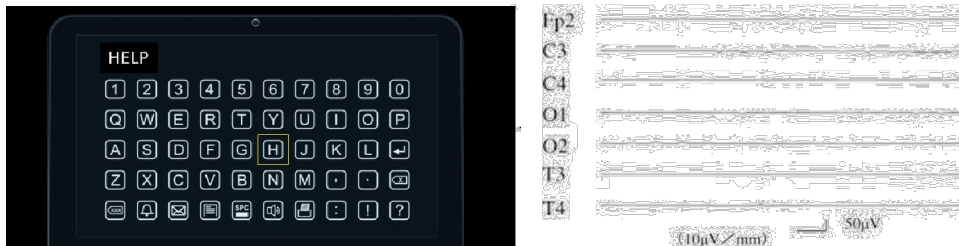
ESPERANZA walks to the rightmost patient, MISS TIBBS (92), and begins mopping the area around her bed.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)  
How are jou, Miss Tibbs? Looks like another beautiful day! I hear the brain doctor is gonna try again to get jou talking today, huh?

ESPERANZA begins mopping the area around the middle patient, CAPTAIN AMADOR (43), a very handsome Hispanic man.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)  
Buenos dias, Capitan, mi amor!  
Aparece que otra mañana tan bonita!  
Espero con ansias este noche!

ESPERANZA begins mopping the area around the next patient, PROFESSOR EDGAR MORRIS (58). The camera (but not ESPERANZA) can see what is on the monitor near EDGAR MORRIS: a 10x5 spelling matrix with the word "HELP" written on the top next to a monitor window with flat lines scrolling right to left.



ESPERANZA (CONT'D)  
 Buenos dias, Professor Morris! I  
 heard jou done real good talking  
 last week. I listen, if jou wanna  
 tell me how jou can talk through  
 that sombrero! I wish I could help -

ESPERANZA frowns, looks at the ventilator, then EDGAR MORRIS,  
 then the monitor with its scrolling flat lines.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)  
 (screaming) Doctor! Doctor!

2

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - MORNING

2

BURNETT and JACKSON both exit their cars and walk toward a building attached to the hospital with a sign that says "Long Term Care Facility". Both have badges hanging over their belts. BURNETT (42, tall, attractive, short wavy brown hair, heavy make-up, slight southern drawl) is wearing a pants suit. JACKSON (37, African-American, very muscular, burn scar on left cheek, soul patch, deep voice) wears a black blazer over an unnecessarily tight tan shirt. DR. JIN (63, straight grey-black hair, wearing a white doctor outfit) meets them at the entrance and shakes hands with BURNETT, then JACKSON.

BURNETT  
 Thanks for helping us again,  
 doctor. I reckon you 'member we met  
 last year, when you helped us out  
 with a cold case.

DR. JIN  
 I do recall. I hope I can help you  
 find the person responsible this  
 time. Please, this way.

DR. JIN enters the building. BURNETT and JACKSON follow her. The hallway isn't well lit nor maintained, with peeling paint and edges filled with shadows and desperation.

DR. JIN (CONT'D)  
Your victim was found by a cleaning lady around 8 this morning. I believe he became deceased around two hours earlier. Cause of death was asphyxiation.

BURNETT  
So I take it he needed that ventilator to breathe. Why?

DR. JIN  
He was diagnosed as comatose. Someone apparently disabled the ventilator and both the alarms.

JACKSON  
Both alarms? You have two of them?

DR. JIN  
Yes. Patients like these typically have alarms on both the ventilator and a pulse oximeter system. Both of them should have gone off under those circumstances.

JACKSON  
So the perpetrator knew how these systems work?

DR. JIN  
Yes. It wouldn't be hard to figure out, though. We also had a camera in the room but it was disabled.

BURNETT  
Disabled? How?

DR. JIN  
Apparently, someone unplugged a cable leading from the camera.

JACKSON  
Great. And nobody noticed the camera feed went dead?

DR. JIN  
No. It was one of those old ones that just records to a USB stick. There is a camera at the end of the hall. Same model. As you may have noticed, this facility is not as well funded as others here in this hospital.

JACKSON

Sure. I seen this kinda place  
before. Any witnesses?

DR. JIN

(sighs) The cleaning lady,  
Esperanza, said there are two  
witnesses, but she was hysterical,  
didn't say much more.

BURNETT

Thanks again. You still sure you  
don't wanna join our new  
Neuroforensics Department, doc?

DR. JIN

Thanks for asking - again - but  
still no. I'm retiring next year.

JACKSON, BURNETT, and DR. JIN arrive at Room 119, open the door, and enter the room. All three PATIENTS and ESPERANZA are in the room. EDGAR MORRIS now has a sheet covering his head. MISS TIBBS' eyes are still closed. AMADOR's eyes are open and his head is tilted about 10 degrees to his left. ESPERANZA's eyes are red from crying.

DR. JIN (CONT'D)

Detectives, this is Esperanza, who  
discovered Professor Morris this  
morning. Esperanza, these are  
Detectives Burnett and Jackson.

Both detectives shake hands with ESPERANZA. JACKSON takes a plastic bag from his jacket, then crouches by the ventilator.

BURNETT

Nice to meet you, Esperanza. Can  
you please tell me how you found  
Mr. Morris this morning?

ESPERANZA

(Nods.) Jes, but first I should  
tell you, he was not just meester,  
he was a professor. So, jes. This  
morning, I was mopping here. And  
then I saw his ventilator, it was  
not working! Then I saw that  
monitor snd so I called the doctor.  
And she came, and she tried, she  
tried to help him, but - (drops her  
head and begins sobbing).

BURNETT

Are you here every morning at the same time?

ESPERANZA

Yes, and also, I come sometimes to visit. The people here, nobody talks to them, except his daughter, sometimes. And the captain, he is my friend! (motions to AMADOR.)

BURNETT

We'll need a copy of the visitation records for this room.

ESPERANZA

Jes, at the front desk. I will get them and copy them for you.

BURNETT

Bless your heart.

JACKSON rises from his crouched position while putting a plastic bag with a fingerprint swab in a jacket pocket.

JACKSON

And this room is usually empty?

ESPERANZA

(frowns.) Well, no. They are always here. (points to the PATIENTS.)

BURNETT

And this room is just for these kinds of patients?

ESPERANZA

Yes. People who, they cannot move. They say, they are in a coma. But, the captain, and the professor, they are not in coma. They say he is - what was it you say, doctor?

DR. JIN

Unresponsive wakeful state. You're right, it's often misdiagnosed as coma. Really hard to distinguish.

JACKSON

Yeah, I heard that term. Used to be called vegetative state. Wasn't politically correct to call 'em vegetables, even though they are.

ESPERANZA

(Suddenly furious) Detective, you should never call them that! They are human beings! They can hear you and they know what you are saying! And the captain, he is my friend!

She motions to AMADOR, and everyone except the PATIENTS look at him. Camera shows a reaction shot from AMADOR's POV, with the camera tilted 10 degrees to the left like his head. JACKSON is surprised by the outburst, then recovers.

JACKSON

Hey, I didn't mean it like that.

ESPERANZA

You should treat them with respect.  
(Brief awkward silence.)

BURNETT

Esperanza, you said that there were two witnesses. Where are they?

ESPERANZA

Here.

ESPERANZA gestures to the PATIENTS. DR. JIN, BURNETT and JACKSON look at them (and AMADOR "looks" back in another reaction shot), then look at each other. The room is silent except for the life support machines, clicking and whirring.

3

INT. SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE AREA - MORNING

3

BURNETT, JACKSON, and ESPINOSA (28, olive skin, moustache, black hair that looks crunchy from hair gel) are standing and looking at a monitor on BURNETT's desk. RUMPLE (58, lanky, wrinkled shirt, uncombed salt-and-pepper hair and goatee) is watching the monitor while sitting at his desk with his feet on the desk. He is munching baby carrots loudly. In the background, we see three dark, empty rooms. Two of them have signs that say "Interrogation" and the third room's sign says "Neuroforensics." BURNETT points at her monitor.

BURNETT

Here, y'all, look at these visitor logs we got from the hospital. It looks like his daughter visited the victim a lot last week - here. We sent a unit to bring her in.

BURNETT points again and camera switches to her monitor. The top of the screen says "Visitation Records for Edgar Morris" The rows have "Susan Morris" several times. The camera switches back to the detectives as ESPINOSA begins speaking.

ESPINOSA

So nobody else visited the victim?

BURNETT

Not according to these visitor logs. But they're iffy. We didn't sign any logs there this morning.

JACKSON

You checked for any other cases like this? Maybe we get a serial vegetable killer.

RUMPLE chuckles, then eats another baby carrot with his mouth open. BURNETT glares at him and he swallows sheepishly.

BURNETT

I checked CNet, NCIC, Interpol, CSP, LDA, SVM, PCA, nothing.

RUMPLE

Hard to imagine. Why kill someone who's almost dead already?

