

ACT TWO

Scene One

(The action is continuous. We hear the Beethoven quartet and then a huge crash of thunder and lightning. The wind howls and the snow is falling in sheets.)

(When the lights come up, GILLETTE is still kneeling over DARIA's body, taking her pulse, just as we left him.)

GILLETTE. ...dead!

(A thousand thoughts are going through his brain, and his head darts from side to side, looking for a clue. This is a challenge worthy of HOLMES himself.)

(He looks carefully at the hilt of the knife sticking out of DARIA, then looks at the wall of weapons and sees the empty space where the knife used to hang.)

Good God, it's my knife...

(He springs up and looks down the hall, then through the French doors and the door to the dining room. The killer is gone.)

(He takes the afghan from the sofa and throws it over DARIA's body, then he hurries to the telephone.)

Hello, operator? Get me the police!...P-O-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.

(She exits.)

GILLETTE. Oh my God...

(At this moment, FELIX appears at the top of the stairs and begins descending. He's angry and he doesn't look up - so he doesn't see the body at first.)

Oh, Felix, thank God. Come here, quickly.

FELIX. Don't speak to me, you reprobate.

GILLETTE. Yes, yes, I know, I was stupid, I apologize, I'm groveling, but I need your help!

FELIX. Oh I'm sure you do because you had to stage a séance, you had to pretend my wife was murdered, and you certainly had to what the hell is that?

(GILLETTE lifts up the blanket a bit.)

It's Daria.

GILLETTE. She's dead.

FELIX. ...What's the joke?

GILLETTE. There is no joke. She's dead.

(FELIX chuckles appreciatively. He's sure this is a Gillette Special. He bends down and pokes the body.)

FELIX. Badabadabada. Bidabidabida. Boodaboodaaaaah!
Oh my God! What happened?!

GILLETTE. Knife to the back.

FELIX. Holy God! Who did this?!

GILLETTE. You're not going to believe it.

FELIX. Who?!

GILLETTE. Mother.

FELIX. My *mother* did this?

GILLETTE. Not *your* mother. *My* mother.

FELIX. Martha?

(GILLETTE nods.)

Dear sweet Martha?

GILLETTE. She was furious because Daria threatened to ruin me. Now I need to protect her. Will you help me?

FELIX. Well of course I'll help you, she's like my own mother. But what are you thinking?

GILLETTE. I'm not sure. I suppose we should hide the body somewhere in the house. Then we'll claim that Daria left here right after the séance and we have *no idea at all where she was going*. Then, when things cool down, we'll get rid of the body.

FELIX. It does make us accessories to murder, you know.

GILLETTE. Well, if you don't want to help your dear sweet Martha who's been like a m -

FELIX. Oh shut up. We can't let her go to prison. Poor old thing, what kind of life has she had? She's been stuck with you for most of it...What are you doing?!

GILLETTE. Getting rid of the evidence.

(GILLETTE is kneeling over the body. He pulls the knife from DARIA's back, and it comes out with a hideous pop, spurting blood from the wound.)

FELIX. Ah! Yuch!

(GILLETTE whips a magnifying glass out of his pocket and examines the knife.)

GILLETTE. Look at this. There are fingerprints all over it.

FELIX. You do know that you're not really Sherlock Holmes, don't you?

GILLETTE. *(preoccupied with his examination)* Of course I do, Watson.

(BZZZZZ! The front doorbell.)

Good God, who's that?!

FELIX. How should I know?! Maybe it's the *police* to arrest us for *murder*.

GILLETTE. That's very funny, ha, ha.

(He hits the intercom button.)

Hello, who is it?

VOICE THROUGH THE INTERCOM. *(a woman's voice, deep and ironic)* Good evening, this is the police.

(GILLETTE lets out a yip and tries to turn it into a pleasant laugh.)

To whom am I speaking, please?

GILLETTE. This is William Gillette, may I help you?

VOICE. Yes, I'd like to ask you a few questions. But it's rather snowy out here so may I come in, please?

GILLETTE. Certainly. Yes, I'll just be a moment, thank you so much.

(He hits the switch, turning off the intercom. Then he notices the murder weapon in his other hand and he reacts with another yip. He puts the knife in the top drawer of the desk and slams it shut.)

FELIX. Good God, what are the police doing here?!

GILLETTE. I just remembered. I called them after I found the body.

FELIX. Oh, great.

GILLETTE. But then Mother confessed and I told them not to come!

FELIX. Oh that's all right then.

(mimes holding a telephone)

"Hello, police? There's just been a murder but whoops I think my mother did it so please don't bother stopping by."

GILLETTE. Ho, ho, ho, I'm laughing behind this mask of horror on my face now *pick up the body so we can hide it!!*

(They pick up the body at the arms and legs and start dragging her from one end of the room to the other looking for a hiding place.)

FELIX. She's heavier than she looks!

GILLETTE. Well, put your back into it.

FELIX. She must weigh a thousand pounds.

GILLETTE. At least it was all in the right places.

FELIX. Where shall we put her?!

GILLETTE. What about the closet?

FELIX. Good idea.

(They get the closet door open.)

GILLETTE. Hoist her up!

FELIX. I'm trying! I don't think she fits.

GILLETTE. Let's stand her on end... That should do it...

There.

FELIX. Good.

(They have her standing up in the closet, and FELIX closes the door.)

GILLETTE. I'll get the policeman.

(He heads for the door – but as he goes, the closet door swings open and the body starts to fall out.)

Felix!

FELIX. Ah!

(FELIX catches her.)

GILLETTE. What are you doing?!

FELIX. It's not my fault!

GILLETTE. Of course it is, you didn't close the door properly!

(They get her back in the closet and close the door again.)

There! I'd better go.

(GILLETTE hurries away – and the door swings open again and the body starts falling out...)

Felix!

(FELIX grabs the body and wrestles with it again.)

FELIX. I didn't do anything!

(Meanwhile, GILLETTE is trying to fix the lock on the closet door.)

GILLETTE. It's the lock. It just won't catch.

FELIX. Who built this place, the three little pigs?!

(BZZZZZ! GILLETTE rushes to the intercom again.)

GILLETTE. Hello?!

VOICE. I'm getting very wet out here. I could make a snow angel if you'd like...

GILLETTE. Yes, no! I'm sorry, I'll be right there!

(He turns the intercom off.)

Wait! I have an idea.

