

Alice is aghast. Potts turns a switch on the box on his breast pocket.

ALICE You mean to tell me all the time we've been speakin' that thing hasn't been turned on?

POTTS I never have it turned on. It runs down the batteries.

ALICE Look, never mind that. You know Lady Willoughby's got all these extinguished guests arriving, and you're trailin' through the hall with your muddy feet.

POTTS I was just rearranging...

ALICE I'll rearrange you in a minute if you don't clear off. Oh, life would be much easier without you around. Go on, off with you.

POTTS All right, I'm goin'. No need to shout you know. I'm not deaf.

The doorbell rings.

ALICE Oh, look, now – there's the bell. *(Tidying herself as she goes, muttering)* Ain't I got enough to do...?

Alice exits, answering the 'door'; almost immediately the uniformed figure of Colonel Montgomery Willoughby enters, with Alice close behind. The Colonel is very military in his bearing and it soon becomes apparent that he has an eye for the ladies, as he scans Alice during the next few lines.

MONTY Is your mistress at home?

ALICE She'll be down presently, sir.

MONTY *(Seeing Potts)* Ah, Potts, old fellow. How are you?

Potts is obviously not pleased to see Monty.

POTTS None the better for seeing you, actually, sir. Surprised you can show your face back here again after what you did to Master Royston. Good as slit his throat yourself, you did.

Potts storms off.

MONTY *(A little taken aback)* Well, there's nothing like a cheery welcome home. And that was *nothing* like a cheery welcome home. *(Seeing Alice and liking what he sees)* However, not all gloom on the horizon, I see... You're new, aren't you?

ALICE Ooo, no... I've been here almost a year, sir. Alice's the name.



MONTY Do you know who I am, Alice?

ALICE *(A little overawed)* Ooo, yes, sir. My father... *(Checks herself, but recovers quickly)* You're Montgomery Willoughby, aren't you? The whole village is talking about your promotion! Congratulations, sir.

MONTY Thank you, Alice. *(Meaningfully)* I'm sure we'll be seeing a lot more of each other in the weeks to come. Will you tell your mistress I'm here?

ALICE Of course, sir. She's just making herself beautiful for the guests.

MONTY Will she be long?

ALICE I shouldn't think so, sir. She started on Tuesday. Are you here about the diamond?

MONTY In a way.

ALICE Ooo, is it as beautiful as they sir? I mean, you found it, didn't you, sir - you and master Royston, God rest him. I've heard the diamond's *cursed*, sir, is that right...?

Unbeknownst to Alice, Lady Constance Willoughby has entered. She is about sixty and is a bit of a battleaxe. No-one is in any doubt who is in charge when she is around.

CONSTANCE That will do, Alice.

ALICE Oh, sorry, m'm. I was just asking the colonel...

CONSTANCE *(Forcefully)* That will be all, Alice.

ALICE But m'm...

CONSTANCE The guests are beginning to arrive, girl. You are supposed to be handing out the punch, are you not?

ALICE Yes, m'm.

CONSTANCE Then kindly do so.

ALICE Yes, m'm. Sorry, m'm. Sorry, sir.

Alice rushes off, but as soon as she is sure she cannot be seen, she turns and sticks her tongue out at Constance.

CONSTANCE *(Coolly)* So. A colonel now? Royston *would* have been impressed.

MONTY *(Almost apologetically)* Connie, old girl...

CONSTANCE We missed you at the funeral.

MONTY Yes. Sorry about that. Bit busy.

CONSTANCE Too busy for your own brother's funeral?

MONTY Was actually. Entire platoon surrounded by 10,000 Zulus. Came haring at us brandishing spears. But we stood firm! Told the chaps not to shoot until they saw the whites of their eyes.

CONSTANCE It's a miracle you all survived.

MONTY Survived? Massacred the bally lot of us. Bastards wore sunglasses. Lone survivor. Always been good at hand-to-hand combat... Anyway, what's all this nonsense I hear about you selling the diamond?

CONSTANCE Why shouldn't I? It's of no use to me. Is that why you're here? Can't wait to get your hands on it now Royston's gone, I suppose.

