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MURDER AT THE PALACE THEATER

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and

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DEDICATION

This play, and the subsequent degree that this play helped me achieve is dedicated to the memories of my Aunts Karen and Mary Jane. Two dedicated educators who helped inspire me to go as far as I could with my education, and who showed me the value of a strong, creative mind. This play and this degree are also dedicated to the memory of my Grandma Sarah Isherwood McLane, who taught me how to work hard, and be strong. And lastly, this play and this degree are dedicated to my mom, Diana Daniels who drove me to theater classes, sewed me wizard capes growing up, bought me pens, and paper to help cultivate my love of storytelling...and who made me weird in the first place, and encouraged that weirdness to make me the person I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful cast, and crew at Convergence Continuum who helped make the staging of this play possible. Special thanks to Robert Hawkes who helped make the French more colloquial and conversational. I would also like to acknowledge the theater community I grew up in, and the theater communities who might want to take a chance and stage a play like Murder at the Palace Theater...thank you all for inspiring this play.

MURDER AT THE PALACE THEATER

ROBET M.K. DANIELS

ABSTRACT

This play has come a long way. This play started off as a series of sketch scenes about an incompetent magician, his lovely assistant, and dim, but loveable stage hand named Bosco. At some point as a writer, I became fascinated with obsession, and what people will do when they are obsessed with something. Over time, this play became an examination of duality. Specifically the difference between art versus commerce, craft versus fame, surface level versus what goes on below that surface. And because every play that I write will, in part, be inspired by a need for me to run around a theater in fancy costumes with my friends, I wanted to set it in a place, and in a time, that was, itself very theatrical.

And the period of time during which the Vaudeville stage gave way to the movie screen is a fascinating period in arts history. Art, and creative expression have always gone hand in hand with changes and evolution in societal culture. Throughout history we see mainstream fads make way for the tastes of one counter- cultural movement of another. But with the slow death of Vaudeville, corresponding with the meteoric rise of film, we see two non-mainstream aspects of culture vying for prominence. Film and vaudeville vying for significance in the eyes of the public at large gave this era an excitement that is quite unique, and I wanted to take advantage of that unique energy when I wrote this play.

Overall with this play, I wanted to create an experience for theater goers. I wanted to create something you couldn't see in movies, and I wanted to create something people couldn't see at a normal night at the theater.

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Characters:

BOSCO: A ventriloquist's dummy.

BOSCO II: A ventriloquist.

SPECTACULAR STANLEY: The greatest magician in the world.

TALLULAH: Spectacular Stanley's lovely assistant

PEGGY: A singing/dancing ingénue

LE CLOWN: A clown.

DOTTY: Peggy's twin sister

DICK HAWKSHAW: A moving picture producer.

(A note on production. Any stage directions noted with () and written in the place of dialogue should be acted out as if it was dialogue. Please consider using an actor to play the part of BOSCO, and please consider blind casting if the decision to use an actor for this part is made, as well as with the other parts in this play.)

ACT I

(On lights up, the stage should appear as it does in between shows. There are several crates and boxes strewn about, maybe a costume rack, scattered props, pieces from a magician's act, etc. Enter BOSCO, a ventriloquist's dummy, being carried by BOSCO II, a ventriloquist in his late teens/ early twenties.)

- BOSCO: Hiya everyone! My name's Bosco!
- BOSCO II: And I'm Bosco too. That is to say, I'm Bosco also...not as in Bosco number two.
- BOSCO: Geez kid. You're awfully tense right now. Don't forget you got a hand shoved up my hinter lands.
- BOSCO II: Sorry. (Relaxes.)
- BOSCO: (Feeling BOSCO II relax.) Attaboy. Now, what say you and me make with the jokes, o.k.? I can practically hear the audience nodding off. You ready kid?
- BOSCO II: Honestly? I don't think so.
- BOSCO: Well, here goes nothing.
- BOSCO II: (Like a carnival barker, but timid.) And now...
- BOSCO: Put some heat into it, kid
- BOSCO II: And now, ladies and gentlemen, for your entertainment, the comedy stylings of Bosco and Bosco. (Clears his throat.) Hey Bosco, sure is a nice day today, isn't it?
- BOSCO: Tell me about it, kid. It sure feels good to be let outta that trunk you keep my in, so I can stretch and spend the day sewin' my oats a little bit.
- BOSCO II: But Bosco, you're a dummy made out of wood. You don't have any oats to sew.
- BOSCO: Really, 'cus word on the street is you're the one what ain't givin' your wife no wood or oat sewin'.
- BOSCO II: What's that you say about me?

BOSCO: You got wax in your ears? I said I hear you ain't satisfying the Missus at home.

BOSCO II: Lies I tell you! Why that's nothing but propaganda!

BOSCO: Propaganda you say?

BOSCO II: Propaganda! Why your head is so full of saw dust you probably don't even know the meaning of the word.

BOSCO: Of course I know the meaning of the word.

BOSCO II: Oh?

BOSCO: Sure! How long have you been married, kid?

BOSCO II: Why I've been married for five years.

BOSCO: Yeah? She a proper goose?

BOSCO II: Why yes, yes she is.

BOSCO: Well, after five years, if you ain't satisfying her, she might be a proper goose, but kid, you ain't no propaganda.

(Sound of a rim shot.)

(Lights up on a dead body. There should be several items near the body to suggest fowl play. There should be several dead doves in close proximity to the body, as well as a puddle of some, unknown liquid, an orchid, and some metal grating with blood on it.)

BOSCO II: Hello? Um...that was it. That was my audition. Are you...um...alright, sir?

BOSCO: Ya killed it kid!

BOSCO II: Sir? Are you all right?

BOSCO: He don't look very all right, does he?

BOSCO II: Not very.

BOSCO: What's wrong with his head?

BOSCO II: Bosco...(Stage whisper.) I think that's a dead body.

BOSCO: Thus reinforcing my original statement. I'm trying to give you both a compliment, and a que to get the hell outta here before...

(Enter SPECTACULAR STANLEY, a magician and TALLULAH, his lovely assistant.")

S.S.: What exactly is supposed to be going on here?

BOSCO II: Maybe you can help us. I was just here to audition for Mr. Heathcliff over there, and well, you see...

S.S.: Audition? Did you say audition? This is unacceptable! Do you hear me? Unacceptable!

TALLULAH: (Hovering over the dead body.) I don't think he's hearing much of anything, Stanley.

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY crosses to the dead body.)

S.S.: (Screaming at the dead body.) Unacceptable!

TALLULAH: Stanley!

S.S.: What is it Tallulah?

TALLULAH: You're embarrassing yourself in front of a dummy and a corpse.

BOSCO II: I'm here too.

S.S.: Do not presume to lecture me, Tallulah!

TALLULAH: I'm not trying to, how do you say, lecture anybody Stanley. I'm just saying, I think it's bad luck or something to behave the way you're behaving in front of the recently departed, and someone you hardly know.

S.S.: If Heathcliff thinks he can hold auditions for some second-rate act and not let me know- Me! Why, the thoughtlessness, and unprofessionalism of this entire situation is unacceptable. Do you hear me?

BOSCO: Here's the thing. I don't think your boss is in any kind of position to be accepting things at this point in time.

S.S.: What did you do him?

BOSCO II: Me?

S.S.: No, your dummy, dummy. Yes, you! What did you do to Heathcliff?

BOSCO II: Nothing! Like I said, I was just auditioning for Heath-

(Enter PEGGY, one-half of a sister, singing/dancing outfit.)

PEGGY: This is outrageous! Do you hear me? Outrageous!

S.S.: Splendid! Because, apparently there wasn't enough dead weight on this stage all ready.

PEGGY: Stan, if I wanted your opinion in this matter... Oh, that's right. I will never want your opinion in any matter, ever. Now, if you will excuse me, I am outraged, and Heathcliff is going to hear about it.

BOSCO: Hubba-hubba. Doll, when you got the time, I gotta couplel things you should hear about-

(PEGGY slaps BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: Ow!

BOSCO: Watta woman!

PEGGY: Well? Don't just lie there Heathcliff-

BOSCO II: That's the thing! I think your boss-

S.S.: This peace of untalented flotsam has killed Heathcliff!

BOSCO II: What? Me? No! I just got here, and I was auditioning for Heathcliff. The last I saw-

PEGGY: Heathcliff was having auditions? This is more outrageous than I thought! My sister and I don't have to put up with these kinds of outrageous working conditions Heathcliff! My sister and I will walk, Heathcliff. Do you hear me? Where else are you going to find an act that does what my sister and I do? If you think I am going to put up with this kind of outrage, then you have another thing coming to you!

(Exit PEGGY.)

BOSCO: You could have something coming to you if you wanted, doll!

BOSCO II: Bosco! You're not helping!

BOSCO: What? It's not like what I'm saying is making the guy get any deader. Right?

BOSCO II: True. But, still.

S.S.: So, what's your caper? Huh? You pretend to be some dumb, bunny, and knock people off when they're not looking, and steel all their hard earned money.

BOSCO II: No. What money? I don't know about any money.

S.S.: Who said anything about money. The only person here talking about money is you.

TALLULAH: Well, actually, Stanley, you just said-

S.S.: (A side. To TALLULAH.) Shut up, Tallulah.

BOSCO: My buddy Bosco here ain't no confidence man!

S.S.: Looks like one to me!

BOSCO: Takes one to know one, I guess, huh?

S.S.: Why, you little-

(Enter LE CLOWN. A clown.)

LECLOWN: C'est scandaleux! Vous m'entendez? C'est scandaleux!¹

BOSCO : Jumpin' Jehosiffet a clown !

(All turn and regard BOSCO.)

BOSCO: What? I don't do well around clowns. (A beat.) They're creepy!

LE CLOWN: Je te déteste, petite ordure! J'ai horreur de toute cette situation! J'ai joué devant des impératrices, devant des czars! Et jamais de ma vie n'ai-je du temogine une situation si scandeleuse!²

TALLULAH : Tell me about it Mr. Le Clown! Stanley thinks the new guy offed Heathcliff!

¹ This is scandalous! Do you hear me? Scandalous!

² I hate you, you scandalous little thing! I hate this whole situation! I have performed for empresses, and czars! And never in all my years, have I born witness to a situation this scandalous!

S.S.: I don't think, I know!

LE CLOWN: Scandaleux!³

BOSCO II: We didn't do anything! The last thing Heathcliff said to me was...

BOSCO: (Doing a "HEATHCLIFF" voice.) "You have two minutes to impress me kid. Now get on that stage, and make sure your fly is at full mast."

BOSCO II: See? And Bosco remembers everything he hears!

BOSCO: Everything!

TALLULAH: Was that really the last thing Heathcliff said to you?

BOSCO: Without a doubt!

TALLULAH: That Heathcliff. Always, how do you say, thinking of others.

LECLOWN: En voilà une bonne!⁴

S.S. : When have you ever known Heathcliff to think of anybody or anything but himself and his loads and loads of hidden money, Tallulah?

TALLULAH: I suppose. You don't think somebody, how do you say, murdered Heathcliff for his money, do you Stanley?

S.S.: Money? What money? I'm not sure why everybody keeps talking about the vast amounts of fortune that Heathcliff has hidden away and that nobody is supposed to know about. I don't see what possible relevance mountain upon mountain of lovely, money could have with the untimely demise of our employer and benefactor.