(He pulls the lever on the bookshelf, and the recess with the bar in it swings into view.)

FELIX. Oh my God, that's perfect. Why didn't we start there?

GILLETTE. I forgot about it.

FELIX. But it's your house!

(They drag the body into the recess and get her onto a bar stool, slumped over the bar.)

GILLETTE. There. How's that?

FELIX. She looks like something out of Eugene O'Neill.

GILLETTE. You close up, I'll get the Inspector. Just push the handle.

(GILLETTE hurries towards the hall. FELIX adjusts the body and hurries to the lever in the wall and pulls...but the recess doesn't close. He tries it again. Nothing moves. So the body is fully exposed and he can't close the door to the recess.)

FELIX. Come on...would you close, you stupid...

(He tries pulling on the door to the recess, but it won't move. By this time he hears voices in the hall.)

GILLETTE. *(off)* Welcome, Inspector. Please come in.

INSPECTOR. *(off)* Thank you.

(Panicked now, FELIX grabs the body and drags it behind the sofa, where it's hidden from view. Anyone walking behind the sofa, however, would see it instantly.)

(As he hides the body behind the sofa, the door to the recess moves into place by itself, hiding the bar. FELIX sees it close and watches with astonishment. Why is it closing now, when he wanted it to close earlier?! At this moment:)

(GILLETTE and INSPECTOR HARRIET GORING enter.

INSPECTOR GORING *is covered in snow. Goring is between 40 and 50 and she wears a tweed coat and a hat. She's British, eccentric, and one of a kind. One minute she seems wry and clever, the next minute she's off into a world of her own. She gets things wrong without even knowing it, yet she also seems just the sort of person who can find you out when you're lying. That makes her formidable.)*

(She's also covered in snow at the moment and she isn't happy about it.)

GILLETTE. I'm so sorry to keep you waiting, Inspector.

INSPECTOR. Not at all. I'm only sorry I forgot my snowshoes.

(During the following, FELIX does his best to shield the back of the sofa. He also tries to draw GILLETTE's attention to the body, but GILLETTE just doesn't get it.)

FELIX. Hello.

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

(She chuckles.)

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, actually, 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 is unusual meeting a *woman* detective. I didn't know they existed. 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 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. Hahahahaha YAHHHHHHAHAHAHAHA!

INSPECTOR. Is something the matter?

GILLETTE. No, no. I-I-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.

(She exits again.)

GILLETTE. *(calling)* Help yourself to any of the leftovers.

INSPECTOR. *(off)* I intend to!

FELIX. *(smiling through his teeth again)* Is she gone *this* time?

GILLETTE. *Yes!*

FELIX. Thank God!

(GILLETTE pulls the handle; the recess opens and they spring into action. Once again, they try to hide the body in the recess and close it to hide her.)

FELIX. I've played a lot of supporting roles in my time, but this is ridiculous.

INSPECTOR. *(off)* Mr. Gillette, may I ask you a question out here?

GILLETTE. I don't believe it!

(calling) Yes, yes, just coming!

(to FELIX)

I'll be right back. And this time close it *with her inside!*

FELIX. Ooh, what a good idea. That's very helpful.

(GILLETTE hurries off and FELIX manages to get the body over the bar again. His head is on the bar next to hers, trapped by her arm –)

(when she raises her head and groans. She's not dead.)

(FELIX screams as the recess closes on both of them. FELIX is trapped inside the recess with the body.)

(A moment later, GILLETTE and the INSPECTOR enter from the dining room – and GILLETTE notices immediately that FELIX is nowhere to be seen.)

INSPECTOR. So then there are three exits to the grounds from this floor?

GILLETTE. Hm? Yes, no, four. Front door, French doors, kitchen door and the door to the library.

INSPECTOR. And where is the library exactly?

GILLETTE. Right through there.

INSPECTOR. Thank you so much.

(She starts to leave, then turns back.)

Order from chaos.

GILLETTE. I beg your pardon?

INSPECTOR. Order from chaos. That's what I do. Isn't it comforting?

(Chuckling happily, the INSPECTOR disappears down the hall, leaving GILLETTE alone in the room.)

GILLETTE. Felix?...Felix?...

(Tap...tap, tap...GILLETTE realizes that FELIX is inside the recess so he hurries to the handle and opens the door.)

Would you please stop fooling around!

FELIX. She...she...she's still alive!!

GILLETTE. Oh, don't be ridiculous.

FELIX. She isn't dead yet! Just—just—just take her pulse or something.

GILLETTE. Why don't you take it?

FELIX. Because I'm not touching her!!

(GILLETTE takes her pulse.)

Well?

GILLETTE. She's dead now.

FELIX. Oh, thank God! I mean I'm sorry, but –...

INSPECTOR. (off) *Mr. Gillette!*

FELIX. I'll go get the others and don't you ever, *ever* ask me to cover up a murder for you again.

(**FELIX** disappears up the stairs – and as soon as he's gone, the **INSPECTOR** reenters.)

INSPECTOR. Ah, Mr. Gillette. I just had a thought: Do you have any domestic help working here tonight?

GILLETTE. No, we don't. Our cook left after serving dinner, and I gave my butler the evening off. It is Christmas Eve, after all.

INSPECTOR. Is it? Of course it is. Merry Christmas. Now what about visitors? Did any of your neighbors drop in? Perhaps you had some carolers, eh? Deck the Halls, that sort of thing. I used to love visiting the neighbors on Christmas Eve. A bit of song, a bit of wassail, ha!, by the time we finished I could hardly stagger home!

GILLETTE. It sounds delightful, but I'm afraid it was just the cast and mother. A quiet evening with a few retiring friends.

(**MADGE** comes storming down the stairs followed by **FELIX**.)

MADGE. *Holy Hell in a Hand Basket!! This is just lovely, now a policeman wants to talk to me about a murder! Are you the policeman?!*

INSPECTOR. Police woman, actually.

MADGE. Good. Arrest my husband.

INSPECTOR. I beg your pardon.

MADGE. Arrest him! He's guilty as sin. And *of* sin as it happens. The charge is adultery.

FELIX. Madge, would you stop!

MADGE. Well, it's true, isn't it? You stood right here and admitted it in front of everybody!

FELIX. Well what was I supposed to do?!

MADGE. You could have lied like every other husband on the planet!

