### CURTAINS AUDITION SIDES

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<th>SIDE 1:</th>
<th>GEORGIA</th>
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### CHARACTER BREAKDOWN BY SIDE

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(AARON, GEORGIA and CARMEN are reading the reviews. OSCAR joins them.)

GEORGIA. Oh my god.

AARON. Holy Mother in heaven.

CARMEN. Holy crap.

OSCAR. What? The reviews aren’t good? What don’t they like?

GEORGIA. That we put on a show.

AARON. The Boston Globe says, “If you loved Oklahoma, stay there as long as Robbin’ Hood is running in Boston.”

CARMEN. How about: “Calls to mind Walt Disney’s Pinocchio…because its star is wooden, oughtta be hung by piano wire and swallowed by the first whale that enters Boston Harbor.”

OSCAR. Who said that?

CARMEN. The Christian Science Monitor.

OSCAR. There’s got to be something in the papers we can use.

CARMEN. Let me consult with the writing team. Georgia, Aaron: does “debacle” have two meanings?

GEORGIA/AARON. No.

CARMEN. Well that’s a shame. Critics! Who’d make a living by killing other people’s dreams?

GEORGIA. Wait a minute, here’s something in the Herald that might be good. “Formerly married composer and lyricist Aaron Fox and Georgia Hendricks have provided film star Jessica Cranshaw with a star vehicle – that ought to be driven off a cliff.”

OSCAR. Hey, get a load of this! The Cambridge Patriot says: “Considering the talent and experience of the veterans involved, Robbin’ Hood is sure to be a huge Broadway … (searches desperately for the next sentence) …Smash.”

AARON. Yeah, that’s all well and good, but the Cambridge Patriot is not the Boston Globe. The Globe is the review we needed.

GEORGIA. Face it: we’ve gotten our notices and we’ve been given notice.

AARON. I’m afraid you’re right.

CARMEN. No, no, you two are just oversensitive because you wrote the show. This is only Round One. The first musical my husband and I produced was savaged out of town. But we rolled up our sleeves, did a major rewrite, and brought it to Broadway. And that musical, my friends, was “Kiss Me…I’m Irish.” Closed before the audience opened their playbills, but the point is: We decide if it goes to New York…not Daryl Grady of the Boston Globe.

AARON. So we’re still shooting for Broadway?

CARMEN. Aaron & Georgia, you keep writing tunes that bounce. Oscar, you keep writing checks that don’t.
CIOFFI. Excuse me, I’m Lieutenant Frank Cioffi of the Greater Boston Police. I’m assigned to the Homicide Division and oh – it’s an honor to be standing on the same stage with each and every one of you. I happened to see Robbin’ Hood in previews and may I say that, with the exception of the deceased Miss Cranshaw, you’re all just such wonderful performers. And what a great score.

AARON. Well I appreciate that, Lieutenant.

GEORGIA. On behalf of my half of that compliment, thanks as well.

CIOFFI. You’re more than welcome. I’ve, well, I’ve done a little community theatre myself – oh, no, nothing that fancy, although my Billy Bigelow at the Brookline Barnhouse got a favorable review … and in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” my Bottom was very well received.

BELLING. Wait a moment. You say you’re from Homicide?

CIOFFI. Ah, well, yes. Based on a preliminary autopsy, it’s clear that Jessica Cranshaw was murdered.

BELLING. And, and what are they doing with her killer? I mean, does he get some sort of trophy, or a Pontiac convertible…?

AARON. Chris.

BELLING. Sorry, pure reflex.

GEORGIA. What … what killed her?

CIOFFI. Hydrocyanic acid, commonly used in electroplating, as well as the gas chamber at San Quentin. The acid started a chemical reaction that created her own personal gas chamber, internally …

GEORGIA. Horrible.

CIOFFI. Working backwards from when the capsules dissolved, we know she swallowed them in the very final minutes of this evening’s performance.

AARON. Couldn’t she have poisoned herself?

CIOFFI. Trauma at the back of her throat suggests she didn’t take the capsules voluntarily. Now may I ask who’s in charge here, other than myself?

BELLING. Permit me, Lieutenant. I’m the critically-acclaimed director Christopher Belling and I’ll be blocking your investigation.

CIOFFI. I hope that’s not the case. But if you need to wrap things up with your cast, please go right ahead.