There is an uncomfortable pause, during which Alice re-enters, carrying a tray bearing two glasses of punch.

ALICE Ma'am?

CONSTANCE Ah, Alice. The punch... at last. What took you?

ALICE I was as quick...

CONSTANCE Don't answer back. The impertinence. Really, Alice, I've told you before. If you don't buck your ideas up you'll have to go.

Monty takes the two glasses of punch from the tray and hands one to Constance.

MONTY Punch, Constance?

ALICE *(Under her breath)* Don't tempt me.

Alice leaves with the empty tray. Constance takes the glass from Monty but neither takes a sip.

MONTY Come on, old girl. Know you too well. Can't pull the wool over my eyes. Fallen on hard times? Royston run up a few debts?

Constance is outraged, but he is obviously right.

MONTY *(He begins to make advances)* Connie... Connie... Look, I can help, if you'd let me. Just think... it could be just like old times again... You... and me...

CONSTANCE *(Her hard exterior softening a little)* Monty...

Daphne Willoughby enters. She is young, completely scatter-brained and flighty. She is dressed as a flapper girl and talks with a terrible lisp. What romantic moment there might have been is completely shattered.

DAPHNE Mumsie, have you seen my... *(seeing Monty)* Uncle Monty!

She rushes to greet him and gives him the type of hug only reserved for favourite uncles.

DAPHNE Oh, this is Heaven! Is Daddy with you?

MONTY *(Confused, looking helplessly at Constance)* Daddy...?

CONSTANCE Daphne, dear...

DAPHNE What's wong? Has something happened to Daddy?

CONSTANCE No, no... I just need to speak to Montgomery alone for a moment...

DAPHNE Oh. *(Sudden inspiration)* Shall I pwactice my exercises, Mummy?

CONSTANCE What an excellent idea. Dr Marjoribanks would be thrilled.

DAPHNE All wight. I'll do them over here.

Daphne smiles sweetly at Monty then moves over to the right and begins doing some grotesque ballet steps and stretches. Constance and Monty begin to talk secretively. Monty places his (still full) glass of punch on the table behind them before he speaks.

MONTY She doesn't know? You haven't told her?

CONSTANCE Of course we've *told* her. The doctor says the shock was too much and she's repressed it in some way. Says we should break it to her gently.

MONTY Leave it to me, old girl. Learnt this sort of thing at Mons. Master of diplomacy.

Constance and Monty come out of their clinch and admire Daphne's grotesque gyrations. Monty coughs gently to attract Daphne's attention.

MONTY Ahem... Daphne?

Daphne stops her exercises and rejoins them.

DAPHNE Yes, uncle?

MONTY Daphne... your father's dead.

DAPHNE What? Mummy! Did you hear... Daddy's....

Suddenly Daphne realises what Monty has said and drops in a dead faint. Monty panics. Constance, too, is in a fluster but only because of the inconvenience of the situation, having seen it all many times before.

MONTY Daphne! Daphne, old thing! I say, Constance... don't just stand there! Get a doctor.

CONSTANCE I don't think that will be necessary.

MONTY Some smelling salts... something!

CONSTANCE *(Tired)* Monty...

MONTY We can't just leave the poor girl.

CONSTANCE This happens all the time. *(She places her glass, which is still full, on the table behind them, then continues, pointedly, so that Daphne is sure to hear)* All we have to do is get Alice to pour a bucket of cold water over her...

Daphne recovers immediately and begins to get up.

DAPHNE Where am I?

Behind Daphne, the mysterious figure of Abdul el-Jahaj has appeared. He is Egyptian: tall, with tanned dark skin. He wears a long coat and a fez. His eyes are piercing and his stony face betrays no emotion.

ABDUL The madam has need of the services of Abdul?

MONTY *(Seeing Abdul)* Bloody hell! What's *he* doing here?

CONSTANCE Abdul. Thank Heavens. Miss Daphne is tired. Please take her to her room.

DAPHNE I'm fine, Mumsie. What happened?

MONTY Actually, Connie. I'm feeling rather tired myself after all this travelling. Which room is mine?

DAPHNE The Montgomery suite as always. Abdul will take your bags...

Abdul begins to move towards Monty but is stopped in his tracks.