FELIX. Excuse me, but who's the one who pretended to be possessed tonight?! "*Look at me, I'm catatonic and I'm scaring my husband to death!*"

MADGE. *I did it to solve the mystery, didn't I?*

FELIX. *Well it didn't work, now did it!*

MADGE. *But it could have!*

FELIX. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the Academy Award this year goes to Madge Geisel for vomiting blood on her fellow guests this weekend."

(*She slaps him across the face again.*)

Ow!

(**MADGE** storms up the stairs. **FELIX** loses it and jumps up and down in frustration.)

FELIX. **MADGE GET BACK HERE, YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A LUNATIC!!!**

(*He runs up the stairs after her and disappears. At which moment, **AGGIE** appears from the library eating a stalk of celery.*)

AGGIE. What's going on? Was someone shouting?

GILLETTE. Aggie, I thought you were upstairs.

AGGIE. I came down to the kitchen for a snack.

INSPECTOR. Down?

AGGIE. The back stairs.

GILLETTE. Aggie Wheeler, Inspector Goring.

AGGIE. "Inspector?" Has something happened?

INSPECTOR. Well, we're not certain, but we believe there may have been a murder in this house.

AGGIE. A murder?! Oh no, who was murdered?!

INSPECTOR. That's the thing. We're not quite sure.

GILLETTE. Where's Simon?

AGGIE. I don't know. He seems to have...disappeared on me.

INSPECTOR. That's odd. When did you last see him?

AGGIE. I went upstairs earlier this evening, we all did, and

Simon gave me some wine and I fell asleep on the bed without even changing. I didn't know I was so tired, but I really conked out. It was like I was drugged or something... Anyway, when I woke up he was gone.

(There's a crash of thunder. The lights flicker and when they come back on, they're lower. Throughout this scene, the lights grow dimmer and the world becomes smaller and more threatening.)

(GILLETTE goes to the intercom.)

GILLETTE. *(his voice echoing through the house)* Simon? This is William. In whatever room you're in, could you go to the intercom and push the red button. It will open up the line between us... Simon?... Simon, can you hear me?...

(There is no answer. Just dead silence.)

AGGIE. *(getting very anxious)* William, tell me he's all right.

GILLETTE. I'm sure he's fine. You saw him just a half hour ago.

AGGIE. *He shouldn't have left me in the room!*

(At this moment, SIMON enters from the dining room with a cookie and a glass of milk.)

SIMON. What's going on? Is there a problem?

AGGIE. *(running to him and embracing him)* Oh, Simon!! Where have you been?!

SIMON. I was in the kitchen getting a snack.

INSPECTOR. How do you do. Inspector Goring, Middlesex County Police Department.

SIMON. Good heavens. Is something wrong?

AGGIE. There's been a murder.

SIMON. Oh my God.

GILLETTE. But not in this house.

INSPECTOR. You *think*.

GILLETTE. Well I believe I'd know if there was a murder in my own house.

FELIX. *(entering at the top of the stairs)* Where's Madge?

GILLETTE. What do you mean, "Where's Madge," she was with you.

FELIX. And then she huffed off and she's not in our room.

SIMON. She's probably in the bathroom.

FELIX. No, I looked and she wasn't there either!

SIMON. Why is everyone so jumpy all of a sudden?

AGGIE. I told you, there's a murderer on the loose!

(Boom! The storm is getting worse and worse. The lights flicker again and this time they come up even lower.)

GILLETTE goes to his intercom again.)

GILLETTE. Madge, if you can hear this would you... The line's dead.

INSPECTOR. What about the phones?... "Hello? Hello, operator..." Dead.

(A frisson of concern passes through the room. They all glance at each other.)

AGGIE. It's just the electricity...

FELIX. Except that Madge is missing!

INSPECTOR. This is thrilling!

GILLETTE. Felix, she was here five minutes ago.

FELIX. Excuse me, but I would know if my wife is missing or not and she is *definitely missing!*

(MADGE appears from the hallway eating an apple.)

MADGE. Who's missing?

FELIX. Oh thank God! Madge! Where have you been?!

MADGE. I was in the kitchen, getting a snack.

FELIX. You should have told me!

MADGE. That I was hungry?

INSPECTOR. Your kitchen seems to be very popular.

SIMON. Speaking of missing people, by the way, where's Martha?

GILLETTE. Upstairs asleep.

SIMON. Through all this?

GILLETTE. *Yes* through all this!

AGGIE. What about Daria?

INSPECTOR. Who's Daria?

MADGE. Daria Chase, the columnist.

INSPECTOR. She's staying here? At this house?

MADGE. Yes, that's right.

GILLETTE. She's not, actually.

FELIX. She left right after you all went to bed.

MADGE. In this weather?

GILLETTE. Well, she was upset, you know, and she simply insisted on walking out.

FELIX. That's right.

INSPECTOR. "Upset?"

GILLETTE. A little argument.

FELIX. It was nothing.

INSPECTOR. And did either of you *see* her leave?

GILLETTE. (*with a glance at FELIX*) Not exactly.

FELIX. But she said she was leaving.

AGGIE. Wait a second! That's her handbag!

(*And now we notice it, in a corner of the couch.*)

GILLETTE. She must have forgotten it.

FELIX. Women do.

MADGE. She'd never leave without her handbag. That's impossible.

FELIX. It's not *impossible!*

AGGIE. I agree with Madge. Women just don't.

INSPECTOR. Unless she was running from something.

AGGIE. Perhaps someone should look in her room.

MADGE. I'll go.

INSPECTOR. I'll go with you.

(*They head up the stairs.*)

SIMON. If I had killed Daria, I know where I'd have put her. In that hidden room of yours.

INSPECTOR. Hidden room?

GILLETTE. I don't *have* a hidden room, Simon.

SIMON. Oh you know what I mean, that bar thing. Martha showed us. You pull this handle.

FELIX. No, don't - !

GILLETTE. Don't do it - !

(*Too late. SIMON pulls the handle and the door to the recess slides open.*)

(*GILLETTE and FELIX wince...but the recess is empty. There's no DARIA.*)

(*GILLETTE and FELIX look at each other, puzzled. AGGIE goes into the recess and stands in front of the bar.*)

AGGIE. I don't know what you two are thinking, but there's nothing h -

(*At which moment, DARIA's arm and then her whole body shoot out from behind the bar and she grabs AGGIE with a horrible gasp.*)

DARIA. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

AGGIE. (*terrified*) AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!
HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

(*AGGIE screams and screams.*)

(*Thunder and lightning.*)

(*Blackout*)

End of Scene

Scene Two

(About five minutes later. Daria's body is gone. **AGGIE** is weeping in **SIMON**'s arms, the **INSPECTOR** is pacing, extremely cross, and **MADGE** is standing apart.)