BELLING. Company! (He takes a dramatic pause.) Jessica was part of our company, and now we part company. I’m sure you will remember her in your thoughts and in your resumés.
NIKI. Lieutenant, may I speak to you for a moment. My name’s Niki --

CIOFFI. -- Harris. Miss Niki Harris. I read your bio several times through on the bus ride home the other night. May I say I found your performance particularly memorable? It was just lovely.

NIKI. Well thank you.

CIOFFI. Lovely.

(Beat)

NIKI. Well thank you.

CIOFFI. I’m crazy about your little vibrato.

NIKI. You’re very kind. Anyway, yesterday Miss Cranshaw asked me to coach her on her lines and of course I said I’d be glad to help --

CIOFFI. That’s so like you.

NIKI. Well, I’m also her understudy – at least, I was – I guess I’m Georgia’s now – but then these three letters fell out of Miss Cranshaw’s script. (She grabs them from her purse.) She didn’t take them seriously, but I kept them. I’m afraid my fingerprints are all over them. (Very cheery:) They’re death threats! See: the words and letters have been pasted onto the paper. Cut with little curved finger scissors from a newspaper or magazine. I would imagine.

CIOFFI. (Reading.) You’re murdering the score but I’ll murder you.” “You’ll drop before the curtain does.” “If you don’t quit, you’ll die legit.”

NIKI. Can you tell anything from them?

CIOFFI. Well they seem pretty negative in spirit.

NIKI. Well, yes, of course.

CIOFFI. Oh, I’m sorry, you were hoping for the Arthur Conan Doyle version? Unfortunately, these notes reveal very little, except that the person who sent them is a man in his early thirties, six feet four in height, who wears a pewter ring, served in the Merchant Marine, and despite being right-handed, is known to his closest friends as “Lefty.”

NIKI. How … however did you know that?

CIOFFI. Oh I don’t. I was just saying that, you probably hoped I would be able to tell – wow, if I could do that just from – I mean – wow.
SIDNEY. (**From offstage**) Get your damn hands off of me, you hear?

CIOFFI. Who’s that?

CARMEN. Sounds like my husband. On his best behavior.

BAMBI. I guess he left New York.

CARMEN. Lucky New York.

(**Enter Sidney**)  

SIDNEY. Well isn’t this just peachy keen? You all waited up for me.

BAMBI. Welcome back to Boston, Sidney.

SIDNEY. (**Seeing Bambi, appreciatively**) Well Hel-LO.

BAMBI. It’s me, Sidney. Your stepdaughter.

SIDNEY. Oh. Sorry about that “Faun”

BAMBI. It’s “Bambi.”

SIDNEY. And Last of the Least: Mrs. B, my junior partner and lesser half.

CARMEN. All right, let’s get it over with, Sidney.

SIDNEY. What, you expect me to be upset? I left you in charge of opening night and return to find a murdered leading lady, deadly reviews and a bunch of cops who tell me I can’t leave this theater!

CIOFFI. I’m afraid you’ve arrived at just the wrong time for you and just the right time for me, Mr. Bernstein.

SIDNEY. Lieutenant, I can’t be a suspect, I was in Manhattan when Jessica got murdered.

CIOFFI. Can you prove that?

SIDNEY. It so happens I was keeping company with a young actress I happen to be keeping. On Sutton Place. If I give you her name, it could ruin her reputation.

CIOFFI. Your chivalry is touchingly convenient.

SIDNEY. Lieutenant, I have many influential friends in New York City!

CIOFFI. Too bad you’re in Boston.
NIKI. And will you be wanting me any further, Lieutenant?

CIOFFI. No, but I do have some questions for your boyfriend.

NIKI. I don’t have a boyfriend.

CIOFFI. Oh my gosh. Um, actually, Miss Harris, I’d like to take you into my confidence regarding this investigation.

NIKI. Why’s that Lieutenant?

CIOFFI. Well because if I don’t, there’s really no reason for us to keep talking.

NIKI. Then take me into your confidence with confidence, Lieutenant.

CIOFFI. Something’s very wrong here. I just met an opening night cast who all seemed incredibly eager to close.

NIKI. Well I can understand how they might feel. They all gave up wonderful jobs in hit Broadway musicals to work up here in Boston. I’ve never performed outside of this city, and Bambi’s had to fight her mother at every step just to be in the chorus, but the rest of the cast are underpaid and overworked – though surely not enough to drive any of them to murder.

CIOFFI. Keep in mind I’m within arm’s reach at any hour of the day or night.

NIKI. You think I’m in some danger?

