

PUPPETS, PERPS, AND POLYESTER

By

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INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE FESTIVAL MAIN HALLWAY - DAY

We glide through the chaos of a professional summer stock theatre festival's main hallway during prep. It unravels like a Rube Goldberg machine.

Ever so slowly, a gigantic bowl of spaghetti with a giant meatball all covered in cheese is strategically carried in the arms of several crew in a similar fashion to how a coffin is carried by pallbearers.

CREW #1

Alright boys careful the meatball
is top heavy.

Crew #2 scrunches his face.

CREW #1 (CONT'D)

Heyo- numbah two- what's going on
over there.

CREW #2

Sorry I have a sensitivity to lead
paint.

Crew #2 member sneezes.

The meatball falls out and rolls away down the hall.

CREW #1

Dear God. Lookout!

The crew chase after it.

Simultaneously, stage managers and assistants in headsets walk in from various doorways they attempt to dodge the giant meatball, resulting in their wired headsets falling off.

STAGE MANAGER

Someone stop that godforsaken
meatball!

As we travel further down the hallway, an actress wearing a fur coat and nothing else bursts out from a backstage door.

JUNITH BLONDE (29), A very serious actress dedicated to her craft.

Junith rips a puppet in a mime costume off her hand and hurls it at the director, who storms after her.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (42), the head of the reimagined summer stock theater festival at Dottington.

JUNITH BLONDE
This play is a joke! I hate you!

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Darling wait! It's just creative differences!

As Junith disrespects Cornelius she trips on the headset wires that came from the crew dodging the meatball. Cornelius runs over but hesitates of how to help without violating her now exposed body (not visible on screen).

JUNITH BLONDE (O.S)
Help me up you buffoon!

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
I am afraid I don't feel comfortable crossing this boundary with you.

In this moment a mysterious hooded figure marches past the camera holding a Jim Henson style puppet. It goes unnoticed.

The mysterious figure gets lost in a group of wardrobe crew who run in to aid the star, Junith Blonde.

A CRASH is heard from the opposite side of the hall. The giant meatball crashed into a set piece of the moon landing. Several actors in vintage British police outfits lay on the floor after being run over by the meatball.

Crew rush in.

ACTOR 1
I can't find my badge!

ACTOR 2
My leg!

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
This meatball will be investigated!
Someone will be held accountable!

Crew #2 begins to breakdown into tears.

At the very very end of this long and chaotic hallway is an open door with a sign that reads "costume shop". The supervisor peeks her head out of the door and retreats back in rather unbothered and closes the door.

JESS ICKA (45), Costume shop supervisor. Everyone's honorary workplace aunt.

INT. COSTUME SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Jess moves elegantly through the costume shop. Sketches are pinned to bulletin boards. Fabric lay across tables marked and half cut. Puppets propped up in the midst of their creation.

Stitchers move swiftly from one station to another as garments are constructed.

JESS ICKA

It's a miracle anything get's done
in theatre. So in other words we
are miracle workers, ladies!

At the very very end of this room is a small wooden desk. At this desk a girl with pink ribbon tied into a bow in her hair runs fabric through an industrial sewing machine.

ELEANOR WARNER (22), Assistant costume designer. Does NOT negotiate with terrorists.

Eleanor goes through the meticulous motions that pertain to the art of making a miniature pinstriped suit jacket for an old man puppet.

LEONARD (4 days), an old man puppet.

JESS ICKA (CONT'D)

Leonard looks rather sharp. Good
job Eleanor.

ELEANOR

He's absolutely ready for his debut
on the stage.

Jess looks down at Eleanor's desk and sees design sketches. All the designs are faceless.

JESS ICKA

Are these yours?

ELEANOR

Yeah.

JESS ICKA

I love the career aspirations! One
note. Learn to draw faces.

The shop's attention shifts for approximately 2 seconds as a somewhat well known actor in a macho gangster suit with tight pants waddles in from the dressing room.

DREW POUPEÉD, (30), An actor.

Poupeéd makes his way towards the supervisor's desk, close to Eleanor's work space.

DREW POUPÉED

Hey! These pants are striped...
That's an issue! Remember?

The pants are plaid.

Jess approaches Poupeéd with the tactics of a gentle parent.