MADGE. ...I guess this means we're not exchanging presents tonight...

(**AGGIE** continues weeping.)

SIMON. Shhh. It's all right, it's over now.

INSPECTOR. I'm afraid it isn't over, Mr. Bright. Miss Chase has been murdered and I have been lied to.

(**FELIX** and **GILLETTE** enter together, a little winded, rolling their sleeves down, etc.)

MADGE. Did you dispose of the body as they do in the mysteries?

FELIX. We put her in the greenhouse next to a very beautiful orchid. She looks rather holy.

MADGE. Well that's a first.

GILLETTE. (to the **INSPECTOR**, who is glowering at him) You're still cross with me, aren't you?

INSPECTOR. You could have told me about the séance, and you could have told me about Mr. Boggs.

GILLETTE, SIMON, FELIX. Noggs.

INSPECTOR. Well whoever he was! The man was murdered last night and you don't even tell me about it?

GILLETTE. I'm awfully sorry, I was going to say something, but then –

INSPECTOR. Oh stop it! You were shot two weeks ago, Mr. Gillette, and if I were in your stockings I'd feel rather concerned at the moment.

FELIX. Do you really think there's a connection with all this?

INSPECTOR. Well, of course there is! There has to be! We just can't see it yet because we're *in the forest*.

(*Boom!*)

INSPECTOR. (cont.) Now I'll need some assistance, but I assume that this telephone is still dead.

(She picks up the receiver.)

"Hello...Hello!"

(It's obviously dead. She hangs it up.)

And I suppose no one knows where the murder weapon is?

(No answer. Everyone shrugs.)

All right, I would like all of you to go into the dining room and wait for me, and I urge you to keep an eye on each other. No one leaves! I'll call you for questioning one at a time, and believe me, this is not a joke.

(Everyone exits except **GILLETTE**, who closes the door behind them.)

GILLETTE. Good. Let's get down to business. I fear it's more complicated than I thought at first. They all have motives.

INSPECTOR. What are you talking about? Get in there!

GILLETTE. Surely I'm not a suspect.

INSPECTOR. Of course you are.

GILLETTE. But it's my house.

INSPECTOR. What has that got to do with it? If anything, it means you're a bigger suspect. You know the house inside-out and you knew about the hidden room.

GILLETTE. You know, when you think about it, you're just as much a suspect as I am.

INSPECTOR. I beg your pardon.

GILLETTE. It happens all the time in murder mysteries. The slightly odd "inspector" who arrives alone in the middle of the night and pretends to sort things out when in fact she intends to murder someone for some hideous crime that happened twenty years ago.

INSPECTOR. Oh nonsense.

GILLETTE. I don't see a badge.

INSPECTOR. I left it at the office.

GILLETTE. That's a likely story.

INSPECTOR. *You hid a murder and you're accusing me of stories?!*

(MARTHA walks in wearing her dressing gown. She is rather loopy from her sleeping pills.)

MARTHA. Hello...?

GILLETTE. (*alarmed*) Mother, what are you doing here?!

MARTHA. I heard a scream and it woke me up. At least I think it was a scream. It might have been a tea kettle.

GILLETTE. Mother, go back to bed. Right now.

MARTHA. Oh don't be silly. I am perfectly fine. How do you do. Are you a stranger?

INSPECTOR. Yes I am, I'm afraid.

MARTHA. Oh that's all right. I like strange men, don't I, Willie. Sometimes. If they're nice. Are you nice?

INSPECTOR. I like to think so.

GILLETTE. Mother, how many sleeping pills did you take?

(*Embarrassed, MARTHA holds up four fingers.*)

MARTHA. (*confidentially to the INSPECTOR*) They make me sleepy.

GILLETTE. All right, back to bed.

MARTHA. Oh, stop it!

(*to the INSPECTOR*) How do you do, I'm Martha Gillette.

INSPECTOR. How do you do. Inspector Goring from the Middlesex County Police Department.

MARTHA. *Oh, no!*

GILLETTE. Mother –!

MARTHA. I knew it would come to this, I just knew it.

INSPECTOR. So you know about the murder then?

MARTHA. Of course I know. How could I not know it when I was the one who –

GILLETTE. *Mother!* Don't say anything. Not a word!

MARTHA. Oh stop it. We knew it would come to this and I want to get it over with. *"It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before. It is a far, far better place I go –"*

GILLETTE. Inspector, listen to me! I didn't want my mother to hear this, but...I killed Daria Chase. I'm turning myself in.

MARTHA. Willie!

INSPECTOR. Good God! Are you serious?

GILLETTE. Yes. She threatened to ruin my career and I couldn't just stand by and let her do it.

MARTHA. (*overlapping*) Oh stop being nonsensical. Inspector, I killed Daria Chase and he's trying to protect me.

GILLETTE. (*overlapping*) Mother, please. The Inspector can see that you couldn't do it. You're...you're too old.

MARTHA. Come over here and say that and I'll knock you down!

INSPECTOR. *Would you both be quiet!*

(*MARTHA breaks down in tears.*)

MARTHA. *Oh, Willie, how could I do such a thing! And I didn't mean to kill her! She just made me so angry!*

(*She sobs in his arms. GILLETTE looks up. There's something wrong here.*)

GILLETTE.You didn't "mean to"?

MARTHA. I only wanted to make her sick and teach her a lesson!

(*GILLETTE pulls his mother aside and whispers to her:*)

GILLETTE. Excuse us...Mother, you must have realized it would kill her.

MARTHA. No I didn't! I thought, "You can't treat my son that way! I'll make you suffer first. I'll make you sick as a dog!"

GILLETTE. But you stabbed her in the back!

MARTHA. What are you talking about? How could I stab anybody?

GILLETTE. You used the knife from the wall and then you... oh my God you didn't kill her.

MARTHA. I didn't?

GILLETTE. Mother, what did you say a moment ago about getting sick or something...?

MARTHA. I said I'd make her sick as a dog, the way she threatened you and –

GILLETTE. (*overlapping*) *That's it! That's it!*

MARTHA. But what is that supposed to –

GILLETTE. Be quiet! Listen!