CIOFFI. No, that was a completely unrelated thought.

NIKI. You live with danger on a daily basis, don’t you, Lieutenant?

CIOFFI. Oh, most of the time, it’s just paperwork and procedure. Detectives have no opening night, Miss Harris. We make our entrance after the curtain has fallen on someone else’s life.

NIKI. But it’s a calling, isn’t it? Like a doctor or teacher.

CIOFFI. Or an actor.

NIKI. I suppose you’re right. I can’t imagine doing anything else with my life. It’s not wrong to be married to one’s work, is it?

CIOFFI. No. Not at all. But sometimes it’s no honeymoon.

NIKI. But, your acting roles, don’t they make for a change?

CIOFFI. Oh Miss Harris, each year from May twenty-third to the twelfth of June when I turn my life over to the Swallow Street Players, that’s more than a vacation for me. It’s an overture of hope, the curtain rising on the greatest joy of my life.

NIKI. That sounds wonderful.

CIOFFI. I don’t mean to seem forward but might I walk you home?

NIKI. Oh, I’d be delighted – but you said we’re not allowed to leave.

CIOFFI. Damn.
(Grady has mysteriously appeared on the stage.)

CIOFFI. Excuse me, Lieutenant Frank Cioffi, Homicide. Mind telling me who you are and how you got in here?

GRADY. Oh, as a member of the press, I’m exempt from your quarantine, Lieutenant. Daryl Grady of the Boston Globe.

CIOFFI. After the review you gave Robbin’ Hood, I can’t imagine why you’d show your face here of all places.

GRADY. I’m as mystified as you. The show’s producers called and asked me to pay a visit.

(Carmen and Sidney have entered)

CARMEN. That’s right, Carmen Bernstein, Mr. Grady. You have our thanks for coming by, if not for your review.

GRADY. Listen, I tried my level best to say something good about your production. I praised the choreography, and that young woman who played the schoolmarm, Niki, um --

CIOFFI. Harris.

GRADY. Well I’m afraid it’s all history now. My condolences on the loss of your star and your show.

SIDNEY. When you interviewed me last week, I told you we’re going to Broadway no matter what you wrote about us.

CARMEN. We’re keeping Robbin’ Hood open, and once we’ve ironed out the kinks, we’re asking you to review it again, with Georgia Hendricks in the lead.

GRADY. Georgia Hendricks? Your lyricist? She hasn’t been in a show for years. That’s some story – and yes, there is a precedent for reappraising a show with a new lead – all right, tell you what, I’ll re-review your show. Tomorrow night.

SIDNEY. Tomorrow?

GRADY. It’s the best I can do. And to be fair, keep in mind not many shows can survive two bad reviews from the Globe in one week.

SIDNEY. Carmen, go tell the cast we’ve got 24 hours to hold a week of rehearsals. If we fail, you’ll live to regret it.

CARMEN. Sidney, I guess the reason you’re such a lowlife is because they build you so close to the ground.

(Carmen and Sidney exit)

CIOFFI. Mr. Grady, I thought your review of Robbin’ Hood was needlessly cruel and way off the mark.

GRADY. Well I’m not sure you know how to judge acting, Lieutenant.
CIOFFI. Of course, you’re the expert. However, I regret to inform you that I’m now placing you under arrest for the crime of murder.

GRADY. What? Have you lost your mind?

CIOFFI. Any statement you make may be taken down in writing and used against you in a court of law.

GRADY. This is insane! What in God’s name are you saying?

CIOFFI. I’m saying my best lines from Agatha Christie’s “Murder at the Vicarage.” I played Chief Inspector Slack for the Natick Town Players two summers ago. (Mock surprised.) Oh. Did you think I was saying that for real? Gosh, I’m not sure you know how to judge acting, Mr. Grady. (Beat.) You can go now.
CIOFFI. So let’s clear the stage and give our composer the solitude he needs. *(All others depart.*) That should buy you a few minutes alone with your piano, Mr. Fox.

AARON. Alone, yeah.

CIOFFI. Must be quite a challenge, having to create, when your writing partner is …

AARON. Otherwise engaged?

CIOFFI. Could I ask, only because I’ve wondered this my entire life, which would normally come first, the music or the lyric?

AARON. Same answer as the chicken or the egg.

CIOFFI. So it’s the lyric.

AARON. No, a great melody doesn’t always need a lyric. Or a lyricist.

CIOFFI. Then how do you start?