JESS ICKA

I see, I see. I thought we agreed
that those leaned towards the
classification of plaid.

DREW POUPÉED

I see you. I hear you. I'm
struggling to understand. Look-
look at my pants.

Jess gazes down at Poup's tight plaid pants. She takes a
breath and reluctantly examines.

JESS ICKA

Maybe if they were a looser fit you
would-

Poup interrupts.

DREW POUPÉED

Gonna stop you right there- I
specifically noted that I can't
wear stripes or be in the
accompaniment of others in stripes.

Jess looks at Poupeéd. He looks away for validation from an
outside source.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)

You!

Poup points at Eleanor. She happens to be the next closest
body to this situation. She holds the small pinstriped suit
jacket and is actively placing it on Leonard the puppet.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)

Look at my pants.

Eleanor sits back and observes Poup's pants.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
I cannot give what I need to give
to this craft without feeling like
I truly embody this character. And
this character's pants refuse to be
striped.

Eleanor pauses to carefully think through her words.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
Why aren't you talking?

ELEANOR
If I recall...I think the look that
the designer had in mind involved
more of a crissy crossy like
pattern.

Drew Poupeéd is visibly offended by this remark.

DREW POUPÉED
Wowwwwwwww. No really just wow.
Crissy crossy huh?

Eleanor looks to Jess for help.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
This department is unbelievable.

JESS ICKA
Mr. Poup-

DREW POUPÉED
No. Just no. First you all shame me
for my slender body and creative
needs. And now look at this.

Poupeéd, unable to bend his knees due to the tightness of his
pants, waddles towards the small pinstriped suit on Leonard
next to Eleanor.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
This is just a blatant attack.

Poupeéd grabs Leonard the puppet by his little arm. Eleanor's
body language resembles that of a police officer witnessing
hostage situation.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
Tell me what this is.

ELEANOR
Let Leonard go.

DREW POUPÉED

Leonard?

ELEANOR

The puppet's name is Leonard. You are damaging his little arm. Let him go.

Poup hits the puppet over. Eleanor lifts him into her arms.

DREW POUPÉED

The stupid puppet is wearing stripes. It is crystal clear that NO ONE HERE read my treatise on why stripes, even in the accompaniment of a co-star, make slender bodies look unappealing in stage lighting. I can't go on like this. And I certainly will not go on alongside this fugly little jacket.

Poupeéd releases his talons from Leonard the puppet. Eleanor checks on Leonard to make sure he is not ripped or injured. Poupeéd turns away ready to waddle out with aggression.

JESS ICKA

You know what.

DREW POUPÉED

What?

JESS ICKA

I think we can make something work.

DREW POUPÉED

Aw thank you love.

Jess calmly grabs a pair of pants on a hanger. She hands them to Poup.

Before Poup walks out he stops and turns to Eleanor.

DREW POUPÉED

Assistant person. What is your name?

ELEANOR

Eleanor.

DREW POUPÉED

Count your days Puppet girl. Something tells me you won't last long in this industry.

Jess and Eleanor watch Poup leave. Jess turns to observe Eleanor's small pinstriped suit jacket on Leonard.

JESS ICKA

Don't ever snap at an actor again,
especially Drew Poupéed.

ELEANOR

That jacket took me two days and he
assaulted Leonard.

Jess places her hand with care on Leonard's small shoulder.

JESS ICKA

Fix Leonard's jacket and apologize
to Drew Poupéed.

Jess walks away but looks back at Eleanor.

JESS ICKA (CONT'D)

Once you finish tonight make sure
you set Leonard for top of day.

Eleanor sits in front of Leonard with his little pinstriped suit jacket.

Defeated, Eleanor takes the little suit jacket off and carefully folds it. She gently places it in a bin off to the side with other small garments. She sits with nothing in front of her and she starts again from scratch.

INT. DOTTINGTON COSTUME SHOP - 2AM

The costume shop is empty except for Eleanor.

Eleanor runs a new small suit coat through the industrial sewing machine one last time. She pulls it out and snips the threads.

She holds the new jacket up to Leonard who sits on her desk.

Cornelius Cashmere barges into the costume shop.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE

Where is Drew?

ELEANOR

Don't know Haven't seen him since
the pants incident.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE

Ugh. I'm gonna kill him if he ruins
my show!

