

Sibling Rivalry

A Two Act Comedy

By Jim Gustafson

Note:

While this play was written for American theaters it can easily be revised for the British stage. For example the American law enforcement agencies... The FBI and U.S. Marshal's office... are the equivalent of your **Serious and Organized Crime Agency (SOCA)** and the American "Witness Relocation Program" is the same as your "**Protected Persons Service.**" City names can also be changed to give the play a "**local flavor.**"

A note about staging

The play takes on a single unit set representing the Hunter's home with the kitchen, dining and living rooms all open and adjoining.

A note about casting

This show has a relatively large cast that can be populated by doubling, tripling and even quadrupling. Several characters could be played by females or males.

At Rise:
Act One Scene One

Basic set - Combo Living/Dining Room/Kitchen. Two small typing tables and chairs at a larger table. Redmond is sitting at small table with typewriter. Amanda is across the stage. She's also at a typewriter.

Lights Up

Redmond looks up.

Redmond: Good evening. I'm Redmond Hunter. I'm just a writer. That's Amanda my wife... She's a writer too.

Amanda looks up.

Amanda: I do Romance Novels...

Redmond: And she's good... Very good. They call her the "Queen of Romance Novels" because she's had fifteen...

Amanda: Fourteen ... Don't gild the lily.

Redmond: O.K. Fourteen best selling Romance novels.

Amanda: Redmond's being modest when he says he's **just** a writer. He's a best selling author. He's had 31 books on the New York Times best seller's list.

Redmond: And none in the Literary Review.

Amanda: That's because you write popular fiction

Redmond: Pulp Fiction actually. I'm what the critics call a hack writer. I do stories about private gum shoes like Dutch Van Dyke

Dutch comes on stage and pours a cup of coffee.

Redmond: Dutch investigates Organized crime... Usually murder and mayhem. The kind of stuff perpetrated by Gino Rotelli.... A Mob King Pin.

Gino comes on stage and heads for the coffee.

Gino: Coffee... Coffee. Got to have coffee. Mornin' Dutch. How ya doing?

Gino pours his coffee.

Dutch: I'm hanging in there. But I'm getting antsy. I gotta get out of here.

Gino: Tell me about it.

Enter Pomeroy

Pomeroy: Gentlemen, it's fine day but of course we can't enjoy it in the company of others.

Gino: Or with each other either now that you're up Pommey, old chap.

Amanda: Redmond doesn't only write crime novels.

Pomeroy interrupts:

Pomeroy: Six of his best sellers were riveting court room dramas featuring the brilliant English bred lawyer Pomeroy Smith.... That's me.

Amanda: Thank you Pomeroy. While Redmond hasn't won over the literati even his harshest critics have to admit that nobody creates characters that capture the readers' imaginations like his do. They literally come to life in the minds of readers as though they were real people.

Gino: Yeah the ladies love me.

Redmond: Unfortunately that talent is a blessing and a curse.

Amanda: A blessing for the readers...

Redmond: And a curse for Amanda and me.

Amanda: You see the problem is that Redmond's characters are "SO REAL" that while he's writing about them they actually do come to life and live in our home until his novel is done. When it goes to the publisher they leave us to live in minds of readers.

Redmond: So when a book's in progress we wind up with a place full of house guests... but no can see or hear them but Amanda and me. And that's sometimes problematic.

Pomeroy: But you and Amanda can enjoy my wit and clever banter... So you're twice blessed.

Dutch: That's the curse part Pomeroy.

Amanda: I knew this would happen when I married Redmond. I didn't think it would be an issue. The boys are pretty well behaved around me. What I didn't know when we got married was that now the characters I write about would also come to life and take up residence with us until publication... And that can occasionally be

a problem because frequently his characters and mine don't see eye to eye.

Dutch: Amanda, it's not our fault... Your characters... The guys at least... are such mamby pambies... Princes... Pretty boy models... Chefs...

Gino: But Amanda's chicks! Bring 'em on. The romantic novel broads are **CUTIES** with a capital Q!

Pomeroy: That's a capital "C".

Gino: What?

Pomeroy: Cuties is spell....

Dutch: Don't bother Pommey. He won't get it.

Amanda: Dutch, my men are manly... But sensitive... They're just not macho like the thugs you deal with in your stories... And of course the women are all beautiful... That's the allure of the romantic novel genre.

Redmond: Sometimes our characters are almost like our kids... They have petty jealousies... Get under each others skin... Tease and irritate one another.

Amanda: Quite simply they have sibling rivalries.

An attractive young man (David) and woman (Desiree) come on stage carrying suitcases.

David: We're ready Amanda.

Desiree: I'm so excited.

Amanda: Just one final line and you'll be off to the publishers... And the readers.

