

*Gillette*

*(He takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. Strong music and the curtain falls. We hear the wild applause of an audience – and realize now that what we've just seen is a play within a play. In reality we're at the Palace Theatre in New York City in early December 1936. The curtain rises and the entire cast of five appear and take their bows. Then the man who has been playing HOLMES steps forward and holds up his hand to quiet the crowd.)*

GILLETTE. Ladies and gentlemen, Merry Christmas.

*(Audience: "Merry Christmas!")*

My name is William Gillette and I thank you for your kind reception of our play about a man of reason who loses his heart and stands up for the one fixed star in his firmament – the cause of justice.

*(applause)*

As many of you know, I wrote this play some fifteen years ago with the blessing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in order to keep his greatest creation – Mr. Sherlock Holmes – alive and well on the stages of the world. Any success we have attained, I attribute entirely to Sir Arthur, though I'm more than happy to bask in his reflected glory.

*(laughter; applause)*

This was our final performance in New York City, but I hope that you'll come see us again, on tour, which we begin right after Christmas in just –...wait. Stop. Don't anyone move!

*(He points into the audience.)*

That man has a gun!

*(laughter)*

No, no, I mean it. I'm not joking. He could be –

*(BANG!!! A shot is fired from the audience and GILLETTE cries out and falls to the ground. The actress playing ALICE, who is beside him, screams, then kneels over him. Her name is AGGIE.)*