MARTHA. ...Willie –

GILLETTE. *Listen!*

(They strain to listen. The INSPECTOR, who has overheard everything, is listening too.)

MARTHA. I don't hear a thing.

INSPECTOR. Neither do I.

GILLETTE. It's the case of the dog in the night.

MARTHA. But I don't hear a dog.

GILLETTE. (*joyously*) *Exactly!* Mother, quick! Go find Portia!

MARTHA. What has Portia got to do with it?

GILLETTE. She may be ill, or she may be... Oh, quickly, Mother, go find her!

(MARTHA hurries off.)

Inspector, listen. I retract my confession *and* my mother's. We didn't do it.

INSPECTOR. But I heard her confess!

GILLETTE. But she didn't mean it and that's the point.

*"She's as innocent as the new-born lamb
A-feeding on the crest of yonder hill."*

INSPECTOR. *Othello?*

GILLETTE. I just made it up.

(MARTHA reenters, carrying the dog in her arms. Poor Portia is limp and ill. The crisis has made MARTHA more level-headed.)

GILLETTE. How's Portia?

MARTHA. She's very ill. I should have realized that wicked woman might do such a thing.

INSPECTOR. Do what thing? What are you talking about?!

GILLETTE. Look, it's simple. My mother was angry with Daria for threatening me, so to teach her a lesson she gave her – what? A cup of tea?

MARTHA. Yes.

GILLETTE. With something in it to make her sick.

MARTHA. Yes. Well not at first. First I brought her a regular cup, but when she became abusive I went back and doctored it.

GILLETTE. With one of the chemicals I left in the kitchen.

MARTHA. It said on the bottle "if ingested, causes violent stomach pains," and I thought, "Well, that's just the thing."

GILLETTE. But she didn't drink the tea, she must have thrown it at Portia, who licked it off the floor.

MARTHA. That's it, that makes sense! But I must get Portia to bed right away good-bye.

(MARTHA hurries off with Portia in her arms.)

GILLETTE. Mother, wait! Earlier, when I went:

(He does the stabbing gesture again, his arm moving up and down from the elbow.)

and you nodded, what did you think I meant?

MARTHA. I thought you were cheering me on about the poison.

(She makes the gesture.)

"Go, Mother! Go, Mother!" I'll see you later.

(She hurries out of the room with Portia.)

GILLETTE. (*exuberant; at the top of his game*) Ha ha! We're back in business! And now we have a murderer to catch!

INSPECTOR. "We?"

(GILLETTE goes to his mantelpiece and takes up his meerschaum pipe, then starts pulling on a Holmes-like dressing gown.)

GILLETTE. Now let's review what we know so far: we know that Daria must have been murdered in the fifteen minutes after the séance because that's when I came in and found her. So that puts the murder between 8:45 and 9 pm.

(By this time, GILLETTE is smoking the meerschaum and has fastened the dressing gown. He's now the very picture of Sherlock Holmes.)

INSPECTOR. Mr. Gillette! Let me remind you that I am in charge of this case, and you are by no means ruled out as a suspect.

GILLETTE. A: I'm not a suspect and you know it, B: You do need my help since I know everyone involved, and C: I haven't ruled *you* out as a suspect, and in fact you seem rather odd to me. Now who shall we start with?

INSPECTOR. Call Aggie and Simon in. And no funny business!

GILLETTE. *(opens the door)* Aggie, Simon, could you step in, please. I need to ask you some questions. The Inspector will take notes for me.

INSPECTOR. *I do not find that even faintly amusing!* This is my case, and it shall remain that way!

(to AGGIE and SIMON, who are just entering:) Now both of you sit down. I want to discuss your relationship with Daria Chase. How did you know her?

AGGIE. I only met her this evening.

SIMON. I met her at Killington, the ski resort.

INSPECTOR. And when was this?

SIMON. Just over a year ago.

INSPECTOR. And how did you meet?

SIMON. She recognized me from a play I was in. She'd given me a bad review about a swimsuit.

INSPECTOR. "Swimsuit?"

SIMON. I wore a swimsuit in the play and she implied that it was...too loose.

INSPECTOR. Loose? But how could she tell if it was...Oh. Sorry.

SIMON. Anyway, I'd never even been to Killington before and there she was. I think she goes there pretty often as a sort of getaway.

INSPECTOR. And why were you there?

AGGIE. He was helping me.

INSPECTOR. Helping?

AGGIE. I was on my honeymoon and my husband Hugo was killed in a skiing accident.

INSPECTOR. I read about that! He was a big wheel. Oh my Lord! I'm so sorry!

AGGIE. Thank you. After it happened I called Simon to help me deal with it.

GILLETTE. And you got there overnight.

SIMON. Yes, I borrowed a friend's car and drove for about seven hours.

INSPECTOR. *(taking notes)* I see. And the name of your friend who owned the car, please?

(SIMON glances uncomfortably at AGGIE.)

AGGIE. Tamsin McGregor.

SIMON. Yes.

AGGIE. That was his girlfriend at the time.

INSPECTOR. I see.

AGGIE. Simon, you can talk about it, it's fine.

(to the INSPECTOR and GILLETTE) She still calls him, apparently. She doesn't want to give him up.

SIMON. *(to AGGIE)* I asked her to stop calling.

AGGIE. I know that.

SIMON. I even told Mr. Gillette about it.

GILLETTE. That's right. She called this afternoon and I answered the phone. She sounded upset, I'm afraid.

SIMON. I'm sorry you had to be involved.

GILLETTE. Oh not at all. But the one thing I don't understand is how she got my telephone number.

SIMON. I guess she looked it up, or called the operator.

GILLETTE. That's not possible. It's unlisted.

SIMON. ...Well I don't know. Maybe she saw it in my address book.

GILLETTE. While you were still a couple?

SIMON. Right.

GILLETTE. Except that was, what? – almost a year ago?

SIMON. That's right.

GILLETTE. And I moved into this house just three months ago. So there was no telephone number a year ago. It didn't exist.

SIMON. (*getting upset*) Well, I don't know. Maybe she got it from a friend of yours, or your agent or something. I mean, she knew I was coming here, I told her *that*, but I also told her not to call under any circumstances! I begged her. I said *don't call!*

(*Brring! The telephone rings. Everyone looks at it.*)

(*Brring!*)

INSPECTOR. ...The telephone seems to be working again.

(*Brring! GILLETTE picks it up.*)

GILLETTE. Hello?

