(Hurries out after duo.)

VIOLET. *(Dispirited.)* What do we do now?

AGGIE. *(Comes onstage, script in hand.)* You can't work *around* her – she's got herself in damn near every scene.

BILLY. *(Righting chair and straightening "sofa.")* Not the love scene in Act Two. Maybe we could do that one.

VIOLET. Can't we wait till we have a real sofa? That metal's awfully hard to cuddle on.

GERRY. Aggie, when *do* we get the sofa?

AGGIE. We should've had it two days ago.

GERRY. Could you call and find out?

AGGIE. I could try.

(Exits.)

LOUISE. You want a look at that corridor wall, Gerry?

GERRY. *(Will get onto stage.)* Yes, I'd better. I'm worried about those braces.

LOUISE. You and me both. I've got six two-by-fours on it already, and the thing still flaps like a sail!

(They will move offstage during:)

SMITTY. Well, I guess I'll go hit the old biology book!

BILLY. You've got it *here*?

SMITTY. Why not? All the time I spend waiting to make my entrance, I could study for *three* exams!

(Exits.)

BILLY. Well, Violet, whattaya say – ?

VIOLET. Oh – all right.

(Gets up from "armchair," sits on "sofa.")

Ready when you are.

BILLY. *(Moves to point just inside right doorway.)* Okay. On your mark – get set – *(Into character.)* "Oh! Diana. I was seeking Lady Margaret."

VIOLET. "Lady Margaret is cutting roses in the garden, Stephen."

(Looks down demurely, folds her hands in her lap.)

"She – may not return for some time."

BILLY. "I see."

(Moves closer.)

"Would you mind if I waited for her...here?"

VIOLET. "Naturally not."

BILLY. "Might I...sit?"

VIOLET. "If you are so inclined."

BILLY. *(Sits beside her.)* "Diana – "

VIOLET. *(Eyes still downcast, turns head away.)* "Yes, Stephen – ?"

BILLY. "Would you take offense if I were to – to – ?"

VIOLET. "Stephen, what are you trying to say?"

BILLY. "Oh, dash it all, Diana, must we play at words?! You *know* the message that longs to cry out from within my heart!"

VIOLET. *(Raises her eyes, looks at him.)* "Is it possible – do I dare for a moment imagine – that the message in your heart is the selfsame message that cries out from within my own – ?"

BILLY. "Diana – do you mean – do I dare to dream – ?"

(Takes her hands.)

VIOLET. "Have a care, sir – have a care – you know that I am betrothed to another man!"

BILLY. "And yet – you do not draw away...?"

VIOLET. "Oh, Stephen – can you not reason out *why*?!"

BILLY. "I – I am almost afraid to!"

VIOLET. "Then *cease* your noble trepidations, Stephen Sellers. For – though I am a high-born lady – I am also a woman!"

BILLY. "Oh, Diana!"

(Kisses her lightly on the lips.)

VIOLET. "Oh, Stephen!"

(Lays her head against his shoulder.)

VIOLET. "If Doctor Forbes should come upon us – !"

BILLY. "*Hang* your illustrious fiancé! He shall not have you!"

(Kisses her again, a bit more firmly.)

"Oh, Diana – !"

VIOLET. Oh – Billy!

BILLY. Oh – Violet!

(And they go into a real clinch, clutching and caressing and swaying, the metal chairs rattling until:)

LOUISE. *(Enters.)* What's all that clattering – ?!

(They spring apart and come to their feet.)

Ha! No *wonder* you want a real sofa!

VIOLET. Now, Louise – !

LOUISE. I didn't see a thing. Not a thing.

(Gives a happy cackle of amusement and exits.)

VIOLET. Billy – do you think she suspects?!

BILLY. How could she? I didn't suspect, *myself,* till just a moment ago!

VIOLET. Oh, darling, neither did I!

(They almost embrace, but break decorously apart and try to look innocent as they hear:)

PHYLLIS. *(Offstage.)* *Yoo*-hoo – ?! Anybody *here* – ?!

VIOLET. Billy! That sounds like Miss Montague!

BILLY. Tonight? But she promised not to come back till dress rehearsal!

(Others reappear onstage via various routes, all wearing the same apprehensive look as our duo.)

GERRY. Did *you* all hear what *I* heard – ?

POLLY. It sounded like *Phyllis*!

SAUL. Probably with five new pages of dialogue for *you*!

POLLY. *(With patient forebearance.)* Saul – I just accepted *one* apology from you – do you want to have to make *another*?!

SAUL. *(Sincerely.)* Sorry, Polly.

(This time we can definitely pinpoint the source of the voice as emanating from the rear of the theatre:)

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.