JACKSON

Right, just wait a little and-

The detectives stop talking as CAPT. CUPRIC (63, medium height, brown suit and tie) enters. He hands a manila folder to each detective, who each open them and begin reading.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Alright, listen up, people. The victim's daughter should be here soon. Quite a record. She was arrested for assaulting her father three years ago. The victim chose not to press charges. They found a meth pipe on her too. Also, a unit responded to a 911 call from a neighbor last week. Neighbor said she overheard the daughter yelling at someone about how she planned to kill her father. Daughter said it was a misunderstanding, no follow up. Did anyone get anything from the patients in that room?



JACKSON

Vegetables are lousy witnesses.

BURNETT

Wait. Captain, the maid - Esperanza - she said something about talking to them. She was really insistent.

JACKSON

Naw, that happens with these situations. Learned that one early.

CAPT. CUPRIC

What do you mean?

JACKSON

Well, I had an aunt who was like that. She took some bad heroin. Couldn't move after that. They said she was in a locked in state, like locked in to her body. My mother, she'd visit her every day, after working double shifts. But she'd go, and she'd say she was talking with her sister, and so I wanted to go too, to get to know her. But there was nobody left inside there.

CAPT. CUPRIC

How old were you?

JACKSON

I was like seven, eight. And I would go, lots of times, and Ma would ask questions, and she'd swear she could read a little twitch or something, here or there. But I looked, kept looking, trying to find any sign she could hear me-

RUMPLE

Already playing detective?

JACKSON

Yeah, I guess. But I never solved that one. She just... She was already gone. Nothing left. Point is, that maid, she's nice, she got hope, but she got a full heart and an empty head. And I saw guys like that in Afghanistan. Same thing. Just cause you want 'em to be there don't mean they are.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Alright. Let's focus, people. I got Thanh from tech services checking out the camera footage from the hospital. Jackson, interrogate the victim's daughter with Rumble.

JACKSON

(nods.) Will do.

CAPT. CUPRIC

(to BURNETT.) Lieutenant, monitor that interrogation from out here. Don't hesitate to call Thanh the techie if she needs to check anything.

BURNETT

I'm on it, captain.

CAPT. CUPRIC

(to ESPINOSA.) Marco, your turn to check out the hospital. Maybe you can get more outta that maid talking her language. And ask around for any other visitors, anything unusual. Right now we got nothing unless the daughter knows something. (ESPINOSA nods.)

4

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE MORNING

4

JACKSON and SUSAN MORRIS (20, braided blonde hair, silver nose and lip piercings, wearing a blue singlet and tie-die dress) are seated at a desk facing each other. SUSAN holds CHRIS (1, wearing a diaper and a shirt that says "I woke up this cute") in her lap. RUMPLE stands behind JACKSON.

JACKSON

Susan, you understand why you're here, right?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah!

JACKSON

Where were you this morning?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh. Well, we left my apartment in Carlsbad around 5:30.

(MORE)

SUSAN MORRIS (CONT'D)

Then we ran some errands in San Clemente, didn't we? Didn't we? (tickles CHRIS, who laughs.)

RUMPLE

What errands?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh. I got gas, bought some organic protein powder from that vegan store, then dropped off a painting I sold to some old guy off T-street. Then we just got home and one of those cops picked us up.

JACKSON

Anyone who can verify this?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, no. I mean, I messaged my dad this morning, but now...

RUMPLE

Must be very emotional, everything with your father.

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah!

JACKSON

Trying to readjust, and take care of him- (points at CHRIS MORRIS, who looks back and smiles disarmingly. RUMPLE smiles back while JACKSON looks uncomfortable.)

RUMPLE

After all your father did, tore up your family, left you alone.

JACKSON

I might wanna kill him too.

SUSAN MORRIS

Huh? You mean that time the cops came last month?! Uh, no! You guys don't know shit. I was talking about euthanasia. Daddy put it in his will, he didn't want to live in a coma, he saw lots of patients like that. Look it up. But then I learned he's not in a coma, he might recover - I mean, before... you know, this... (she sobs.)

RUMPLE

We also saw you had a fight with him a few years ago.

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah! I was like psycho then. He just divorced my mom and I kinda freaked out. I was into, you know, some bad stuff. I went to rehab, been testing clean for two years. Look it up. I'm all different now. And I love my dad, ask anyone.

JACKSON

Susan, can you think of anyone else who might have wanted to do this?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, no! He was the nicest man. And, well, you know, he couldn't even move. How can he piss someone off?

RUMPLE

Frankly, Miss Morris, aside from you, we got nobody with any motive, and no evidence, and no witnesses. So, yeah, we still gotta ask-

RUMPLE is interrupted by a knock on the glass. RUMPLE nods to the others in the room, winks at CHRIS, then leaves the room.

5

INT. OUTSIDE OF INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE MORNING

5

SUSAN MORRIS keeps talking to JACKSON behind the one-way glass. BURNETT is watching them through the one-way glass. She shows her cell phone to RUMPLE. It shows a picture with SUSAN MORRIS driving. CHRIS is sitting in the passenger seat.

BURNETT

I asked Thanh the technie to check for a license plate match. She just sent us a picture from a camera at the 5 northbound border patrol checkpoint around 6 this morning. Check your phone.

RUMPLE

(Checks phone.) Yup. That's them. Looks like we need a new suspect.

BURNETT

Right. Tell her she's free to go,  
but get anything else from her you  
can. We got nothing right now.

RUMPLE enters the interrogation room and shows JACKSON that  
picture on this cell phone. JACKSON sighs.

6

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE MORNING

6

RUMPLE

Miss Morris, we confirmed your  
alibi. You're free to go, but if  
you don't mind, I just wanted to  
ask you a little more about your  
father. Miss Morris, the maid kept  
insisting she could talk to some of  
those patients-

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah, including Daddy! People  
say he's a vegetable, and they  
write him off, you know, like he's  
nobody. Even at the hospital! But  
they don't know shit. I talk to  
him. His memory is there, he can  
hear me, he makes jokes. I just - I  
just talked to him last week, and  
he said he loves me, and, Chris  
here, and-

RUMPLE

He said that to you last week?

SUSAN MORRIS

(SUSAN sniffs.) Uh, yeah! When I  
visited him on Friday. See?

SUSAN pulls a cell phone from her purse and shows the  
detectives a text message from "Edgar Morris" that says: "I  
love you and Chris. Thank you so much for visiting. It helps  
inspire me to pull myself out of this. Life is always  
beautiful, valuable, and exciting."

JACKSON

Your father sent you this text  
message last week?

SUSAN MORRIS

Right.

RUMPLE  
(frowns.) But how- With respect,  
Miss Morris, we had been informed  
that your father couldn't move.

SUSAN MORRIS  
Uh, yeah! Course not! Didn't they  
tell you? He was using this, this  
electrode cap thing. Uh, a, a brain-  
computer interface. Or just a BCI.

RUMPLE  
A brain-computer interface?

SUSAN MORRIS  
Yes. He doesn't have to move. He  
has this cap on his head and he  
just thinks, and spells.

JACKSON  
And you believe that it works?

SUSAN MORRIS  
Are you even listening? I know it  
works! Look it up online. We got  
one because Daddy used to work with  
a professor who studies it. Or you  
can ask that maid, Esperanza.

JACKSON  
Then is it possible he set this up  
somehow? Didn't want to live any  
more, like he said in his will? I  
mean, he's there, he can't move, he-

SUSAN MORRIS  
I asked him that too. I mean, I  
wanted to make sure about  
euthanasia. I said, Daddy, do you  
really want to keep going? I mean,  
how can you live like this?

JACKSON  
And?

SUSAN MORRIS  
(chokes back a sob.) He said - he  
said it was for us. Me, and him.

SUSAN MORRIS hugs CHRIS MORRIS, who smiles and gurgles  
happily. The room is otherwise silent for a moment.

RUMPLE

You said all this was through a computer - is there a record of these conversations?

SUSAN MORRIS

I guess so. Wayne said they save everything, and they send backups to the company that made it.

JACKSON

Wayne?

SUSAN MORRIS

Yeah, Wayne Engelbart. He's the scientist guy who sets it up.

JACKSON

How can we contact this guy?

SUSAN MORRIS

I have his card, here.

SUSAN MORRIS gets a business card from her purse and hands it to JACKSON. It says: "Wayne Engelbart, PhD Candidate, Altman Laboratory, Department of Cognitive Science, UC San Diego."

JACKSON

Thank you. You said this laboratory studies this technology?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah! One of the top groups.

RUMPLE

So we might be able to communicate with other possible witnesses who were in the room?

SUSAN MORRIS

Uh, yeah! Wayne said he was trying to work with the other patients too. He talks to me a lot. Keeps staring at my - you know - even though I'm, like, I gotta keep reminding him I got a boyfriend.

RUMPLE

Thank you very much, Miss Morris. You've been very helpful.

7

EXT. JUST OUTSIDE LECTURE HALL ON UCSD CAMPUS - NOON

7

BURNETT and JACKSON are standing in the back of a lecture hall full of students. WAYNE ENGELBART (29, skinny, moderate acne scars, slouching, unwashed brown hair, wearing shorts and a wrinkled T-shirt that reads "Will Argue Science for Money") is standing behind a lectern in the front of the lecture hall. WAYNE'S brown beard is untrimmed, uncombed, and hosts several small bits of food and one small white pillow feather. WAYNE looks like he has been tired, stressed, and exasperated for a long time. He closes his laptop as students stand up and start leaving. BURNETT approaches a student walking out of the room, SAMIR.