(*He listens; then offers the phone to SIMON:*)

Tamsin.

(*SIMON takes the phone.*)

SIMON. Hello?...No. But Tamsin, how did you get this number?...Tell me....Because I need to know!...Look, just calm down, I'm not accusing you of anything....*Calm down!*...Tamsin, yes of course I...

(*He looks at AGGIE and lowers his voice.*)

SIMON. (*cont.*) I did *at the time*. But things change. I'm sorry.

(*AGGIE hurries out of the room.*)

Oh, God. Aggie! Wait!...Tamsin, I have to go, I'm sorry. *Yes, I'll call you back!*

(*He hangs up. To the INSPECTOR:*)

May I...?

(*The INSPECTOR nods and SIMON hurries out of the room, leaving GILLETTE and the INSPECTOR by themselves. Beat.*)

INSPECTOR. "The silence between the two professionals spoke volumes."

(*GILLETTE doesn't respond. He's thinking.*)

It's too bad we can't find the murder weapon. It's one of the many things I find odd about this case. It could have fingerprints on it, it could be broken in some way, or wiped clean or any one of a –

GILLETTE. Inspector, would you please stop babbling about useless details, I need to think.

INSPECTOR. I would hardly call the murder weapon a "useless detail," Mr. Holmes. It could tell us everything.

GILLETTE. It won't. I've already inspected it.

INSPECTOR. What?

GILLETTE. It's in the drawer.

(*The INSPECTOR rushes to the drawer, opens it and pulls out the knife.*)

INSPECTOR. Good God! *Why didn't you tell me?!...Mr. Gillette!*

GILLETTE. Inspector, I have no idea why I didn't tell you, but now you've found it so would you *please be quiet BECAUSE I'M TRYING TO THINK!*

(*At which moment, FELIX bursts into the room followed by MADGE.*)

(*They're both buoyant, at the top of their game.*)

MADGE. We've got it!

FELIX. We've got it!

MADGE. We know whodunit.

FELIX. What a team we are.

MADGE. Like Astaire and Rogers.

FELIX. Nick and Nora.

MADGE. Sacco and Vanzetti.

FELIX. You know, we *could* do this professionally.

MADGE. We're awfully good at it.

INSPECTOR. What are you talking about?!

FELIX. We've solved the murder.

MADGE. It's all wrapped up.

FELIX. Don't try to thank us.

INSPECTOR. But you are suspects yourselves!

MADGE. Not anymore. We figured it out.

FELIX. You may call the Sheriff and clean up this town.

GILLETTE. What's your guess?

FELIX. It isn't a guess at all. Look, let's start with a proposition: whoever murdered Daria is behind the whole thing. All right? All the murders and the attempted murder.

MADGE. Working backwards, that includes Daria, Noggs, you and Hugo.

INSPECTOR. I thought Hugo was an accident.

FELIX. Oh, puh-lease. "Coincidence?"

INSPECTOR. Fair enough. Go on.

FELIX. So who are the suspects. The people in this house, right?

MADGE. Ussens.

FELIX. But.

MADGE. But!

FELIX. Process of elimination. First we eliminate Martha. Fair?

INSPECTOR. Well...

MADGE. Can you really see her killing Hugo?

FELIX. Or hiring someone to shoot at her son?

MADGE. Then killing Noggs?

FELIX. With a razor blade?

INSPECTOR. All right, I give.

MADGE. (to GILLETTE) Now what about you. Did *you* do it?

GILLETTE. Oh please.

FELIX. (to the INSPECTOR) And you?

INSPECTOR. Don't be ridiculous!

FELIX. So now we're down to four suspects. Let's start with us. Did you do it, darling?

MADGE. No, my love. And you?

FELIX. Not a chance.

INSPECTOR. But those are denials! They carry no weight whatsoever!

FELIX. Except

MADGE. Except

FELIX. For Noggs.

MADGE. Good old Noggsy.

GILLETTE. What about him?

FELIX. He was killed last night, and we were staying at my sister's house in Rhinebeck last night.

MADGE. We have ten witnesses.

(silence)

GILLETTE. I see it all.

FELIX. I thought you would.

INSPECTOR. What?

FELIX. We're down to Aggie and Simon... *and Simon lied!*

INSPECTOR. When?

FELIX. He and Daria met at Killington. They both said so. But she said she left there *before* Hugo died,

MADGE. and *he* said he arrived there *after the killing* – in response to Aggie's call for help.

INSPECTOR. But why should Simon lie about when he arrived at Killington?

GILLETTE. So he could murder Hugo and get away with it!

FELIX/MADGE. Bingo.

INSPECTOR. But why on earth would he murder Hugo?

GILLETTE. The money! Don't you see it? Simon arrives at Killington on let's say Saturday and he plans the murder. Then he *pretends* to arrive on Tuesday so he can play the hero with Aggie, and it works because later he marries Aggie and as her husband gets half the money.

FELIX. And Daria knew all this because she happened to be at Killington and saw him –

MADGE. So she became a threat to Simon and he had to kill her.

FELIX. Case closed.

INSPECTOR. Wait! Mr. Gillette got shot at the Palace Theater. How does *that* fit in? Admittedly, Simon could have hired someone, but why shoot *you*? He was already married to Aggie – it doesn't make sense.

FELIX. I have an idea about that.

GILLETTE. So do I.

MADGE. So do I! He missed, right?

INSPECTOR. Well of course he missed. He hit Mr. Gillette's arm. Though from that distance I'd have put it right through his heart, let it ricochet twice around the theater and have it come back between his testicles.

(**GILLETTE** and **FELIX** cross their legs.)

MADGE. You don't understand. This man missed entirely. He was shooting at *Aggie*, he missed her, and the bullet hit *Willie*.

INSPECTOR. Ingenious! But why on earth was he shooting at Aggie?

ALL THREE. *Tamsin*.

INSPECTOR. Tamsin?

MADGE. Simon has a girlfriend!

FELIX. And he's in love with her!

GILLETTE. Just look at it from Simon's point of view. He kills Hugo and marries Aggie to get her money, but he's not in love with Aggie, he's in love with Tamsin.
Solution:

GILLETTE/FELIX/MADGE/INSPECTOR. Kill Aggie.

INSPECTOR. And Tamsin has your telephone number because Simon gave it to her.

GILLETTE. (*simultaneously*) gave it to her!