Cornelius whips his large scarf around his neck and storms out of the shop and clicks a light switch.

The overheard light in the shop shuts off leaving Eleanor and Leonard in the dark.

ELEANOR
I'm still here! Hello?

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway lights flicker as Eleanor walks. She turns past the remnants of the giant meatball.

She carries Leonard in the utmost proper way that someone would if they had serious respect for a puppet.

Eleanor glances into the several rooms she passes. All empty and in darkness.

As she approaches the backstage door Junith emerges from the darkness turned towards the stage. Tears stream down her chin but her face is full of rage.

JUNITH BLONDE
You'll regret this.

Eleanor stops at the door.

JUNITH BLONDE (CONT'D)
Move.

Junith brushes past her but knocks Leonard and Eleanor's tote bag out of her arms.

ELEANOR
Hey!

Junith continues walking quickly down the hallway fuming.

Eleanor crouches down to the tile floor to pick up Leonard and brushes him off while checking him.

Alone, she begins to pick up her things while holding Leonard.

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor props the backstage door slightly open for a sliver of light.

Eleanor gently places Leonard the puppet on a stool in the wings of the stage. She pulls out a small lint roller from her apron.

She overhears what sounds like a wicked annoying man complaining. It is Drew Poupéed.

DREW POUPÉED (O.S.)
Well that's just stupid. Are you
stupid? Who do you even think you
are?

Eleanor is visibly entertained by the drama ensuing. She continues her work and pulls out a rather small comb to fix Leonard the puppet's hair.

DREW POUPÉED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Alright- I get it. I'm sorry. Put
that down. There's no need for
this.

Eleanor pulls out a miniature cologne and spritz Leonard on the left and right side of his little chest as the conversation on stage escalates.

DREW POUPÉED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
STOP STOP! AHFFF! (scream, shriek,
etc.)

Eleanor frantically yet gently places the miniature bottle of cologne down. She then grabs Leonard and hides behind the curtains. She closes her eyes and holds Leonard close to her.

After hearing a series of disturbing sound effects that would relate to one's murder, she hears footsteps leave in the distance.

Slowly, Eleanor releases herself from the curtains. Still hugging Leonard, she gathers the strength to head toward the exit backstage. As she gravitates toward her path to an escape she hears the faint desperation of the talent.

DREW POUPÉED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Helpppppp meeeeee (gargle & gasp)

Eleanor stops.

DREW POUPÉED (CONT'D)
Anyone...please.

Eleanor turns around and approaches the stage with Leonard. She arms herself with fabric scissors from her apron.

A spotlight beams down onto the stage. All else is pitch black.

Covered in what appears to be stab wounds. Alongside him on the floor- a puppet mirroring the horrors that are displayed on Drew Poupéed's body (also in tight pants). Eleanor covers the eyes of Leonard the puppet.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry.

Poup is dead.

EXT. DOTTINGTON 69' CENTER - EARLY MORNING

Three of the Dottington Police Department's cars are curbed up outside the theatre. There is an excessive amount of caution tape everywhere.

All of the Broadway, Off Broadway, and Off Off Broadway cast and crew are gathered outside visibly distraught.

Cornelius Cashmere stands with large hair, a wife-beater, and so many scarves. He rolls his own cigarette while talking to the local police.

SEYMOUR GOO (23), Wanted to be a Boston cop but has asthma so they wouldn't take him.

SEYMOUR GOO

Okay- so you are sayin you guys
just leave all these fancy
buildings open 24/7 and have no way
to know who comes in and out.

Cornelius finishes rolling his cigarette.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE

Babe... I told you, we are in load
in.

Seymour takes a deep breath.

SEYMOUR GOO

I'm gonna need you to get on my
level. A young man was murdered in
your theatre.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE

Our company is leasing it. But yes
continue.

Seymour looks around in disbelief.

SEYMOUR GOO
Who here is in charge?

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Of which department?

Nearby Eleanor sits on a curb wrapped in a blanket with Leonard the puppet who is wrapped in a puppet sized blanket.

Eleanor makes eye contact folks gathered behind the caution tape. They stare and whisper.

Eleanor cuddles Leonard the puppet closer.

Suddenly, a mysterious yet romantic breeze rolls in that hits Eleanor and Leonard in the face. In the distance- across from Eleanor and in front of Seymour and Cornelius, a rugged detective holding a large notebook ducks under the ungodly amount of caution tape.