LECLOWN: Oui. Je l'aurais assassiné simplement par haine.⁵

BOSCO: You're the only one sayin' anything at all about any money, friend. How do we know you dind't kill him, and are tryin' to pin it on my good pal, Bosco?

S.S.: That's absurd! I didn't kill Heathcliff!

BOSCO: Yeah? And why are we supposed to believe that?

³ Scandalous!

⁴ That's a good one!

⁵ Yes. I would have murdered him just because I hate him.

S.S.: Because I'm a star!

(Enter DOTTY, PEGGY's twin sister. The only way for the audience to should be able to tell the difference between PEGGY, and DOTTY is that DOTTY wears an orchid in her hair, where PEGGY does not.)

DOTTY: Excuse me? Everyone? My sister was just telling me that something heinous was going going on in here.

BOSCO II: Um...Hello...

DOTTY: Oh my! Is that Heathcliff lying on the ground?

S.S.: Looks like.

DOTTY: Christmas. Who could have done something like this?

S.S.: The new guy.

BOSCO: We didn't kill anybody!

S.S.: So! You admit that he's dead then?

DOTTY: That's a good point. Are you sure he's dead? Has anyone checked to make sure? Maybe he's alive.

S.S.: He's in the way!

DOTTY: What do you mean?

S.S.: The show starts in fifteen minutes. We can talk to the fuzz once the show is over and before the second show of the night starts.

DOTTY: I just don't think-

S.S.: Tallulah! His feet!

(TALLUALH crosses and grabs the dead body by the legs and lifts.)

BOSCO: What do you think you're doin'?

S.S.: (Lifting the dead body by the shoulders.) Quiet you. The show must go on! My audience is waiting to see me, and not some dead body. To the Box of Mystery, Tallulah!

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY and TALLULAH begin to make their way upstage, towards the Box of Myster, carrying the dead body.)

BOSCO II: (To DOTTY.) I'm Bosco also.

DOTTY: Excuse me?

BOSCO: You're a real lady killer, kid.

S.S.: (Struggling with the dead body.) So you admit it?

BOSCO: What? No! Whatta ya talkin' about?

S.S.: You just said he was a killer!

BOSCO: I was being facetious. It's kind of my thing.

LECLOWN: Cela a l'air bien louche.⁶

TALLULAH : (Struggling with the dead body.) Yeah. Seems awfully suspicious too!

LE CLOWN: (Smacks his forehead.)

DOTTY: This really is all so very heinous! My sister and I had absolutely nothing to do with that or any other dead body that may or may not have been found at various points and at various places during the course of the last ten years.

(DOTTY begins to exit.)

BOSCO II: I just wanted to say- You have nice teeth.

DOTTY: I'm going to find my sister!

(Exit DOTTY.)

BOSCO II: Go don't! Awe, bye!

BOSCO: And you all really think this guy coulda' killed someone?

LE CLOWN: Il me semble dépravé.⁷

S.S. : (Struggling with the dead body.) They say it's the quiet ones you have to look out for.

⁶ Seems suspicious to me.

⁷ He seems depraved to me.

BOSCO: People don't say that!

S.S.: (Struggling with the dead body.) Well, if they don't say it now, I have every confidence that people will be saying it one day.

BOSCO: What do you think they'll say about second rate magicians who tamper with corpses?

S.S.: (Struggling with the dead body.) I have no idea. And in the future I'm sure I'll be far too busy basking in the kind things that my legions of fans recorded in my regards in the annals of history. Open the door to the Box of Mystery Tallulah.

TALLULAH: (Struggling with the dead body begins to attempt to open the door to the Box of Mystery.)

(Re- enter PEGGY.)

PEGGY: (Slaps BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: Ow!

BOSCO: You keep missin' my cheek sweetheart.

PEGGY: What did you say to my sister?

BOSCO II: Me? Nothing?

BOSCO: Nothin' intelligible.

PEGGY: Who do you think you are, thinking you can just waltz in here, kill my boss, and harass my sister?

(TALLULAH has opened the door to the Box of Mystery and she and SPECTACULAR STANLEY have begun trying to stuff the dead body inside of it.)

LE CLOWN: Il y en a qui du toupet.⁸

BOSCO II : I didn't do any of that.

PEGGY: A likely story.

⁸ The nerve or some people.

S.S.: (Struggling with the dead body.) That's what I've been telling him! Shut the door Tallulah!

TALLULAH: (Struggling with the dead body.) I'm tryin' Stanley!

S.S.: Just shove him in there!

TALLULAH: Maybe he won't fit.

S.S.: He'll fit. If I had a dollar for every time I had to cram a-

(The Door to the Box of Mystery closes.)

S.S.: There. See? Nothing to it. Do the thing.

TALLULAH: (Like she was in a show, spins the Box of Mystery 360 degrees. Once the front of the Box is once again facing the audience, TALLULAH opens the door to reveal that the Box of Mystery is now empty.)

S.S.: Ta-da! There. Now, see? The show can go on.

BOSCO II: I still think someone should call the police.

PEGGY: Haven't you caused enough trouble here already?

(Enter DICK HAWKSHAW through the Box of Mystery.)

D.H.: Nobody move! I'm Dick Hawkshaw and I have some questions I want to ask all of you.

BOSCO: Man, the police in this city sure work fast.

(Lights down. Lights up on DICK HAWKSHAW.)

D.H.: What was your relationship to the deceased?

(Lights up on SPECTACULAR STANLEY.)

S.S.: To who? Oh. I was the star act in his show. If you could call what Heathcliff had a "show."

D.H.: What was your relationship to the deceased?

(Lights up on PEGGY.)

PEGGY: My sister and I were the star act of this show. Mr. Heathcliff was our boss.

D.H. : Star attraction, huh?

PEGGY: Why? Have you heard otherwise?

D.H. : No.

PEGGY: What have you heard? Did Stanley say something about his act? Well, let me tell you about Stanley-

D.H. : And what about you? What was your relationship to the deceased?

(Lights up on TALLULAH.)

TALLULAH: Well we weren't sleeping together if that's what you're implying. I would never be, how do you say, unfaithful to Stanley like that.

D.H. : So, you and the magician are an item, eh?

TALLULAH: No! What would give you that idea?

D.H. : And what's your name?

(Lights up on LE CLOWN.)

LE CLOWN: Je m'appelle Le Clown.

D.H. : (Saying it in American English.) The Clown ?

LE CLOWN : (Saying it in French.) Le Clown.

D.H. : Isn't that what I said?

LE CLOWN: Je te deteste!⁹

D.H. : How long did you know the deceased?

(Lights up on Bosco, and Bosco II.)

BOSCO: Who wants to know?

D.H. : I do.

BOSCO: Yeah, and who are you anyways?

⁹ I hate you!

D.H.: I told you. I'm Dick Hawkshaw.

BOSCO: Ain't you a cool customer? We don't know nothin' about no dead body.

D.H.: But you were in the room with a dead body when I got here.

BOSCO II: My name is Bosco also. I am fine.

BOSCO: Who told you we were in that room with that body?

D.H.: You just did. Do you know of anyone that would want to hurt the deceased?

(Lights up on DOTTY.)

DOTTY: Me? No! I don't know anyone who would want to hurt poor, Mr. Heathcliff. I just have to ask. Are you sure he's dead? Like dead, dead?

D.H.: So you were close to the deceased?

DOTTY: "Close" is a funny word, isn't it? I mean, am I "close" to Mr. Heathcliff at this exact moment in time? No. Was I wat one point closer to him then I am right now? Who can say? Will I never be closer to him in the future then I was in the past? Yes.

D.H.: I see. And what about you? Do you know anyone who would want to hurt the deceased?

S.S.: Are you kidding me? That no talent hack? I know plenty of people who wouldn't mind seeing that son of a bitch in the ground.

D.H.: Like you, for example?

S.S.: Me? Absolutely.

D.H.: So, are you admitting to being the murderer then?

S.S.: Hardly! You think I would stoop so low to kill someone like Heathcliff? He's a common vaudeville rube. If I was going to kill Heathcliff, I would hire someone to do it for me, and I can guarantee you that I wouldn't be so easily found out. I'd lean on the new guy with the dummy. He seems like the killing type to me.

D.H. : I see. And how long had you known the deceased?

PEGGY: Quite a while. A couple of years, at least. This is the longest engagement for which my sister and I have ever been professionally contracted.

D.H.: So you'd been working for the deceased a long time then. What'd you do before you started working here?

PEGGY: You don't need to know that.

D.H.: Interesting. And do you know anyone who might want to hear Heathcliff?

PEGGY: I know plenty. But if you ask me, and you did ask me, the new guy with the doll did it. My mama always said, there's only two types of men who play with dolls. And both of those types are capable of killing a fella.

D.H.: And where were you when Heathcliff was killed?

TALLULAH: Me and Stanley were, how do you say, preparing for our bit in the show.

D.H.: That's a likely story.

TALLULAH: It's true! Stanley thinks it's very important to be prepared. In fact, he told me to tell you that I think it's the new guy with his doll that killed Heathcliff I order to help me prepare for our interview.

D.H.: This is an interrogation, not an interview.

LE CLOWN: Disons plutôt une farce, et non pas une interrogation.¹⁰

D.H.: That's great. And you're a clown?

LE CLOWN: Non, je ne suis pas un clown tout simple!¹¹

D.H.: You look like a clown.

LE CLOWN: (Spits on the floor at the feet of DICK STONE.)

D.H.: And that's part of your act?

BOSCO: And that's part of your act?

D.H.: You seem defensive.

BOSCO: You seem defensive.

¹⁰ This is a joke, not an interrogation.

¹¹ No I am not merely a clown!

D.H.: And nervous. Do you often let your dummy talk for you when you're nervous?

BOSCO: Him? I never let him talk for me. I say what's on my mind. And who says we're nervous.

BOSCO II: I don't need a doctor.

D.H.: I'm sure you don't.

BOSCO: Hey. Eyes my eyes are down here, Dick.

D.H.: And where were you when the body was discovered?

DOTTY: I was in the women's dressing room getting ready for the show. It's just...dead is awfully permanent. You know? Something we want to really make sure is the situation.

D.H.: The situation?

DOTTY: Like, did you check to see if there was a pulse? Like if he was dead, did he just die, or did something...I don't know make him die?

D.H.: Make him die? Are you asking if I'm sure someone murdered your boss?

DOTTY: Well, there's a difference between dead, and murdered. I was just seeing if he was one or the other. Out of curiosity, and for no other reason. You're the detective, you know what I mean, when-

D.H.: Oh, I'm not a detective.

ALL: You're not?

D.H.: No! Who said I was a detective?

BOSCO: You said you were Dick Hawkshaw.

D.H.: That's correct.

PEGGY: And you're not a private detective?

D.H.: Private det-? Oh! I see where the confusion is. Private detective. No! My name is Dick Hawkshaw. First name Richard. Last name Hawkshaw. All my friends call me Dick.

TALLULAH: I'd hate to hear what your, whattayacallem, enemies call you then.

D.H.: None of you have heard of me?
(Everyone indicates they've never heard of him.)