MONTY No trouble, old girl. I can manage. Back in a jiffy...

Monty leaves a little too hastily.

CONSTANCE How curious. It was almost as if he knew you...

ABDUL Do not distress yourself, dear lady. I am sure there are many things about my country that Colonel Willoughby would rather forget.

CONSTANCE You're right, of course, as always. Please... take Daphne to her room.

DAPHNE But I'm fine, Mumsie, weally.

CONSTANCE Very well. Come, Abdul. It's about time we were meeting our guests. Daphne, I shall expect you to join us in a moment.

Constance offers her arm to Abdul, who leads her off. They are very much a couple and the implication is not lost on Daphne. Daphne begins to do some exercises again when suddenly there is a noise offstage.

RUPERT *(Offstage)* Pssst!

Daphne stops briefly, listening carefully. Convinced she must be hearing things, she goes back to her exercises. Suddenly, the figure of Rupert Bonnington-Smythe, a youngish man in boater, lewd striped jacket and white flannels appears. He carries a wooden croquet mallet.

RUPERT Yoo-hoo! Daphne! Oh, *Daphne!* Daphne, sweetie...

Daphne is thrilled. It is soon obvious that she is completely infatuated with Rupert.

DAPHNE Oh, Wupert. Wupert, what are you doing here? *(She looks around uneasily)* You know Mummy will be simpwy wivid.

RUPERT But Daphne, old thing. I only wondered if you fancied a quick round of croquet.

DAPHNE Oh, *Cwoquet!* You know I'd wove to, Wupert, but wisten... I can't. Mumsie's having woads of people wound to wook at the diamond.

RUPERT *(Sulkily)* Nobody asked me.

DAPHNE Oh, Woopsie. Wisten, I wanted you to come but Mumsie went positivewy beetwoot.

RUPERT *(Even more sulkily)* Dash it all, Daphne. I'm beginning to think your mother doesn't like me.

DAPHNE Oh, Wupert, dahwing, Mumsie may seem wike a weal battlewax but she's all wight underneaf.

RUPERT *(With a look of disgust)* I don't think I want to get underneath.

DAPHNE *(Concerned, lovingly and obviously infatuated)* Oh... Wupert.

RUPERT Daphne.

DAPHNE Wupert!

RUPERT *(After a sigh)* Daphne!

DAPHNE Wupert! Wupert! Wupert!

RUPERT Daphne! Daphne...

CONSTANCE *(Offstage)* DAPHNE!

DAPHNE *(Urgently)* Oh... Wupert! Quickwy! It's Mumsie!

RUPERT Crumbs. What shall I do?

DAPHNE Quick! Hide!

Quickly, Daphne picks up the shade from the standard lamp. In an instant, Rupert sees the plan and grabs the shade; standing to attention he removes his boater and plops the shade on his head. Daphne takes his boater and wonders what to do with it. With the closest she ever gets to inspiration, she grabs the flower arrangement from the basket and thrusts it into the centre of the upturned boater and holds it in front of her. As she does so, Rupert's head appears for one last glimpse of his beloved from under the shade.

RUPERT Daphne... I love you.

DAPHNE *(Almost forgetting herself)* Oh... Wupert...

Daphne leans forward to kiss Rupert but just as she does so...

CONSTANCE *(Just offstage)* Daphne! DAPHNE!

Rupert replaces the shade and Daphne stands attempting to look nonchalant as Constance enters.

DAPHNE Mumsie!

CONSTANCE Daphne! What on earth are you doing? You *know* you are supposed to be greeting our guests.

DAPHNE Sorry, Mumsie, I was just coming. *(Indicating the flowers)* I was just arranging...

CONSTANCE You were just *arranging* to meet that horrid Bonnington-Smith.

RUPERT *(From under the shade)* Smythe.

CONSTANCE Daphne, it quite escapes me why you should wish to be seen in the company of a man who appears to be impersonating a lamp standard.

RUPERT *(Removing the shade, looking very shameful)* Cripes. Rumbled.

DAPHNE But Mummy... you don't understand. I wove him.

RUPERT She loves me.

DAPHNE I adore him.

RUPERT She adores me.