Dutch: Hey, Red, did you hear that! They're off to the publisher... They're leaving... How about me? I'm ready.

Redmond: All in good time, Dutch.

Amanda: Redmond's publisher commissioned him to write a series of short historical stories... Period pieces... Mysteries, of course. That's why Dutch and the fellas have been here for while. As soon the shorts are done Redmond will get back to their books and send them on their way.

Gino goes over Desiree.

Gino: Desiree we didn't have enough time together. How 'bout convincing Amanda do a sequel with you in it. When you come back here maybe me and you could... You know... We got chemistry... Animal magnetism... I feel it, don't you?

Desiree backs away. And David puts his arm around her.

David: Sorry, Gino... Desiree and I walked down the aisle on page 179. She's a married woman... Not available.

Gino: Don't count on it, punk. Sugar if it don't work out... I'm here. Hey, Pomeroy do you handle divorces?

Pomeroy: Do you pull off petty crimes?

Gino: No way... That's beneath me. I'm beyond that.

Pomeroy: Exactly... Like me and divorces. Do you understand the parallels?

Gino: No? I said do you do divorces?

Dutch: Let it go Pomeroy. Remember who you're talkin' to.

Amanda stands up and puts stamps on a large envelope.

Amanda: O.K. That's it... Come on kids. I'm done. Let's blow this pop stand.

Amanda grabs her coat and they start off stage.

Desiree: Bye-Bye guys... Nice getting to know you.

David shakes Dutch's hand

David: So long, Dutch. You've been a good friend. I doubt if I'll ever see you again but I loved your stories about working with Redmond over the years.

Dutch: You're O.K. Dave... Have a good run with the readers.

Gino: Good Riddance, Davie Boy. You and Desiree... I give it five months... Tops! I'll be waiting for you Desi. Come home to papa.

They leave

Dutch: You've been on David since Amanda created him. Give it rest.

Gino: I didn't like that guy. Every time I hit on Desi he'd run to Amanda and tell on me so she'd read me the Riot Act.

Pomeroy: *(Mockingly):* Was he a tattletale, Gino?

Gino: Yeah he was and Amanda always took his side. It's not fair.

Pomeroy: Poor Little Gino. Mom always liked David best.

Redmond turns to the audience.

Redmond: See what we mean... Just like kids.

Dutch: Amanda's getting a lot better with her guy characters. David was a good dude. I couldn't warm up to that celebrity florist in her last book. He was such a wimp. But David... Not bad.

Redmond: I know what you mean. I suggested David be a pro tennis player... A jock.

Gino: Tell her next time to have a boxer or hockey guy.... Or a gangster bone breaker... A real man's man.

Redmond: She's not ready for that.

Three guys dressed in WWI uniforms and a nurse come on stage.

Pomeroy: Oh, my. Dough Boys...

Gino: And a babe.

Redmond: They're just passing through. I'm wrapping up "Espionage at the Somme"

Soldier One: Good morning. Got any sweet rolls?

Dutch: Over there.

Soldier One: Thanks.

They go over to a counter and each grabs a Danish. Gino walks up behind the nurse and pinches her.

Gino: Hi'ya, Sweet Stuff.

The nurse spins around and knocks Gino down. She pulls a knife from her garter as she sits on Gino's chest with the knife at his throat.

Redmond: *(In German)* Gertrude... Lass ihn gehen. Er ist harmlos.

Nurse looks at Redmond

Nurse: Sehr Wel

She gets off Gino and joins the soldiers.

Gino: Whoa... She's wound a little too tight, Red.

Redmond: Gino... Gertrude's a German spy... An assassin... Not Sweet Stuff. Got it?

Gino: I get it... Like Martha Hardy?

Pomeroy and Dutch look at each other confused. They look to Redmond.

Redmond: Mata Hari.

Dutch and Pomeroy nod and roll their eyes. Pomeroy tries to be a peacemaker by changing the subject as he approaches the soldiers.

Pomeroy: How are things on thing on the Western Front?

Soldier Two: Grim...

Gino: Want to know who wins?

Redmond: Stay out of this .Gino! You folks better get back to the trenches.

They leave

Pomeroy: Redmond this place is turning into a dollar-a-night flop house with these transients coming and going. We never know who's going to be joining us at the breakfast table.

Redmond: But they're always gone by dinner. That's the beauty of a short story.

Dutch: Yeah everybody's gone but us. You gotta get back to our books, Red. We're going stir crazy.

Redmond: I won't be long.

Pomeroy: Very well. Just don't start anything new until your plate clear.

Enter Sheriff Barlow. He's dressed like a cowboy- Stetson hat, jeans, plaid shirt, and vest with sheriff's star. He has a holster with Colt .45 pistol.