HANK JUSTICE (27), Mathew McConaughey adjacent. Wears a Brown Jacket.

Cornelius is hit by the romanic breeze.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry... I'm gonna be honest, I just completely lost my train of thought. Did you feel a mysterious yet romantic breeze roll through?

Officer Seymour Goo turns his attention away from Cornelius.

Hank Justice waves a badge to one of Seymour's accompanying officers in the distance.

Seymour Goo closes his far smaller notepad.

SEYMOUR GOO
Stay here Sir.

Seymour walks across the pavement towards Hank Justice who appears to be closely investigating the grass in front of the building.

SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
You a fed or something?

Hank does not break his focus from the grass. His hand glides over the top of the lawn in a sort of existential yet casual way.

HANK JUSTICE
Fed, federal, it's all the same
really.

SEYMOUR GOO
Who the fuck are you dawg?

In this moment an older larger man in a police uniform approaches from behind and grabs Seymour by his shoulder.

CHIEF BUCKY (67), He has buck teeth. Has never seen a crime before.

CHIEF BUCKY
Language.

SEYMOUR GOO
Sir, with all due respect, we have
a full blown homicide. The least of
our concerns should be curse words.
We gotta catch this asshole.

CHIEF BUCKY
Son, on my force we don't cuss. The
seven of us gotta have better
morals than the booger eater
criminals out there who-

Hank Justice breaks his concentration on the grass for the first time to look up at Chief Bucky and Seymour Goo.

HANK JUSTICE
Did you say seven?

CHIEF BUCKY
The seven finest in all of the
Berkshires.

Hank Justice slowly stands up.

HANK JUSTICE
Are there only seven officers in
your department?

CHIEF BUCKY
Technically eight if you count
Killer.

Chief Bucky points to a small blind and deaf cockapoo in the window of a cop car across from them.

CHIEF BUCKY (CONT'D)
But she's retired.

HANK JUSTICE

I see.

Seymour visibly agitated.

SEYMOUR GOO

We don't have funding like the feds
do. We gotta be creative.

Hank swiftly pulls his hand out for a handshake.

HANK JUSTICE

Sorry brother- Detective Hank
Justice.

The Chief's eyes widen. Chief Bucky intercepts Seymour Goo's
handshake opportunity by swiftly grabbing Hank's hand.

CHIEF BUCKY

Wow great Name! Detective, we
appreciate the support. Chief Bucky
Dottington PD.

Hank tries to release his hand from Chief Bucky's grip.
Finally, he frees his hand and looks at Seymour.

CHIEF BUCKY (CONT'D)

This is Seymour- our rookie.

SEYMOUR GOO

Officer Seymour Goo.

Hank Justice nonchalantly looks around.

HANK JUSTICE

Witnesses?

SEYMOUR GOO

I just talked to the creative
director of the festival. From what
I gathered they leave the entrances
and exits of the theatre space
unlocked at all hours. No cameras.
The victim suffered several stab
wounds to the chest and abdomen.
Based on pattern of the wounds we
believe a knife was used. We got
one eye witness.

Hank nods his head but doesn't look at Seymour when he
speaks.

HANK JUSTICE

And what'd she say?

SEYMOUR GOO
Oh I haven't spoken to her yet but-

Hank calmly takes his sunglasses off to reveal a slightly smaller pair of sunglasses.

HANK JUSTICE
You haven't talked to the key witness yet?

Seymour adjusts his stance.

SEYMOUR GOO
Well I've been taking note of all possible entryways and exits to further understand the geography of the-

HANK JUSTICE
Where's the witness?

The Chief points.

CHIEF BUCKY
The traumatized one with the stuffed animal thing.

Eleanor sees the Chief pointing. She adjusts her demeanor and sits up.

Hank Justice immediately strides over to Eleanor. Seymour Goo trails.

EXT. DOTTINGTON 69' CENTER NEAR THE CURB- CONTINUOUS

Hank Justice calmly takes a breath and opens his large notebook.

Seymour stands slightly behind Hank and moves to be next to Eleanor at an equal distance that Hank stands.

HANK JUSTICE
Hello miss, I'm Detective Justice.
I have a few questions for you.