DAPHNE And weer going to be mawwied.

RUPERT And we're going to be... what?

CONSTANCE Over my dead body! *Come*, Daphne.

Constance takes Daphne's arm and they make to leave. Daphne is distraught, but her mother is not to be argued with. She hurriedly hands Rupert his boater, still containing the flowers before being dragged off.

DAPHNE *(as she is being taken off, tearfully)* But Mumsie... mumsie, you can't... you're being howwid... *etc.*

Constance and Daphne exit, leaving Rupert alone. Rupert moves to the table, picks up the glass of punch with Monty left and downs it in one. Angry, he stares after Constance and Daphne and doesn't notice Alice entering behind him.

ALICE *(Smiling)* 'Ello.

RUPERT Oh. Sorry, didn't hear you come in.

ALICE So I saw. *(Looking in the direction Constance took)* Been getting' at you, 'as she?

RUPERT Yes... I...

ALICE Yeah, well, join the queue. Still, we won't have to put up wif her for much longer, eh? *(Approaching him, furtively and suggestively)* Did you get it?

RUPERT What? No. Er...

ALICE Oh. You promised...

RUPERT No time, I...

ALICE (*Angry*) Well... best give it back then, or 'e'll be missin' it.

Rupert produces a small brown envelope from his jacket pocket and gives it to Alice, who pockets it quickly. The sound of Potts, singing 'One Man Went to Mow' is heard offstage.

ALICE Listen... I better go. (*She takes his empty glass and places it on her tray*) Same time tomorrow?

RUPERT (*Suggestively*) Don't be late.

Alice exits. Potts enters from the French windows (or, if not practicable, the other side of the stage).

POTTS Hello, young fella. 'ere, what are you doing with my flowers?

RUPERT What? Oh, sorry. It wasn't me. It was Daphne.

POTTS Café? What café?

RUPERT Not café, *Daphne*.

POTTS Oh, Daphne. Doesn't surprise me. Farthing short of a shilling if you ask me. Mind you, what can you expect, brought up in a place like this, eh? Father murdered...

RUPERT Murdered? I say, I thought it was an accident...

POTTS Not as I heard. Stabbed through the heart. Killer tortured him first, too, so's I heard. Nasty business. Wouldn't be surprised if that Montgomery had somethin' to do with it. Whole village knows. Always callin' round, he was, when Master Royston was on his expeditions.

RUPERT Really?

POTTS Oh, yes. There are some as says it was all to do with the curse, of course...

RUPERT Curse?

POTTS Load of superstitious nonsense if you ask me. Listen, why not pop round for a chat tomorrow, I'll tell you all about it? Haven't seen you for a few days... got a nice bottle of Grouse in the shed.

RUPERT Thanks. I will.

POTTS Like our little chats. Only don't bring Daphne. Lovely girl and all that and you'll do all right by her, but... accident-prone, know what I mean?

RUPERT I'll remember.

POTTS December? Don't wait 'til December. 'Ere... and don't let that Abdul fella catch you around. Somethin' odd about him if you ask me... almost snoopin' around. (*Purposefully*) You know... I think he's foreign.

Unbenownst to Potts, Abdul has entered and is standing behind him.

ABDUL It may interest you to know, Mr Potts, that I went to Eton. It may interest *you*, Mr Bonnington-Smythe, to know that Lady Constance is heading this way.

RUPERT Cripes. I'm off. See you tomorrow, Potsy.

Rupert exits hastily through the windows. As he does so, Lady Constance enters, approaching from behind Abdul.

CONSTANCE Ah... Abdul... there you are. (*Seeing Potts*) Mr Potts! (*Looking at his filthy attire disdainfully*) This is unexpected. Do I have to remind you that at this very moment, the house is filled with a hundred very important and distinguished people... and you?

POTTS 'Ere, I was only...

CONSTANCE That will *do*, Potts. Kindly remove yourself and your offensive smell before I have Abdul dispose of you for me.

POTTS Well, in all my years... Master Royston would never have put up with this... house full of damn foreigners... believe me... ruddy cheek...

Potts can still be heard cursing as he leaves through the windows. As he leaves, Alice enters, carrying a visiting card on tray. Close behind her walks Inspector Foot of the Yard.