BURNETT

Excuse me. We're looking for  
Professor Altman.

SAMIR

(Laughs.) Me too. She's never here.  
She makes her lab slaves teach. Or  
just stand up there and bitch at us  
like this pizza-faced asshole.

BURNETT

Is that one of her, uh, lab  
assistants lecturing now?

SAMIR

Yeah. Name's Dr. Engelbart. He's  
the lucky slave de jour. Good luck  
getting him to talk to you.

SAMIR leaves as WAYNE ENGELBART starts walking out of the room, surrounded by about 20 students asking questions.

WAYNE

Again, there are no office hours  
this week. I'm just covering for  
Professor Altman. If you have  
questions, please just email her.  
Really, I can't talk. I have to go.

ERIKA

Professor, can you just tell us-

WAYNE

I'm not a professor.

ERIKA

Sorry, uh, Dr. Engelbart, can you-



WAYNE

No. Not a doctor. Don't have a PhD.  
Gotta go. Thesis defense tomorrow!!

WAYNE storms out of the room, pushing through several insistent and exasperated students asking him questions. BURNETT and JACKSON are outside and show him their badges.

BURNETT

Wait! We need to talk to you.

WAYNE begins walking away very quickly, with both detectives and several students following him.

WAYNE

Really not a good time. I have my  
PhD thesis defense tomorrow and-

BURNETT

Professor Morris was just murdered.

WAYNE stops and drops several papers he is carrying. He makes no effort to get them.

WAYNE

What? Edgar's dead? How? Who would-

Two students catch up, and one tries to shove an open textbook in WAYNE's face.

JENNIFER

Dr. Engelbart? Can you-

WAYNE

(yells) No! Come on! Fucking leave  
me alone!!

All the trailing students look at each other, cowed. WAYNE grabs the papers he dropped and starts walking away quickly, and only BURNETT and JACKSON follow.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Do you have a, um, police car or  
something? Somewhere we can talk  
privately? (WAYNE gawks shamelessly  
at BURNETT's chest while speaking.  
She ignores it.)

JACKSON

Pretty far. Parking here is  
terrible, even for police cars. Do  
you have an office?

WAYNE

(Laughs.) A grad student with an office? I heard legends of those, before budget cuts. No. Just our lab, and it's pretty busy. So what happened to Edgar?

BURNETT

Professor Morris was killed around 6 AM. Someone apparently turned off his ventilator.

WAYNE

Would have been an ugly way to die.

BURNETT

Yeah. Yeah, and so I reckon maybe you could help us. Can you tell us where you were at 6 AM?

WAYNE

Home. Fast asleep.

BURNETT

Can anyone verify that?

WAYNE

No. I wasn't, you know, uh, sleeping with anyone. I'm a science nerd, you know. We're not really so popular with women like you. (looks at BURNETT, who purses her lips and looks away.)

JACKSON

Do you know anyone who might want to kill him?

WAYNE

No. He was a great guy.

JACKSON

We understand his daughter visited. Did he have any other visitors?

WAYNE

I don't know. He's only been communicating for about a month now. Took me months to get him that far.

(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

His EEG is actually pretty healthy in some ways, he asked me some hard questions about the field and our lab, he can still- I mean, well, he could remember. Past tense. Sounds weird with him.

BURNETT

Wayne, we really need more to go on than this. Can you get the other witnesses in the room communicating?

WAYNE

Maybe, but not right now. After tomorrow, I can try, but-

BURNETT

Can your boss help?

WAYNE

(WAYNE looks irked and miserable.)  
Depends who you ask. No, not really. But Edgar was super helpful to me. I did an internship in his lab. I wouldn't even have a thesis defense tomorrow without him. So. Yeah. I'll help. (Shrugs.)

BURNETT

Great! Let's head to the hospital.

WAYNE

It's not that easy. I need to go to my lab to get equipment.... Um.... You want to go with me to my lab? Meet my boss?

BURNETT

Sure.

8

INT. RESEARCH LAB AT UCSD - MOMENTS LATER

8

BURNETT, JACKSON, and WAYNE enter the lab. It's crowded with equipment, cables, and several students in their late teens and twenties. WAYNE points to a closed door. The nameplate on the door reads "Professor Helen Altman - BCI Lab Director." The two detectives approach the door. BURNETT knocks. WAYNE starts purposefully moving about the lab, grabbing equipment. His labmates protest. WAYNE ignores them unsympathetically. After a long delay, BURNETT knocks again, waits a few seconds, then opens the door. The office is devoid of clutter.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN (58) is seated at a very nice desk with an unmoving Newton's cradle. She has a thin face, short grey hair, and wears a light gray pants suit. LEN PAAU (48), wearing a tailored suit and thin-rimmed glasses, sits across from her. ALTMAN looks up at BURNETT, then barks at her with a slight German accent.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
I'm in a meeting!

BURNETT  
I'm Detective Burnett, this is Detective Jackson. We need to ask you a few questions.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
Not right now. You can make an appointment through-

BURNETT  
Professor, Professor Morris was murdered early this morning. Could we speak to you outside, please?

9 EXT. IN FRONT OF LAB - MOMENTS LATER

9

BURNETT  
I understand you used to work with Professor Morris?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
Yes. Edgar was our lab director. My boss. We worked with a lot of patients together. Such an unfair irony. Of course, we had to try to help him, so I assigned my best graduate student. Gave him all he needed. All the best equipment.

BURNETT  
Professor, can you think of any reason why anyone might want to kill him?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
(sighs.) Maybe his daughter. I know she used to be really bitter at him. I can't understand it, I-

WAYNE opens the lab door and walks outside with equipment and supplies bulging out under both arms.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN (CONT'D)  
Whoa there, Wayne! Where ya going?

WAYNE  
Oh, hi! I need to prep one of the patients at the hospital so they can help these detectives.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
What? You have a thesis defense tomorrow! You will not go anywhere!

WAYNE  
But, but, it's for Edgar! Didn't you hear? They need my help, the detectives-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
I said no. Return that equipment to my lab immediately!

WAYNE  
Aw, come on! I mean.... What the fuck, bitch?! Where would you be-

BURNETT  
HEY! Let's tone it down here. Professor, those witnesses are our only chance of identifying the killer, and we need to get them communicating. Can you help instead? Or someone else here?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN  
(Sighs.) No. I mean, of course I know how, but it really requires him, for these particular patients. Fine, little Wayne. Go. If there's nothing else, I'll be getting back to my meeting with my patent attorney.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN goes back in the lab and slams the door. WAYNE walks toward a nearby parking lot with the bulky equipment. JACKSON and BURNETT wait until WAYNE is gone, then look around to ensure they are alone. They are.

BURNETT  
(Whistles.) Alright, now I'm not so sure about our mad scientist here.

JACKSON

Yup. I mean, he got a lotta stress,  
but... so do I, and I ain't never  
talked to my boss that way.

BURNETT

I have. But yeah, this kid's fixin'  
to pop any minute. You, me, let's  
get back to the hospital. I'll tell  
Marco to keep an eye on WAYNE.

10

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

10

The room look similar to the morning with a few changes. PROFESSOR MORRIS is gone. His bed is empty and neatly made. ESPERANZA and ESPINOZA are seated in a corner, having an animated conversation each other in Spanish like old friends. CAPTAIN AMADOR is now wearing an electrode cap. He is propped up on a pillow, and his head tilts about 5 degrees to the right. A small LCD monitor faces the captain, and a larger monitor faces away from him (toward WAYNE). The monitor shows 8 channel EEG data (aka moving squiggly lines). WAYNE is seated near CAPTAIN AMADOR, typing on the laptop. He looks up as BURNETT and JACKSON enter.

WAYNE

Hey! Going really well so far. I  
asked him if he saw anything and  
he's spelling right now.

WAYNE turns the small monitor so the detectives can see it.  
They can see the following text:

TELL THE CYNICAL BLACK DETECTIVE I AM NOT A VEGETABLE. AND HE  
DRESSES LIKE A FRUIT. I WAS ASLEEP WHEN EDGAR DIED. SORRY.

ESPERANZA

(laughs at JACKSON.) I tell jou,  
detective, he can hear jou. Jou  
should treat him with respect!

JACKSON

This guy is talking to me?

BURNETT

(Smiling.) I reckon he ain't had  
much contact with anyone else  
matching that description recently.

ESPERANZA

I told jou, the captain, he can  
hear jou.

JACKSON

Why do you keep calling him  
Captain?

ESPERANZA

He is a captain. Marines. Navy  
cross. That's why he's here, he  
hurt his head in a plane crash.

JACKSON looks at CAPTAIN AMADOR, then at the other two patients in the room. JACKSON then squints intensely at CAPTAIN AMADOR, as if seeing him for the first time. Camera switches to a first person POV from the perspective of CAPTAIN AMADOR. The camera is tilted about 5 degrees to the right, and the top of the frame is obscured by eyelids. JACKSON rolls up his sleeve and shows him a USMC tattoo.

