

#1 - Scene 1.3 - Albertson / Betsy / Leah (p11-13)

START

ALBERTSON

~~Me too. That's why I'm assigned to follow up. (He sits on the couch)~~ So, to recap: the theater does shows on Friday and Saturday nights. Based on the amount of rigor, we're guessing the corpse had been here probably twenty-four, at most forty-eight hours. Therefore, most likely, the victim's body was placed on the stage sometime after the Saturday night performance.

BETSY

After the show?

ALBERTSON

Probably.

BETSY

I'm sure that will be a relief to the cast members who sit on that couch.

ALBERTSON (*recognizes he's on the couch*)

And you two discovered the body, along with ... Gloria Townsend?

LEAH

Yes. Gloria's the Chair of the theater's Board.

ALBERTSON

So, who has access to the theater after hours?

(*LEAH turns to BETSY.*)

BETSY

Well, this place is not exactly Fort Knox. Is Fort Knox still a thing? You see, we're a volunteer organization and many of our volunteers come and go at odd hours. So, lots of people have keys.

ALBERTSON

Can you be more specific?

BETSY

Well, designers, stage managers, board operators. The Board Members. House Managers. At the conclusion of a production, all the volunteers are asked to turn in their keys.

ALBERTSON (*keeping up with his notes*)

Although, in theory, anyone could have made a copy of their key.

BETSY

Well, the words "Do Not Copy" are printed right on them. But you know people.

ALBERTSON

I do.

LEAH

So, what happens now?

ALBERTSON

Currently we're investigating the last few days of Mr. Lovett's life. To see if anyone may have had cause to harm him.

BETSY

I can help you narrow it down: Every actor — and theater — in town had reason to string the little weasel up. His reviews were bad for business. I did an Excel spreadsheet that goes back five years. Your other detective wasn't interested, but I can email it to you if you like. The newspaper has two theater critics. Lovett's reviews were so savage that we saw a qualitative drop in ticket sales whenever he reviewed a show. It went straight to our bottom line: A bad review and the phone stopped ringing.

(A PHONE RINGS in the distance.)

BETSY *(standing up)*

Of course, thankfully, that's changed since we found his body. Are you done with me?

ALBERTSON

Yes, I think so.

(BETSY exits. LEAH and ALBERTSON watch her go)

ALBERTSON

Quite the character.

LEAH

As I'm learning.

ALBERTSON *(standing)*

Well, Ms Sexton, if you have any—

LEAH

You can call me Leah.

ALBERTSON

And you can call me Mark.

(ALBERTSON holds out his hand. LEAH thinks it's for a handshake, but he is actually holding out his card).

LEAH

Oh, thank you. I don't have any cards yet. Betsy tells me they're on order.

ALBERTSON

Not to worry; the ink's still a bit wet on mine. But, as I was saying, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

LEAH

Actually, I do have one question. Are your people done with this space? I mean, can we use it?

ALBERTSON

They've taken all their gear, so it looks all clear to me. But I can double-check.

LEAH

Great. The cast does a speed-through right before the show on Friday night, but now that I think of it, they might do that down in the dressing room ...

ALBERTSON

Oh. You're continuing with this show?

LEAH

Yes ... unless for some reason, we're not allowed to?

ALBERTSON

No, nothing like that. I just didn't think, after the murder and the dead body, that people would want to ...

LEAH

Are you kidding? The phone's ringing off the hook.

END

(Sound of PHONE RINGING in the distance)

LEAH

Like I said. According to Betsy, we're sold out for Friday and nearly sold out for Saturday night as well.

ALBERTSON

And not because of Mr. Lovett's negative review, but instead because of his ... demise?

LEAH

According to Betsy.

ALBERTSON

Interesting. So, while Mr. Lovett's review might have hurt the show, his death is having the exact opposite effect at the box office. Making this show a surprise hit. A real moneymaker. For the theater.

#2 - Scene 1.7 - Leah / Doris / Alex (p39-40)

FULL CAST (*on and off stage*)

Thank you five minutes!

(*BETSY disappears back through the door.*)

BRIAN

Hey, did you see my copy of that review? I left it right here.

ARCHIE

Sadly, no. I don't make it a habit of collecting reviews, particularly those of the late, unlamented Mr. Lovett. In reviewing one of my one-man shows, he referred to me as "the least talented person on stage." It's years later and I still don't quite grasp what he meant.

BRIAN

Who do you think killed him?

ARCHIE

I am, as they say, without a clue. But as I told that police detective, if I was going to kill him for giving me a bad review, I would have done it years ago.

START

(*LEAH and DORIS and ALEX rush in from the Dressing Rooms.*)

(*LEAH has her script in her hand. DORIS is making a final tweak to LEAH's costume. ALEX is in his full costume, except for the hat and mustache.*)

LEAH

Why did I say yes to this? Why, why why?

DORIS

It will be fine, dear. We'll all be with you on stage. And remember, you're not doing the whole play.

LEAH

Yes I am. Until I pass out.

DORIS

No, you're only doing the scene you're in. And then you're off, to study the next scene.

