

Note: The other guests have just left the room, leaving Gillette and Aggie alone for a brief moment

GILLETTE. You didn't tell me.

AGGIE. I couldn't. I didn't have the courage.

GILLETTE. Courage?

AGGIE. I didn't want you to think less of me.

GILLETTE. But Simon is a fine fellow.

AGGIE. He's more than that!

GILLETTE. What I mean is -

AGGIE. I know what you mean. He's ordinary. He's "nice." He's easy to please. Well he is those things. And he's in love with me.

GILLETTE. Are you in love with him?

AGGIE. (*hurt*) Of course I am. I wouldn't have married him otherwise. (*Increasingly upset*) And he's very, very kind. When I needed him, he was there in an instant.

GILLETTE. Of course he was.

AGGIE. But I was in love with you. You just...you didn't ask me. I gave you every chance. I offered you everything!

GILLETTE. I know you did. And I was too foolish to take you up on it. I had some misguided notion that I was being loyal to my wife's memory.

AGGIE. It's been ten years since your wife died.

GILLETTE. Yes, I know.

AGGIE. (*In his arms*) Oh, William...

GILLETTE. Aggie, listen. You're going to be fine. The best man won. I'm sure of it. And for heaven's sake, just look at me. I'm old enough to be your slightly older brother.

(She laughs nervously.)

AGGIE. Thanks. Thanks a millionIt's just that I...I mean, I thought that you ...felt something... (*Almost breaking down*)

You treat everything as a joke! Even that horrible attempt on your life!

GILLETTE. Not as a joke, my dear, but as a game, which is a different thing entirely. Look, we have chosen this mad life of ours, and we'd be insane not to accept it for what it is. Do I go to an office? No. Do I wear a tie to work? No. We're actors. We wear silly costumes. We put on noses made of putty, for God's sake. We don't want to be grownups. We're all Peter Pans and a good thing it is too. I don't want to leave all the fun behind because I've reached some magical age of regret. That's what they want us to do, you know, all those gray faceless accountants, and I won't do it. I won't. I don't treat life as a joke - I treat it as the most glorious game ever invented. Love and heartbreak? Game. Life and death? The greatest game, the biggest adventure. Shakespeare got it right on the nose. Henry the Fifth charging into battle against overwhelming odds and what does he cry? "*It's all a game and if I die, I die!*"

So let them praise me, hate me or shoot at me - but at the end of the battle, I will have lived, even for a moment. And if you think you need Simon in order to live like that, then take him, by all means! Cling to him! Don't hesitate for a second! ...I will, however miss you unutterably.

(Beat. AGGIE is speechless. Her heart starts racing and she realizes how much she loves him. She leans in to kiss him - when sounds from the terrace interrupt the moment.)

Felix, Inspector and Gillette

*(During the following, **FELIX** does his best to shield a dead body which is behind the sofa. He also tries to draw **GILLETTE's** attention to the body, but **GILLETTE** iust doesn't getit.)*

FELIX. Hello.

INSPECTOR. There is no means of escape, Professor Moriarty!

(She chuckle s.)

I recognize you from Mr. Gillette's most interesting play.

FELIX. Oh. I see. Did you enjoy it?

INSPECTOR. I found it unlikely, illogical, far-fetched and I enjoyed it immensely. Especially when you plunged to your death.

FELIX- Thank you.

INSPECTOR. I've always liked Sherlock Holmes, of course. You can't be in my business and not appreciate him. He's such

a misfit. I like misfits. I don't know why.

{GILLETTE and FELIX glance at each other. The INSPECTOR strolls around the room observing things.} **FELIX.** I don't suppose there's much crime out here in Connecticut, eh?

INSPECTOR. Oh, you'd be surprised. I have loads of cases, I just can't solve any of them. Ha! I seem to miss the clues for some reason. And yet I do catch all the criminals in the end. I don't know how exactly ... *"The evil that men do lives after them! The good is oft interr'd with their bones!"* I thought I'd be an actress when I was a youngster, you see. I just never had the confidence, alas. But then I got a nose for blood, and that's all I needed. "Blood will have blood!" "Is this a dagger which I see before me?!!" No it isn't, act uall y, it's missing.

GILLETTE. I'm sorry?

INSPECTOR. The dagger from your wall. This spot here. I can see the discoloration from where the dagger used to be.

FELIX. You know, it's unusual meeting a woman detective . I didn't know they existe d. Are you one of many?

INSPECTOR. Not yet, I'm afraid, but I believe you might call me the wave of the future. I think of myself as a pioneer, heading West, fertilizing the land as I go.

FELIX. I don't want to think too hard about that... **GILLETTE.** So what can we do for you, Inspector?

INSPECTOR. Well, a few minutes ago, someone called the police station and reported a murder. According to the operator, the call came from this house.

FELIX. This house?

GILLETTE. That's ridiculous.

INSPECTOR. Then it wasn't either of you or who called? **FELIX.** No.

GILLETTE. Not at all.