JACKSON

Captain, I apologize. I'm sorry. I  
served too. We good?

WAYNE

He's spelling something, detective.

WAYNE points to the flashing matrix on the monitor. The monitor contains an 10x5 matrix with letters and other characters (same as the image on page 2). The matrix flashes several characters with each flash, 100 ms per flash, 200 ms between flashes. As the characters talk, text very slowly appears on the top row that says NO PROBLEM DETECTIVE.

BURNETT

How is he spelling?

WAYNE

See the flashing letters? The user  
just has to count each time his  
target letter flashes.

BURNETT

He just spelled O. So that means he  
counted each time the O flashed?

WAYNE

Right. If you count a flash like  
that, you produce a brainwave  
called the P300. If you ignore it,  
no P300.

JACKSON

And that electrode cap can pick up  
all those brainwaves?

WAYNE

Yeah. Then my laptop figures out which flashes produced a P300, and we know which letter he wants to spell even though he didn't move.

JACKSON

(Pauses.) Huh. Looks like science fiction with brain stuff.

WAYNE

(Shakes head.) Not at all. None of that sci-fi was written by people who really know about BCIs. I guess call it bci-fi. This is real.

BURNETT

So this is more like Facebook and Neuralink and stuff?

WAYNE

Um. Still no. Not really. I mean Neuralink is invasive, you need a brain surgeon. Your brain or mine?

JACKSON

And your speller always works?

WAYNE

(Sighs.) No. That's why we have error correction software. Ignore everything you saw or read about brain devices. It makes mistakes and it's slow and it doesn't work for everyone, but it works for him. And for Edgar. I mean, worked.

BURNETT

And you can do this on a laptop?

WAYNE

Yeah. You don't really need a fast computer. I just bought a new laptop for them to use when I'm not here. Like to talk to Edgar's daughter or Esperanza here.

JACKSON

And this stores everything? Can you give us records of those conversations?



WAYNE

I mean, usually it's unethical, but if it's to solve a murder, sure.

BURNETT

And this is part of your work with UCSD? Your PhD thesis work?

WAYNE

Naw, not really. I mean, same concepts, but I don't get any money or papers for this. I just volunteer. Someone has to help these people. Look, he finished spelling. He says no problem detective. (Shakes head.) You shoulda heard him when we first got him talking. I asked him why he was doing this. I mean, why he keeps going. And he said, life is always beautiful, valuable, and exciting. Exact words. Made me really think about things, you know?

JACKSON

Captain, honored to speak with you, sir. This is an image of the person who killed Professor Morris from the camera down the hallway here. I know it is a bad image, but can you recognize this person?

He shows his phone to AMADOR. It shows a bad image of someone wearing a white coat and hat. AMADOR slowly spells NO.

BURNETT

This could be a long discussion. I'm fixin' to head back to the office. We don't have all day.

JACKSON

I do.

BURNETT

What?

JACKSON

I have all day. I'll stay with the captain.

WAYNE

Wait, he's spelling something else.

BURNETT

How do you know when he's done?

WAYNE

You don't.

JACKSON

He just spelled Wh. Maybe he means who? Why?

WAYNE

Please don't. He hates it when you finish things for him. Besides, his software can do that. It has word completion. See, he spelled WHIT and it added the E on the end.

JACKSON

Alright, while he finishes, maybe you can explain some more things. Your lab doesn't have any money, but you just got a new laptop?

WAYNE

Oh, it's not from the lab. I bought it. I asked my boss but she said no, so I had to spend my own money.

BURNETT

So Professor Altman is one of the top experts in BCIs, but she can't get any money for science?

WAYNE

No. This is happening all over America. We're like the anti-science capital of the world now. There's no money for science research anymore. Even the best labs spend all their time begging for grant money instead of working. Some people can make some money on the side with patents, but that's it. Oh, check it out, looks like Captain Amador is done.

WAYNE points at the monitor. It says: "WHITE COAT ON MURDERER NOT FROM HOSPITAL." BURNETT and JACKSON look at each other, then at ESPERANZA, who is wearing a white hospital coat.

BURNETT

He's right. Look. Esperanza's coat doesn't have those epaulets.

WAYNE

Huh? What are epaulets?

BURNETT

Cloth decorations on the shoulders.

JACKSON

So the perp disguised himself as a doctor, but got the doctor's coat somewhere else?

BURNETT

Let's show this picture around other hospitals. Maybe someone will recognize our perp.

JACKSON

Thank you, Captain. Sir, can you think of anyone with a motive to kill the professor?

As he begins spelling, BURNETT grills WAYNE further.

BURNETT

Wayne, did the professor have any patents? Anything valuable?

WAYNE

No. Every time he had a good idea, he just published it. Different now with Helen in charge. This is part of the problem in my lab, someone has a good idea, and, um, it gets patented instead. (Frowns.)

BURNETT

Go on.

WAYNE

Nothing.

JACKSON

What do you mean by that, Wayne?

WAYNE

Just a joke.

BURNETT

Come on, Wayne. What did you mean?

WAYNE

My boss. Her last patent application. It's huge. You can find it online, number 7460903.

(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

It could cure depression, ADHD, lots of things. She always says she's busy with other work but she just focuses on that one patent and we run everything.

BURNETT

What about that patent, Wayne? You sayin' she stole your idea?

WAYNE

Not really. Most of it was based on earlier work in our lab. She just used one recent idea I had in a paper I wrote for her. Actually, directly plagiarized. Just copied, word for word.

JACKSON

And you're angry?

WAYNE

Mad? Ideas are everything. Especially me. I got NOBODY!

ESPINOSA and ESPERANZA both look at WAYNE, startled. WAYNE looks at BURNETT pathetically, eyes hovering over her face and then chest, then looks down, then continues ranting.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Just my papers and ideas. That's it! My whole life! And, and nobody likes us in society, scientists, nerds, women won't talk to us, all I have is a good idea and now I got nothing, not even a paper, no PhD.

JACKSON

Look, it's a bad time to talk about this. You got your defense tomorrow-

WAYNE

Oh, come on! Don't remind me! I'm so fucked tomorrow!

BURNETT

You're worried about failing your thesis defense?

WAYNE

Yeah. I mean, I'm gonna fail, like everything else. My grades were only mediocre.

(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I had to delay my defense a couple times cuz I had, well, I had some medical problems. Obviously you noticed my boss hates me since I spend most of my time working with these guys instead of kissing her ass all the time. (WAYNE gestures to the PATIENTS.)

BURNETT

And can you-

WAYNE

Wait, he's done typing.

The monitor displays: HEARD DAUGHTER WHEN SHE WAS HERE. SHE WAS ANGRY AT SOMEONE. NOT EDGAR.

BURNETT

(frowns.) Jackson, since you're staying here, I'll go check on some things at the office.

JACKSON

OK. Can I talk to you outside for a second first?

BURNETT

Sure.

They both leave room 119 and close the door. They're alone.

JACKSON

Not so sure about Wayne's story. And he'd know how to turn off the ventilator and the alarms.

BURNETT

And all this info from the captain relies on Wayne. What if he rigged the speller? Planted messages?

JACKSON

What if that other patient can talk too, and Wayne's just stonewalling? Could be why the captain said the daughter was angry last week.

BURNETT

I reckon maybe the victim told Wayne a lot more than he's letting on. New ideas. Maybe a new patent.

JACKSON  
You think he'd take it and run?

BURNETT  
(Pauses thoughtfully.) I'm not sure. He's angry, lonely, cynical, he's burnt out - but Wayne, that guy, he's an idealist.

JACKSON  
Takes one to know one.

BURNETT  
Burnt out? Yeah, I know y'all call be Burnout Burnett behind my back.

JACKSON  
No, ma'am. I mean an idealist. Scratch a cynic, you get a frustrated idealist. I was.

BURNETT  
(Thinks.) Guess it's parta this gig. I'm fixin' to move on myself. Anyway, if we bring him in, how do we talk to Captain Amador?

JACKSON  
Talk to his boss, find a way to drag her lazy ass out here?

BURNETT  
Nah. I don't think she really knows how. Not as much as Wayne. And she'll just squabble over it.

JACKSON  
Yeah, that woman is colder than a dead Eskimo. But they're old friends, she got no motive.

BURNETT  
Then we still need Wayne.

JACKSON  
Yeah. For now, we got no choice. We gotta work with him. You and Espinosa can leave if you want, I got Wayne covered.

11

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE AREA - AFTERNOON

11

RUMPLE is seated at his desk, talking to CAPT. CUPRIC, who is standing. BURNETT and ESPINOSA and walk in, and CAPT. CUPRIC turns to face them just before THANH (24) walks in behind him. She is pudgy with thick, scratched, dirty glasses, a nasal voice, and black hair tipped with blue highlights.

CAPT. CUPRIC

We got nothing on the fingerprints.  
Maybe we'll have more luck with  
those cameras. Let me check with  
Thanh the techie, see if she's-

THANH

Right behind you, Captain.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Ah. Good timing. We might need some  
tech support later, you free?

THANH

Why, indeed I am. As for right now,  
I could even tell you why I came up  
here, Captain, if you'd indulge me.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Please.

