

*Aggie/Gillette*

**MADGE.** She said I played Hamlet's mother looking like a worried hamster.

**SIMON.** I was in a play last year and appeared in a bathing suit. She wrote: "Simon Bright's audacity in the role was largely in excess of his equipment."

**GILLETTE.** Well, she's clever at least.

**FELIX.** She's a spiteful, gossip-mongering harridan bitch and you owe us all an explanation.

**ALL.** Here, here. / I agree. (*etc.*)

**GILLETTE.** All right, fine. She's writing a profile of me for *Vanity Fair* and she asked to come to one of our weekends. Now like it or not, Daria Chase is the most influential columnist in the country. Her profile of me will give us more free publicity than if I'd shot Lincoln. So I suggest that as a courtesy to me you are at least civil to Miss Chase and that you get off your fannies and go greet her at the dock. Thank you.

(*Everyone heads for the door to the garden.*)

**SIMON.** Exit ungrateful guests shuffling feet.

(*SIMON, MARTHA, FELIX and MADGE exit - but before leaving, FELIX adds a last word to GILLETTE:*)

**FELIX.** You're up to something, aren't you?

(*FELIX rolls his eyes and leaves. GILLETTE turns back to the room - and sees that AGGIE has lingered to talk to GILLETTE privately.*) start

**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 million....It'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?

**GILLETTE.** (*cont.*) 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.

end

(*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.** (*off*) Gillette! Guess who's here?! It's our old friend Daria Chase!

(*DARIA CHASE enters, followed by the others. DARIA is gorgeous, glamorous, and dressed to the nines with holiday chic. She's one of those people you can't take your eyes off of; and despite all of her show-biz cattiness, you can't help liking her – or at least admiring her. She has a sense of humor and has invented herself from the ground up, which is no mean feat.*)

**DARIA.** (*She poses.*) Merry Christmas! Oh William! My dear, sweet, vulnerable man! How is your *arm*? Your *heart*? Your *soul*? *Ah!* After that ghastly shooting I thought I'd never see you again! That or I'd find you limping like a broken lion to the final watering hole.

**GILLETTE.** And here I am as right as rain and twice as healthy. Daria, you look magnificent.

**DARIA.** Oh, please. I simply grabbed whatever was hanging in my sad, little closet as I bounded out of New York City for the countryside on *Christmas Eve* and oh my God just smell the air out here! I haven't smelled air like this since I was a little girl growing up in Kansas or wherever it was with all those divine little cows and things. How lucky you are to have all this...nature to comfort you.

**FELIX.** Just like that famous picture of me with my clothes on.

**DARIA.** Oh, Felix, my dear, how lovely.

**FELIX.** Not as well as you, obviously.

**DARIA.** Oh stop it. My beauty is all on the inside. And Madge, don't we? I remember when we were as youngster – how I lost ten years of experience.

**MADGE.** And yet my friends and I are still young.

**DARIA.** Now stop it, that's impertinent to my friends.

**MADGE.** I had Felix.

**DARIA.** And didn't everyone else?

**GILLETTE.** Daria, let me introduce you to my mother, Martha Gilllette.

**MARTHA.** We've met before. Very nice. I've read your column. In fact, I've had a bed in case I can't get to sleep.

**GILLETTE.** Mother!

**DARIA.** What a witty thing to say.

**SIMON.** Hello, Daria. It's nice to meet you.

**DARIA.** Simon, my dear, you're a handsome fellow.

**SIMON.** As do you!

**GILLETTE.** I didn't know that you were so handsome.

**DARIA.** Of course we do. We're all handsome. I was there for the party last weekend. I was there for the party last weekend.

(*to AGGIE*) Then after I had that ghastly accident, didn't I? I stayed I would have had a good time the whole year! And poor y... upsetting.

**MADGE.** I'll bet you don't know anything.

**AGGIE.** For four weeks.