MADGE. So if I may, a recap, from the beginning, just once.

FELIX. Go.

MADGE. Simon is in love with Tamsin and he's friends with Aggie.

FELIX. Then Aggie marries Hugo, who is rich as Croesus.

GILLETTE. So Simon, who is ambitious,

MADGE. And a sociopath,

INSPECTOR. Kills Hugo, marries Aggie, gets the money, and decides to kill Aggie so he and Tamsin can enjoy the loot.

FELIX. So he leaves a note making it look like Gillette was the intended victim.

MADGE. But.

FELIX. But! Noggs overhears Simon hiring someone to shoot Aggie,

MADGE. And whoever it is, misses Aggie, his intended victim, and hits our beloved leader here.

GILLETTE. And meanwhile, Simon kills Noggs because he's heard something.

INSPECTOR. On top of which, Daria knows the truth because of Killington

FELIX. And blackmails Simon,

MADGE. So he stabs her in the back!

FELIX. ... Well, that's simple enough.

GILLETTE. It is, actually. It's like *Richard the Third*. Ruthless man kills everyone he needs to in order to get what he wants. The rest is detail.

AGGIE. I'd love one.

SIMON. Have a seat. It'll just take a minute.

(She starts to sit.)

No, no. Sit here. You can see outside. The light is so beautiful.

(He offers her a chair so she can't see the wall of weapons behind her. She sits. SIMON stares at the back of her head for a moment, then takes down a garrote. Thunder, and the lights dim.)

(AGGIE leans her head back and takes a deep breath.)

AGGIE. Oh. I'm so tired.

SIMON. Are you...?

AGGIE. Oh, my neck! Could you massage it?

SIMON. Of course.

(He puts down the garrote and begins massaging her neck.)

How's that?

AGGIE. Heaven.

(He works on her neck in silence for a moment. She sighs deeply.)

Wouldn't it be wonderful to live in a place like this?

SIMON. You *can* afford it, you know.

AGGIE. That's true. But I meant this kind of life. Like the Inspector.

(He continues to massage her neck...and then his fingers go around her throat...)

I could solve all the local mysteries and put things right again. I love that sort of tidiness, when all the pieces fit so perfectly together and everything just locks into place. That's when they catch the *really* bad people. "Where did the Pennyfeather's cat disappear to?" She's on the roof. "Who dug up Miss Pilbeam's flower bed last night?" It was that darn dog again. "Why do the Wheelers beat their daughter every night? She tries so hard to be perfect."

SIMON. I know you do.

(pause)

AGGIE. We had the perfect plan, didn't we.

SIMON. We did.

AGGIE. I marry Hugo. I get the money. We kill Hugo. We get married.

SIMON. Then Daria had to come along and stick her nose in it. Out of the blue!

(Agitated, SIMON walks to the bar and starts making a drink. AGGIE stands.)

AGGIE. She was on to you like a shot.

SIMON. The stupid cow. I always hated her. Do you know she tried to blackmail me. *Me!*

AGGIE. Is that why you killed her?

SIMON. No. I didn't kill her. That's the funny thing. It wasn't me.

AGGIE. Oh, really? And yet, on the other hand, you tried to kill me, didn't you?

(SIMON looks at her, startled – and AGGIE snatches up the garrote and whips it over SIMON's head and starts to strangle him without mercy. She's pulling so hard, he can barely claw at his neck. Meanwhile, the storm outside is raging.)

You hired that man to shoot at me in the theatre, didn't you?! DIDN'T YOU?!

SIMON. *(strangling)* Yes!

AGGIE. And you were about to try it again, weren't you?!

SIMON. Arghh... Aggie, please!

AGGIE. Aggie please *what?! Leave you and Tamsin to enjoy my money?!*

SIMON. No!

AGGIE. *Liar! Admit it!*

SIMON. *Argh!*

AGGIE. *You're still in love with her, aren't you?! ADMIT IT OR I'LL KILL YOU!!*

(Beat. He shakes his head yes – and Snap! She gives the garrote a final yank and SIMON's body goes limp and he falls to the floor. AGGIE undoes the garrote, and is catching her breath, when she hears voices outside.)

INSPECTOR. *(off)* I'll go round the front!

MADGE. *(off)* We'll take the lawn!

GILLETTE. *(off)* I'll try the house!

(AGGIE runs to the French windows to look out – when suddenly SIMON begins to stir.)

SIMON. Unhhh...

(AGGIE turns, shocked. She looks around desperately, grabs a heavy bronze statuette from a table and races to him. As he begins to get to his knees, she smashes him in the head with a horrible thud and he collapses to the floor again and doesn't move.)

GILLETTE. *(off)* Aggie?!

(Panting, AGGIE springs into action. She tousles her hair and rips her dress – clearly she's planning to pretend that she's just been attacked. She strikes a pose and is about to start wailing, when SIMON starts moaning again.)

SIMON. Unnhhhh!

(AGGIE is dumbfounded. SIMON tries to get to his feet.)

AGGIE. Would you stop it!

(AGGIE runs to the wall and grabs a shotgun. She's about to shoot him – but decides instead to club him with it. Wham! SIMON hits the floor, dead at last – and AGGIE starts wailing just as GILLETTE runs in the door.)

GILLETTE. Aggie!

AGGIE. Oh, William! William! Oh, thank God! He tried to kill me! And he killed Hugo! He admitted it! And he put this horrible thing round my neck and I managed to squirm out of it and I got it around his neck and I...I could hardly breathe!

(AGGIE bursts into racking sobs and flings herself at GILLETTE.)

AGGIE. It was Simon all along! He still loved Tamsin! That's what he said! Oh, William, I love you so much!

(She clings to him for dear life.)

And we can find our love again, I promise. *I promise.*

GILLETTE. Oh my darling, that's wonderful! And may I tell you something?

AGGIE. Of course you can. You can tell me anything in the world!

GILLETTE. I turned the tape recorder back on before I ran outside.

(He takes the remote control device out of his pocket and holds it up. AGGIE's eyes widen in terror.)

AGGIE. No! No, don't!...Don't play it! Please! Please!!

(He's about to hit the button...but doesn't.)

GILLETTE. I didn't put it together until I was outside. You married Simon because you had to. He helped you kill Hugo because that was the way to get the money.

(AGGIE bolts to the wall and grabs a pistol.)

AGGIE. Get back! Get back! I'll shoot, I swear to God!

