

Gillette, Aggie

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 haridan 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, Maria 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.)

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 our 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 Pan 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?