D.H.: Unbelievable.

S.S.: Tell me about it! One of the most frustrating things in the world is walking into a room where absolutely no one has any idea who you are. People are savages.

D.H.: I'm a film maker.

ALL: A film maker?

D.H.: You ever hear of the moving pictures?

ALL: (Erupts in individual displays of butt kissing DICK HAWKSHAW.)

S.S.: Moving pictures, you say?

TALLULAH: I love the, how do you say, moving pictures!

PEGGY: You know, Mr. Stone, I've been told that I have a face for the pictures. And I have a twin, so there's two of me.

D.H.: More bang for my buck?

S.S.: The only thing you and your sister have a face for is radio!

PEGGY: How dare you?

BOSCO II: Everyone. Hey! Remember there was a dead body?

PEGGY: The moving pictures are the wave of the future. There's no place in them for your second rate act!

S.S.: Second rate? I'll have you know that my act is not second rate! I have never been so offended in all my life!

PEGGY: Yes, I'm sure that's what the audience thinks as they have to watch you mince about on stage for ten minutes twice a night!

S.S.: Sister, you're gonna be dancing at the bottom of the lake-

LE CLOWN: Écartez-vous tous! On voit bien qui c'est que M. Le Cinéaste est venu voir.¹²

TALLULAH : Hey clown. Why don't ya, how do ya say, back off ? I think it's clear who Mr. Film Maker is here to see.

BOSCO II: Does anyone know if Heathcliff had a family we should call?

PEGGY: So, what do you say Mr. Hawkshaw? Want to give yourself the opportunity of a lifetime, and let my sister and I audition for you?

D.H.: Well, I-

S.S.: Well, if she's going to audition, then I'm going to audition too!

TALLULAH: Me too!

S.S.: Tallulah, that part was implied when I said that I was auditioning.

LE CLOWN: Je dois m'en aller pour préparer ma séance d'essai.¹³

(Exit Le CLOWN.)

PEGGY : I've got to go tell Dotty! (Calling as she exits.) Dotty! Move your ass! We have an audition to get ready for!

(Exit PEGGY.)

S.S.: Come Tallulah! I must ready myself, and commune with the mystic forces at my command. (To DICK HAWKSHAW.) I will see you anon for something... Spectacular!

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY laughs and throws a smoke pellet. His laughing can still be heard even as the rest of the people on stage, and presumably the audience is momentarily blinded. As the smoke clears, SPECTACULAR STANLEY is revealed to be, while still laughing, attempting to open the trap door in the stage. It is stuck. After a moment, SPECTACULAR STANLEY realizes everyone can see him.)

S.S.: Son of a- (Crosses for the door.) Come Tallulah!

(Exit SPECTACULAR STANLEY.)

TALLULAH: Coming Stanley!

¹² All of you back off! It's clear who Mr. Film Maker is here to see.

¹³ I must away to prepare for my audition.

(Exit TALLULAH.)

DICK: What about you, kid? You and your buddy want to sit for my camera?

BOSCO: I heard those things steel your soul.

DICK: I don't know about that.

BOSCO: I would. I used to be a real boy! (Evil laugh.)

DICK: Right. Not too creepy. So, what do you say kid?

BOSCO II: I – I don't think. That is.

BOSCO: We ain't interested.

DICK: You really do let that dummy do all the talking for you, don't you?

BOSCO II: No. Not atll that time. I mean, no. What do you know?

DICK: I know that people like you and your friends are a dying breed, kid. All this? This is going to be all gone in the next couple of years. You and your friends...

BOSCO II: I don't have any friends, Mr. Hawkshaw.

DICK: Well I guess that's obvious seeing as how everyone here thinks you killed their boss.

BOSCO II: And you don't?

DICK: I know a killer when I see one. And the only thing you know how to kill is an audience. And think of how many audiences will see you if you come over to pictures.

BOSCO: We're all each other got, and we're all each other needs. You don't gotta worry about us.

DICK: Got it. Well, apparently I'm going to be around a while you're fr-colleagues of varying degrees of talent bolster their dreams of fame and fortune on a long shot. Come find me and my camera. Best get on the ship out of town while there's still a town to get out of. Hope to see you before I leave, kid.

(Exit DICK HAWKSHAW.)

BOSCO II: All those people think I killed that man, Bosco!

BOSCO: Right. That's why it's time to get out of here.

BOSCO II: You're right. I was hoping this time it would be different. This place seems nice.

BOSCO: You gotta start having hire standards, kid.

BOSCO II: But Mr. Hawkshaw said he thought we were innocent. He seemed nice.

BOSCO: If your standard for 'nice' is someone thinkin' you didn't kill someone else, then I refer you back to my original point of you needin' higher standards.

BOSCO II: That one girl seemed nice.

BOSCO: Who? The sister of that other girl? I don't know about her, but her sister was all right in my books.

BOSCO II: Like you have a shot with her.

BOSCO: I have more of a shot with her than you do with her sister. Which isn't much of one at all, seeing as how they both think you killed their boss. Now come one. Time to go.

BOSCO II: You're right.

(BOSCO and BOSCO II begin to exit. ENTER DOTTY.)

DOTTY: Oh!

BOSCO II: Ohio, Oklahoma, opening, ornate, orchestra, olive, orphanage, orange, orangutan...

DOTTY: What are you doing?

BOSCO II: Those are all things that start with oh.

DOTTY: Oh. I mean, true.

BOSCO II: Hi, Dotty.

BOSCO: Bye Dotty.

DOTTY: Are you leaving?

BOSCO: Hard to believe as it may be, but my buddy here and I don't like to stick around a place where we know we ain't wanted. And bein' accused of murder by a bunch of people you hardly know isn't exactly the hospitality wagon.

DOTTY: I understand. I think it's a shame the way everyone behaved.

BOSCO II: You do?

DOTTY: Of course! I mean we don't even know if he was murdered. Do we?

BOSCO II: No?

DOTTY: I mean, do we even know if he was really dead?

BOSCO: He looked pretty dead to me.

BOSCO II: He seemed pretty dead too, the way his head was kind of on backwards, and his face had all those strange ridges across it.

BOSCO: His kisser ain't gonna be makin' any headlines, let me tell you.

DOTTY: I mean, he's probably dead. Sure. But, I mean, that doesn't mean he was murdered!

BOSCO II: I guess not.

BOSCO: He had things stickin' out of him.

DOTTY: You're exaggerating. Heathcliff spent his life in the theater. He was just being dramatic.

BOSCO II: So, you don't think I killed him then?

DOTTY: I don't think anyone killed him! Especially not anyone that I know.

BOSCO II: Wow. You're nice.

DOTTY: And you're cute. Kinda. I've got to go. My sister will flip her lid if I don't get back to warming up for our audition. Hopefully I'll see you around before we leave.

BOSCO II: You're leaving?

DOTTY: Of course, silly. After Mr. Stone sees our act, Peggy and I are going to be off to California to make movies!

BOSCO II: Oh. Right.

DOTTY: Well, bye.
(Exit DOTTY.)

BOSCO: Yeah, right. See ya. All right kid. Let's get out of here.

BOSCO II: Did you hear what she said?

BOSCO: What? Yeah. Sure. Every word. Can we go now?

BOSCO II: She doesn't think I'm a killer.

BOSCO: She's lovely. A delicate flower. The door is this way.

BOSCO II: You're right.

BOSCO: I know I'm right. See, look. The door. This way.

BOSCO II: She is a delicate flower!

BOSCO: Growin' in a concrete jungle. Shake a leg.

BOSCO II: Someone like her shouldn't be running around with a killer on the loose.

BOSCO: She doesn't think there is a killer on the loose, kid. Now, let's go!

BOSCO II: What are you talking about? Someone killed an innocent man-

BOSCO: Innocent? The owner of a second rate joint like this is never innocent, kid. Ever.

BOSCO II: My good name is at stake. Well, my name...I don't know how good it is, but that's all the more reason for me to-

BOSCO: Aw, no. Don't tell me you're thinkin' what I think you're thinkin'-

BOSCO II: So that means-

BOSCO: I'll give you everything I own not to say it-

BOSCO II: I'm going to track down who the killer is, prove to Dotty what kind of fella I am, and win her heart!

BOSCO: That's fine. I don't own anything anyways.

BOSCO II: Come on, Bosco! We have a killer to track down!

BOSCO: And people call me a dummy!

BOSCO II: (Picking something up.) Look at this! Do you think this looks suspicious?

BOSCO: No? Why? What are ya doin', kid?

BOSCO II: Looking for clues. But I'm not really sure what a clue is supposed to look like.

BOSCO: Aw, geez.

BOSCO II: (Picks up something different.) Well what about this? This could be a clue.

(Exit BOSCO and BOSCO II. After a moment, DICK HAWKSHAW steps out of the shadows, and, carrying his moving picture camera, follows BOSCO and BOSCO II off stage. Lights down. VAUDEVILLE ACT I.)

ANNOUNCER: And now Ladies and Gentlemen, for your entertainment...Spectacular Stanley.

(Lights up, Enter SPECTACULAR STANLEY.)

S.S.: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am Spectacular Stanley, your proprietor of prestidigitation for this evening. For my first trick, I am going to need a volunteer from the audience. Can I have a volunteer from the audience. Yes, you there!

(TALLULAH in disguise, stands.)

TALLULAH: Me?

S.S.: Yes, you! Can I get you to assist me in this trick?

TALLULAH: (As she's making her way to the stage.) Why, I've never been on stage before. This is all so very exciting. I hope I don't make a wattayacallit, fool out of myself. What, with this being my first time on stage and all.

S.S.: Yes, that's enough. Now, tell me. Have we ever seen each other before in our lives?

TALLULAH: No, we have not.

S.S.: Excellent. Now, I want you to look up my sleeves. See, nothing up my sleeves, is that correct?

TALLULAH: That is, how do you say, correct.

S.S.: Excellent. Now, there's nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve, and presto!

(A dead dove appears in SPECTACULAR STANLEY's hand.)

S.S.: A deck of cards!

TALLULAH: That looks like one of your doves Stanley.

S.S.: I can see that.

TALLULAH: It looks like it's dead.

S.S.: It is dead Tallulah! I mean, it is dead, perfect stranger, whom I have never seen before in my life. That was, part of my act. (Tosses the dead dove.) What I mean to say was, nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve, and presto!

(A deck of cards appears in SPECTACULAR STANLEY's hand.)

S.S.: A perfectly normal deck of cards!

TALLULAH: That is, how do you say, spectacular.

S.S.: Now, I want you to draw a card from the deck.

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY fans the cards for TALLULAH, who picks out a card.)

S.S.: Look at the card. Memorize it. Show the card to the audience. And replace the card in the deck.

(TALLULAH follows SPECTACULAR STANLEY's instructions.)

S.S.: Excellent! Now, using the staggering mental abilities with which I was gifted at birth, I shall guess which card it was that you picked from the deck. I need you to concentrate on your card.

TALLULAH: (Concentrates on her card.)

S.S.: (To the audience.) And I want you all to concentrate on the card as well.

AUDIENCE: (Concentrates on the card.)

S.S.: Excellent. It's coming to me. I'm seeing an image...it's becoming clearer...your card is...the three of clubs!

TALLULAH: No.