ALICE Please, m'm.

CONSTANCE (*Irritably*) Yes? What is it?

ALICE A visitor, m'm.

Constance picks up the visiting card from the tray and reads.

CONSTANCE Good Heavens.

FOOT Inspector Foot of the Yard, Ma'm. Greater Copping C.I.D. I'm sorry to disturb you, Ma'am, but I have reason to believe you might be able to assist me in my enquiries.

ALICE Ooo...

CONSTANCE *(Sharply)* Alice! Instead of standing there gawping why not fetch a drink for the inspector?

FOOT Not whilst on duty, thank you, Ma'am.

Constance is quite taken with the inspector and we start to see another side to her character as she becomes more flighty

CONSTANCE Oh, come... tonight is a special evening, inspector; I should be a poor hostess if I did not look after *all* my guests.

FOOT No, really, Ma'm. Years of experience have taught me to reject anything which might interfere with my 'ighly tuned powers of detection.

CONSTANCE *(Quite understanding)* Of course.

FOOT *(Suddenly afraid he isn't going to get one)* Well, maybe just a small brandy...

Constance smiles sweetly.

CONSTANCE *(To Alice)* Alice... a brandy for the inspector.

Alice curtsies and exits, with the tray.

CONSTANCE Inspector, may I introduce Abdul el-Jahaj? He is an old friend of my husband's.

Abdul gives a grand salute of greeting to the Inspector, both hands touching his forehead, his breast, then held out open to the side

ABDUL You flatter me, Mistress. I would have been honoured to call Sir Royston my friend... as it was, I was happy to serve him. I owe him my life.

CONSTANCE *(Sweetly)* Royston saved Abdul's life in Egypt.

FOOT Really?

CONSTANCE Yes. Abdul was sat on by a demented camel. *(The inspector looks astonished. After a pause)* The camel had wind. It was touch and go. As soon as he heard about Royston, Abdul came over and offered to serve me in whatever way he could. And I must say... *(Smiling sweetly at Abdul, pointedly)* during the long nights, his presence has been an enormous comfort.

FOOT I'm sorry about your husband, Ma'am, but that isn't why I'm here.

CONSTANCE *(Not expecting this)* I see. How may we help you, inspector?

FOOT I'm investigating the death of a young man four weeks ago, Ma'am. We have reason to believe the young man... was murdered.

CONSTANCE No.

FOOT Yes. He was found face down in a bowl of rice krispies.

CONSTANCE You don't mean...?

FOOT Yes... We fear it may be the work of... a cereal killer.

Inspector Foot produces a photograph from his inside jacket pocket and shows it to Constance.

FOOT This is his picture. I don't suppose you recognise him?

Constance obviously does, but she regains her composure almost immediately.

CONSTANCE No... I'm afraid not. Should I, inspector?

FOOT No, not really, Ma'am... just an hunch...

The inspector shows the photograph to Abdul, who glances at it then passes it back almost immediately.

ABDUL I'm afraid not, inspector. But then, you all look the same to me.

CONSTANCE Who was he, inspector?

FOOT Arthur Hodgkiss, Ma'am. Petty thief, mostly, but recently developed a particular interest in diamonds...

CONSTANCE Diamonds, inspector?

FOOT Yes, Ma'am. This... er... Willoughby Diamond of yours, it is somewhere...er...safe, is it, Ma'am?

ABDUL Do you wish me to fetch the diamond from the safe, Mistress?

CONSTANCE No, Abdul. Only I can, and there is no need. I have the diamond secreted about my person.

FOOT Where exactly, Ma'am?

CONSTANCE (*Flirting*) Why, if I told you that, inspector... it wouldn't be secreted.

FOOT (*Bashful*) No, Ma'am... I suppose not.

CONSTANCE Of course, you could always... search me.

FOOT Actually, I usually leave that type of thing to Special Constable Nelson...

CONSTANCE Ooooh. He sounds rugged... handsome.

FOOT He's a bloodhound.

Constance suddenly produces the boxed diamond from her garter.

CONSTANCE Oh, look... what's this I have here?

FOOT Ooo... may I?