AARON. Well, it can start with a note. Which can become a phrase. And you try hanging words on each branch, like trimming a tree.

CIOFFI. Sounds easy enough.

AARON. Really? Well don’t talk about LOVE. Or you’ll have to say FITS LIKE A GLOVE. Or as certain as PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, you’ll pine for the WOMAN YOU’RE CONSTANTLY THINKING OF --

*(Beat.)*

You see the problem?

CIOFFI. Dangling participle. So you suggest staying away from love?

AARON. At all costs. And don’t mention your life. Or you’ll have to say CUTS LIKE A KNIFE. Or refer to the HEARTBREAK AND STRIFE, when you find that you’re missing your --

*(He stops.)*

CIOFFI. Missing?

AARON. *(Distracted.*)* What?

CIOFFI. You were saying what you miss.

AARON. Oh? *(Beat.)* Nothing.
JOHNNY. Come on, boys and girls, rise and shine, we’ll start with the new version of “In the Same Boat,” your breakfast orders are waiting downstairs – and Lieutenant Cioffi is here.

CIOFFI. Morning folks.

BELLING. Welcome back, Lieutenant, to the marathon production of No Exit.

CIOFFI. I’ve just come from Sid Bernstein’s autopsy --

BELLING. Did they drive a stake through his heart, just to be safe?

JOHNNY. Chris, not in front of his widow. How are you holding up, Ms. B?

CARMEN. You all sent out for breakfast and nobody thought to tell me?

JOHNNY. Breakfast is gonna be cold if you don’t eat now, folks.

CARMEN. Any idea who killed the bastard?

CIOFFI. He could have been killed by any person with access to this stage. Including you, Johnny.

JOHNNY. What does that mean?

CIOFFI. We found a copy of “Variety” with words cut out of it in the stage manager’s office … your office.

JOHNNY. Chris and Oscar have keys as well.

CIOFFI. Then it seems you gentlemen are my first official murder suspects.

BELLING. Well it’s an honor just to be nominated.

CIOFFI. But everyone is still under suspicion. I found this little black book in Bernstein’s breast pocket. Look familiar? Each page has the name of a company member and a notation in Bernstein’s secret code, obviously a memo of why each of you were being blackmailed. And look at this death threat “Dear Sidney: end the show or it’s the end of you.”

JOHNNY. Oh my god! Sid Bernstein died for nothing. He told me that he was gonna close the show.

CARMEN. When did he tell you that?

JOHNNY. In his office right before he got hoisted. He said someone had just that minute changed his mind about keeping Robbin’ Hood open. Then I saw him go upstairs to watch Georgia rehearse her big number. He gave me my last paycheck.

CARMEN. You can give it back to me. I am not closing the show. (Taking the check.) Let’s put this check in a safe place.

JOHNNY. It felt very safe in my pocket.
CIOFFI. I’m sorry. No believe me, it’s a bold attempt, and, and it certainly has some of that, that “vim” we’ve been looking for, but there’s still something missing …

BOBBY. Well, of course, we only had one half of our song writing team working on this version.

BAMBI. Excuse me everyone! I just had a thought.

BELLING. Ah, how long we’ve waited for this day!

BAMBI. If we’re adding Bobby to the Kansasland number, it so happens he and I have been working on a dance routine that’s perfect for my Princess Kickapoo character. And him.

BOBBY. We’ve been messing around with a kind of an Apache “Apache dance.”

BAMBI. It’s a pas de deux. For two.

CIOFFI. Bobby, it would save us a lot of time if it’s ready to go.

BOBBY. We’ve only talked it through --

BAMBI. I’m ready.

CIOFFI. Bobby, can you improvise a short turn in time for tonight?

BOBBY. Sure, but I don’t know if I can make the costume change for the next scene.

CIOFFI. Well, for gosh sakes, Bobby, it’s just losing a bandana and putting on the mask, would it kill you to try?

BOBBY. No, sir.

CIOFFI. That’s Lieutenant.

BELLING. Carmen, Bambi’s the spawn of your loins. Yes or no?

CARMEN. Normally I’d say over my dead body, but I don’t want to give anybody ideas. Sure, let her take a shot at it.

BAMBI. Thank you, for the chance, mother.

CARMEN. It’s called “giving you enough rope to hang yourself,” Elaine. Maybe not my best choice of words.

BAMBI. You always make fun of me around other people.

CIOFFI. Perhaps I should leave.