S.S.: It wasn't? Of course it wasn't! Because, in fact, your card was really, the...ace of hearts!

TALLULAH: Sorry.

S.S.: I see. Well, maybe that's because your card has really been (reaches behind TALLULAH's ear.) behind your ear the whole time!

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY pulls out a second dead dove.)

TALLULAH: It's another dead dove!

S.S.: I can see that!

TALLULAH: How many dead doves do you have on you?

S.S.: (Simmers for a moment.) Thank you sir for your assistance. If you could make your way off stage so I can begin my next trick.

TALLULAH: But you didn't tell me what my card was.

S.S.: It's all part of the act. And if you see my assistant backstage would you tell her to prepare for the Hat Trick?

(Exit TALLULAH. SPECTACULAR STANLEY produces a flask, and swigs from it. After a moment TALLULAH re- enters, no longer in disguise, carrying a table with a fabulously decorated cloth over top of it.)

S.S.: Sorry for the technical difficulties ladies and gentlemen. The ancient spirits that bestow their gifts upon me so that I might entertain you with feats of magic and wonder are often -times fickle higher beings. However,

I guarantee you that this next trick will leave you all speechless. For those of you with a weak constitution, you might want to gird yourselves for what you are about to see. For I am about to, right before your eyes, reach into the great beyond, and produce for you, my dear audience, a perfectly intact living creature! Thank you, hold your applause, thank you, you're too kind.

(TALLULAH sets the table down in front of SPECTACULAR STANLEY and exits.)

S.S.: See, this hat? (Takes off his top hat, and shows it to the audience.) Seems like it is a perfectly normal hat, doesn't it? (Shows the audience the inside of the hat and sets it down, brim side up, on the table in front of him.) But this is much, much more than just some bits of silk, and boning. The creation of this hat was commissioned by the very first manager of magic in this moral coil. Through this hat-

VOICE: (From off stage.) Boo! Just pull the damn rabbit out of the hat!

S.S.: (Addressing as if the heckle came from the audience.) You want to see me pull a rabbit out of my hat? Fine! I'll pull a rabbit out of my hat.

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY reaches into his hat, and digs around for a moment, grumbling.)

S.S.: (After a moment of grumbling, pulls out...) Ta- da! (a third dead dove.) What the hell? (Tosses the dove, reaches into the hat again, and pulls out...) Ta-da! (Yet another dead dove.) All right, where are you, you stupid rabbit?

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY digs into the hat. Like really digs into the hat. He reaches in and pulls out several completely random things. This should start out with another dead dove, and continue with random, and increasingly ridiculous items: an alarm clock, a bowling pin, an anchor, an upright bass, a fish bowl with a fish in it, etc. This eventually leads to SPECTACULAR STANLEY climbing deeper into the hat. The more of SPECTACULAR STANLEY's body that can be gotten into the hat for the visual effect the better. I'm imagining at one point, perhaps, only SPECTACULAR STANLEY'S lower half sticking out of the hat. After several moments, and a dozen or more random things pulled out of the hat have gone by, SPECTACULAR STANLEY climbs out of the hat.)

S.S.: (Calling off.) Tallulah! Tallulah, you forgot to put the rabbit in the hat! You, once again, completely ruined my act!

(Exit SPECTACULAR STANLEY. TALLULAH enters from the opposite direction from which SPECTACULAR STANLEY exited.)

TALLULAH: I put the, whatta ya call it, rabbit in there Stanley. You're just not looking hard enough.

(TALLULAH crosses to the hat.)

TALLULAH: (Reaches into the hat, and pulls out a rabbit.) See? Stanley? (Remember that she is in the middle of a performance, and looks at the audience.) I mean, how do you say, Ta- da!

(At which point, the audience will hopefully clap, as the lights go down on VAUDEVILLE Act I. Lights up on Scene II. ENTER BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: (Spotting the puddle on the floor.) What about this?

BOSCO: It's just a puddle of something.

BOSCO II: If anything looks like a clue, this looks like a clue.

BOSCO: Not everything is a clue, kid.

BOSCO II: Something got to be a clue! This could be a clue. It smells funny. Funny is usually a sign that something is a clue, right?

(ENTER SPECTACULAR STANLEY and TALLULAH. They are coming off stage from their performance. TALLULAH should still have the rabbit.)

S.S.: You've ruined us Tallulah! Ruined us!

TALLULAH: I'm not the one that, how do you say, couldn't find the rabbit in the hat, Stanley.

S.S.: And why are all the doves dead? What have you been feeding them?

TALLULAH: I really wish you wouldn't blame me for everything, Stanley.

S.S.: I would kill for some good help! Do you hear me? Kill! That's right! I said it!

(Exit SPECTACULAR STANLEY and TALLULAH.)

BOSCO: O.k., that was pretty odd.

BOSCO II: Did you hear that?

BOSCO: I hear a couple of things just then.

BOSCO II: The birds!

BOSCO: What about 'em?

BOSCO II: They're dead! Who else is dead? Heathcliff! Dead birds...dead Heathciff. That's can't be a coincidence. Maybe whatever killed Heathcliff also killed those birds.

BOSCO: You're a bird brain, kid.

BOSCO II: I think I'm onto something!

BOSCO: Those birds coulda' died lotsa ways. Hell, if I was one a' Spectacular Stanley's birds, I'd probably kill myself!

BOSCO II: O.k. (Crosses, and picks up the bloody, metal grating.) What about this?

BOSCO: That might be something more along the lines of what you'd consider a clue.

BOSCO II: See? We're not so bad at this. I'm going to prove my good name, yet!

(Enter PEGGY.)

PEGGY: You've got a lot of nerve hanging around here.

BOSCO II: No, no. See, I'm still here because I'm trying to prove I didn't kill your boss.

PEGGY: Oh, yeah? And who do you think killed Heathcliff?

BOSCO II: I don't know yet. But I found this. (Shows her the bloody, metal grating.)

PEGGY: Well, isn't that just great?

BOSCO II: It sure is.

PEGGY: Why are you showing that to me?

BOSCO II: It's bloody? I mean, it's bloody. See? I don't think these things are normally so bloody, so-

PEGGY: Now you listen to me you creepy little thing. You can take your dummy, and scam. You hear? You've done enough damage. My sister and I are trying to prepare for what might be the biggest audition of our lives, and we don't need some boner brained nincompoop who thinks he's a hero trying to save the day.

BOSCO II: I'm really not trying to save the day. I honestly just don't want anyone to think I'm a murder.

PEGGY: I've been around, you know? You don't know what my sister and I have seen. What we've been through.

BOSCO II: No, I haven't. And... What do you mean by-

PEGGY: I think you know what I mean.

BOSCO II: You think I know what you mean?

PEGGY: I think you know you think I know what I mean. And I'm watching you. (Calling off.) Dotty! Hurry up! I'm getting into place! If you're late for your entrance again-

(Exit PEGGY.)

BOSCO: Watta woman!

BOSCO II: I'm terrified of her!

BOSCO: You don't think I'm not! Fear really gets my wood chipper.

BOSCO II: Her flower!

BOSCO: I wouldn't call her a flower. She's more like a cactus. Exotic and prickly.

BOSCO II: No! What's the difference between Peggy, and Dotty?

BOSCO : About a hundred and twenty pounds of attitude?

(BOSCO II crosses and picks up the flower that was amongst the things around the body at the top of the play.)

BOSCO II: No! Their flower! Haven't you noticed? Peggy doesn't have a flower in her hair, but Dotty does. It's an orchid, and it's orange so it sets off her blue eyes, and-

(ENTER DICK HAWKSHAW. He's been filming BOSCO and BOSCO II from some unseen vantage point, and he continues to film as he enters.)

- D.H.: That's great! Keep it going! The camera loves you, kid!
- BOSCO II: Mr. Hawkshaw! How long have you been filming us?
- BOSCO: And more importantly, does the camera love me too?
- D.H.: The camera adores you, baby! Can't get enough of you! Audiences across America are going to eat this up!
- BOSCO: Yeah? Well we don't got no time for your camera Dick.
- D.H.: Aw, come on! Don't be like that!
- BOSCO: Stop filming right now, Dick, or we're gonna have another corpse on our hands.
- D.H.: (Stops filming.) That's not very funny given the circumstances.
- BOSCO: Dick, if we were funny, we wouldn't be auditioning in two bit places like this.
- D.H.: So, it's a rise to glory, is it?
- BOSCO II: What is?
- D.H.: Your story! I can see it now! A boy from Kansas, nothing remarkable about him, no talent, not smart or handsome, completely average in every way. One day, he finds an old dummy in the attic of the orphanage-
- BOSCO II: Orphanage?
- D.H.: The dummy soon becomes your only friend. The two of you are inseparable. Sure the other orphans laugh at you. That's what orphans do, right? They're the scum of the earth who thrive on misery, so of course they're going to laugh at you for something like that. But, despite the taunts, and jeers of the evil orphans, your talent grows, and you begin your meteoric rise to fame!
- BOSCO II: We're not from Kansas.
- BOSCO: And you sure don't like orphans, do you?

D.H.: Can't stand them. That's not the point. The point...look, the point is you have to tell a story. And the best way you can tell a story is by having a schtick.

BOSCO II: Really? That doesn't seem entirely right.

D.H.: Trust me. I've been in this business since the beginning. And before this, I was in another business for along time, and made a killing doing that. You should trust me, kid.

BOSCO II: And like we told you before, Mr. Hawkshaw, Bosco and I aren't interested in being in the moving pictures.

D.H.: Why are you so in love with the theater? Huh? Places like this are a dump! Do you know what I did last month? I bought four of these places in four different cities. I cleaned them out, put in big, comfortable padded seats, a concessions stand, and a screen, and this machine on the roof that cools the air inside. It actually cools the air inside of the theater! Can you imagine that? They're calling them air conditioners, and they're going to revolutionize the entertainment industry.

BOSCO II: They are?

D.H.: Do you know how much money those places are going to make for me now?

BOSCO II: How much?

D.H.: A lot more than your friends dead boss ever earned running this place. And places like that could make you a lot of money too.

BOSCO II: I've never had a lot of money Mr. Hawkshaw. All I want to do-

D.H.: Stop right there. I'm already vomiting in my mouth a little. That's fine. Whatever you were going to say is fine. But you're not going to keep getting offers like the one I just made you. Don't be stupid and keep turning them down.

(Exit DICK HAWKSHAW.)

BOSCO II: (After a moment.) I can hear you still filming us from the shadows Mr. Hawkshaw.

D.H.: Damn! I'll get you one of these days! You'll see!

BOSCO: Ya see that?

BOSCO II: Mr. Hawkshaw sure is passionate about his job.

BOSCO: He's a little crazy about his job is more like it.

BOSCO II: Awe, come on, now Bosco. Who am I to judge someone for being a little crazy?

BOSCO: Kid, I don't mean good crazy! I mean the kinda crazy that's gonna get you in trouble, again. And the kind of trouble that could be permanent this time. Know what I mean?

BOSCO II: Seldom to never.

BOSCO: It means that this much crazy bein' in one place ought to be a big, ol', glowin' sign from the heavens to you that we need to hit the streets.

BOSCO II: Not until I prove I didn't kill anyone!