Sheriff Barlow: Howdy boys... I'm back.

Dutch: Sheriff Barlow what are you doin'... **(Pause. Dutch, Gino and Pomeroy all look at Redmond)** Redmond!

Redmond: Relax I just jotted down a few ideas.

Sheriff Barlow: He's telling the truth... His notes started with "For down the trail when the current work is done." I'm not bumping you guys off schedule.

Pomeroy: That's a relief. Well, two move out and one moves in.

Redmond: Well... Not quite.

Enter two attractive young ladies in jeans, chaps, plaid shirts and Stetson. They also have holsters with six shooters.

Gino: Yipee-Ki-Yea.... Ride 'em cowboy... Hey Red, who are the cowgirls? You gonna do a rodeo mystery?

Sheriff Barlow: That will be enough, Gino. A little respect. One's my daughter... Becky and the other's my niece, Bonnie.

Gino: (Mockingly) Your niece?... Yeah, I've used that before, too.

Pomeroy: Becky and Bonny... Isn't that adorable... And alliterative.

Redmond: Holy cow! You're right. What was I thinking?

Redmond grabs a note pad and start erasing.

Redmond: Bonny you're now Madeline... But you go by Maddie.

Bonny /Maddie: O.K. I'm Maddie... Becky does this happen often?

Pomeroy: Only if I don't do the editing for Redmond.

Sheriff Barlow: Maddie's my sister's little girl. They're my new deputies.

Dutch: What happened to that punk kid that was your deputy?

Redmond: He had to go. He kept bugging me about getting his own book without the sheriff.

Gino: So they're your deputies. You old Cow Puncher. You never said your daughter was such a looker. And packing heat... That's hot.

Sheriff Barlow: And she can shoot the eyes out of a baby rattlesnake before it knows what hit him.... and so can Maddie. Believe me Gino both can do the same with a full grown skunk so mind your Ps & Qs around my little girl and her cousin.

Becky goes to Dutch.

Becky: You must be Dutch Van Dyke. Daddy's told me all about you. You and papa go way back don't ya.

Dutch: Yeah, I was in Red's first book and your dad was in his second.

She turns to Pomeroy

Becky: And you're Pomeroy Smith.

Pomeroy: Pomeroy Smith, **ESQUIRE**

Becky: Daddy talks about you a lot.

Pomeroy: I'm not surprised. My books put Redmond on the literary map.

Becky: Maddie, Mr. Smith's a famous Lawyer... They say the best lawyer ever was.

Pomeroy: That's an accurate assessment.

Gino steps up.

Gino: I'm Gino... Gino Rotelli.

Becky: Yeah... Pop told me all about you too.

Gino: And what did he say.

Becky turns away from Gino.

Becky: *(Ignoring him)* Well we're plum pleased to be here.

Enter Amanda. She turns her back to everybody as she takes off her coat and hangs it on a hook on the door. Then she turns around and sees Sheriff Barlow. She goes to him and gives him a hug.

Amanda: Sheriff... It so good to see you. I've missed you. Redmond didn't say anything about a new book.

Sheriff Barlow: I'm just notes now. I'm on the back burner for a while.

Amanda: Even so, I'm glad you're here.

Sheriff Barlow: Well, thank you Miss Amanda. There's someone I want you to meet... This is my little girl Becky...

Becky reacts to being called his "little Girl".

Becky: Dad!!!

Sheriff Barlow: I know... My **daughter!** Becky, this is Miss Amanda. A few years ago she got Old Red back in the saddle and writing again. She saved us all from riding off into the sunset.

Becky: Pleased to meet you Miss Amanda. Daddy's always been fond of you.

Amanda: I feel the same about him... He's the only normal one in this Loony Bin. I feel like I know you with all your papa's tall tales.

Maddie: Hi, Miss Amanda. I'm Maddie... Becky's cousin... The Sheriff's niece

Redmond gets up and gives Amanda a hug.

Redmond: Sorry Honey but it looks like we have full house again.

Amanda: Ummm. Redmond. I didn't exactly come right back from the corner mail box.

Redmond: I thought it took you a while to post the manuscript. I figured you were saying your good byes to David and Desiree.

Amanda: No, they disappeared when we left the house like usual. I took a stroll through the park on the way home.

Redmond: You didn't.

Amanda: I did. It was gorgeous day and I thought I'd get inspired.

Redmond: And did you find inspiration?

Amanda: I did...

Redmond: Oh no... How many?

Amanda: Just two... So far.

Gino: More roomies? Guys or gals?

Amanda: Two women.

Gino gives a "fist pump."

Gino: Yes!!!

Gino holds up his hand to give a "high five" but nobody responds so he raises his other arm over his head and "High Fives" himself.