INSPECTOR. I see. And how is your arm feeling? **GILLETTE.** I beg your pardon?

INSPECTOR. The arm where you were shot two weeks ago on the stage of your theatre in New York City. It was in all the papers. You see, I believe that if these two events- the shooting and the call - are unrelated, then we've got ourselves quite a coincidence. And coincidence makes me very suspicious.

(Suddenly turning to FELIX who has been trying to get GILLETTE to notice the dead body on the floor.)

Do you have a twitch?

FELIX. Twitch? No. Yes. Why?

GILLETTE. Inspector, the fact is, nothing unpleasant has happened here tonight . Unless you count my rather poor singing voice during the Christmas carols. Ha ha!

FELIX. Ha ha! **GILLETTE.** Ha ha ha! **FELIX.** Ha ha ha!

(GILLETTE now sees the body behind the sofa. If GILLETTE is still sitting opposite, perhaps FELIX lifts the leg of the cadaver behind the INSPECTOR's back.)

GILLETTE. HahahahahaYAHHHHHHAHAH AHAHA! **INSPECTOR.** Is something the matter?

GILLETTE. No, no. I just remembered a good joke. **INSPECTOR.** Can you tell us?

GILLETTE. Well ...there were these, uh, two Irishmen, and one says to the other, "Begorah, what's that dead body doin' on me livin' room floor." And the other one says -

FELIX. "Begorah, because the door to the bar wouldn't close!"

BOTH. *{desperately}* Hahahahahahaha!

(The INSPECTOR looks bewildered)

INSPECTOR. Mr. Gillette, if you don't mind I'd like to take a look around for a moment. I'd like to jiggle your handles, as it were.

GILLETTE. Oh, absolutely. Feel free. Why don't you start in the kitchen? It's right through here, last door on the right. **INSPECTOR.** Thanks so much, I'll just be a few minutes. *(The INSPECTOR exits.*

GILLETTE, smiling, watches her go.) **FELIX.** *(Smiling broadly through his teeth)* Is she gone yet?

GILLETTE. Not quite ...Yes, she's gone! Now why didn't you hide the body?!

FELIX. That pull-thing of yours didn't work properly and I had to drag her out and then it closed all by itself!

GILLETTE. You didn't pull it properly.

FELIX. Of course I pulled it properly!

(The INSPECTOR reenters unexpectedly - and the two men jump at the sound of her voice - and shield the back of the sofa.)

INSPECTOR. Excuse me -

GILLETTE & FELIX. Ahh!

INSPECTOR. I forgot to ask, but is there anyone else staying here at the moment?

GILLETTE. Yes, indeed, we have Felix's wife, Madge. And Aggie and Simon, all from the play you saw, and of course my mother, who's very, very old and asleep upstairs, so if you could avoid disturbing her...

INSPECTOR. Of course, but I'd like to speak with the others if you don't mind. **GILLETTE.** We'll call them down.

INSPECTOR. Thank you. I'll be in the kitchen.

MARTHA and GILLETTE

Note: In the living room of Gillette's home, Daria is lying dead on the floor

GILLETTE: *(on phone)* Hello, operator? Get me the police... P-0-L- .. yes, that's right, thank you ...Hello? Is this the police? I

have to report a murder.

(At this moment, MARTHA enters from the hall.)

MARTHA. Willie, dear -

GILLETTE. Mother, stay out of this room!

MARTHA. Oh, don't be ridiculous.

GILLETTE. Mother, please, there's something I don't want you to see. *(Into the phone)* Would you hold on a moment?

MARTHA. Who are you speaking with?

GILLETTE. The police actually. Now Mother listen. Brace yourself. This is going to be very upsetting, but Daria is dead.

MARTHA. Yes I know, dear. I killed her.

GILLETTE. What did you say?

MARTHA. I said I killed Daria.

GILLETTE. But she was murdered.

(He gestures up and down with his arm a few times, imitating the plunging of the knife.)

MARTHA. That was me, I'm afraid.

(MARTHA starts to cry. She's extremely upset.) Oh, Willie!!

GILLETTE. *(Into the phone)* I'll have to get back to you. *(He hangs up the phone.)* Mother, what happened?!

MARTHA. *(Weeping)* Oh I was just so angry at Daria for speaking to you the way she did that I lost my temper!

GILLETTE. But mother, she was only threatening me.

MARTHA. Well, she'd have done it, too. She was ruthless. She was evil! She was a theatre critic, for God's sake! (*She weeps.*) I suppose I'll go to jail now, won't I?

GILLETTE. No. No, you won't. I won't let that happen, I promise you. **MARTHA.** But how is that possible? **GILLETTE.** I don't know yet, but you'll have to do everything I say. **MARTHA.** I suppose I can try...

GILLETTE. Good. Now I want you to go upstairs and take one of your pills, it'll make you sleepy. No, take two. **MARTHA.** When I take two I can't even see straight.

GILLETTE. Good, and then go to bed. We'll discuss it in the morning.

MARTHA. Oh, Willie, I'm so sorry for doing such a terrible thing, but I couldn't let her hurt you, I just couldn't.