ALEX

You do that first scene, then you're off stage for like fifteen pages; then on stage for about seven pages; then the murder scene, which is only six, seven pages, and then intermission.

LEAH

You make it sound so simple. But don't forget, this damned show also has an Act Two.

#2

ALEX

A piece of cake.

LEAH

A huge hunk of cake. Twenty pages right off the bat.

DORIS

I'll help you out. I'm on-stage with you most of that scene. There was many a night when I had to pick up not only my own cues, but Joan's as well. If push comes to shove, I can do your lines in addition to my own. Which, of course, may have a negative impact on audience comprehension.

ALEX

And then I come on and I can help as well.

LEAH

The hell. Knowing you, you'll be staring at the ceiling, checking the lights.

ALEX

Not tonight. I promise. Then you're off stage for a dozen pages.

LEAH

Sure — and then back on stage for a dozen more pages!

ALEX

With me. You'll be with me. I've got you. And if all else fails, you can fall back on your improv skills.

LEAH

If a blank stare and a dry mouth count as improv skills, then I'm all set.

ALEX

Just remember: Yes. And.

LEAH

Yes ... And why did I agree to do this?

END

(BETSY pops her head in at the top of the stairs.)

BETSY

Places, please.

FULL CAST

Thank you places.

(BETSY leaves.)

#3 - Scene 2.1 - Albertson / Betsy / Leah (p48-49)

(LIGHTS down on ARCHIE.)

ALBERTSON

So, she was a nightmare to work with. But is that enough reason to push her down the stairs?

LEAH

Archie wasn't the only one who had a history with Joan and Lovett. Alex does, too. I overheard him talking about it to Brian. And it's worse than what happened to Archie ...

(LIGHTS up on ALEX and BRIAN.)

ALEX

I was in a production of "Doubt" with Joan. She was the old nun. I was the priest. The young nun was played by an actress named Ellen. Lovett gave her the harshest review, just brutal. Cruel. And then Joan piled on, as only Joan could, undermining Ellen at every turn. She did it under the guise of "helping" her, but it wasn't helpful.

BRIAN

That's terrible.

ALEX

It gets worse. Ellen took her own life soon after the show closed. Was it Lovett's fault? Joan's fault? Maybe. Maybe not. Hard to say. But I know this: they both enjoyed — relished — hurting people. Something needs to be done about people like that.

(LIGHTS down on ALEX and BRIAN.)

(LEAH turns back to ALBERTSON.)

ALBERTSON

"Something needs to be done about people like that." That's the closest thing we've heard to a motive.

LEAH

No, I don't believe Alex has it in him to do that. Of course, Gloria has a wholly different idea about who is behind this.

START

(LIGHTS up on GLORIA.)

GLORIA

It's Joan. It's clearly Joan. She kills Lovett and then injures herself to avoid suspicion.

(LIGHTS up on BETSY.)

#3

BETSY

Classic Agatha Christie: The first suspect is always the second victim. Classic.

LEAH

But why would Joan kill Lovett?

GLORIA

A woman scorned. I've always suspected those two were canoodling.

BETSY

And don't forget, Lovett was poisoned — you have to get close to someone to poison them.

GLORIA

So, Lovett tries to dump her and she kills him. Simple.

BETSY

Clean. Effective. Sends a message.

LEAH

Giving her a rave review is a weird way to dump someone.

GLORIA

A farewell gesture of good will perhaps. Tell that adorable young police detective — what's his name again?

LEAH

Detective Albertson.

GLORIA

Tell the redoubtable Detective Albertson to focus his investigation on Joan.

BETSY

And on her alleged accident.

(LIGHTS out on both women. And then the LIGHTS pop back on, but just on GLORIA.)

GLORIA

Oh, and, if it comes up, mention that I'm single. And open minded. A little of the Mrs. Robinson and all that.

END

~~LEAH~~

~~Isn't he a bit young, even for you? What did you say your rule was?~~

#4 - Scene 2.2 - Gloria / Leah (p53-54)

comes in or out of the building. *(She checks it, silences it)* It's odd doing this production, after having done the show out East so recently. I mean, it's the same show. But different. But the same. If that makes sense.

DORIS

Yes. Each production takes on a life of its own, but often each one is, somehow, the same. I'd forgotten that could happen. It coalesces into a family. Sometimes. In the best and occasionally the worst ways. My father — Dr. Albert Pepper —

LEAH

Dr. Pepper? Really?

DORIS

We all have our cross to bear. My father used to chide me about it. "You're going to see your other family, aren't you? Do you like them better than us?" He was teasing of course. He was very supportive. Always. The rest of the family, not so much. They were like, "God I hate the theater." But not my late father. Always in my court.

LEAH

That's great. A great thing to have. It would have been a great thing to have.

(GLORIA ENTERS, also well-dressed)

GLORIA

There you are! Why are you hiding in here?

DORIS

She was just keeping me company. I'm going to mingle for ten more minutes, then go home. Once more unto the breach, dear friends. Once more. *(Touches LEAH'S shoulder as she exits)* So glad to have you in our family.

START *RIS EXITS. GLORIA brandishes a check in one hand, a champagne flute in the other.)*

GLORIA

I come bearing gifts. Large gifts. Hefty gifts.

