

PHYLLIS. Yoo-hoo! How are you all?!

(*ALL turn and peer out into theatre, watching the progress of PHYLLIS MONTAGUE—a maiden lady of indeterminate age, probably anywhere between forty-two and fifty-seven—and especially noting the sheaf of papers she carries, as she hurries happily down the aisle toward the stage.*)

GERRY. Why—Phyllis—we weren't expecting you—at least, not tonight—!

PHYLLIS. Oh, I *know* I'm being a *naughty* girl, Geraldine, but I have so many new and good things to share with you all that I simply *couldn't* wait until the dress rehearsal!

SAUL. (*Wide-eyed, and absolutely frank:*) Well, *that's* a mercy!

(*PHYLLIS has gotten up Onstage, now, and is moving along the row of people there, handing each an identical sheaf of stapled-together pages, during:*)

GERRY. Phyllis! *More* changes? We *open* in four nights!

PHYLLIS. That's why I decided not to wait until dress rehearsal to stop by. This would be much-too-much to have to learn in one night!

HENRY. What makes you think we can do it in *three*?

PHYLLIS. Oh, don't be a tease, Henry. It's really all very simple. I've simply added just *one* extra character and cut the love-scene.

BILLY and VIOLET. (*In woeful unison.*) "Cut the love-scene"?!

PHYLLIS. Perhaps I'm putting it too strongly—it's not precisely cut—just cut out of Act Two and moved back to Act One.

BILLY. Oh, well, that's not so bad.

PHYLLIS. Except it's no longer between Diana and Stephen.

VIOLET. Then—between who else?

AGGIE. Yeah, the Lord and Lady are already married—

SMITTY. You *can't* mean the Doctor and the *Maid*—can you?

PHYLLIS. Oh, dear, perhaps I didn't make it clear. *Diana* still plays the scene—but now it's with Sir Percival!

GERRY. What? But Phyllis—

LOUISE. How can you do such a thing?

PHYLLIS. Oh, well, I got to thinking that perhaps a knight of the realm was a better catch for Diana than a mere rich commoner like Stephen, so—

LOUISE. Phyllis, I didn't say *why*—I said *how* can you do it? We don't *have* a Sir Percival in the play!

GERRY. Exactly! Everybody *refers* to him, all the time, but he never actually *appears*!

SAUL. Besides, it's kind of rough on *Diana* if you make that switch—considering that I *bump off* Percival before I show up at the house!

PHYLLIS. You *do*?

POLLY. Don't you even remember your own *plot*, Phyllis?

PHYLLIS. Yes, but I don't recall a *murder* . . . show me where it says so.

BILLY. We never actually *see* it done. But once we find that Percival has vanished, and then Rex has the famous gemstone Percival was bringing to the party, we figure out who *killed* him, see?

PHYLLIS. (*Pondering deeply.*) Murder. I never thought of it as a murder. I just thought that, well, Rex had picked Percival's pocket, and perhaps drained all the petrol from the tank of his car to keep him from the party. After all—murder is so—so—