CARMEN. No, you have dreams of being in the theatre, Cioffi, you should hear this, too. Elaine, as a Broadway producer, there’s something much more important to me than you getting a star turn.
BAMBI. What?

CARMEN. Me turning a profit.

BAMBI. I’m sorry, mother, to me, the theatre is a temple.

CARMEN. What, so it should only be filled on the Sabbath?!

BAMBI. But what about the great poets of the stage?

CARMEN. Honey, I put on THE ICEMAN COMETH and nobody cameth! It’s a business, Elaine, and it’s strictly business when I say you’re not star material. That’s my opinion and I don’t care who knows it.

BAMBI. Well I think my dance number could be very provocative.

BELLING. Sweetie, the only thing you could arouse is suspicion.

CARMEN. You have no taste, Elaine. I’ve seen your make-up, your closet and your boyfriends. And I’ve seen a couple of your boyfriends in the closet with your make-up.

BAMBI. You never have a good word to say about me, do you? I think I’ve been doing pretty well in this show.

CARMEN. Big deal considering the fifteen years of ballet, jazz and circus training I paid for. My professional opinion is you just don’t have what it takes. I’m sorry you volunteered for this life, dyed your hair, changed your name –Why of all the names on earth did you pick “Bambi”?

BAMBI. Because in the movie, Bambi’s mother is shot to death by hunters.
AARON. Oh Georgia, there you are.

CIOFFI. Aaron, good – could I talk to the three of you about Bernstein’s little black book of blackmail? He wrote a memo about every cast member, with three noteworthy exceptions: you, you and you. Going by this book, Bernstein had nothing on you. Yet the production budget says you’re getting the same raw deal as the rest of the cast. Why are you toiling for pennies when you could be doing so much better elsewhere? No one has anything to say?

GEORGIA. Can you blame us? If I recall, one of those death threats said, “MAKE ANOTHER SOUND AND YOU’LL END UP UNDER GROUND.”

CIOFFI. Exactly, but Georgia … I never read that particular death threat out loud.

GEORGIA. What?

CIOFFI. Niki and the late Jessica Cranshaw are the only cast members who saw it. Other than the person who sent it, of course.

GEORGIA. But, well then I guess Niki told me.

CIOFFI. I told her not to tell anyone.

NIKI. I didn’t, Frank. I told you I wouldn’t so I didn’t.

CIOFFI. Then I’m sorry, Geogria, I have no choice but to book you on suspicion of murder.

AARON. Hold on a second.

CIOFFI. Niki, would you be able to go on tonight?

AARON. Oh now I get it! You want to give a little boost to your sweetheart’s career.

CIOFFI. My relationship with Niki Harris is purely that of police investigator and possible suspect.

NIKI. No it’s not.

CIOFFI. It’s not?

NIKI. No, I’m really liking you, Frank.

CIOFFI. Oh it’s reciprocal, I assure you.

NIKI. I’m very glad to hear that.

CIOFFI. I’m more than glad. (Beat.) I was doing something.

GEORGIA. Arresting me for murder?

CIOFFI. Yes! It makes perfect sense. Jessica Cranshaw’s death gave you a chance to star on Broadway, and when Sid Bernstein decided to close the show in Boston, his death kept your chances alive. Miss Hendricks, you’ll have to come with me.
AARON.  Wait a second, Lieutenant.  I’m the one you want.

CIOFFI.  You’re confessing to the murders, Mr. Fox.

AARON.  You heard what I said.

CIOFFI.  That’s not a simple thing to retract.

GEORGIA.  Think about what you’re doing.

AARON.  I have. Georgia, this is a great thing that’s happening in your life. I’m not important now.

CIOFFI.  Very noble, and yet you’re on record as being dead set against Georgia taking this role.

AARON.  No I just said that because I knew if she took the part, she wouldn’t have time to write with me, be with me. That’s how Sidney got me to work for nothing. It was the only way I knew to be near her again. Stuck out of town together, huddled over a piano each night … who knows what might have happened?

GEORGIA.  But that’s how Sidney got me to work on the show, Aaron. I wanted the same thing.

AARON.  You did?

GEORGIA.  I do.

AARON.  I don’t understand.

GEORGIA.  I didn’t want you to. Not until I knew how you felt. But you seemed as preoccupied with your music --

AARON.  -- because our songs were the one place you and I were still together.

GEORGIA.  Aaron. You said our songs.