LEAH

It looks like a check. Unless the champagne is for me.

GLORIA

Perish the thought. It's a check. But you know what it really is? A godsend. Say goodbye to the potholes in the parking lot. Say hello to tuck pointing the chimney, whatever the hell that means. The angels Abe and Bea Kaufman have descended from the heavens and gifted us with a truly generous donation.

#4

LEAH

What are the strings?

GLORIA

Strings? What a cynical response to such a beneficent offering. You should be ashamed. But yes, one small string: More Shaw.

LEAH

More what?

GLORIA

More plays by George Bernard Shaw.

LEAH

Well, I don't know how to break it to the Kaufmans, but there aren't going to be any more plays by George Bernard Shaw. He's been quite unproductive since he died.

GLORIA

No, no, they'd like to see a Shaw play on the schedule every year.

LEAH

Every year? Really? Seriously? I don't think Shaw himself wanted to see a play of his every year. You didn't promise them?

GLORIA

Of course I didn't. (*a beat*) I said you promised.

LEAH

Gloria, we're not going to do a Shaw play every year—

GLORIA

Of course we aren't, silly — the Play Selection Committee would kill the idea in a nano-second. They'd kill that notion faster than the hunters killed Bambi's mother. All I told the Kaufmans was that you'd put it on your season recommendation list to the Board. Trust the committee in all their Kafkaesque splendor — they'll do the dirty work.

LEAH

Fine. I promised myself to start on my season recommendation list this week. There will be a Shaw play on it.

GLORIA

I thank you. And the Kaufmans thank you. Even George B. thanks you. Okay, back into the fray. You know, it would help if you put in an appearance, being new and all. A bright smile and a wink could pay for a new boiler. I'm just saying. ~~Plus, there's a reporter here from the paper. They want to do a story about how you stepped in and saved the day. Local hero.~~

END

#5 - Scene 2.2 - Archie / Leah / Brian (p55-56)

~~LEAH~~

~~I'll be right there. I promise.~~

START ~~BRIAN EXITS, nearly colliding with ARCHIE, who is dragging BRIAN behind him.)~~

ARCHIE

Leah, Leah, you have to hear this. It's classic, just classic. Tell her what you said. This will kill you.

LEAH

Take a number.

BRIAN

I was just asking Archie about his other productions and wanted to know if any of his one-man shows had roles for other actors in them.

ARCHIE

'Do any of your one-man shows have parts for other actors?' This talented yet insanely naive young man never fails to delight. But it got me to thinking: I know you're working on next season's shows and there are a handful of plays that would be great if you want to feature this particular dynamic duo. Like "Deathtrap." "Red." Even "The Gin Game" if you go for gender-blind casting.

LEAH

Those are all great suggestions, Archie, but keep in mind, this is a community theater. Part of the mission is to involve as many artists as possible in each production. We're committed to doing shows that other, larger theaters simply can't afford to do, due to economic restrictions.

ARCHIE

You mean because they actually pay their actors.

LEAH

Sure, if you want to be crass about it. So, we want to do the large cast shows that they can't. Like "Our Town." "The Matchmaker." "The Crucible." "The Madwoman of Chaillot."

ARCHIE

I don't think any professional theater is kicking themselves because they can't afford to do "The Madwoman of Chaillot."

LEAH

You're probably right. Look, how about something from George Bernard Shaw? There are great parts for both of you in "You Never Can Tell." Also in "The Devil's Disciple." Or "Man and Superman."

BRIAN

Yeah. It would be cool to play Superman. How do you suppose they'd do the flying?

ARCHIE

So talented and yet so dim. God rarely gives with both hands, am I right? Glad we spoke. Let me explain Shaw and other deep theatrical mysteries to our young friend here over another glass of champagne ...

END

(ARCHIE leads BRIAN out, as BETSY ENTERS, followed by ALEX.)

BETSY

There you are. People are beginning to talk.

LEAH *(starting to rise)*

I know. I just needed a little breather from continually introducing myself.

BETSY *(gesturing she should sit)*

Give it a minute. A little mystery in a new staff member goes a long way. Don't destroy the illusion until you have to. They'll discover the real you and lose interest soon enough. We're just doing a quick champagne run.

(She turns to ALEX, taking a key off her key chain.)

You'll find the case in the refrigerator in Special Locked Props. Easy to spot — it's the only champagne in there.

LEAH

Wait?! You're letting Alex go into Special Locked Props? I've never even been let in there.

BETSY

You've been here, what, a week? He's been here a lot longer than you.

ALEX

Don't despair. I wasn't allowed in Props — just Props! — for the first year.

LEAH

Well, I've been in Props. And Special Props, if you must know. Not that I'm bragging.

BETSY

So quit your bellyaching. *(To ALEX)* And be quick about this. They're drinking us dry out there.

(BETSY EXITS. ALEX heads toward the back stairs.)

LEAH

Alex, before you ... I just need to ... I haven't had a chance to talk to you ... about Saturday night. The surprising and unrequested kiss.

ALEX

Don't worry about it.