He waves his badge and quickly puts it back into his pocket.

SEYMOUR GOO
And I'm Officer Goo. I also have questions.

Seymour pulls out his small notepad.

HANK JUSTICE	SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
Now can you please tell me your-	What were you doing the night of-

An awkward pause occurs between all three.

HANK JUSTICE (CONT'D)
That's funny.

SEYMOUR GOO
There's not one funny thing about
this.

Eleanor looks at Leonard the puppet and then back at the two officers.

HANK JUSTICE	SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
If you could in your best words describe-	Can you run down what exactly occurred prior to-

SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
Detective.

Hank Justice gestures with his hands toward Seymour.

SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
Can you walk us through the events
of last night Miss?

Eleanor takes a deep breathe.

ELEANOR
Yeah sure ummm. I stayed late to
fix Leonard's suit jacket.

SEYMOUR GOO	HANK JUSTICE
Who's Leonard?	Who's Leonard?

ELEANOR
This is Leonard.

Eleanor gestures to the old man puppet by her side.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
And I went to set him for top of
day when-

SEYMOUR GOO
What's that?

Eleanor brings out her teacher voice.

ELEANOR

It's setting up the props right off stage for their use in rehearsal.

Seymour nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

That's when I heard Mr. Poupèed talking to someone and it escalated really fast.

Hank Justice appears to be drawing the puppet in his notebook.

HANK JUSTICE

And so we just need confirmation that he fell on top of the sharp object.

Eleanor tilts her head confused of what Hank said.

ELEANOR

I don't want to step on your profesh toes but I feel like... the "m" word might be a thing here.

HANK JUSTICE

I'm not familiar- is that a sex thing or a bad word.

Eleanor interjects.

ELEANOR

... Murder.

In this moment everyone's attention nearby turns to the three of them.

HANK JUSTICE

Of course- but we can't rule out all possibilities. Do you know how many lives are lost every year due to falling on pointy objects? The answer is too many. When will people learn... we must apply the same logic of holding scissors blade down to all pointy objects.

Hank nods his head as if he lost a friend to a pointy object accident.

Eleanor nods her head.

ELEANOR
Yeah no thats so sad. But I'm
confident it wasn't that.

SEYMOUR GOO
Did you see them?

ELEANOR
No I was hiding and praying for my
life at the time.

SEYMOUR GOO
Where?

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor (with Leonard still in her grasp) points to a bundle
of curtains in the corner of the backstage.

ELEANOR
I was in there.

Nearby sounds of police officers moving around the crime
scene and cameras clicking.

HANK JUSTICE
And it was just you back here? No
one else was in the building to
your knowledge?

Eleanor hesitates to answer.

ELEANOR
Well yes. Before I set
Leonard...Cornelius Cashmere ran
in. He seemed anxious.

HANK JUSTICE
Is that right?

ELEANOR
He was looking for Mr. Poupéed. And
he said...

BEGIN: FLASHBACK

INT. COSTUME SHOP - MOMENTS BEFORE MURDER

Cornelius has sweat dripping from his face. He touches his
forehead nervously.

In his hand is an opened letter and a sharp silver letter opener.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
I'm gonna kill him if he ruins my show.

END: FLASHBACK

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE BACKSTAGE - PRESENT

SEYMOUR GOO
Whoa. That's a- that's a possible murder weapon.

HANK JUSTICE
This could be an easy open and shut case. Is that the only person you saw?

ELEANOR
No. It wasn't. I saw one more person. Junith Blonde exited backstage looking upset.

SEYMOUR GOO
How so?

ELEANOR
She was crying and she turned to the stage and said...

BEGIN: FLASHBACK

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE MAIN HALLWAY - MOMENTS BEFORE MURDER

Junith stands in the doorway looking at the stage from where she came from.

Her face is full of rage. Her hands are curled tightly into fists with one gripping a knife.

JUNITH BLONDE
You'll regret this.

END: FLASHBACK

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE BACKSTAGE - PRESENT

HANK JUSTICE
No way. A knife?

ELEANOR
Well, I think it was a prop.

SEYMOUR GOO
Yeah, it seems a little too
convenient to be that.

HANK JUSTICE
Which is why it very well could be
her. Convenience is just a high
five from the detective Gods, Goo.

Eleanor takes a step back ready to flight instead of fight.