AARON.  Our songs, our life. What was I thinking when I let you slip away?
GEORGIA. Thank you, Lieutenant. You played your part very effectively.

CIOFFI. Oh and what a treat to share a scene with you!! And a fair exchange: you got Aaron to show you his cards, I got the answer to why you both came on board with this show.

NIKI. You and Georgia staged all that?

CIOFFI. Yes! It was her idea. A good one, I thought. And you’ve been playing a part, too, haven’t you, Bobby?

BOBBY. I plead guilty to impersonating Georgia’s devoted lover.

GEORGIA. When we first started rehearsals, I asked Bobby if he’d pretend we were involved again, to see if I could stir up something, anything in Aaron.

CIOFFI. Good job.

GEORGIA. Thank you, Bobby. I’m so grateful.

CIOFFI. Just a polite reminder … you’re still suspects.

GEORGIA. Right. (Georgia leaves.)

CIOFFI. But Bobby? I may have found out why Aaron and Georgia worked for Sidney Bernstein, but I still don’t know your reason.

BOBBY. I always wanted to give the performance of a lifetime.

CIOFFI. Fooling Aaron by acting as if you’re in love with Georgia?

BOBBY. No. Fooling Georgia that I’m acting. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for her.

CIOFFI. Except commit murder?

BOBBY. Even that, if she asked me. (Bobby leaves.)

NIKI. Oh, Frank. Why does love make so many people feel bad? The public should be warned that Cupid is armed and dangerous.

CIOFFI. Maybe romance should be left strictly in the hands of the police.

NIKI. If you mean present company, I’d vote “yes” on that proposition.

CIOFFI. Oh Miss Harris.

NIKI. Please call me Frank. I mean: please call me … Frank.

CIOFFI. May I be bold?

NIKI. I already know you are.

CIOFFI. Would you like to go out?

NIKI. You won’t let me.

CIOFFI. I keep forgetting. And I can’t make any exceptions, even though you’re exceptional.
CIOFFI. Niki, I think it’s time you told me what Sid Bernstein had on you.

NIKI. Nothing. Really. Unlike the rest of the cast, I want to be in this show. I’ve gotten some wonderful reviews here in Boston, but this is the best chance I’ve ever had at Broadway.

CIOFFI. Johnny hinted that a woman in the cast used some secret personal connection to advance her career, and that I wouldn’t like knowing who she was. Did he mean you?

NIKI. Every show is filled with gossip.

CIOFFI. Oh Niki. You didn’t say “no.” Who is it?

NIKI. I made a promise to someone that I wouldn’t talk about it. I don’t break promises.

CIOFFI. You know, in Bernstein’s notebook – with the coded memos about each person’s secret – alongside your name, he wrote a great big zero.

NIKI. I’m glad.

CIOFFI. Or maybe it was the letter O. (Johnny enters carrying a standing mike into which he speaks)

JOHNNY. Oscar, the sandwich you ordered is here. (Hand over mike) For crying out loud, Niki, you have to get into your costume.

NIKI. Sorry! (She exits.)

JOHNNY. (Into the mike) Folks, five minutes and we’re back on stage to learn and block yet another brand new version of IN THE SAME BOAT. (Calls to above the stage.) Ben, I need the fly lines downstage of the trap door, can you drop them in for me? (To Cioffi) You might want to step away from the trap. (Cioffi steps toward Johnny, unwittingly talking into the mike)

CIOFFI. Johnny, if Niki shared some secret with you, I have to know --

JOHNNY. Don’t talk near the microphone, Lieutenant. When it’s switched on, everybody downstairs can hear you.

CIOFFI. You tell me now what you know about Niki Harris.

JOHNNY. In what capacity are you asking that question? Office of the law or jealous boyfriend? Can what I say be held against me – or will you just hold it against me if I don’t say what you want to hear?

CIOFFI. I hadn’t finished questioning the cast. And I’m not finished with you. (Cioffi exits.)

JOHNNY. Ben, bring in the storm drop will ya? Deck it. Nice and easy, I’m right underneath it. (Hears a creepy sound.) What’s that? That’s not from our score. (Seeing someone in the orchestra pit.) Oh. That’s funny. I thought you were – (Nervously, looks in the wings SR and then SL) Hey, if you’re worried I’m going to tell anybody what I know about you and … (A loud shot. Johnny is instantly spun around and tries to move upstage. A second shot hits Johnny in the back and he falls.)
(The fly space above the stage. Cioffi, Niki and Belling are standing on the catwalk.)