(Enter DOTTY.)

DOTTY: Am I late? Did I miss my entrance?

BOSCO II: Hi Dotty.

DOTTY: Oh, hi. Stand still.

(DOTTY leans on BOSCO II for a moment while she adjusts something on her costume.)

DOTTY: Thanks.

BOSCO II: Your sister is waiting for you.

DOTTY: She enters from the other side of the stage.

BOSCO II: I like your costume.

DOTTY: You're sweet.

BOSCO II: So, I was thinking. Once I prove I didn't kill your boss-

DOTTY: You're not still on that, are you?

BOSCO II: Well, I mean, how would you feel if a bunch of people thought you killed someone?

DOTTY: Not so great, I suppose.

BOSCO II: But I've found a couple of interesting things while I was poking around-

DOTTY: Interesting things?

BOSCO II: Yeah. Like a puddle that smells funny.

BOSCO: Yeah, all kinds of things that could be clues to a murder, or just random things lying around a theater.

DOTTY: (Giggles.) Your doll really is kind of cute.

BOSCO: And you're kind of a cute doll.

BOSCO II: Bosco!

BOSCO: What? You were thinking it?

DOTTY: Look. I've got to go on. I'd love to hear more about the things you said you found.

BOSCO II: You would?

DOTTY: Not because I think someone killed Heathcliff, mind you. I just want to make sure that what you found is definitely proof that no one killed Heathcliff.

BOSCO: More like you wanna scrub your finger prints off of any evidence.

DOTTY: What was that?

BOSCO: Nothin'.

DOTTY: I've really got to go. Meet me by the dressing rooms after my act?

BOSCO II: That'd be swell.

DOTTY: Great.

(DOTTY taps dances off stage.)

BOSCO: She did it.

BOSCO II: What? No she didn't. You don't know that.

BOSCO: What I know is she's awfully sure that her boss didn't get murdered when he very obviously did.

BOSCO II: Maybe she's in shock.

BOSCO: Shock?

BOSCO II: Yeah. Shock. Dames are prone to shock, aren't they?

BOSCO: And you wonder why you're single, kid.

(BOSCO II starts to exit.)

BOSCO : Where do you think you're going?

BOSCOII: To wait for Dotty by the dressing rooms.

BOSCO: To wait for you own, impending murder, is more like it.

BOSCO II: Don't be ridiculous! Dotty is not the killer, and even if she was, wouldn't it be kind of stupid of her to kill twice in the same place?

BOSCO: What if she's deranged?

BOSCO II: Again, who am I to judge if someone is a little deranged?

BOSCO: You need to start bein' more judgmental, kid.

BOSCO II: And maybe you need to start learning how to trust me more.

(Exit BOSCO and BOSCO II. Lights down. Lights up Vaudeville Act II: DOTTY tap dances on stage. She does a bit of a number for several moments. She then produces a sign that has the word "INTERMISSION" written on it to resemble a Vaudeville style intermission placard. She begins to tap dance off stage. But before she does, a noise can be heard from off stage.)

DOTTY: (Responding to the noise.) Who's there. I hear you. What? No! Stay back! You can't make me! Not again! Stay back! (She screams.)

(The lights fade to black as DOTTY screams at whatever unseen horror lurks for her offstage. Black out. End ACT I.)

ACT II

(Lights up ACT II. Vaudeville Act III: Enter PEGGY, tap dancing. She tap dances for a moment, and then pauses for several bars as this is obviously where DOTTY would be dancing. PEGGY dances some more and then pauses again for the part for the part of the music where DOTTY should have a bit. Eventually, PEGGY just holds up a sign that says “ACT II.” She tap dances off stage, grumbling to herself. Lights up, ACT II, SCENE I. Enter BOSCO and BOSCO. They pace for a moment. Enter SPECTACULAR STANLEY, crossing. He bumps into BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

S.S.: Out of the way cretins!

BOSCO: Back at ya!

(Exit SPECTACULAR STANLEY. Enter LE CLOWN, crossing.)

BOSCO II: (Accidentally steps into LE CLOWN’s path.)

LE CLOWN: (Attempts to step around BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: (Again, accidentally steps into the path of LE CLOWN.)

LE CLOWN: (Attempts to step around BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: (Again, accidentally steps into the path of LE CLOWN.)

LE CLOWN: Bouge toi! Il faut que j’entre en scène!¹⁴

BOSCO II : Sorry.

(Exit LE CLOWN.)

BOSCO : Gee kid. Calm down.

BOSCO II: How can calm down? All these people think I murdered there boss, and I’m about to make my case to-

BOSCO: Who you got the hots for?

BOSCO II: That doesn’t have anything to do- I mean, I don’t have the hots for anyone.

BOSCO: Liar, liar.

¹⁴ Move! I’m almost on!

BOSCO II: I am not!

BOSCO: You're like a rug, just lying around all day!

BOSCO II: Bosco!

BOSCO: All I'm doin' is tellin' the truth.

(Enter PEGGY.)

PEGGY: What are you doing here?

BOSCO II: We were, that is- Bosco, and I were just-

BOSCO: You see your sister around?

PEGGY: I thought I told you to stay away from Dotty you creeps!

BOSCO: Last I checked this was a free county. The dummy here can fraternize with whoever he wants.

PEGGY: Boy, you're just begging to get made into a pile of kindling wood aren't you, you little creep?

BOSCO: Well, if you're trying to get me to make some wood, you're succeeding.

PEGGY: (Slaps BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: Ow!

PEGGY: My sister missed our act! She never misses our act, so something must have happened to her!

BOSCO II: I've been waiting here since I saw her last. You can ask anyone else!

BOSCO: Yeah, the kid here has been making getting in other people's way look like an Olympic event.

PEGGY: Well isn't that convenient?

BOSCO II: What's convenient?

PEGGY: The convenience of it all.

BOSCO: What are you talking about?

PEGGY: It's awfully handy you happened to be standing right here when I told you my sister was missing.

BOSCO: So what? She didn't disappear from here.

PEGGY: You would say that, wouldn't you?

BOSCO: There you go talkin' about wood again.

BOSCO II: Bosco, ssshh. We're looking for your sister just like you are. The minute we see her, we'll tell her you're looking for her.

PEGGY: And aren't you certain you're going to have a timely encounter with my sister. That seems awfully convenient.

BOSCO: Well, I'm glad all your wants and needs are being met. Me? I just want to scam the hell on outta here. But the dummy here, well, apparently his new thing is hanging around in places where he keeps getting accused of things he didn't do.

BOSCO II: That's right!

BOSCO: I know I'm right kid, that's why I keep tryin' ta get ya to leave!

BOSCO II: It's awfully convenient you noticed your sister was missing only after you performed. How do we know you didn't do something to your sister before you went on, and used your performance to try to cover up something.

BOSCO: Dang, kid. That actually made some kind of sense.

BOSCO II: It was bound to happen sooner or later.

PEGGY: Are you suggesting I did something to my own sister?

BOSCO II: No. But I am suggesting that you're trying to distract from something. And your supposed convenience is actually very inconvenient because of the untimely thing that you did that is somehow connected to your sister's disappearance, and now you're inconvenienced and so your only option now is to point out the perceived convenience of others actions!

PEGGY: Buster, I ought to smack you.

BOSCO: Go ahead. He likes it!

BOSCO II: Not now, Bosco. Go ahead! I've been smacked around my whole life. Today isn't any exception. You think this is the first time I've been accused of something?

BOSCO: Where you going with this kid?

BOSCO II: Well, it's not! I'm no stranger to people thinking the unspeakable of me.

BOSCO: You're really not helpin' you're case, here, kid.

BOSCO II: I'm no stranger to having to prove myself. You think I killed your boss? Go ahead, and think that!

BOSCO: Or, ya know, don't because he didn't do nothin'.

BOSCO II: I'm going to show you, and I'm going to show everyone else here, and then I am going to ask your sister out on a date. Because I deserve to be on the arm of a pretty girl, and she deserves to be treated to a night on the town by someone who isn't a murderer! Now, if you'll excuse me, I have my innocence to prove, and a date to win!

PEGGY: Well, you have me convinced.

BOSCO II: Really?

PEGGY: No! You boob! I'm calling the police!

BOSCO II: Don't do that!

PEGGY: Just try to stop me!

BOSCO: That sounds like a challenge to me.

PEGGY: (Slaps BOSCO II.)
(Exit PEGGY.)

BOSCO II: What are we going to do Bosco?

BOSCO: I keep tellin' ya kid. Leaving is, was, and always will be a real option for us.

BOSCO II: I need to figure out who the murder is before the police get here.
(Enter DICK HAWKSHAW.)

D.H.: I would listen to the dummy if I were you.

BOSCO: Are you crazy? He's gonna get us arrested! (Beat.) Oh, you were talkin' to him.

D.H.: You could get out of here right now.

BOSCO II: But I didn't kill anyone Mr. Hawkshaw!

D.H.: And I believe you! Which is why I'm only going to make this offer to you once. Leave with me now. Come with me to Hollywoodland, sign a contract with my studio. You can leave all of this behind you. Forget you were ever accused of murder, live a cushy life in a house with an air conditioner, a swimming pool, and a small army of butlers, and maids. All you have to do is ,make some movies, after you've signed on the dotted line.

BOSCO II: Why do you want to help me?

D.H.: Because I think you got something.

BOSCO II: But everyone thinks I'm a murderer. I can't just leave here and live a life of fame and fortune when everyone here thinks I did something bad.

D.H.: Do you have any idea how many people are out in Hollywoodland, in part, because they're trying to hide from something? You think what you're going through is bad? Come back and talk to me when the stuff you're running from looks like the stuff that Chaplin is running from, and then we'll talk.

BOSCO: I think we should listen to him, kid. There's a lot of things we could forget living in a house, with a butler, and a swimming pool.

BOSCO II: Doesn't that all seem too good to be true to you?

BOSCO: You're missing the point, kid. Of course this is too good to be true! Stuff like this doesn't happen in the real world that often, and when it does, you got to take a chance on it. The difference between us, and most poor saps is that we know goin' into this that it's too good to be true, so we can be on the look out for the other shoe to drop, and be ready for it, and get out of dodge before things get hot again.

BOSCO II: Bosco, I'm not running anymore. I don't need a mansion. I need some place to call home. Some place to relax, and-

(Noise from off stage.)

BOSCO II: They found us! Run Bosco, run!

BOSCO: (Slaps his forehead with the palm of his hand.)

D.H.: Suit yourself kid. Show's almost over. Last chance of getting an offer to audition for a man with a camera.

BOSCO II: I appreciate the offer Mr. Hawkshaw. But right now, I've got more important things on my mind than moving pictures.

D.H.: Whatever you say kid. Just remember once I'm gone, I'm gone. And any opportunity I bring with me is going to be gone too.

BOSCO II: I'll be fine Mr. Hawkshaw.

D.H.: I hope you will be, kid.

(Exit DICK HAWKSHAW.)

BOSCO: Are you crazy kid? We coulda had it all!

BOSCO II: I don't know, Bosco.

BOSCO: What's there not to know about? We coulda' been famous. We coulda' had a lot of money! We could have had a swimming pool!

BOSCO II: You can't swim.