SEYMOUR GOO
Where are you going?

ELEANOR
Nowhere- I was just-

SEYMOUR GOO
...Because you've been the most
sane person I've met so far. We
gotta keep this chick around. Super
helpful thank you!

Eleanor releases a breathe of relief.

ELEANOR
Yeah no theatre has its characters
for sure. I'm just glad I'm not in
film. Those people are the worst
trust me.

Hank Justice examines the most random and useless items
backstage.

Seymour interrupts Hank's investigating.

SEYMOUR GOO
Welp. Don't you wanna take a peek.
You know at the crime and such?

Hank Justice turns his attention toward Seymour but is still
in deep thought.

HANK JUSTICE

The thing about murders is you have to look from angles that don't make sense. Some call it useless. I call it investigating.

SEYMOUR GOO

But... the body. Shouldn't we-

HANK JUSTICE

Goo... I don't find joy or interest in seeing the remnants of a tragedy.

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE STAGE - SECONDS LATER

HANK JUSTICE

Fascinating.

Hank carefully observes the body but his attention is drawn to the corresponding puppet that lies next to it on the stage. The puppet mirrors the horrors of the crime.

SEYMOUR GOO

Yes. The puppet was found next to the body correct?

Eleanor stands far away off stage and shouts back.

ELEANOR

Yeah that was there when I got here!

Seymour looks around the stage.

SEYMOUR GOO

And you didn't happen to see a sharp object that was the murder weap-

HANK JUSTICE

These wounds don't look like a knife wound.

Eleanor shouts back.

ELEANOR

I didn't see anything near him other than the murder puppet!

A cloth is carefully laid over Poupèed's corpse. Just before a small puppet sized cloth is about to be laid on the puppet, Hank holds his hand up to stop the action.

HANK JUSTICE

Miss.

Eleanor shouts once more from a distance away.

ELEANOR

Yeah whats up?!

Hank looks closely at the puppet.

HANK JUSTICE

This stitch work is pretty
impressive... wouldn't you agree?

Eleanor pauses but ultimately shouts back.

ELEANOR

I thought it was pretty
professional!

Hank Justice squints his eyes in deep contemplation as he
turns toward Eleanor.

HANK JUSTICE

And these puppets are not in the
existing puppet arsenal for the
show?

ELEANOR

That is not our puppet! At least I
don't think it is.

HANK JUSTICE

But you make puppets?

ELEANOR

I am more involved in constructing
the puppet garments!

HANK JUSTICE

But you can make puppets and you
are the only one here that does?

ELEANOR

I minored in puppetry construction,
yes.

Eleanor winces at her remarks.

In this moment a CLINK sound is heard from above. A
mysterious wooden object falls from the catwalk.

It hits Seymour Goo on the head. All six of the police officers in the room unsheathe their firearms. They all point in different directions. Hank looks up.

HANK JUSTICE
Who goes there?

A giant spotlight echoes on as it points to the catwalk.

Cornelius Cashmere looks down from the catwalk above.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Oh my- Vic kill that light!

VIC TIM (46), Both lighting director and lighting assistant. Has a pony tail and only wears black cargo pants.

Tim peeks head out from the control room balcony. He gives a thumbs up and the light turns off.

Cornelius gathers himself as he looks downward.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (CONT'D)
I hate to be that guy but my vintage briar pipe just totally slipped from my hand. Does someone have eyes on it? It did belong to Charles Dickens so please handle it with care.

Hank picks up the wooden pipe that hit Seymour's head. All the cops put their firearms away.

Seymour takes out his inhaler and puffs it.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (CONT'D)
No way I used to have something just like that.

SEYMOUR GOO
No this isn't a- I have asthma...
You can't be in here!

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Hold for a hot sec.

The director walks across the catwalk down and around to where everyone is.

He arrives on the stage a little out of breath. He grabs the vintage pipe from Hank.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (CONT'D)
Thanks so much.

SEYMOUR GOO
You can't be here.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Babes... the show must go on. We
have invited dress in 3 days and
the understudy needs to lock into
his new role.

A young scrawny man who resembles Edward Scissorhands
approaches with a script.

JACK SAWN (21) Poupeéd's understudy. Is afraid of everything.

JACK SAWN
Cornelius, thank you so much for
this opportunity.

