

LOUISE. (*Offstage.*) I heard that, Saul Watson!

SAUL. (*Amiably.*) Then let it be a lesson to you!

(*Offstage, we hear LOUISE laugh.*)

POLLY. (*Sitting in center of sofa.*) I hope we get this act done tonight. Three days till dress rehearsal and we haven't even done a full run-through!

BILLY. Thank your friend *Phyllis* for *that*!

HENRY. You mustn't blame *Phyllis*, Billy - she's simply a perfectionist.

SMITTY. If she wasn't satisfied with the script, why did she submit it?

SAUL. Because if we'd picked some other show, she'd have had to wait till next *year* to get it done!

VIOLET. Why couldn't we do it as our *next* show?

BILLY. We've got our audiences pre-conditioned.

SAUL. "Brainwashed" is more like it!

POLLY. That's putting it rather strongly, Saul.

SAUL. It's the unvarnished truth. We never vary, season after season. We do a mystery, a comedy, a drama, and a musical, in that order, without fail.

VIOLET. Yes, but why?

HENRY. We started the theatre that way, and it just got to be a habit. For us *and* our patrons.

VIOLET. But what would be the harm if we mixed it up?

SAUL. It would confuse people. The comedy fans would come to the drama and laugh at all the tragic moments - and the musical fans would start beating time to the comedy - !

BILLY. Or sob during the mystery!

AGGIE. They may *still* do *that*!

GERRY. (*Re-enters with cup of coffee.*) Aggie! Whose side are you on, anyway?!

AGGIE. On the side of *sanity* - which doesn't do me much good around *here*!

(*Exits toward coffee.*)

STAKE →

STOP →