THANH

I have been assiduously  
scrutinizing the hospital camera  
footage. This pulchritudinous mad  
scientist, Dr. Engelbart, were you  
aware he was at the hospital  
immediately prior to the murder?

RUMPLE

No. He said he was asleep. Alone.

THANH

Ah, but our data say otherwise, my  
wondrously disheveled friend.

THANH moves to the large monitor and types briefly on the keyboard. The monitor begins presenting camera footage from the hospital parking lot. WAYNE can be seen walking through the parking lot. He is wearing a white coat, carrying a backpack, and looking around worriedly, as if afraid to be seen. Text on the bottom of the monitor reads JAN 19 5:43 AM.

BURNETT

What the Sam Hill?

THANH

And also, I found this on that  
grievously ancient camera down the  
hallway. It's blurry, low-res, but-

THANH presses a button. The resulting new footage shows WAYNE walking out of room 119, looking nervous. WAYNE hugs ESPERANZA, who then enters room 119 as WAYNE walks down the hall toward the front door. The bottom reads JAN 17 10:32 PM.

THANH (CONT'D)

That's just after the camera in  
room 119 ceased recording. Now cast  
your perspicacious eyes here, about  
an hour later.

THANH presses a button and a new video clip shows ESPERANZA leaving Room 119, smiling. The bottom reads Jan 17 11:21 PM.

THANH (CONT'D)

There are similar scenes last  
night, where the maid goes to that  
room around 10:30.

ESPINOSA

She said she was only there to  
clean the room. During work hours.

BURNETT

Dr. Jin said it wouldn't be hard to  
figure out how to tweak the  
ventilator and alarms. That maid  
had a lotta time in there.

ESPINOSA

And none of these extra visits are  
in the visitation logs.

RUMPLE

So the grad student and the maid  
are both lying to us?

CAPT. CUPRIC

And the patient. Captain Amador. He  
also told you there were no other  
visits, right?

ESPINOSA

Right.



BURNETT

But still no motive. No indication why three people, who only met less than a month ago, would team up and obstruct our investigation?

CAPT. CUPRIC

About time we find out. I'll call Jackson, tell him to bring Wayne in here. Espinosa, get back there and arrest the maid. Thanh, once Wayne arrives, get his laptop as evidence and start looking through the communication logs. Check out all their conversations, look for anything suspicious on that system. If he has passwords, security, you do your thing.

THANH

(Nods enthusiastically.) Yes, sir!

12

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

12

WAYNE is seated at the interrogation desk, reading a journal paper intently. BURNETT and JACKSON enter the room, and WAYNE stands up abruptly as his chair falls backward.

WAYNE

What the fuck?! Why are you doing this to me? I didn't do anything!

JACKSON

You did a lot of things. You can start with why you unplugged the camera watching the victim.

WAYNE

I- Aw, fuck. Come on, guys! There was nothing wrong with that.

BURNETT

Not good enough.

WAYNE

Come on! I've been totally helpful! On the day before my PhD defense!

JACKSON

Yeah, you mentioned that a few times. We heard you.

WAYNE

I was in grad school for eight years to get this chance! I-

JACKSON

Yeah, and you could be in jail a lot longer if you don't answer us!

WAYNE

It's an ethical issue with patient confidentiality. I can't just-

JACKSON

So he told you something?

BURNETT

Wayne, aside from saving yourself, you could really help our investigation. You could help us find out who killed your friend.

WAYNE

No. No, it's not like that. Trust me, it wouldn't help you.

JACKSON

We'll decide that, Wayne.

WAYNE

No. No, I'm not gonna say anything.

JACKSON

Think about that. You want to be at your defense tomorrow. You go this way, you gotta find a lawyer, and bring him up to speed before tomorrow. That's hard to do when you got no lawyer and no money.

BURNETT

We've seen it. Many times. Takes weeks to find a public defender.

JACKSON

When was that PhD thesis defense? Tomorrow?

BURNETT

Tomorrow morning, right?

WAYNE

Oh, come on! You guys are treating me like a criminal!

BURNETT

Wayne, just talk to us. OK? You can trust us.

WAYNE

(Pauses to think, looking at BURNETT.) No. I, I know you don't believe me, but it's not like that. Sorry, but no. Again. (WAYNE looks disappointed, but resolved.)

JACKSON

You know we're interrogating Esperanza too, right?

WAYNE

Leave her alone! She didn't do-

JACKSON

And if she spills first, that's really bad for you, right? You're a smart guy. You know the prisoner's dilemma? Well, you're gonna be a prisoner. Her too.

BURNETT

Wayne, you've only known this person for a month. Are you sure you can trust her? With your PhD? With the rest of your life?

WAYNE

(shakes head.) She won't say anything. But it's not what you think. Really, honestly, she didn't do anything really wrong either. You should just let her go. Please. (looks at BURNETT pleadingly.)

BURNETT

Why?

WAYNE

(pauses). Sorry. No. Is there anything else?

JACKSON

(shows the picture of the perp in the white coat.) Let's talk about this photo of the murderer, here. Do you notice anything unusual about this coat?

WAYNE

No.

JACKSON

Is that you?

WAYNE

No!!

JACKSON

You wear white coats in your lab,  
right? Kind of like these?

WAYNE

(looks at photo.) Yes. I think so.  
OK, yes, but I didn't kill him!

BURNETT

Why aren't all your visits in the  
hospital logs, Wayne?

WAYNE

I don't have to sign in! I'm  
research staff! They all know me,  
you can ask them there! Esperanza,  
she never signs, cuz she's-

JACKSON

Not supposed to be there until her  
shift starts. Much later. (glares  
at WAYNE, who says nothing.)

BURNETT

Where were you around 6 AM  
yesterday morning, Wayne?

WAYNE

I told you, I was sleeping.

JACKSON

We got a security camera that puts  
you in the hospital parking lot  
just before the murder.

WAYNE

(Briefly throws up his hands in  
frustration.) No. No, it's not -  
it's private. I wasn't anywhere  
near his room.

JACKSON

Where were you?

WAYNE

It's private.

JACKSON

You know what else is private? What they do to scheming, scrawny little nerds like you in the slammer.

WAYNE

Oh, come on! What the fuck?!

BURNETT

Wayne. We'll keep it totally confidential if it's not related to the murder. But if you don't give us something, now, right now, you're going to spend your thesis defense in jail. OK?

WAYNE

I, uh. Fine. I was a patient there. Am a patient. At the hospital.

JACKSON

Why?

WAYNE

Stress disorders. I got an ulcer.

JACKSON

That one, I can believe.

WAYNE

I told you before. I said I had health issues. I thought it was better, but it really hurt this morning, so I went to the emergency room and then they sent me to my doctor's office.

JACKSON

And you happened to be there right when your patient was murdered?

WAYNE

I didn't know! I was in agony!

JACKSON

Wearing the same white lab coat as the murderer?

WAYNE

Yeah, I had that coat! I wear my lab coat all the time around there. I told you, I'm research staff.

BURNETT

The camera shows you with a backpack. What was in the backpack?

WAYNE

My laptop! And a cap for Edgar, I had to wash it, and, and some journal papers! I, I can prove it, they're all still there, I got the new Nature article from Professor Jin, and the speech Wolpaw gave when he got the Nobel, and the new hybrid BCI paper from Brunner and those guys in-

JACKSON

And a hat?

WAYNE

No! Nothing else. Wait, and a manual for the EEG amplifier. And some paper and pens. And aspirin. And, and some gum. Um. It was like the 2 flavor gum, with orange and wild strawberry, I think. But that's it. Nothing else. You can ask my doctor there. Dr. Spataro. I was in her office until at least seven. And there's a the camera in the hall outside her office.

JACKSON

Alright. We'll have to check on some of this. You sit tight.

WAYNE

Can I have my laptop back? Please?

JACKSON

No. (JACKSON and BURNETT stand up and start to leave.)

WAYNE

OK but wait! Wait, what about just one of those papers in my backpack, like the- (The door closes.)

13

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE AREA - AFTERNOON

13

ESPINOSA and RUMPLE are seated at their desks. RUMPLE twirls a pencil absentmindedly. THANH is seated at an empty desk, typing on WAYNE's laptop. CAPT. CUPRIC is standing, watching THANH type, as JACKSON and BURNETT walk in to the central office area from the interrogation room. BURNETT is putting away her cell phone as if she just finished a call.

CAPT. CUPRIC

That was fast.

BURNETT

Wayne wasn't much help. He has an alibi for being at the hospital. I just confirmed it. But Wayne won't say a thing about the cameras or their late night visits to room 119.

ESPINOSA

Nothing from Esperanza either.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Huh. What about the captain? You think he can explain this?

JACKSON

I doubt it. They're all sticking together.

THANH

Captain Amador was decidedly more loquacious last week, though.

CAPT. CUPRIC

Huh?

THANH

I just got in to these message logs. Look here, on the 17th, extensive dialog in Spanish. Marco, can you help me here? Te veo mas tarde, mi amor? Doesn't that last word mean "love?"

ESPINOSA

Uhhh - yes.

THANH

Yeah, and he says it again here- might I humbly request your ongoing linguistic assistance, Marco?