BOSCO: Well, I coulda' floated around the pool. I like swimming pools! Get off my back!

BOSCO II: I'm not on your back. I'm in it.

BOSCO: Don't remind me.

(Enter SPECTACULAR STANLEY. He's been drinking.)

S.S.: Oh, it's you.

BOSCO: Speaking of reasons we need to get the hell outta here.

S.S.: You think you're so great. Don't you?

BOSCO II: Not exactly-

BOSCO: You know it!

S.S.: (Sits. Pats the area next to where he's sitting.)

BOSCO II: Uh-

S.S.: (Pats the area next to him again.) Have a seat.

BOSCO: O.k.?

(BOSCO and BOSCO II sit next to SPECTACULAR STANLEY.)

S.S.: (Swigs from bottle. Offers it to BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: No thank. I don't drink.

S.S.: Go on. It's good for you.

BOSCO: Give it here. (Swigs. Shudders.)

BOSCO II: (Shudders.)

BOSCO: (Handing the bottle back to SPECTACULAR STANLEY.) That'll put hair on your chest.

S.S.: My Greek heritage puts hair on my chest. Tell me lad, how long have you been in the business?

BOSCO II: The business? Not for very long. Bosco here used to belong to my grandfather.

S.S.: And was he in the business?

BOSCO II: My grandfather? No, he used to make toys. He would bring Bosco out for the kids at holidays. One day, this old gypsy lady came into his toy store, and-

BOSCO: Why? What's it to ya?

S.S.: I've been in this business for a long time. Long enough that I don't say the actual number of years I've been honing my craft, but not so long that the business hasn't killed me yet. (Swigs.)

BOSCO: Sounds like a long time.

BOSCO II: But not as long as some.

BOSCO: Sounds like a medium length amount of time.

S.S.: Long enough to know that you have to either adapt or die. (Swigs.)

BOSCO: (Looks at BOSCO II. Shrugs.) BOSCO II: (Looks at BOSCO. Shrugs.)

BOSCO II: Is there anything I can help you with, Mr. Spectacular?

S.S.: No. You've done enough by just being here.

BOSCO II: I see?

S.S.: Seeing acts like yours makes me realize the state of our craft. I have decided that it is my obligation... nay, my duty to continue to encourage, and challenge young talent, such as yourself, in order to ensure the continued integrity of the craft.

BOSCO II: You've been encouraging me up until this point?

S.S.: Do you want some unsolicited advice?

BOSCO II: No thank you.

S.S.: Sure you do.

BOSCO: No, really. We're fine.

S.S.: You can't fool me.

BOSCO II: No foolin' a fooler. (Nervous laugh.)

S.S.: You think you're so clever. But you're not. I used to be just like you.

BOSCO II: You did?

S.S.: That's why I'm going to give you some unsolicited advice. .

BOSCO II: Mr. Spectacular, I honestly-

S.S.: Get out.

BOSCO II: I-

S.S.: Right now.

BOSCO II: But, I-

S.S.: Don't fuck with your elders. And get the fuck out. Right now.

BOSCO II: Who are you to-

S.S.: You think you scare me? Eh, 'Puppet'? En Garde! Haha! Come on! I'll tear you apart! Fisticuffs it is!

BOSCO: You gotta be kiddin' me.

(Enter TALLULAH.)

TALLULAH: There you are Stanley! I've been, how do you say, lookin' all over for you.

S.S.: Ah, Tallulah. I've been looking all over for you-

TALLULAH: Well I ain't, how do you say, at the bottom of that flask you got there, Stanley.

S.S.: My dear, if you are suggesting that I am inebriated, why you have another-

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY passes out.)

TALLULAH: Poor Stanley.

BOSCO: I was just gonna say the same thing about the guy's liver.

TALLULAH: He doesn't mean to, how do you say, get like this. He's just been under so much pressure with the moving picture fella being here.

BOSCO: Yeah, it's a real pain when a guy promising fame and fortune shows up out of the blue.

TALLULAH: Who? Dick Hawkshaw? Nah. He's been here for a couple of days.

BOSCO II: But you all acted like it was your first time seeing him when he popped out of the Box of Mystery.

TALLULAH: Most of us were meeting Mr. Hawkshaw for the first time. But he's been in town since, what do you call it, Tuesday.

BOSCO II: He has?

TALLULAH: Sure he has. He told me and Stanley he had a meeting with Heathcliff, and Dotty the day after he arrived.

BOSCO II: Huh.

BOSCO: What you thinking kid?

BOSCO II: You said he met with Dotty, but not Peggy?

TALLULAH: He said Dotty. Didn't say nothing about Peggy.

BOSCO II: And does Peggy know her sister met with Dick Hawkshaw and Heathcliff?

TALLULAH: Not that I know of. Peggy and I don't exactly share intimate details of our lives with each other. She's a, how do you say,

BOSCO: A bitch?

TALLULAH: That's the word.

BOSCO: My kinda gal.

BOSCO II: That's interesting. Really interesting.

ANNOUNCER: And now, ladies and gentlemen, all the way from Paris, France, Le Clown.

(LE CLOWN enters, crossing.)

LE CLOWN: Laissez-moi passer, crétins! Mon public m'attend.¹⁵

(Exit LE CLOWN. Thunderous applause can be heard from the "audience.")

BOSCO II: The auditions.

BOSCO: You're not really thinkin' about puttin' on a show for that creep and his camera are you?

BOSCO II: A show? Not unless you consider solving a murder putting on a show!

TALLULAH: Oooo, how, what's the word, exciting!

BOSCO II: Come on Bosco!

(Exit BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

¹⁵ Out of my way cretins. My audience awaits.

TALLULAH: (Beat.) Should I just wait here then? I don't wanna, how do you say, miss all the excitement. Is there, what's the word, anything you want me to do to help? Hello?

(Re-enter BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: Sorry. Um, Tallulah, gather everyone together, and don't let them leave.

TALLULAH: How do you want me to do that?

BOSCO II: By any means necessary!

TALLULAH: Right!

(Exit BOSCO, BOSCO II, and TALLULAH.)

S.S.: (Beat. Still unconscious.) Tallulah, can you put a blanket over me? Your Honey Bear is cold.

(Black out. Vaudeville Act IV. Enter LE CLOWN.)

LE CLOWN: Je m'appelle Le Clown.

(LE CLOWN fetches a bucket, and a fishing pole. He sets the bucket down center stage. He casts the fishing line into the bucket. He pulls in the line. There is an egg at the end of the string. He detaches the egg from the end of the string, and cracks it open. There is a baby inside. He puts down the egg shell, and holds the baby. He regards it. He pulls out a tiny umbrella, and opens it. It begins to rain on him from inside the umbrella.)

LE CLOWN: Regardez! On est tous des animaux dans une cage. Et voilà.¹⁶

(Hopefully at this point there will be no applause because the audience will be too busy trying to figure out what the hell it is they just saw. Regardless, LE CLOWN should stand, triumphantly, basking in the applause that only he can hear as the lights fade to black. ACT II, SCENE II. Enter TALLULAH. After a moment, enter BOSCO, and BOSCO II.)

BOSCO II: Where is everyone?

TALLULAH: Well, that's a, how do you say, complicated answer.

BOSCO II: Well, isn't that just great. I'm about to prove my innocence, while unmasking a vicious murder, and no one is around to see it!

¹⁶ Look! We are all animals in a cage. Finished.

BOSCO: Life ain't fair, kid.

(Enter SPECTACULAR STANLEY through some means of entry that is not a traditional enter left or right mode of entry such as the Box of Mystery, or maybe from under a pile of costumes or something. Get creative.)

S.S.: I am here. Everything is under control.

TALLULAH: (Attempts to wrestle SPECTACULAR STANLEY's hooch away from him.)

BOSCO II: Great, so now we have two people-

(Enter DICK HAWKSHAW.)

D.H.: I'm here, I'm here. Let's get this show on the road.

BOSCO II: Mr. Hawkshaw. Great. Now all we need are-

(Enter LE CLOWN, crossing.)

BOSCO II: Excuse me? Mr. Le Clown? Exuse me?

BOSCO: Hey Clown!

LE CLOWN: Quoi?¹⁷

BOSCO II: I know you're a busy man, but if I could just have your attention for a couple of-

LE CLOWN: Laisse- moi passer.¹⁸

BOSCO II: But all we need is one-

(LE CLWON brushes past BOSCO and BOSCO II. In the process, LE CLOWN's hat gets knocked off of his head.)

BOSCO II: Oops.

LE CLOWN: Paysan!¹⁹

BOSCO II: Oh, dear. My apologies Mr. Le Clown. Let me get your hat for you.

¹⁷ What?

¹⁸ Out of my way.

¹⁹ Peasant.

(BOSCO II bends to pick up LE CLOWN'S hat, but kicks it out of his reach. BOSCO II approaches it again, and again kicks it out of his reach. BOSCO II approaches it a third time, and once again, kicks the hat out of reach.)

BOSCO: Here, kid. Let me try.

(BOSCO II and BOSCO bend to pick up LE CLOWN's hat. This time, as they're stopped over, BOSCO's hat also falls off.)

BOSCO: Awe geez. Now look what ya did?

BOSCO II: Sorry Bosco.

(They stoop to pick up the hats, and kick the hats in two different directions. BOSCO II fakes frustration, and goes and picks up the hats. BOSCO and BOSCO II cross back to LE CLOWN. BOSCO II puts BOSCO's hat on LE CLOWN's head, and LE CLOWN's hat on BOSCO's head.)

BOSCO II: There.

LE CLOWN: Je devrais bruler ce chapeau maintenant.²⁰

(LE CLOWN switches the hats back.)

BOSCO II : Sorry.

(BOSCO II switches his hat for LE CLOWN's hat.)

BOSCO: No, you got it wrong again dummy.

(BOSCO switches his hat for the hat now on BOSCO's head.)

LE CLOWN: Non!²¹

(LE CLOWN switches the hat on his head for the hat on BOSCO's head. BOSCO II switches the hat on his head for the hat on LE CLOWN's head.)

LE CLOWN: Arrête! Tu vas me passer tes poux !²²

²⁰ I should burn this hat now.

²¹ No!

²² Stop it! You're going to give me lice!

(Their hats get switched around for several beats. The frequency with which the hats are swapped should increase in speed, the right hat should never be on the right head during this time. In fact, when the bit stops, the hats shouldn't be on the right head.)

LE CLOWN: Arrête!²³

(The bit stops.)

LE CLOWN: (Glares, and takes his hat off of whoever's head it is on, while removing whoever's hat is on his head. He places his hat on his head, and throws the other hat on the ground and stomps on it.) Je m'envais.²⁴

(LE CLOWN begins to exit.)

BOSCO II: Wait! You can't leave.

LE CLOWN: Tu vas voir.²⁵

BOSCO : Stop!

S.S.: Yes, stop. This is awful. Tallulah said you wanted to see all of us. Hopefully it's not so you can try to murder any more of us.

BOSCO II: Don't worry, I'm not going to murder any more of you. I mean, any of you! Because I didn't murder any of you in the first place!

D.H.: Is there a point to all of this clowning around, kid?

LE CLOWN: (Scowls at DICK HAWKSHAW.)

BOSCO II: There is! A very good point! A point that I would get to if you would all just let me-

ALL: Get to the point!