**BELLING.** Don’t you think we’re too easy a target up here in the flies, Lieutenant? Especially with the entire cast rehearsing below us?

**CIOFFI.** I found the gun used on Johnny in the orchestra pit. And Niki found the gun fired at Carmen … I’m sort of hoping the killer has run out of guns by now.

**BELLING.** But it’s been hours since poor Johnny was murdered. At this point, what purpose could you have for dragging me up here?

**CIOFFI.** Because you know the most about the technical cues in the show.

**NIKI.** And why do you need me?

**CIOFFI.** The last time I talked with Johnny, you were the topic of conversation. I don’t want you out of my sight until I figure out his dying message.

**BELLING.** Dying message?

**CIOFFI.** Johnny knew his killer, he only had seconds to live, couldn’t write, couldn’t speak. His bloodstains on the stage tell us he dragged himself to get his call book, and ripped out this one page, on which he’d written the words “Drop in Planet Earth.”

**BELLING.** Well, “Drop in” is simply the term we use for scenery that’s lowered from up here in the flies.

**CIOFFI.** Exactly. MOUNTAIN DROPS IN, SKYLINE DROPS IN.

**BELLING.** MARY MARTIN DROPS IN …

**NIKI.** There’s a drop of the Earth at the end of “In the Same Boat!”

**BELLING.** There will never be an end to “In the Same Boat!” Listen. They’re rehearsing the latest version now! Same bloody orchestra part, third new melody, collect the entire series!

**CIOFFI.** My God. My God, that’s it! Of course. I’ve solved it. Come on, we have to get down from here, fast.

**BELLING.** This way. Retreat after me. *(Belling exits.)*

**NIKI.** Frank? Are you coming?

**CIOFFI.** You get started, I’ll be right along.

**NIKI.** Be careful, Frank. The killer may realize you’re onto him. *(Niki exits, but Cioffi talks to her …)*

**CIOFFI.** Yes, but as long as I’m all the way up here, I really should check what’s written on the side of this drop. “Planet Earth” … *(Hears something.)* Niki? *(Leaning over the edge of the catwalk)* Gee isn’t it amazing how you can be totally stumped about something until it suddenly hits you? *(A large sand bag comes swinging on a rope and knocks him off of the catwalk.)* Ahhhhhhhhh!!!
(The cast gathers to help Cioffi as he descends from above.)

BELLING. What on Earth is going on, no pun intended. Niki, you must have pushed him!

NIKI. Me? Why would you say that?

BELLING. Because you and I were the only ones up there with him and I’ve almost entirely ruled out myself.

CIOFFI. Folks, the answer has been staring us in the face all along. Quick, I need to see the music for this number! (He exits to grab a copy of the music)

NIKI. He must have fallen off the catwalk while we were climbing back down.

BAMBI. What were you doing all the way up in the flies?

BELLING. I’m asking myself the same question. Niki, did you see anything up there? (Cioffi re-enters.)

NIKI. I don’t know, it was so dark – I suppose I might have accidentally unhitched a rope.

CIOFFI. This was no accident. But that can wait because I think I’ve solved it! Can’t believe it took me so long to figure it out. Let me see… (He turns one page rapidly after another) Damn!

BAMBI. What’s the matter, Lieutenant?

CIOFFI. I just remembered I can’t read music. Never mind, basic logic tells me – Aaron, you wrote all three versions of IN THE SAME BOAT to fit the same orchestra parts, right?

AARON. Right.

CIOFFI. Then if all three songs fit the same arrangements, they must all fit with each other. That’s what will give this number the kick in the derriere it’s been needing … the whole company singing three different songs at the same time … it’ll make “Fugue for Tinhorns” sound like “Frere Jacques!”

BELLING. But what about the murders?

CIOFFI. Oh will you forget about the murders for a second!

NIKI. But you said you got it, that you’d solved it!

CIOFFI. Solved how to salvage this number. I want to run this now. Bring in the set, Johnny!

BAMBI. He’s dead.

CIOFFI. Oh right, I forgot. Everyone, get ready for the top of the number. Lose the globe and give us the river – we’ll have Rob Hood and the ladies trying to reach the steamboat to Wichita before the farmers lose their land … is everybody on board with that?

AARON. Aye, aye, captain.

CIOFFI. That’s Lieutenant. Ladies and gentlemen, clear the deck.
NIKI. But if that’s Bobby, who is this?

