SIDE 1 GEORGIA/AARON/CARMEN/OSCAR

(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.

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.

SIDE 6 CIOFFI/GRADY/CARMEN/SIDNEY

(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.

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?

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.)*

SIDE 13 CIOFFI/NIKI/BELLING

(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.)* Ahhhhhhhhhh!!!