BOSCO II: Right. I know who killed Heathcliff!

ALL: (Reacts ambivalently to this news.)

BOSCO II: You don't want to know who killed your boss?

S.S.: I just want to know if I'm going to get my last pay check.

²³ Stop!

²⁴ I'm leaving.

²⁵ Watch me.

TALLULAH: Stanley, this is a, whattayacallit, human life we're talking about here.

S.S.: I understand that Tallulah. And this human life either wants to get paid, or endear myself to someone who has the capacity to pay me.

TALLULAH: (To BOSCO II.) He kinda has a point.

LE CLOWN: (Spits on the ground, and begins to exit.)

S.S.: I'm leaving now also.

BOSCO II: But, I know how killed your boss!

TALLULAH: Nice try, hon. Maybe if you juggled or somethin' while you told everyone.

BOSCO II: And if I'm right, it was someone in this very room!

ALL: Gasps!

S.S.: Well, it wasn't me!

LE CLOWN: Ce n'était pas moi non plus.²⁶

TALLULAH: I didn't do it!

D.H.: Don't look at me!

BOSCO II: Yes. See, I've been watching you all.

BOSCO: Observing.

BOSCO II: Yes. I've been observing you all. Learning your routines, your quirks.

BOSCO: Studying your mental fortitude.

BOSCO II: Right. And we've been gathering evidence. I have found clue upon clue upon clue. I have seen the signs, and all of the signs are pointing in one direction. And that direction is towards the person who killed poor Heathcliff.

ALL: (React with: "You don't know who killed Heathcliff. You don't know what you're talking about! Quit wasting our time! Get the hell out of here!" And similar such phrases.)

²⁶ It wasn't me either.

BOSCO : But upon close review of all the evidence.

BOSCO II: And all the clues.

BOSCO: We've narrowed down our list of suspects.

BOSCO II: And that is why we can now say, that, beyond the shadow of a doubt-

BOSCO: Without question-

BOSCO II: That the murder of Heathcliff is Le Clown!

ALL: (But LE CLOWN.) Gasps!!!

LE CLOWN: C'est pas moi qui l'ai fait.²⁷

BOSCO II : The clues were vague, but plentiful. It all started when Bosco and I noticed there were an awful lot of dead doves lying around.

BOSCO: More dead doves than you'd see in a typical Vaudeville joint.

S.S.: What are you trying to say? That because my assistant is incompetent, and forgets to feed my pigeons-

TALLULAH: Doves-

S.S.: Yes, doves, of course...Forgets to feed my doves on occasion does not mean that I am a murderer.

TALLULAH: Or me.

S.S.: Ssssh, Tallulah. Nobody is talking about you right now.

BOSCO II: One dead dove I wouldn't have noticed.

BOSCO: Two dead doves? Well that's just some good eatin' right there.

BOSCO II: But any more than that? Well, that seemed suspicious to Bosco, and me.

BOSCO: Mostly to the kid, though.

BOSCO II: And that made me think, who would want to kill all those doves?

BOSCO: Someone without a heard, and soul. That's who! Someone like, a clown?

²⁷ I didn't do it.

BOSCO II: Ladies, and gentlemen, I give you, your murder. Le Clown!

LE CLOWN: Je vous déteste tous.²⁸

BOSCO : Everyone turn, face the freak and shame him! Shame! Boo! Boo! Shame!

(ALL stare blankly at BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

BOSCO: What are you all looking at? I said to face the freak! I'm not the freak! The clown is the freak! Freak!

(ALL stare blankly at BOSCO and BOSCO II.)

BOSCO: All of you all need to kiss my knots.

LE CLOWN: Je n'ai pas tue Heathcliff. Et je n'ai certainement pas tué dégoûtants rats volants.²⁹

BOSCO : Huh ?

TALLULAH : He said he didn't murder Heathcliff, and that he, whattayacallit, wouldn't touch a dove to kill it.

S.S.: Tallulah? You speak French?

TALLULAH: I speak six languages fluently.

S.S.: You do?

TALLULAH: And I just started learning Mandarin last month.

S.S.: (Opens and shuts his mouth several times.)

TALLULAH: What? I like to read? I have to have something to, how do you say, occupy my time after you pass out every night, Stanley?

S.S.: I feel like I don't even know who you are Tallulah!

TALLULAH: Please, Stanley. I'm the same, old gal you've always known. It's just now you know I'm good with languages. And I volunteer at a soup kitchen on Sundays. And I work with an organization that helps get women, how do you say, registered to vote. And run a self defense class for women twice a month.

²⁸ I hate you all.

²⁹ I did not murder Heathcliff. And I certainly didn't kill any disgusting sky rats.

ALL: (Blank stares at TALLULAH.)

TALLULAH: What? He's passes out a lot.

S.S.: Well, I think keeping secrets from one another is the worst thing a person can do.

TALLULAH: Ooooo, Stanley! You make me so mad sometimes!

BOSCO: I'll bet! Someone with your obvious talent, reduced to workin' for a two-bit magician like Spectacular Stanley.

S.S.: Hey! I'll have you know. Tallulah may be my assistant, and I might be lowly, and second- rate, but I am definitely, DEFINITELY not a magician. (Beat.) Wait a minute...

BOSCO: Having to work for a guy like Stanley must be pretty frustrating.

TALLULAH: It can be.

BOSCO II: So, you admit you're frustrated with your position in your life.

BOSCO : Frustrated enough...to kill?

BOSCO II: Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you, our murderer!

TALLULAH: Who? Me?

BOSCO : Yes, you!

TALLULAH: I didn't kill Heathcliff!

BOSCO: Or, that's just what your criminal mastermind wants us to think!

BOSCO II: You knew Mr. Hawkshaw was in town early. But he wasn't in town to meet with you. Was he? The idea of working I the moving picutres was tempting for you. And when you heard Mr. Hawkshaw wasn't meeting with you, you saw your opportunity at stardom slipping away!

BOSCO: Bum, bum, buuuuuuuuum.

BOSCO II: So you slipped up behind Heathcliff, and killed him!

BOSCO: Gasp! Whisper, whisper, whisper. Seems like an open and shut case to me! Ya me too. She looks like a criminal to me. Whisper, whisper, whisper.

TALLULAH: All right! I confess!

BOSCO: She confesses everyone! You all heard that, right?

TALLULAH: I confess I was frustrated! Working for Stanley isn't exactly a tango in the Tulips.

S.S.: Well, that's an obvious lie! I'm beyond reproach as a work fellow!
Everyone can see what an obvious lie it is that she's telling right now.
Right?

TALLULAH: But no matter how mad he makes me, I love Stanley! And even though he does make me mad, it's very rarely ever that close to being mad enough to want to kill someone!

S.S.: It's true! I am the greatest lover she has ever had!

ALL: (Except TALLULAH, SHUDDER.)

TALLULAH: Short, and furry do it for me.

BOSCO: How do we know you're not just stroking his ego so that he'll cover for you?

TALLULAH: I'm not! And besides, Stanley and I were getting ready to go on when Heathcliff was killed.

BOSCO: You could have killed him after you were finished getting ready!

TALLULAH: No! See, by getting ready, I mean I was getting Stanley conscious again.

BOSCO II: I don't understand.

TALLULAH: Stanley likes to tie one on-

S.S.: I do not! I have a sip of something fine to steel my nerves prior to going on the stage. I hardly call that tying one on.

TALLULAH: It takes a while to get him awake again. Usually, I have to smack him around for a good, long while. So, after I wake him up, I have to ice down my hands before the show.

BOSCO II: So, you're saying-

TALLULAH: I'm saying I couldn't have killed Heathcliff because my hands were swollen like two balloons, and I was wrist deep in a bucket of ice when he died.

BOSCO: Hell, lady. The job you got, I admire you for not killing anyone up 'til now.

TALLULAH: It's why I have hobbies.

S.S.: Wait a minute! Why isn't anyone looking at me?

ALL: (Look at SPECTACULAR STANLEY.)

S.S.: I could have done it!

TALLLULAH: Awe, Stanley, hon, of course you, wattayacallit, could have.

S.S.: Don't try to placate me, woman! And don't let Tallulah's allegations of my supposed loushishness dissuade you from the fact that I am quite capable of murder!

BOSCO II: So that just brings us to-

S.S.: Observe! If you will, my dead doves! They could have died after I poisoned Heathcliff, and the poor, deceased birds came into contact with trace amounts of poison still left on my fingers! I could be plotting the demise of each, and everyone of you even as we speak. It might not have been me covering for Tallulah, it could have been Tallulah covering for me! Because I am capable of anything! Just watch-

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY passes out, drunk, and starts snoring.)

BOSCO II: So, that just brings us to-

D.H.: I didn't do it.

BOSCO : Come on Dick, you're stepping on my lines here.

DICK STONE: Please, I could see where you were going with this a mile away. I was here because my studio was offering Heathcliff a lot of money to show our moving pictures here.

TALLULAH: Heathcliff was gonna turn the theater into a moving picture house?

DICK STONE: It's the wave of the future, baby.

BOSCO: So then you killed him so you wouldn't have to pay him the money you promised him.

DICK STONE: You are just the most adorable thing ever! Wrong again, I'm afraid. Heathcliff never signed over the deed to the building. Without it, we can't buy it.

BOSCO: Well, shit.

BOSCO II: Well, if it wasn't any of you, that must mean, the real killer was-

(There is a mysterious thumping.)

BOSCO II: Wait!

BOSCO: Awe come on, kid. Sooner or later they're gonna figure out you don't really know who the killer is.

BOSCO II: Listen.

(Everyone listens.)

S.S.: (Waking up.) I don't hear anything. (Passing out again.)

TALLULAH: Me either.

LE CLOWN: C'est probablement le son de votre stupidité commune.³⁰

(The same mysterious noise.)

BOSCO II : There it is again !

BOSCO : I heard it that time too !

S.S. : (Waking up.) I didn't hear anything!

(Thump.)

TALLULAH: I heard it that time!

(Thump.)

S.S.: Wait! What was that thumping?

BOSCO II : All of you shut up ! I think it's coming from somewhere around here.

³⁰ It's probably the sound of your combined stupidity.

(Everyone begins to search, listening to crates, trying to figure out source of the mysterious noise. Eventually, it happens again, and one of crates on stage moves.)

D.H. : Here ! I think it's coming from here !

(They all gather around the crate. BOSCO II crosses, and opens the front of the crate. Inside is the top half of DOTTY, separate from her legs.)

DOTTY : (Looking around. Then screams.)

EVERYONE : (Screams.)

DOTTY : (Screams.)

S.S. : Ye gads ! It's horrible ! What's happened to her! It's horrific!

TALLULAH : Someone just did the sawin' a person in half trick on her, Stanley.

S.S. : And you don't think it's horrific that someone has ripped off my act?

TALLULAH : Yeah, and they probably performed the trick better than you.

S.S. : What did you say?

DOTTY : Could you all help me find my legs ? I have an itch on the bottom of my left foot that has been drivin' me crazy !

BOSCO : No worries, doll. I can't rack down a killer pair of gams in any kind of adverse conditions.

(ALL begin to search the stage for DOTTY's legs.)

BOSCO II: Who did this to you?