GILLETTE. I understand. Now up you go. Straight to bed. You promised.

MARTHA. (*Drying her tears*) Oh, all right. Nighty-night.

GILLETTE. Sleep tight.

MARTHA. Don't let the bed bugs bite. (*She hugs her son.*) Oh, Willie, I love you so much. **GILLETTE.** And I love you.

MARTHA. Incidentally, that taxi Daria ordered before she died? I cancelled it. I took the view that she wouldn't need it once she was dead. Good-night, dear.

FELIX and DARIA

DARIA. Do you know, I've been thinking about what happened to Aggie? Pretty young actress, no money, meets eligible young man who's very rich. He falls deeply in love with her, marries her and promptly dies on the honeymoon and I think to myself: she must be the luckiest girl in the entire world.

FELIX. Daria, she lost her husband, for heaven's sake.

DARIA. Oh, please. Husbands are a dime a dozen. They come and go like ducks around a country pond. They waddle around looking self-important, they quack as though someone is actually listening to them, and then, mercifully, they die off and disappear.

FELIX. That is very endearing of you, Daria. Why not just take an ax and chop her feet off.

DARIA. Oh, grow up. The little gold-digger hit the jack-pot. What more does she want, a trophy? And she got Simon in the

bargain. Now let's stop talking about them. Let's talk about me instead. What is it you like most about me?

FELIX. Your shyness.

DARIA. I like you because you're handsome. And stoic. Doesn't all of Gillette's success make you want to scream? Aren't you seething inside with jealousy?

FELIX. No, he's my best friend.

DARIA. Really? You didn't try to shoot him, then.

FELIX. How could I? I was on stage when he was shot.

DARIA. So was everybody who's here this weekend. Except dear, innocent Martha.

FELIX. And you.

DARIA. Why would I want to shoot him? I haven't slept with him yet. Now stop being stoic and kiss me.

FELIX. I'm a married man.

DARIA. (*cuddling up to him*) You mean your lips don't work at all anymore?

FELIX. Daria ...

DARIA. Ten minutes, upstairs, they'd never miss us.

FELIX. Daria!

DARIA. We never get to spend time together!

FELIX. We could be spending a great deal of time together, in there eating dinner.

DARIA. You're angry about the review, aren't you?

FELIX. You did call me a side of beef.

DARIA. But in a nice way! Oh, Felix, I was just trying to get a laugh. I should tell the truth when I write, shouldn't I? Truth and beauty, as the poet Shelley said: it is all we know on earth and all we need to know.

FELIX. Keats.

DARIA. Hmm?

FELIX. It was the poet Keats.

DARIA. You know, Felix, you're even more attractive when you stand up to me.

Simon, Aggie, Madge, Felix

SIMON. Are you holding up all right? **AGGIE.** I think so.

SIMON. He'll be fine with it, just trust me. **AGGIE.** Right.

SIMON. Good egg.

AGGIE. ...You're sure?

SIMON. Absolutely. I want to see their faces when we give them the news. They'll say, "What?! What?!"

(He makes a face and they laugh happily. At which point, MADGE and FELIX enter)

FELIX. Greetings and salutations!

MADGE. "What country, friend is this?"

FELIX. "It is Illyria, lady."

MADGE. "My brother, he is in Elysium. Perchance he is not drowned! What think you, Sailor?"

FELIX. "It is perchance that you yourself were saved." Ha!

(They all embrace and laugh.)

Merry Christmas! Here's to the revels. They shall be non-stop and very drunken. Do you realize that we've been on vacation for a mere two weeks and already I've missed you terribly?

SIMON. Thank you, Felix.

FELIX. Not you, you idiot. Aggie. I've been in love with her since I was uh oh, there's my wife. **MADGE.** Keep talking, darling. It will sound so wonderful when it's repeated in court.

AGGIE. How was your time off?

MADGE. Luxurious. We went to a spa. Felix hated it.

FELIX. There was nothing to eat. Or drink! And we had to do some bizarre Buddhist exercise. **MADGE.** It's called Yoga.

FELIX. I thought that was the white pudding stuff.

MADGE. That was yoghurt.

FELIX. It was like spoiled milk with the texture of bone marrow. It'll never catch on.

AGGIE. I can't get over this place, can you?

MADGE. He said it was something, but I had no idea.

AGGIE. Why would he build a castle on the Connecticut River?

FELIX. Why does Gillette do anything? The man is insane.

SIMON. I thought he was your best friend.

FELIX. And I repeat, the man is insane.

MADGE. He builds an awfully nice house, though. It would be excellent for a murder.

SIMON. Why a murder?

MADGE. It's isolated, there are loads of rooms for hiding the body, and it's on a river so you can drown people. What more do you want, an ax?

FELIX. *(nodding to the wall)* He has one. **SIMON.** Two.

AGGIE. Three.

FELIX. As well as two broadswords, a garrote and a brace of pistols. If Connecticut is ever attacked by Rhode Island, this house will be the first line of defense.