Jack turns to the police.

JACK SAWN (CONT'D)
Please don't let me die too.

In this moment crew members appear in the theatre carrying
random objects and everyone seems to be getting back to work.
From the side doors it is visible that actors are outside in
the hall rehearsing their lines.

SEYMOUR GOO
This is an investigation. This is a
crime scene. You can't be in here.

Cornelius appears annoyed.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
But you guys have the roly things
out and are cleaning up I thought.

Cornelius points to a large gurney.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE (CONT'D)
And the main guy said you were
basically all done.

HANK JUSTICE
What main guy?

Chief Bucky appears from the front doors of the theatre, star
struck by a couple b-list celebrities.

Cornelius waves and gives Chief Bucky a thumbs up. Chief
Bucky waves and reciprocates the thumbs up.

HANK JUSTICE (CONT'D)
Shouldn't you guys be grieving this loss? A man was just killed. The show can't possibly go on.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
But it must! Detective...

HANK JUSTICE
Justice.

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Justice...We are artists. We grieve through our art. We must express ourselves in this tragedy. Once more the show must go on. This is the big leagues... we are DTF.

SEYMOUR GOO
Excuse me?

CORNELIUS CASHMERE
Dottington Theatre Festival. This summer stock is the road to Broadway officer...Goo. Now, if you excuse me the show needs to be going on now.

Cornelius waves and more crew flood into the theatre. The little cloth that was held off by Hank is laid over the murder puppet on stage. It covers the puppet's corpse. Then Poupèed's body is picked up and thrown on a gurney. The murder puppet is picked up and placed in a large plastic bag.

Eleanor watches deeply disturbed as the puppet is zipped up in the plastic bag.

Eleanor hugs Leonard closer and covers his puppet eyes. Chief Bucky approaches closer towards the stage.

SEYMOUR GOO
Sir, shouldn't we be shutting this whole thing down?

HANK JUSTICE
Chief, I have to agree with the rookie here. This show has to stop.

CHIEF BUCKY
I think we can find a happy medium. Let these fine fancy people have their show. And we can find the killer.

SEYMOUR GOO

Respectfully sir, that makes no sense. What if the perp decides to kill again?

CHIEF BUCKY

Two things make money in this town. The nickel museum. This summer broadway thing. And the nickel museum was robbed 14 years ago. (Somberly) So they only got half their nickels now which accounts for about 45 cents.

ELEANOR

That's so sad.

Everyone looks at Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

This is obviously much more sad though.

Seymour nods and begins to walk away awkwardly with Eleanor. Hank turns to Chief.

HANK JUSTICE

Chief. From one mighty fine brother in blue to another...If these people don't comply. We have to shut it down. There's no need for anymore drama in this town.

The Chiefs sighs and nods in agreement.

CHIEF BUCKY

A last resort, Detective. For now I've been advised to try collaboration.

INT. HALLWAY DOTTINGTON THEATRE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Eleanor (still holding Leonard), Seymour Goo, and Hank Justice stand in the hallway together.

The human sized gurney rolls past them. The puppet in a giant zip lock bag follows after.

SEYMOUR GOO

This show simply can't go on. Right?

HANK JUSTICE
Unfortunately, it appears it will.

Seymour looks around the hallway at the cast and crew returning to their normal work flow.

In this moment a stage manager sees Eleanor with Leonard the Puppet.

MARE E. (24), Stage Manager.

MARE E
Oh my godddd. Eleanor! We've been looking for this little guy everywhere.

ELEANOR
Don't worry- I've got him.

MARE E
That's super great but we actually need him for rehearsal.

ELEANOR
Rehearsal isn't for another hour so I can hang with him till then.

MARE E
That's so sweet but absolutely not. Props need to be accounted for.

Mare E reaches to grab Leonard from Eleanor. She pulls him away and steps backwards.

ELEANOR
His name is Leonard!

Everyone pauses and stares at Eleanor.

MARE E
Whoa.

ELEANOR
Sorry. I'm sorry Mare E. I didn't mean to...

Seymour steps in.

SEYMOUR GOO
She's had a really long night and morning.

Seymour looks at Hank.

SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)
We shouldn't bring her for
questioning right now. She needs...
a break.

Hank nods.