ESPINOSA walks to the monitor and begins reading. After several seconds, his eyes widen and he blushes.

ESPINOSA  
Captain, I can explain all this.  
Why they're all lying about it.

CAPT. CUPRIC  
Please.

ESPINOSA  
Captain, these are love letters.  
From Amador to Esperanza.

CAPT. CUPRIC  
Love letters?

ESPINOSA  
That's the diplomatic way to put it, captain. Some of them are pretty explicit. Toward the end of their conversation on the 17th, he asked Wayne to disconnect the camera so they could have some private time.

THANH  
Ewww! The maid fucked a paralyzed guy? I mean how does he even get it-

JACKSON  
Hey, Thanh! Two people fell in love and had sex. What's your problem?

THANH  
Nothing, I guess. If it's mutually consensual. I mean, I'm grievously unversed in the medical or carnal arts, but don't you need-

ESPINOSA  
Yes, it's consensual. He definitely agreed. Enthusiastically. Should we charge Esperanza with - with, um...

CAPT. CUPRIC  
No. Let her go. Thanh, copy all those messages. And Thanh, can you please help us talk to Wayne, try to work with him?

THANH  
Yes, sir.



14

INT. SECOND INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

14

ESPERANZA is seated, fuming. ESPINOSA and RUMPLE walk in the room and sit across from her.

ESPERANZA

I tell jou, I say nothing.

RUMPLE

That's not why we're here,  
Esperanza. You're free to go.

ESPERANZA

Que?

ESPINOSA

You were right. Earlier. We're  
sorry. You're free to go.

ESPERANZA

But why- No. Wayne, he did not say  
nothing. Si?

RUMPLE

No. He kept your reason for  
visiting the captain private.

ESPERANZA

Then how- No! Jou read what he said  
to me! Jou! It was in Spanish!

ESPINOSA

Esperanza, lo siento, we had to-

ESPERANZA lunges across the table and slaps him in the face,  
hard. She then wags a finger in his face while lecturing him.

ESPERANZA

I tell jou, this was a private  
matter! I tell jou before! This is  
none of jour beezness! I tell jou,  
the captain, he is my friend!

ESPERANZA glares at him a moment longer, then storms out.

15

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - AFTERNOON

15

WAYNE is pacing in the small room. BURNETT, JACKSON, and  
THANH enter. BURNETT gives WAYNE his laptop, which he grabs  
enthusiastically and opens. THANH sits next to him and  
watches him. WAYNE briefly gawks at her chest, notices she's  
looking back at him, and looks away. THANH smiles bashfully.

BURNETT

Wayne, we understand about Esperanza and Captain Amador and why you disconnected the camera. But we're still checking on some parts of your story and need your help again.

WAYNE

Yeah, fine. How?

BURNETT

Well, we're still trying to identify who would have had a motive to do this.

WAYNE

Look, please, I've been really helpful but I got a thesis defense tomorrow and-

JACKSON

We just need a little more, Wayne. Did anyone else know about Edgar? Or what you were doing?

WAYNE

I can't think of anyone you didn't talk to already. I told you, we back up the data but just to our lab and the manufacturer. And they're in Austria, they're out of the picture.

THANH

Indeed, I had a question about that, my feathered colleague.

WAYNE

You mean me? Oh. Not again! Fucking shitty dorm room pillow! (Strokes his beard and removes a feather.)

THANH

I was looking over all the TCP/IP activity on your laptop. You know your laptop kept getting monitored in real-time from this IP address, right? (points).

WAYNE

Yeah. That's our lab IP address. My advisor follows my work sometimes. Actually, I'm flattered.

(MORE)

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I didn't think she paid that much attention to me.

THANH

And someone deactivated the web browser here, yesterday, while it looks like the victim was trying to-

WAYNE

What?

THANH

Look, here, the victim launched a web browser, then went to a website, and then a command came from that IP address to block access to that site.

WAYNE

I, uh- (squints at screen). Huh.

THANH

And this website, uspto.gov, is that familiar?

WAYNE

Yes. US Patent and Trademark Office. It looks like he was trying to read a patent pending. 7460903.

JACKSON

That's the one your boss is going for.

WAYNE

Yeah. Well, that doesn't make any sense. OK, let's check for other-

He is cut off as the door opens and LEN PAAU enters.

PAAU

Good afternoon. I am Len Paau, representing Professor Helen Altman. Am I correct in assuming this is the laptop used by Wayne Engelbart here?

PAAU points to WAYNE's laptop. WAYNE nods.

PAAU (CONT'D)

This is an injunction against any further use of the university's equipment or data.

WAYNE

Oh, not again! I just got that fucking thing back! Come on, asshole! I need that laptop to prepare for my thesis defense! It's tomorrow morning! What the fuck is wrong with all of you people?

PAAU

Here is the relevant paperwork. It also prevents you, Wayne, from discussing this issue further.

BURNETT snatches the paperwork from PAAU and begins reading.

JACKSON

Please, Mr. Paau. You're obstructing a murder investigation!

PAAU

We're protecting our experimental participants' right to privacy. Dr. Engelbart, you are-

WAYNE

It's just mister. I'm not a doctor. I told you my thesis defense is-

PAAU

Mister Engelbart, you have been negligent with highly confidential data from patients participating in an experimental research study.

JACKSON

This man's boss is aware of his work, and she gave him permission-

PAAU

That permission is hereby revoked. This student is not qualified to make such legal determinations, nor is his boss.

WAYNE

I've read the consent forms, IRB Committee approval, Declaration of Helskini, Ethical Code of Conduct-

PAAU

Did you have an attorney present when deciding which data to reveal? Did you think about the man's right to privacy?

(MORE)

PAAU (CONT'D)

Did you consider that this man's data could reveal personal information well beyond the scope of your-

WAYNE

Of course. I decided-

PAAU

It's not your decision. You must surrender that laptop to me now.

WAYNE

It's not lab property. I paid for it. I'm keeping it.

PAAU

The data on the hard drives are lab property, and are covered in this injunction. Ask that detective.

WAYNE looks at BURNETT, who is still reading the injunction.

BURNETT

I'm sorry. It covers all equipment and data owned by the university or any staff. Mr. Paau, we'll be happy to cooperate until the moment we can get this overturned. First thing in the morning.

WAYNE

OK, but can I just get one little file off there?

PAAU

No.

WAYNE

Please, please, just one file, it's the slideshow for my talk tomorrow. You can look at it, there's nothing-

PAAU

Absolutely not. Give me that laptop, immediately, or I'll ask these detectives to arrest you.

WAYNE slowly hands the laptop to PAAU, who smiles insincerely and leaves. JACKSON follows PAAU, still arguing with him.

WAYNE

Detective?

BURNETT

Yeah?

WAYNE

Can I go now?

BURNETT

Yeah. Hey, thanks for helping us.  
Good luck tomorrow.

WAYNE

Thanks for trying to solve this  
thing. Good luck with all that.

BURNETT

We might need your help again  
later. We could use your help on  
some cold cases.

WAYNE

Sure. I'm free starting tomorrow.  
Either way it goes. Kind of fun  
playing detective. Actually. Wait.  
Can I see that injunction?

BURNETT

Sure. I'll make you a copy.

16

INT. DETECTIVE OFFICE AREA - NEXT MORNING

16

BURNETT, JACKSON, and RUMPLE are seated at their desks. CAPT.  
CUPRIC is standing, and ADA SMITH is standing next to him.  
ADA SMITH looks at her cell phone and purses her lips.

ADA SMITH

Sorry. Still no luck with the  
injunction. I'll keep trying.

RUMPLE

(Shakes head.) The man asked for  
help, in his dying word, and we get  
held up by red tape.

JACKSON

You know, that's been bugging me  
lately.

RUMPLE

Red tape? Bugs me every day.

JACKSON

No. That he would say that.

RUMPLE

That he would ask for help when  
someone cut off his air supply?

JACKSON

Yeah. Think about it. He knows  
what's up. He knows he's gonna die.  
He knows nobody is gonna read it in  
time. Why ask for help? Why not say  
something more-

CAPT. CUPRIC

Helpful?

BURNETT's cell phone rings, and she answers it.

BURNETT

Burnett. Hi, Wayne. Who? From  
where? Yes, I can put him on video.

She presses a few buttons and DR. GUGLINGER (51) appears on a monitor in the office area. He is dressed in traditional Styrian formal attire and has a very heavy Austrian accent. The background is a laboratory area somewhat similar to the Altman lab. Some amplifiers, EEG caps, and other equipment are on a table behind him, much like the equipment in the Altman lab. Two well-used skis with labels reading "Fischer Progressor" lean against a back wall. Through an open window, we see the sun setting over gorgeous Austrian Alps.

DR. GUGLINGER

Servus, uh, you are detectives, you  
are working with Wayne Engelbart?

BURNETT

Yes.

DR. GUGLINGER

My name is Dr. Guglinger. Our  
company manufactures equipment, and  
software also, for brain-computer  
interface systems.

JACKSON

And?

DR. GUGLINGER

I received an phone call this  
morning - or, last night for you -  
from Wayne Engelbart. He wanted to  
see some data that was sent to our  
server. So I provided, for him, a  
remote access.