TALLULAH: I'll bet whoever did this is the same person who killed Heathcliff.

BOSCO: Was it the clown? I'll bet you it was the clown?

LE CLOWN: Était-ce la petite curiosité, et le nouveau gars?³¹

S.S. : Was it Tallulah?

TALLULAH: Stanley!

³¹ Was it the little freak, and the new guy?

DOTTY: It was Peggy.

ALL: (Gasps)

BOSCO: I was just going to say that!

BOSCO II: Peggy! Your sister was the killer? How do you-

DOTTY: I'm sorry, but can we find my legs before I go and start feather dusting for you all?

(Everyone takes several beats to look for DOTTY's legs.)

D.H.: (Opening the front of another crate.) Found them! (There is a pair of legs inside the crate. One foot is tapping impatiently.)

(SPECTACULAR STANLEY and TALLULAH lift the crate that contains DOTTY's top half. They cross, put DOTTY's top half on her bottom half, spin the crates, and open the front. DOTTY walks out, as a whole person.)

S.S.: Ta-da!

DOTTY: (Scratching her foot.) Oh, God! That feels good!

BOSCO II: So? What happened Dotty? Why did your sister do this to you?

BOSCO: And why did she kill Heathcliff?

DOTTY: The answer to both questions is (dramatically pointing at DICK HAWKSHAW.) because of that man!

ALL: (Gasps!!)

D.H.: What are you talking about? I'm just a moving pictures producer.

DOTTY: Right. A moving pictures producer whose checks are signed by the makers, and sellers of "air conditioning units."

ALL: (Start to gasp, but then realize that they don't know what air conditionings are.)

S.S.: I don't follow.

LE CLOWN: Air quoi?³²

³² Air what?

BOSCO: What conditioning?

TALLULAH: I'm confused.

DOTTY: Dick Hawkshaw makes movies, alright. But, what he didn't tell you was he makes movies to get people into theaters. Nice, dark, retreats from the heat cooled by...that's right air conditionings!

BOSCO II: Dotty, I don't think the problem is that we don't believe what you're saying. I think the problem is that no one here knows what air conditionings are.

DOTTY: Oh, right. Well, think of a fan, in a box that is able to actually reduce the temperature of the air in a room.

S.S.: What? That's witch craft! Or some kind of evil sorcery!

TALLULAH: That ain't a real thing, is it?

D.H.: Air conditioners are real, my friends. And there is no stopping them. You think that people are going to go, and sit in a dark room, facing the same way, and look at moving pictures? That's ridiculous! Why would anyone do that when there's the thrill of live theater! No! People are going to go to the moving pictures because moving picture houses are going to be air conditioned! Think about it! It's the end of July, you can fry an egg on the side walk, the Irish, and the Italians are sweating all over you. What are you going to do? Well, now you can go sit, all day, in the cool, cool air of a moving picture house. Buy some snacks! Stay for the double feature! Hell, spend your whole pay check! There is going to be an air conditioned moving picture house in every major city in this country by this time next year! And the creators of the air conditioning unit will be counting the money you spend to breathe their nice, cool air!

BOSCO II: And, so Peggy killed Heathcliff so that he wouldn't sell you the theater? She was trying to preserve the integrity of her craft?

DOTTY: No. She killed him because she wanted to be the one to get the money from the sale of the theater.

BOSCO: But how could that happen? Unless...

DOTTY: That's right. Heathcliff was our...long lost father!

ALL: (Gasps. Maybe at this point, there is a dramatic music queue of some sort.)

S.S.: So, she cut you in half, because...

DOTTY: Because I tried to talk her out of it. I tried to stop her from killing him! Really I did! But she's three minutes older than I am! She thinks she knows better! She's been watching out for us our whole lives before he acknowledged us, and let us start working for him. But when Peggy thinks she's doing something that's in our best interest, watch out. After she killed him, I tried to get her to confess, but she wouldn't. And then she saw me talking to you Bosco Two...

BOSCO II: Bosco also.

DOTTY: And I guess she thought I was going to spill the beans.

TALLULAH: So she cut you off?

DOTTY: My sister is also a crazy bitch.

BOSCO: My kinda' woman.

BOSCO II: Well, come on. Let's get her. Right? Shouldn't we all go get her. Or something?

DOTTY: She's gone.

LE CLOWN: Disparu.³³

DOTTY: Skeedaddled.

BOSCO II: But, why would your sister cut you in half and then leave you?

DOTTY: She was going to ship me to where she was going. She thought if I went missing, then she could leave, and pin Heathcliff's murder, and my disappearance on Bosco as well without causing any suspicion to fall on either of us.

TALLULAH: Ship you?

DOTTY: C.O.D. She likes to stiff the mail carriers when they deliver things C.O.D. But look, the box you found my legs in? That piece of paper stuck to the box has a shipping address on it.

BOSCO: She was going to Nantucket?

DOTTY: I guess so.

³³ Gone.

BOSCO: I know a couple of gals from there.

BOSCO II: But how did she do it? How did she kill Heathcliff?

DOTTY: She dropped part of the air conditioning Mr. Hawkshaw wanted to install on the roof onto Mr. Heathcliff's head.

TALLULAH: Ouch.

S.S.: That's absurd. That sounds like something out of one of those new cartoons shorts.

DOTTY: That's why his head looked the way it did. And that flower you found? It was from Peggy's hair. It must have fallen out, and gotten into poor Mr. Heathcliff's blood, and guts, and stuff.

BOSCO II: Ew. (Throws the orchid he's been carrying around for the entire play to the ground.)

DOTTY: And that's why all your doves are dead, Stanley. The stuff inside of one of those air conditioners that helps it cool the air is pretty toxic. It leaked out when Peggy dropped it, and I guess she tracked it back stage, and all the doves got into it.

D.H.: I'll have you know that the coolant in one of our units is no more toxic to you than cigarette smoke. As long as you're bigger than a dove, and don't let any of it get in your mouth, or eyes.

BOSCO II: So, that's it then? It was your sister the whole time.

DOTTY: That's it.

BOSOCO II: Shoot! I thought for sure I had the killer fingered.

BOSCO: And I thought for sure I'd be fingerin-

BOSCO II: (Covers BOSCO's mouth.) Wow. Peggy was the killer this whole time.

LE CLOWN: Et elle aurait pu s'en sortir aussi sans ce maudit ventriloque et sa poupée.³⁴

D.H.: Great that's all settled then. I have everything I need. I'm going to make a great film out of this. Action, murder, comedy. You guys are great. So great, that I want to offer you a job.

³⁴ And she would have gotten away with it too if it wasn't for the stupid ventriloquist and his doll.

LE CLOWN: Bien sûr. J'accepte. Je m'attends à un gros salaire. Alex viens. Sortons d'ici tout de suite.³⁵

D.H.: Not you. You!

TALLULAH: Me?

D.H.: Not you!

S.S.: Me?

D.H.: Don't be absurd! You!

DOTTY: Mr. Hawkshaw, I'm flattered, but-

D.H.: Wrong again. You!

BOSCO II: Wow. Gee, Mr. Hawkshaw. I don't know what to say. Bosco and I have only ever thought about working in the theater-

D.H.: Almost there. Not you. Him.

BOSCO: Me?

BOSCO II: Bosco?

D.H.: He's perfect. He can do everything. Plus he doesn't need to eat, or receive a salary. I'll give you five dollars for him.

BOSCO II: Mr. Hawkshaw, Bosco is not for sale.

BOSCO: Kid, can I talk to you for a second?

BOSCO II: Sure, Bosco. What's up?

BOSCO : I think it's time we went our separate ways, kid.

BOSCO II: Bosco no!

BOSCO: I don't like it either pal. And don't get me wrong, life's been great since it's just been you, and me. But you're young, and it shouldn't always be just you, and me. And besides you don't need me anymore.

BOSCO II: I don't?

BOSCO: Nah. Anyways, I think that one doll is kinda warm for your form. It would be kind of creepy having me around to make that threesome.

³⁵ Of course you do. I accept. I trust my salary will be a big one. Come now. Let us leave this place at once.

DOTTY: He's right Bosco.

(DOTTY goes to BOSCO II, and takes him by the hand.)

DOTTY: Look. You're a sweet guy. I don't think you have a mean bone in your body-

BOSCO: Well, if you want a mean bone in your body-

BOSCO II: Not now Bosco.

BOSCO: You never let me have any fun.

(DOTTY pulls BOSCO II aside. BOSCO II sets down BOSCO as she does so.)

DOTTY: And you showed a lot of bravery the way you tracked down...well, tried to track down Heathcliff's killer like you did. And you're not hard on the eyes either. I'd like to get the chance to get to know you a little better. But without your creepy friend there.

BOSCO II: You're right. Bosco's been my only friend for so long. But it's time I started making friend with real life people. And you know, I'm going to be coming into a little bit of money. Maybe we can go out to some place fancy for our first date?

DOTTY: It'll be nice spending time with a fella instead of creating a new identity for my sister and I before we go on the run again.

BOSCO II: And those doctors from that hospital are looking for a guy with a ventriloquist's dummy. So now I'll be even harder to find.

(Beat.)

BOSCO II: Wait, what?

DOTTY: Wait, what?

BOSCO II: Mr. Hawkshaw, you have yourself a deal.

(BOSCO II and DOTTY turn to face the others. At some point during BOSCO II and DOTTY's dialogue DICK HAWKSHAW has stolen BOSCO and has exited with him.)

TALLULAH: They're gone.

BOSCO II: What?

S.S.: Dick Hawkwhaw. He left with your dummy while you two were canoodeling.

BOSCO II: He just took- you mean he stole- and Bosco- and you all just let him?

S.S.: Wasn't any of our business, kid.

LE CLOWN: Je vous déteste tous toujours.³⁶

(Exit LE CLOWN.)

BOSCO II: I can't believe Bosco is gone.

TALLULAH: That's the nature of the beast, kid. You'll find another schtick. There's plenty out there.

S.S.: Come now, Tallulah. I will let you rub my feet, while I think about what our next job venture is going to consist of.

TALLULAH: Can't wait Stanley.

(Exit SPECTACULAR STANLEY and TALLULAH.)

BOSCO II: And now I don't even have five dollars to treat you to some place special.

DOTTY: Hey, anywhere you want to take me will be great.

BOSCO II: Well, it's a nice night out. What say we go for a walk, and take in a moving picture?

DOTTY: Sounds good! There's a new one I've been dying to see! Sure is hot today.

BOSCO II: It'll be nice to go to someplace, and be able to cool down for a while.

(Exit BOSCO II and DOTTY, arm in arm laughing and talking about moving pictures. Beat. HEATHCLIFF's body falls out of the Box of Mystery. Lights down. Lights up on Vaudeville Act VI. The music of The Can Can plays. After a moment, enter everyone in a kick line, doing The Can Can. Once everyone is in a lie on stage, they do several kicks, and other moves of the Can Can, before turning their backs to the audience, and bending over, showing that the words "THE END!" are written, one letter one each of the backsides of each of the actors. They then exit the stage, doing the kick line from the Can Can. It doesn't have to be that routine as I described, but it should be something that involves all of the

³⁶ I still hate you all.

characters, and somehow lets the audience know it's the end of the play.
The End.)