Constance, completely deflated, hands the small box containing the diamond to the inspector. Carefully, he opens the velvet box and removes a shining, shimmering cut stone. As he does so, Abdul eyes the stone enviously.

FOOT Well... I must say... it's beautiful... perfect...

CONSTANCE (*Sweetly*) Not quite, inspector. Like all the great diamonds, this one has a flaw. They say if you hold it up to the light, the shape of a black skull appears inside it...

Inspector Foot holds up the stone, but cannot see anything.

FOOT A skull? Now, there's a coincidence. Where exactly?

CONSTANCE I've never seen it myself, but my husband said that he could. Personally, I've never held with such superstitious nonsense...

ABDUL In my country there is a saying, Mistress. A man with an open eye and a closed heart sees less than a blind man with an open mind.

FOOT What do you think, Mr el-Jahaj? Is the Willoughby Diamond really cursed as they say?

ABDUL Who knows, inspector? One thing I am sure of. That diamond contains a power you and I can never hope to understand. If I may be permitted...

Abdul reaches for the stone, but Constance quickly snatches it from the Inspector. As she is doing so, Monty enters.

CONSTANCE If I may be permitted, inspector. I think the time has come for me to return to my guests. If you have no further questions...

MONTY I say... am I missing something? Was that the diamond I saw? Come on, Connie, give us a gander...

Constance puts the diamond back into its' box during her next line.

CONSTANCE Monty! Inspector... may I introduce my brother-in-law, Colonel Montgomery Willoughby? Monty, this is Inspector Foot of the C.I.D.; he's investigating a murder.

MONTY Crikey. Really, inspector?

Foot produces the photograph again to show Monty.

FOOT That's right, sir. I don't suppose you would have seen this man before?

Monty casually glances at the photo and then returns it. As he is doing so, Alice enters bearing a tray with a glass of brandy and three glasses of punch.

MONTY 'Fraid not, old boy.

FOOT *(Replacing the photo in his inside pocket)* Well, Ma'am, I must apologise, it appears I've been wasting your time... if you'll excuse me...

CONSTANCE Ah, but you can't go until you've finished your brandy, inspector. Please...

Alice offers the inspector the brandy from the tray, which he takes. She then gives a glass of punch to Monty, Constance and Abdul in turn. She approaches Abdul tentatively, obviously afraid of him.

FOOT Why, thank you, Ma'am. If you don't mind, I'll just have a little wander around the grounds...

CONSTANCE Of course, inspector...

The inspector exits, drinking his brandy as he goes. During the course of the next few lines, Constance, Abdul and Monty all sip from, but do not drain, their glasses.

CONSTANCE What are you gawping at, girl?

ALICE I'm sorry, Ma'am... *(indicating Abdul)* it's 'im, m'm... he gives me the creeps.

CONSTANCE You stupid girl. I *trust* you have given a glass of punch to all our guests...

ALICE *(Indignantly)* Yes, m'm...

Daphne enters. She is in full flight and ready to tackle her mother.

CONSTANCE You may go. I shall expect to see you in my office first thing in the morning.

DAPHNE No, Alice... wait. Mumsie, you can't do this. I won't wet you. Alice is my cwosest and most twusted fweind. Although I realize that she is from a lower social class and poor breeding and therefore hardly worthy of my interest.

ALICE Oh, *thank you*, miss.

DAPHNE And another thing. Mummy, I've made up my mind. I am going to mawwy Wupert.

ALICE What?

CONSTANCE *What?*

MONTY Good for you, old girl.

CONSTANCE Oh, shut up, Monty. *(To Daphne)* Don't be ridiculous, Daphne. Anyone can see that the man is an absolute drip.

DAPHNE But I wove him!

CONSTANCE Nonsense. You fall in love with somebody every five minutes. Look at that... Roger fellow.

DAPHNE Woger? I... I... don't wemember.

CONSTANCE Don't remember? Good Lord, you were *engaged*...

DAPHNE I was young.

CONSTANCE You're 46. It was only six weeks ago. Roger *Pemberton*!

DAPHNE Oh, him...

