

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.

(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 painting on the grass, but with our clothes on.

DARIA. Oh, Felix, my dear, how *are* you?

FELIX. Not as well as you, obviously.

DARIA. Oh stop it. My beauty is superficial and yours is on the inside. And Madge. My God we go back a ways, don't we? I remember when I first came to New York as a youngster – how I looked up to you with all your years of experience.

MADGE. And yet my friends and I called you "Mother."

DARIA. Now stop it, that's impossible. You didn't have any friends.

MADGE. I had Felix.

DARIA. And didn't everyone.

GILLETTE. Daria, let me introduce the rest of the clan. This is my mother, Martha Gillette.

MARTHA. We've met before. Very briefly, at a party. But I do read your column. In fact, I keep it right next to my bed in case I can't get to sleep at night.

GILLETTE. Mother!

DARIA. What a witty thing to say. And so unexpected.

SIMON. Hello, Daria. It's nice to see you.

DARIA. Simon, my dear, you're looking very well.

SIMON. As do you!

GILLETTE. I didn't know that you two –

DARIA. Of course we do. We met at Killington, at the big weekend. I was there for the skiing and those divine parties.

(to AGGIE) Then after I left, your husband had that ghastly accident, didn't he. I was so upset. If I had stayed I would have had one of the biggest scoops of the whole year! And poor you. It must have been quite upsetting.

MADGE. I'll bet you don't know they're married now.

AGGIE. For four weeks.

SIMON. Four weeks, two days, and six hours. I'm especially proud of the six hours. It shows I can really stick with it.

DARIA. The truth is, I do know about it, and I plan to put it in my column on Monday morning. I mean, just look at the two of you. You're headline news! One minute you're character actors, the next minute you've inherited half of the Pacific Northwest.

SIMON. What do you mean?

DARIA. What do I - ? Darling, you've just married the Merry Widow of Manhattan for God's sake.

SIMON. Sorry, but you've got it wrong. Hugo didn't leave her anything.

DARIA. *Excuse me*, but I *am* a reporter. When I found the records on your marriage, I happened to see Hugo's will and testament.

(to AGGIE:) He left you everything, didn't he? All his millions.

AGGIE.Yes, he did.

(The room erupts.)

FELIX, MARTHA & MADGE. Oh my God!/That's amazing!/ Oh, Aggie!/Simon!

GILLETTE. Why didn't you tell us?

AGGIE. I-I don't know. I-I didn't want it to affect my relationship with anyone. They'd treat me differently, you know they would.

SIMON. Does this mean I'm rich?

(AGGIE nods.)

Very rich?

(Nod.)

Hahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa! I'm rich, I'm rich, I'm rich! How do you do? I'm rich. You may touch me...

(He rushes to AGGIE, but stops abruptly:)

You just made my day.

(He embraces her and they all laugh.)

DARIA. I must say, this cast of yours gives me endless things to write about. It's like I *invented* you just for the purpose.

MADGE. We'd rather you wrote about the play and not us.

DARIA. Oh, nonsense. Of course you wouldn't. Everyone wants publicity. It's magic, and it's changing the world. Look at me, I'm a sorceress. A wave of the pen and I can make you a star. Poof. Publicity equals fame equals money. It's like a drug, but it never stops. And I must say, you've all been hogging the limelight beautifully, haven't you. First the shooting, which in itself must have doubled my readership, then the inheritance and now the *murder* –

FELIX. Murder?

AGGIE. What murder?

SIMON. You mean the shooting.

DARIA. No, I mean the murder this morning.

(Dead silence.)

Don't tell me you don't...

(to GILLETTE) Do *you* know about it?

GILLETTE. I'm afraid I do. I was going to tell everyone *after* dinner.

DARIA. Oops.

AGGIE. Who was murdered?

GILLETTE. Noggs.

(Shocked silence.)

SIMON. Stage doorman Noggs?

GILLETTE. I'm afraid so.

AGGIE. Oh no.

GILLETTE. The police asked me to identify the body this morning. It happened late last night, apparently.

DARIA. I was there.

GILLETTE. Excuse me?

DARIA. At your theater. Last night. Not *at* the murder, of course.

MADGE. But there's no show on at the moment.

DARIA. I was doing background work on my article.

FELIX. Did you see Noggs there?

DARIA. Yes, I did. When I went *in*, but he was murdered apparently when I was inside.

SIMON. But who would murder him? I mean – poor Noggsy.

MARTHA. Perhaps he saw something related to the shooting. Or overheard someone talking about it.

AGGIE. Could it have been an accident?

SIMON. Or natural causes, like a heart attack.

GILLETTE. That would be very comforting indeed, except his throat was cut from ear to ear with a razor blade.

(BOOM!! A thunderclap. They all jump. Through the windows we can see the snow falling.)

MADGE. There's a storm brewing.

FELIX. And I have a feeling it's going to get quite nasty before it's over.

MARTHA. Oh nonsense, it's Christmas Eve, now let's have dinner. Right this way. Let's go everybody!

(MARTHA opens the door to the dining room, and Portia starts barking again.)

PORTIA. Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark!!

MARTHA. Oh, Portia, be quiet!

(Everyone starts filing into the dining room chatting.)

DARIA. *(winding FELIX's arm around hers)* Felix, my darling, will you take me in? I'm like the maiden aunt of the family, all sad and lonely.

FELIX. *(glancing at MADGE)* ...Of course.

(DARIA and FELIX go in.)

SIMON. *(taking AGGIE's arm, imitating Daria)* Aggie, my darling, will you take me in? I'm like the bachelor uncle of the family, all full of myself and annoying...