JACKSON  
(Nods.) Clever boy. The injunction  
doesn't cover Austria. (looks at  
ADA SMITH, who is silent.)

BURNETT  
Thank you for calling. Go ahead.

DR. GUGLINGER  
The subject in question had almost  
no EMG. That is, um, the signals  
from the muscles. I believe he was  
not able to move.

BURNETT  
Thanks, we knew that. Can you tell  
us anything about how he used your  
equipment? What he tried to  
communicate?

DR. GUGLINGER  
Well, he was asleep for most of the  
time. Then, he awakened at 5:57 AM.  
Then, he spelled a word. Then his  
brainwaves, they start to look  
really very unhealthy, they-

JACKSON  
Right, never mind that part. So he  
spelled one word, around 6 AM?

DR. GUGLINGER  
Right.

RUMPLE  
The word was "help," right?

DR. GUGLINGER  
No.

JACKSON  
What?

DR. GUGLINGER  
I show you, here.

DR. GUGLINGER presses a button. On a monitor behind him, the  
same 10x5 matrix appears, and spells H, then E, then L.

DR. GUGLINGER (CONT'D)  
You see, here, he did start to  
spell this.

(MORE)



DR. GUGLINGER (CONT'D)  
But then, it was not a word the  
computer knowed, so the error  
correction, it made it into, um, a  
common word. Watch, please.

On the monitor, the letter E appears, then the final letter,  
N, spelling HELEN. After a delay, the word changes to HELP.

BURNETT  
He spelled Helen, not help?

DR. GUGLINGER  
Yes. That is what Wayne said. I  
checked, and, yes, he is right. He  
asked me to call you, to say this.

BURNETT  
Thanks very much for your call.  
Excuse us, please.

BURNETT pushes a button to end the call.

BURNETT (CONT'D)  
Wayne just cracked the case. It's  
Altman. Her first name is Helen.

JACKSON  
And we got motive. She wants to  
steal that patent. Let's go.

ADA SMITH  
Wait. We're on shaky ground here.  
That is one iffy source. A patient  
with brain damage who spelled one  
word while dying of asphyxiation.  
And we're already in a fight with  
the university, and you want to go  
after one of their star scientists.

JACKSON  
She has access to white lab coats,  
she knows how to turn off the  
ventilator and alarms, she can hack  
the software, she knew everything  
the victim said, she understands  
how all this works!

BURNETT  
And she wanted that patent. It'll  
make her rich.

ADA SMITH  
(Pauses). OK. Go. Arrest her and  
bring her in.

17

INT. UCSD SEMINAR ROOM - MORNING

17

WAYNE stands at the front of the room behind a lectern. He has showered and is wearing a suit. His beard and hair have been combed. WAYNE stands straight and seems relaxed and confident for the first time. Facing him is an audience of about 50 people, mostly well dressed. PROFESSOR ALTMAN and four other THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS are seated in the front row of this audience.

WAYNE

Thank you for your question,  
Professor Millán. Results showed I  
could not only increase P300  
amplitude but also the N2 and  
earlier VEP components elicited-

The door opens and JACKSON and BURNETT enter. BURNETT is carrying handcuffs. WAYNE throws up his hands and wails.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Oh, no, no, no, not again! I didn't  
do it! At least, just give me ten  
more minutes! Come on! Please!!!

BURNETT

We're not here for you. Helen  
Altman, you are under arrest for  
the murder of Edgar Morris.

The audience gasps and BURNETT cuffs PROFESSOR ALTMAN, who appears unemotional. WAYNE, however, is not.

WAYNE

Helen? You? I- I- how could you-

WAYNE stammers into the lectern. BURNETT and JACKSON begin to walk away, with BURNETT escorting PROFESSOR ALTMAN. WAYNE suddenly recovers and looks up.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

No, wait! We were in the final  
question phase! I was nailing it!  
Come on, detectives! Let her sign  
this first! Just take off her cuffs  
for five seconds, please! Here-

WAYNE approaches PROFESSOR ALTMAN with a document and pen. JACKSON shakes his head at WAYNE and holds up his hand in a "stop" gesture. WAYNE stops, then drops the pen and document as ALTMAN is escorted out by JACKSON and BURNETT. The room is silent as WAYNE slouches and looks like he's about to cry. WAYNE abruptly stands up straight and faces the audience.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Huh. Thank you all for coming. I, uh. Well, hey, at least our department is free of that fucking evil bitch!! Um. Or I guess it's not my department any more. Well, I guess there's no point in more questions after they arrest the chair of your thesis committee. At least it's finally over. Bye.

WAYNE looks around the room whimsically and waves at the audience sadly. Audience members look at each other, confused. Then, WAYNE shrugs and leaves, head held high.

18

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING

18

BURNETT and JACKSON are seated on one side of an interrogation desk, while PROFESSOR ALTMAN and PAAU are seated across from them.

BURNETT

So, Professor. Would you like to tell us how someone hacked the victim's computer? Deactivated a web browser just when he was looking up that patent of yours?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

I don't know. Could have been Wayne, other people in my lab, any competent hacker. In any case, please direct such questions to my attorney here.

BURNETT

Care to explain why he spelled your name right before he died?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

Yes. You ever seen what happens to a human brain without oxygen?  
(Shakes head dismissively.)

PAAU

I'd like to remind you of the injunction in effect during your investigation, detectives. I hope none of your-

JACKSON

Haven't forgotten. We got a picture of the perp, 'bout your height, wearing a coat just like those coats in your lab-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

You found someone with a white lab coat in a hospital? And you've been a detective how long?

JACKSON

Why'd you assign Wayne to botch the job with him?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

What?

JACKSON

You had to make a show of trying to get Professor Morris to communicate, since he was your friend and everyone knew it. You said you assigned your best student, gave him all he needed. But you assigned the guy you thought was your worst student, while he was busy with his thesis, told him to back off, gave him no equipment, no support.

BURNETT

You wanted Wayne to fail, didn't you? Expected it? Didn't think the locked in guy could speak out?

JACKSON

But you didn't count on Wayne working nights and weekends to help him. Knocked himself out to help one of his heroes. Cause you would never do anything like that.

BURNETT

That was your mistake with Wayne. You could never understand why he would do it. No empathy. Even for your old friend. Who trusted you.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

Detectives, I'm happy to cooperate to the fullest extent of the law, but as I already mentioned, please refer all matters regarding my old friend Edgar to my attorney.

BURNETT

Your old friend? With the idea for your new patent?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

(Smug.) Which new patent? Neither of you have any, do you?

BURNETT

The one to cure depression? Yeah, detectives do research too.

JACKSON

That's a lot of money to share with a vegetable, huh, Helen?

PAAU

Excuse me, I have to ask that we hold off on any questions regarding pending intellectual property. We would like to get additional and appropriate legal representation-

BURNETT

Well, I don't think you need counsel just to listen. We've been reviewing it, and it seems to have a lot of overlap with the work you did with Professor Morris. Maybe you think you shouldn't have been the only author on that patent.

JACKSON

That's a lot of money, isn't it? A cure for depression? Too much money to share with an old friend?

BURNETT

Who was locked in, and couldn't enjoy it.

JACKSON

Didn't really deserve it. Woulda just given it to his daughter.

The detectives pause for a reply, but PROFESSOR ALTMAN does not react. She is remarkably still, head tilted about 10 degrees to the left, watching silently and unemotionally.

PAAU

If you're done badgering my client-

BURNETT

But that daughter tried to help him. And he talked to her.

JACKSON

I wonder what he said to her, Professor?

PAAU

Any such conversations are definitely covered by the injunction. If you'd like access, you can contact my office, or -

BURNETT

Call Susan Morris.

PAAU

Excuse me?

BURNETT

We could call Susan Morris. Actually, we already did. And you know what she told us, Professor?

JACKSON

She said that her dad was angry at you, Professor. And he asked her to bring a copy of that new patent of yours, and some of his old notes.

BURNETT

Now why would he do that, Professor? I reckon you know.

PAAU

Detectives, all of this relies on a lot of speculation, experimental unproven technology, and one witness who's a convicted felon.

JACKSON

We got more witnesses.

PAAU

To the victim's private conversation with his daughter?

BURNETT

It wasn't private. Captain Amador and another patient were there.

PAAU

You want to convince a jury with testimony from two vegetables?

JACKSON

(Stands up and points angrily.) One captain, USMC. Navy Cross. Wounded in action. The kind of man that commands respect. Miss Tibbs-

PAAU

Detectives, we all want to get to the bottom of this, but given the injunction against the use of our equipment or data, I have to remind you there's no way to corroborate your inane presumptions.

JACKSON

This isn't the only lab doing this.

BURNETT

Yeah. We're talking to other BCI research labs. We've been trying to hire someone for neuroforensics anyway so we just happen to have some friendly contacts. You know these university scientists, they'll talk your ear off.

PAAU

Fine. Until then, we'll be going.

JACKSON

That's not all. We still have enough to hold your client.

PAAU

For now, perhaps, but without more evidence-

The door opens and THANH and ADA SMITH enter the room. ADA SMITH is carrying the laptop and a document. ADA SMITH hands the document to PAAU, who begins reading it. PAAU frowns.