CIOFFI. Your devoted admirer, Niki, determined to bring down the curtain on Robbin’ Hood – because if the show went to Broadway, you’d forever leave his sphere of influence … a sphere that was the clue Johnny gave us as he died … a planet called “Earth” … or as Shakespeare put it, “the great globe itself,” the Boston Globe, and its senior critic, Daryl Grady!

(Grady takes off his mask and holds a knife to Niki’s face.)

GRADY. Careful, Cioffi, or no one will ever want to see her face again.

CIOFFI. Easy, Daryl.

GRADY. Easy for you, you’re going to marry her. I heard you say so over the house P.A. She loves you. She never loved me.

NIKI. Frank, I swear I didn’t know --

CIOFFI. But she does know you Daryl, doesn’t she? You shun publicity, your picture has never been published, yet she walked right up to you yesterday, tried to shake your hand to thank you for the compliments you paid her.

GRADY. I asked her not to tell anyone we knew each other, so that I could praise and proclaim her in my reviews --

NIKI. But he was only a friend, giving me advice, it was never more than that --

GRADY. It was more than that to me, Niki. I needed you to stay here where I could hail you and guide you. But this infernal musical was going to New York no matter what I wrote about it, that’s what Sidney Bernstein said --

CIOFFI. But watching the show in previews, you saw how to guarantee that Jessica Cranshaw would never go to Broadway.

GRADY. Yes, and I tried to shoot Carmen and sandbag you, the same way I posted closing notices for Jessica and Johnny … an imperfect performance on my part but one learns from one’s mistakes, right, Niki?

CIOFFI. Daryl! I see you’re out of guns. How far from this theater do you think you can get without one?

GRADY. Good point. Set your own gun down for me.

CIOFFI. Wait --

GRADY. Now.

CIOFFI. Fine. Just don’t hurt her. (Cioffi places his gun on the stage.)

GRADY. Get back!
CIOFFI. Daryl, I’m going to take Niki away from you now.

GRADY. You already have.

NIKI. Frank, don’t …

GRADY. Take one step and you’re dead.

(Cioffi takes another step.)

GRADY. Fine, you’re dead.

(Grady fires the gun, it just goes “CLICK”)

CIOFFI. In situations like this I always unload the gun in my shoulder holster, and I take all the bullets and put them in this gun. (Niki rushes into Cioffi’s arms.) Come here, Niki. Mr. Grady, you’re under arrest.
CARMEN. Nice going, Cioffi. You put life into a show that was dying and now they’ll put Grady away for life.

CIOFFI. Well, I had a lot of help. Especially from you.

CARMEN. *Me?*

CIOFFI. You and your daughter. I told her how much she’d shown me in that square dance number of hers. She was great.

CARMEN. Better than great.

CIOFFI. Aha! Finally to hear you say it! You tell everybody “it’s a business” but I’ve found you out, Carmen: you are the stage mother of all time. But so that no one could accuse her of getting there on your coattails, you’ve always belittled her talent in public, even if she hates you for it.

CARMEN. You can’t let her know. I want her to think she got it all on her own.

CIOFFI. You’re amazing.

CARMEN. But how did knowing that help you catch Grady?

CIOFFI. Oh it didn’t. I just explained why you killed your husband.

CARMEN. What? Grady killed my husband.

CIOFFI. No, Grady killed Jessica, and Johnny, and tried to kill you, because he wanted the show closed, but that’s exactly what your husband was going to do.

CARMEN. Well, then, he was killed by someone he was blackmailing.

CIOFFI. If that was the case I think they would have taken his little black book with them. He must have told you he was closing the show.

CARMEN. He didn’t tell me he was closing the show.

CIOFFI. He told Oscar, why wouldn’t he tell you, you were his partner.

CARMEN. Because the partnership was over! He had himself a conniving little ingénue on Sutton Place, and I was out on the street --

CIOFFI. So he didn’t need you.

CARMEN. He didn’t need anybody. Grady promised him rave reviews for his next three shows if he shut this one down now.

CIOFFI. So your husband did tell you he was closing the show.

CARMEN. No!

CIOFFI. Then how would you know the terms of a deal he made with Grady minutes before he died if you weren’t the last person to see him alive?

CARMEN. He laughed at me! No more shows, no more dreams, after all I’d had to take from him, he laughed at me and Elaine like we were nothing.

CIOFFI. And …

CARMEN. And I killed him.