MARE E
I get it. The murder stuff is hard.
I can't imagine. But the actors
need the puppet to get into
character like right now.

Seymour turns to Eleanor, signaling her to hand off Leonard.

Eleanor slowly hands Leonard off to Mare E.

MARE E (CONT'D)
There we go.

Eleanor now looks devastated.

MARE E (CONT'D)
On a good note... New jacket looks
amazeeee!

Eleanor looks longingly at Leonard.

ELEANOR
It's kinda sad now that I look at
it.

MARE E
He really put you through the
ringer. Rest in Peace though. So
talented. He will be missed.

Seymour and Hank look at each other.

MARE E (CONT'D)
Are you guys gonna go to the thing?

SEYMOUR GOO
What thing?

Mare E points at the bulletin board in the hallway.

MARE E
The celly of life.

ELEANOR
Oh wow. They organized that so
fast.

MARE E

Well kinda- it's gonna take place
in combination with the preplanned
tropical themed party at
Cornelius's house. Everyone's
going.

Mare E walks away with Leonard the puppet. Eleanor watches
closely as Leonard is carried down the hall with little care.

INT. DOTTINGTON THEATRE MAIN HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

The trio stands in front of the bulletin board observing the
party flyer. It is decorated with various tropical clipart
and says "Rager in paradise" and in fresh marker at the
bottom it says "+celebration of life party tonight at
Cornelius Cashmere's home".

Hank looks from the poster to Eleanor.

HANK JUSTICE

I guess we'll be seeing you
tonight. Unless you have some
reason you wouldn't want to attend?

ELEANOR

No no. I'll be there.

Hank closes his large notebook very slowly and stares at
Eleanor.

HANK JUSTICE

I bet you will.

ELEANOR

Yeah I just said I was.

HANK JUSTICE

Good now if you excuse me I need to
go talk to Mrs. Junith Blonde.

Hank walks away as mysteriously as possible.

SEYMOUR GOO

That's what I'm doing. I'll wrap
this up and be there shortly.

Seymour is left awkwardly standing in front of Eleanor.

SEYMOUR GOO (CONT'D)

That guy is a freak.

ELEANOR

For a second there I got scared he thought I did it.

SEYMOUR GOO

Everyone is a suspect. Definitely don't leave town.

ELEANOR

Can't anyways I have work. I'm just glad I'll be ruled out with DNA evidence.

SEYMOUR GOO

Unfortunately, DNA was voted down in the town budget last fiscal year.

ELEANOR

Are-are you serious?

SEYMOUR GOO

Taxpayers didn't want to pay more. Only crime we have had was that robbery at the nickel museum years back.

ELEANOR

What does that mean?

SEYMOUR GOO

Means there's only 45 cents at the nickel museum and we do things the old fashioned way.

ELEANOR

So that must mean you are an experienced and talented police officer right?

SEYMOUR GOO

I would say so now that I've been on the job for six months. But this could be my big break. Maybe I can finally be transferred to a department near Boston.

ELEANOR

I need to stop talking to you. It's making me feel significantly more concerned and honestly ill.

SEYMOUR GOO

I get it. We'll bring you into the station tomorrow. We need to pick at your theatre person brain to really understand what the heck is going on here.

ELEANOR

I have work but it's just a light 14 hour shift so I may be able to find time.

Seymour points at a different section of the bulletin board.

SEYMOUR GOO

I think you're actually very free.

Eleanor confused, quickly looks at the bulletin board to see the costume shop schedule. Eleanor's name is at the bottom highlighted in red with text that says "off duty".

Eleanor slowly backs away from the bulletin board and looks at her surroundings. Everyone else in the production and crew move in a chaotic symphony around her.

Eleanor spots her costume shop supervisor carrying several prom dresses towards the costume shop. Eleanor diligently follows through the doors leaving Seymour in the hall.

INT. DOTTINGTON COSTUME SHOP - CONTINUOUS

ELEANOR

Jess- I didn't see my name on the schedule. Wasn't sure if there was a mistake?

Jess walks around the shop seemingly busy as she checks on other girls sewing.

JESS ICKA

No mistakes here.

ELEANOR

It's just I have to finish Leonard's top hat for the musical number.

JESS ICKA

Fantastic news- I gave that project to Kate Lynn.

ELEANOR

Oh my god. Am I fired?