(She aims the gun at his head.)

GILLETTE. Aggie.

AGGIE. You didn't love me enough, did you?! I wasn't good enough for you, the great William Gillette! Well I didn't need you! I found Hugo!!

GILLETTE. Aggie, please.

(She fires! Click.)

GILLETTE. You don't think I leave them around loaded, do you?

(With a cry of frustration, AGGIE throws the pistol down and races to the hall, fleeing for her life – and runs straight into the INSPECTOR, who's waiting for her. Simultaneously, FELIX and MADGE reenter.)

INSPECTOR. No you don't!

AGGIE. Ah! Let me go! Let go of me!

(She's struggling so hard that the INSPECTOR can't hold her.)

INSPECTOR. Mr. Geisel! Would you help me here! My God, Mr. Gillette, you were right! She's a wildcat!

(FELIX helps hold on to her.)

AGGIE. Stop it! Stop it! I hate you!

(Amid cries and grunts, they finally subdue her and handcuff her. By the end, she's panting like a trapped animal, exhausted.)

If you hadn't recorded me with that stupid machine I'd have gotten away with it!

GILLETTE. I hate to tell you this, but I didn't put the machine on. That was a bluff.

AGGIE. AHHHH!

FELIX. Aggie. Why?

AGGIE. "Why?" How's fifty million dollars "why." How's getting to dress perfectly and act perfectly and get treated perfectly. *EXCEPT SIMON HAD TO GO AND RUIN IT, THE LYING, WOMANIZING LITTLE CHEAT!*

(She kicks the body – and SIMON starts upward with a gasp. They all jump back, and SIMON gets to his knees.)

SIMON. Unnnhhhh...What happened?...

(He looks up and sees everyone staring at him.)

Uh oh.

INSPECTOR. Mr. Bright, you are under arrest for the attempted murder of Miss Agatha Wheeler, the murder of her husband, Hugo, and the murder of Miss Daria Chase. If you would like to make a statement –

SIMON. Hey, wait a second! I didn't kill Daria. She did!

AGGIE. Liar! Why would I murder Daria?! It was your alibi that was busted.

SIMON. You lying little schemer,

SIMON.

I had nothing to do with Daria!

AGGIE.

It was your problem, not mine!

INSPECTOR. Will you both please be quiet!! You are both under arrest,

(We hear a siren in the distance.)

and I believe I see my men coming up the drive, *now move along!*

AGGIE. ...Idiot!

(AGGIE and SIMON leave the room, and the INSPECTOR starts to follow them.)

MADGE. You were right about Aggie. What made you think of it?

GILLETTE. Just getting outside helped clear my head. And then I thought: How could Simon kill Hugo alone? Just loosening the strap on his ski? Too unpredictable. Aggie must have drugged the poor man, or perhaps they killed him together first, then staged the accident. I suppose we'll find out at the trial.

FELIX. I hadn't thought of a trial. Do you think they could beat the rap?

GILLETTE. I doubt it. But if this were a play, it would make a good sequel....Inspector. Well done.

INSPECTOR. Thank you, William. We get our man. And girl. Whatever.

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,

And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full

Of divest cruelty!

If you need an actress, give me a jingle. I might be available.

(The INSPECTOR exits, leaving FELIX, MADGE and GILLETTE onstage. There's a moment of stunned silence.)

GILLETTE. Amazing.

MADGE. Aggie. Who would have guessed.

FELIX. Well I did, actually.

MADGE. What do you mean?

FELIX. I always thought there was something suspicious about her. She was too perfect, too...satisfied, which is why I followed her out here last night during dinner. I had a feeling she was up to something.

MADGE. I thought you were out here fooling around with Daria.

FELIX. Madge. Me?

GILLETTE. (to **FELIX**) I wouldn't push it, if I were you.

(**MADGE** and **FELIX** take hands. **GILLETTE** looks away.)

MADGE. I'm so sorry, Willie. Were you in love with her?

GILLETTE. I think I was for a moment. But what is love? 'Tis not hereafter.

FELIX. Present mirth hath present laughter,

MADGE. What's to come is still unsure.

FELIX. In delay there lies no plenty,

GILLETTE. Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,

MADGE. Youth's a stuff will not endure.

FELIX. That's all well and good, but "sweet and twenty" tried to blow your brains out.

GILLETTE. Sweet and twenty usually does.

(**FELIX** picks up the gun.)

Careful with that, it's loaded.

FELIX. Oh it is not.

GILLETTE. Yes it is. I emptied only the first chamber. How else to catch a master criminal?

FELIX. (waving the gun around without even noticing it, making **GILLETTE** and **MADGE** more and more nervous) Oh stop it. You mean to say that you emptied the first chamber of every single one of these guns?

GILLETTE. Yes!

MADGE. (dodging the gun) Felix! Be careful!

FELIX. (waving the gun like a schoolteacher shaking a finger at a pupil) Gillette, listen to me: you are *not really* Sherlock Holmes and you've got to get over this obsession of yours.

GILLETTE. Would you be careful with that! It's loaded!

FELIX. Oh it is not and I'll prove it!

(He raises the gun above his head and points it at the ceiling, ready to fire.)

MADGE. Don't!

GILLETTE. (in a different, more serious tone) ...Wait a moment, I have a question. If Aggie and Simon didn't kill Daria, then who did?

(At which moment, **MARTHA** bustles down the stairs in her nightgown.)

MARTHA. Sorry, sorry, I can see you're busy, but there's something I forgot to do...Oh, what is it?...Oh yes, of course.

(She spies the knife that killed **DARIA**, still lying on the desk where the **INSPECTOR** left it. She picks it up and gives it a good cleaning with her handkerchief.)

We can't leave this just lying around, now can we? It still might have my fingerprints on it. They'd think I was crazy as a bed bug.

GILLETTE. Mother?

MARTHA. I'm sorry, dear, but I had to do it. She would have ruined you.

(She hangs the knife on the wall where it was originally.)

There. Now everything's perfect again and we can all go to bed. Merry Christmas!

(She smiles happily at her dear ones, who are all safe... and dumbfounded.)

(At this moment there is a screech of music and **DARIA**, still alive, lurches out of nowhere onto the French door from outside. We see her plastered against the glass - while simultaneously, hand still raised, **FELIX** fires the gun into the ceiling, surprising even himself.)

(**BANG!**)

(The final moment of the Beethoven quartet fills the air.)
(curtain)