CONSTANCE Yes, him. One minute it was ‘Woger this’ and ‘Woger that’ - then he vanishes, leaving you flat and what do you do? Throw yourself at the first feeble-minded moron who passes your way. I forbid you to see this Bonnington-Smythe person again.

DAPHNE I shall tell Daddy!

CONSTANCE *(Angry)* For Heaven's sake, Daphne! Your father's dead!

DAPHNE What? Oooohh...

Daphne faints. Alice rushes to her. Constance places her glass on the table. Abdul places his glass on a separate part of the table, but less hurriedly.

MONTY *(Tired)* Here we go again...

Monty places his glass on the table also and rushes over to Daphne. As he does so, Rupert enters. He is carrying a half-finished glass of punch.

RUPERT Good Lord! What's happened to Daphne?

MONTY She's fainted!

Rupert places his glass on the table, close to Constance's glass, then rushes over to Daphne.

RUPERT Why?

CONSTANCE She's hysterical.

RUPERT *(Slapping Daphne's hand)* Daphne! Speak to me!

ALICE I'll get a bucket of water.

Daphne begins to wake up immediately.

DAPHNE Hello? What happened?

MONTY It was your mother's fault.

DAPHNE Why?

MONTY She told you your father was dead.

DAPHNE What? Oooohh...

Daphne faints again. Rupert begins slapping her hand again.

RUPERT Daphne! Daphne! Speak to me!

CONSTANCE Mr Bonnington-Smythe! I must insist that you unhand my daughter!

RUPERT Look what you've done to her!

ALICE I'll get the water. Extra cold.

Daphne is resurrected again.

DAPHNE I say. I feel much better for that sleep. What's happening?

Daphne gets up.

CONSTANCE Mr Bonnington-Smythe is just leaving.

RUPERT I say...

CONSTANCE Abdul, kindly escort him from the premises.

RUPERT Now look here...

CONSTANCE If he will not leave, you have my permission to release the hounds.

ABDUL As madam commands.

RUPERT *(Defiantly, but not at all convincingly)* I'm not leaving without Daphne. I need her!

DAPHNE And I need Rupert.

MONTY I need a drink, old boy.

Monty stands and moves back to the table and picking up a glass of punch, begins to drink. Potts enters.

POTTS 'Ere, what's all the racket? I could hear you lot right down in the potting shed. Without batteries!

CONSTANCE Mr Bonnington-Smythe is just leaving!

MONTY Mr Bonnington-Smythe is... is... yyyiiiu...

Monty suddenly freezes and clutches his throat. He has been poisoned. He falls to his knees. Daphne screams. There is general pandemonium. All are shouting at once, though Abdul remains quite placid with a quiet air of satisfaction. Above the melée, we hear:

CONSTANCE Monty! What's wrong?

DAPHNE Mummy!
POTTS It's the curse!
RUPERT What?
ALICE The Curse of the Willoughby Diamond!
MONTY But it's f....

Monty collapses, dead. Inspector Foot of the Yard appears.

FOOT Hello, hello, hello... what's all this, then?
CONSTANCE Thank goodness, Inspector. It's Montgomery... he's collapsed.
ALICE He's unconscious.
RUPERT He's dead.

Daphne screams.

RUPERT I say, do you mind? That was right in my ear.
FOOT Then it seems we have not one murder to solve, but three.
ALL What?
POTTS Eh?
FOOT Yes... Arthur Hodgkiss, The Colonel here... and Royston Willoughby.
DAPHNE What? Daddy? Oooohhh...

Daphne faints again. Alice and Rupert fuss over her.

FOOT Ladies and gentlemen... with your help and my legendary prowess, I think we can solve this mystery. But first, all this fraternisin' with the hoi-poloi has given me a bit of han appetite. I think we should all have some nosh.

The remaining cast rush hungrily for the exit.

FOOT Could you I ask you strong gentlemen to help me lift the Colonel? Thank you... and I wonder if you could fetch me a bucket of cold water for Miss Daphne here...

Daphne recovers instantly.

DAPHNE

I'm better!

FOOT

Excellent. Ladies and gentlemen, we shall return in a few minutes when you can assist me with my questioning. Thank you very much... hoi, you lot! Wait for me!