ADA SMITH

Detectives, the injunction is no longer in effect.

JACKSON

So we can grab Wayne and go talk to the other witnesses in the room.

BURNETT

And all those things you didn't want a jury to see? They're ba-ack.

ADA SMITH

We have more than that. We've been reviewing the communication logs on his laptop - found more messages to his daughter.

PAAU

Again, this is a private conversation, with a confidentiality agreement-

ADA SMITH

An agreement that simply corroborates what our other witness said, and what we both know the other two patients will say.

BURNETT

How about you, Professor? Anything to say?

PROFESSOR ALTMAN remains impassive.

THANH

The victim also asked his daughter to locate some lab notes he emailed his putative old friend here.

ADA SMITH

Still don't want to talk, Professor? 10 years, murder 2.

JACKSON

Ten? We got her on murder one!

PAAU

We're not prepared to entertain any such discussion at this point.

ADA SMITH

So that's no, then? OK. Offer's off the table. Bad move. Go on.



THANH

I checked those notes against the patent to elucidate any concordant phrases in both documents. Probably the same software you use to catch cheating students, huh, professor?

JACKSON

Uh oh.

THANH

The substantial majority of your patent was just copied from-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

I'll take it. Ten years. If, if I can get parole-

PAAU

Helen, stop! Please!

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

No, I got a career to think about. I can go work abroad somewhere - probably get parole in a lot less than ten years. Right?

ADA SMITH

Ten years? That offer was so 30 seconds ago. Now it's-

BURNETT

Wait, I agree with Jackson. Why talk at all? We got her on-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

Twelve.

ADA SMITH

Nope. Twenty.

JACKSON

Why? Cause the victim was locked in? Cause you think his life was worthless? Put her away for good!

PAAU

Your colleague has a point, detective. That may be your opinion, but selling it to a jury as a regular murder might be tough.

BURNETT

We'll take our chances.

JACKSON

Get his daughter to testify. Tell the story! The story about how he said he lived through all that to see her and her son! Tell them how he said life was beautiful, valuable, and exciting! Get that to a jury! Tell them-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

Fifteen years.

PAAU

I think we were better off at ten. They also have suspicious evidence gathering, involving that injunction and a private confidentiality agreement, that could blow their whole case-

ADA SMITH

We'll take fifteen.

PAAU

Ten.

ADA SMITH

You had your chance at ten once. You blew it. The offer for ten flew the coop a minute ago and fifteen is flapping its wings. Fifteen, or we go to trial. We'll go for life and as much publicity as we can for-

PROFESSOR ALTMAN

Yes. I said, I'll take fifteen. It's not up to him. Done.

PROFESSOR ALTMAN stares straight at the desk for several seconds. Her head remains tilted slightly to the left. She then suddenly slams the desk with her left hand. The impact is loud enough that others in the room jump. Her head then collapses into her open right hand, and she begins to sob.

19

INT. THE ALTMAN LAB AT UCSD - NOON

19

BURNETT and WAYNE are both seated in the lab. In the background, his looting labmates are removing items from her lab and arguing over who gets them. Two students both pull on her Netwon's cradle, which breaks in a shower of steel balls.

BURNETT is wearing an electrode cap and concentrating on a monitor with flashing letters like EDGAR'S P300 BCI. The monitor displays BURNET she smiles when another "T" appears.

BURNETT

Wow. Thanks for letting me do this.

WAYNE

Yeah. As far as I know, you're the first detective to use a BCI.

BURNETT

You think everyone will use these BCIs someday?

WAYNE

Someday. Not someday soon, though. Still so much more to do. Well, let me get this cap off you.

WAYNE removes the electrode cap from BURNETT.

BURNETT

I'm sorry again about the timing of the arrest.

WAYNE

(Waves it off.) It's OK. You gotta do your jobs. I doubt I woulda passed anyway. But helping Edgar, and the Captain, that was real. And it was really hard. Not a lot of people coulda done that. (Smiles for the first time.)

BURNETT

I've been meaning to talk to you about that. You solved this case, Wayne. And, well, seems like you might be looking for a job.

WAYNE

(Shrugs.) I guess. Looks like my job as grad student is over.

BURNETT

What about a job with us?

WAYNE

(Smiles wryly.) What do you mean? You got another patient victim?

BURNETT

Not quite the same, but yes, there's a cold case we gave up on. Plus with all this neurotech going mainstream, we're trying to start a Neuroforensics department. You could be the first neurodetective.

WAYNE

I'm... Hm. Never woulda thought of that before all this but... love the job title. Already heard about some other problems.

BURNETT

Problems? You mean... crimes?

WAYNE

Oh, hell, yeah. Covering up when systems don't work or have nasty side effects. Privacy issues. Identity theft. Cybercrime. Defrauding patients and insurance companies. Murder for inheritance, divorce, whatever. Not that new. Look up this New Yorker article, Reading Minds from 2003. And there'll be a lot more of 'em coming up. Just taking advantage of patients and families. I hate that evil greedy bullshit. Love to take those fuckers down. You said you had some cold cases?

BURNETT

Here's one. This guy had a chip in his head to control a prosthetic arm. Stabbed his wife. Said it was an accident, blamed it on the chip. We dropped the case, now he's suing the company that made the chip.

WAYNE

Hm. Implanted BCI, pretty expensive. It should have a log of his motor activity just before then. Get me that log and I can tell you if he was thinking about a stabbing motion.

BURNETT

We should be able to subpoena that. Here's another cold case.

(MORE)

BURNETT (CONT'D)

This woman with Lou Gehrig's disease was using one of those brain-controlled wheelchairs. Went into traffic. Died. We suspected the husband rigged it.

WAYNE

Hm. That one, I don't really have the hacking skills. It would help if I can work with that cute techie chick. Actually, that would be nice in a lotta ways. But look, you might wanna hire someone else, someone more... successful. Not a lot of people are gonna take me seriously without a PhD. I mean-

The door opens and CHANCELLOR WOLF enters. WAYNE immediately stands up.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Uh, hello, sir. Sir, this is Detective Burnett, she was-

CHANCELLOR WOLF

Yes, I understand she was involved in the misunderstanding with the injunction. It is a pleasure to meet you, Detective.

BURNETT

And you are?

CHANCELLOR WOLF

I am Dr. Wolf, the Chancellor of this university, but was not directly involved in the injunction decision. That was pushed by Professor Altman and her attorney, who was a personal friend of hers and not acting under my direction.

BURNETT

I understand, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR WOLF

Thank you, detective. If you don't mind, I'd like to have a private conversation here.

BURNETT

Sure. I was just leaving.

WAYNE

Wait. Chancellor, sir, it's OK with me to talk in front of her.

CHANCELLOR WOLF

Very well. I spoke with the other four members of your thesis committee regarding the unusual circumstances of your defense, and-

WAYNE

I'm sorry about that, sir, I-

CHANCELLOR WOLF

Please don't interrupt me, Dr. Engelbart, I was trying-

WAYNE

Yes, sir, but I'm not a doctor.

CHANCELLOR WOLF glares at WAYNE, who looks cowed.

CHANCELLOR WOLF

That wasn't the conclusion reached by the remaining four members of your committee, who I asked to make a decision without Professor Altman. Their conclusion was unanimous. Congratulations, doctor.

WAYNE

(Voice breaks.) Uh, uhh- thank you, sir, I- I- don't know what to say-

CHANCELLOR WOLF

Preferably as little as possible. About this case, about your thesis defense, about these issues with confidential data, and this conversation. Understood? Doctor?

WAYNE

Yes, sir.

CHANCELLOR WOLF exits and closes the lab door. BURNETT hugs WAYNE, who blushes under a fresh tear rolling down his cheek.

BURNETT

You'll have to get used to being called doctor now.

WAYNE

(Sniffs.) I guess so. Hey, I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable earlier. Lotta stress, you know?

BURNETT

Yeah. I know. Believe me, I know. Glad to see you passed, doctor.

WAYNE

What about you, detective?

BURNETT

What?

WAYNE

What about you? Detective. It's a badge of honor. You had to earn it. You still proud of it? You just solved a murder. Still feel good?

BURNETT

(Tired.) Yeah.

BURNETT takes out her badge and spends several seconds studying it pensively. As she does so, she steadily seems less and less burnt out, then finally smiles at WAYNE.

BURNETT (CONT'D)

Yeah. Yeah! Thanks for reminding me. Doctor. Call me if you want to talk more about more work with us.

WAYNE

I will. And thank you. Detective.

After BURNETT opens the door to leave, ERIKA enters, holding a textbook. She looks inside and sees WAYNE.

ERIKA

Hi, Mr. Engelbart? You said-

WAYNE

It's doctor.

NOTE: The author can provide all of the BCI equipment here as props and has access to long-term care facilities.

IMAGE CREDITS: The images on page 1 show two versions of MindBEAGLE and are owned by GUGLINGER Technologies, used with permission. MindBEAGLE is a P300 BCI to communicate with patients (mis)diagnosed with coma. Both "patients" in these images are paid actors. The author made the other images.