

BILLY. We could use a miracle!

GERRY. Saint Genesisus—pray for us!

OTHERS. Saint Genesisus—pray for us!

GERRY. Okay, places, everyone—I'm going offstage.

SMITTY. Saul—who's Saint Genesisus?

SAUL. The patron saint of actors—he performed for the Roman Emperor and they had him put to death.

SMITTY. Oh, boy. I hope there are no emperors out front tonight!

SAUL. Amen!

(MUSIC STARTS; at climax, curtain opens on Act One tableau of "Murder Most Foul," as before.)

SMITTY. (Featherdusting safe like crazy.) "Lord Dudley, will there be anyone at dinner tonight besides Sir Percival the famous archaeologist, Doctor Rex Forbes the famous scientist, and Stephen Sellers the famous millionaire?"

HENRY. "Other than myself and Lady Margaret, my wife, and the lovely socialite Diana Lassiter, here . . . no, Doris."

SMITTY. (Starts toward doorway, right.) "That's what I thought." (Exits, and from Offstage, we hear her give a loud:) Whew!

HENRY. (Reacts slightly, then plunges onward.) "I say, Diana, have you yet located that book on famous jewels of India that I told you must be there on the shelf?"

VIOLET. (Finding book she has been deliberately overlooking.) "Ah, yes! Here it is!" (Faces him, flips book open, reacts.) "Oh, I say, Lord Dudley—you didn't tell me there was a curse on the Ranchipur Delhi—I mean the Darjeeling Ruby—Diamond!"

HENRY. (Trying to save her.) It is known by many names, my dear!

VIOLET. It is? . . . Oh, yes, it certainly is! Lots of 'em.

HENRY. (Reverts to his normal line, not realizing it no longer fits, especially as a response to VIOLET.) "Fiddlesticks! A lot of hogwash!" (Realizes.) That curse, I mean! . . . "Damned superstitious rot!" (VIOLET, by now totally "up," just stares at him; he desperately reverse-feeds her line to her.) But—doesn't the book distinctly say—?

VIOLET. (Home at last.) Yes! "But the book distinctly says that Lord Clyde Fortescue, the first owner of the—the Darjeeling Diamond!—was found floating in his tub—!" Uh—I don't mean the diamond was found floating in his tub!

HENRY. No-no, of course not. But—what was? Eh?

VIOLET. He was! "In his own blood!" (Stops.)

HENRY. (Prompts.) And the next owner—?

VIOLET. (Back on the track.) "And the next owner, Sir Giles Renfrew, had no sooner purchased the ruby—the diamond—from Lord Clyde's estate, when he was found floating in his own stables by his favorite horse! . . . Trampled, I mean! (In front row, PHYLLIS gives an audible moan; VIOLET flashes a frantic look that way, then slogs onward:) "And the next owner—"

HENRY. (Forgets he's supposed to interrupt; belatedly remembers.) "Balderdash! Nonsense! A lot of old wives' tales!"

VIOLET. (Eliding her line a bit.) They're all dead, aren't they? . . . The owners. Not the old wives.

HENRY. "Yes, but consider: I bought the ruby this morning—and I'm fine!" (Starts to put hand to his head, realizes and corrects:) "The diamond!" (Hand to head again, sways.)

VIOLET. "Lord Dudley—is anything wrong?"

PHYLLIS. (Just audible.) Everything! Everything!

HENRY. (As if he hadn't heard—but we can see he

had.) "No-no. Nothing. Just one of my beastly attacks."

VIOLET. (*Jumping ahead two speeches.*) "You don't suppose—?"

HENRY. (*Determined to get his line in.*) Don't you wonder how long I've been having them?!

VIOLET. Oh! "How long have you had them?"

HENRY. "Since this morning."

VIOLET. (*Totally lost, improvises.*) That long, huh?

HENRY. (*Controlling his rage.*) Do you suppose that I suppose—?!

VIOLET. "You don't suppose—?"

HENRY. "Ridiculous! Sheer coincidence! Merest chance!"

(SMITTY bolts Onstage, and since their panic is contagious.)

SMITTY. Doctor Dud is here, Lord Forbley!

HENRY. (*Staggered, insects as though naming the fiancee.*) "Ah! It is your fiance Diana!" (*Both women stare at him.*) "—your fiance, Diana!"

(PHYLLIS sighs audibly.)

VIOLET. "Yes, being engaged to the world-famous scientist has made me the envy of all the girls in London—in England—in London, England!"

HENRY. ("Up.") Uh.

SMITTY. (*After a moment, tries to help by saying his line.*) "Ah, but a lovely belle like you deserves to be rung!" (*Thinks.*) "—to have a ring!"

VIOLET. (*To SMITTY, naturally.*) "You flatter me, Lord Dudley."

HENRY. Uh.

AGGIE. (*Off. Giving him his line, in a hoarse whisper.*) "Doris-will-you-show-the-gentleman-in"!

SMITTY. (*Before he can even echo the cue.*) "At once, milord!" (*She exits; no one enters.*)

AGGIE. (*Off.*) Saul!

SAUL. (*Off.*) Coming! (*Dashes Onstage, gives clumsy bow.*) "Lord Dudley. Diana."

HENRY. "I'm sure you young people will want to be alone. I'll just toddle off to my room and putter about." (*As in earlier error, moves to Upstage doorway, starts to exit Right, but stops as we all hear.*)

GERRY. (*Off.*) You're going the wrong way!

HENRY. Oh! (*Turns full about and exits Left, instead, so that we see him passing Upstage of the window as he goes.*)

SAUL. (*Who has seen this, of course.*) He—he must be going to use the outside stairway!

VIOLET. (*Likewise.*) Yes. That must be it. (*Pause.*) Well—

SAUL. (*Galvanized back into character, shouts windowward.*) "Really, Lord Dudley, you needn't go."

HENRY. (*From in back of garden-backdrop, where he is working his way toward Stage Right wings—and will wobble the Upstage corridor wall in the process.*) "Nonsense. I was once in love, myself!" (*We hear him STUMBLE and FALL.*) Damn it!

SAUL. (*Rushes to VIOLET, quickly.*) "My dearest darling!"

VIOLET. "My sweet!" (*They kiss lightly, then stand apart.*)

SAUL. "My darling, I have a little surprise—" (*Starts frantically feeling his empty pockets.*)

PHYLLIS. Oh, dear! (*Jumps up, exits up aisle, and while she is making her way to the Backstage area, our duo ad-libs desperately.*)

VIOLET. I like surprises.

SAUL. I kinda thought you did.

VIOLET. I can't wait to find out what it is.

SAUL. It's really worth waiting for.

Saul