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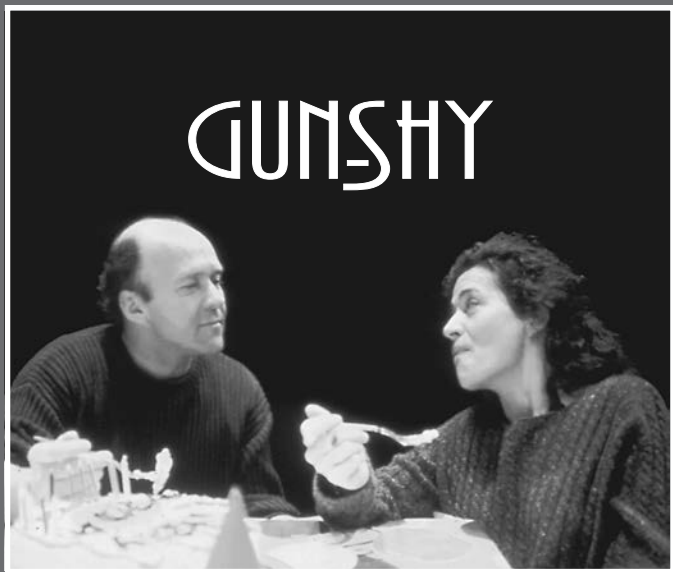
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Dramatic Publishing

"a *Private Lives* for our time"
New York Magazine

GUNSHY



COMEDY

BY

RICHARD DRESSER

THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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"*Gun-Shy*... grabs you from
the moment the lights go up
and never lets go."
The Herald (Miami)

GUNSHY

Comedy. By Richard Dresser.

Cast: 3m., 2w. Remember your first marriage? It's back. *Gun-Shy* is a no-holds-barred comedy about marriage, divorce, infidelity, infertility, incompatibility, eternal love, household accidents, and diets no one should try. Evie and Duncan have divorced after fifteen years. Evie is having a wild, tumultuous affair with an aggressively insecure coffee salesman named Carter. Duncan finds himself with Caitlin, a young, extremely weight-conscious gun-control lobbyist. The two couples end up on a high-speed collision course, snowbound in Duncan's New England house. When the dust clears, Evie and Duncan's divorce is in shambles and true love endures. This play, which *Variety* called "out-and-out funny...[with] wonderfully barbed dialogue" premiered at the Actors Theatre of Louisville and ran at Playwrights Horizons in New York. *Flexible set.*

ISBN: 0-87129-879-1

Code: G63

Front cover photograph: Actor's Theatre of Louisville premiere production
featuring William McNulty and Maryann Urbano

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Printed on Recycled Paper

GUN-SHY

A Play in Two Acts
by
RICHARD DRESSER



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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“World premiere at the 1997 Humana Festival of New
American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville”

“Produced in New York City by
Playwrights Horizons, 1998”

Actors Theatre of Louisville, Jon Jory, Producing Director, first presented GUN-SHY at the 21st Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays, in Louisville, Ky., March 15 through April 5, 1997. The production was directed by Gloria Muzio and included the following cast:

Evie Maryann Urbano
Carter V Craig Heidenreich
Duncan William McNulty
Caitlin Twyla Hafermann
Other People Lee Sellars

Scenic Designer Paul Owen
Costume Designer David Zinn
Lighting Designer Ed McCarthy
Sound Designer Martin R. Desjardins
Properties Designer Ron Riall
Stage Manager Julie A. Richardson
Assistant Stage Manager Andrew Scheer
Dramaturg Liz Engelman
New York Casting Eve Battaglia

GUN-SHY was produced off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons, February 1998. The production was directed by Gloria Munzio and included the following cast:

Evie Maryann Urbano
Carter Christopher Innvar
Waiter, Ramon, Neil, Nurse, Paramedic Lee Sellars
Caitlin Jessalyn Gilsig
Duncan Jeffrey DeMunn

Scenic Design Allen Moyer
Costume Design Jess Goldstein
Lighting Design Peter Kaczorowski
Sound Design Martin Desjardins
Casting James Calleri
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GUN-SHY

A Play in Two Acts
For 2 Men, 2 Women,
and 1 man playing a variety of roles

CHARACTERS

EVIE a woman about forty

CARTER a man about forty

DUNCAN a man in his mid-forties

CAITLIN a woman in her twenties

The other characters are to be played by one actor:

WAITER, RAMON, NEIL, NURSE, PARAMEDIC

SETTING:

Act I: Various locations in the Pacific Northwest,
New England, and Washington, D.C.

Act II: Duncan's house outside Boston.

Running time: Approximately 2 hours.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

AT RISE: *Lights up on a revolving restaurant. EVIE and CARTER are at a table by the window eating clams and sipping champagne.*

EVIE. You don't know what pain is.

CARTER. I know what pain is.

EVIE. You don't know what pain is.

CARTER. I know what pain is.

EVIE. You don't know what pain is.

CARTER. I know what pain is. Pain is talking to you when you're like this.

EVIE. Like what? This is me.

CARTER. No it isn't. It's not the real you. The real you is fun and wild and spontaneous.

EVIE. Except when the real me wants to talk. (*Opens her purse.*) What do you see?

CARTER. Is that...

EVIE. Yes, my underwear. I took it off in the ladies' room.

CARTER. Bravo! (*Pouring more champagne.*) This is why I love you.

EVIE. Shut up. I am somebody's mother. There's a boy who calls me mom. I swear I'd strip for you, right here, right now, just watch me. (*She starts to unbutton her dress.*)

CARTER. Please wait. You're welcome to strip in the car.

EVIE. I don't know what we're doing. I don't know where we're headed. We're going a hundred and twenty miles an hour and who, pray tell, is at the wheel?

CARTER. I swear to God I have never been so happy in my entire life.

EVIE. Yes, because you've had a largely pathetic and unrewarding life. But I have been happy, and I want to be happy again. No, I *demand* to be happy again.

CARTER. You're not happy?

EVIE. This isn't happiness. This is sickness, this is fever, this is delirium. (*Downs her champagne.*) We have to hold hands and leap into the void or I'll retreat. I'll go back to some small safe place. I've spent nearly two hundred thousand dollars to learn this about myself. Is this a fling? It's fine if it's a fling, I've flung with the best.

CARTER. How could what we share be just a fling?

EVIE. Then what is it?

CARTER. It has ... significant implications for the future.

EVIE. Why don't I just kill myself?

CARTER. We could be good together. Long-term.

EVIE. How can we be good for each other? There are so many things wrong with you.

CARTER. More than normal?

EVIE. But still, I want you. Is there reason to hope? Tell me I can hope. Can I hope? Please?

CARTER (*glances out window*). No.

EVIE. No? Did I hear the word "no"?

CARTER. No! *Look!* Somebody's breaking into my car!

EVIE. No, Carter, *you* look! Look at me! Talk to me!

CARTER. I should *never* drive that car! Never! (*He strains to see, but the car is lost to view as the restaurant*

turns.) Why did we come to a revolving restaurant, anyway?

EVIE. Well, how convenient.

CARTER. Don't you understand? It's my car!

EVIE. It's always something, isn't it? I am opening my heart to you and you won't even look at me.

CARTER. Waiter!

EVIE. What do you think a waiter is going to do?

CARTER. Somebody's got to save my car.

EVIE. But a waiter? Even a good one...

CARTER. I'm going down there myself. If my time is up, then so be it.

EVIE. You'd face death on the street before you'd deal with me honestly, wouldn't you? You'd rather go out in a hail of gunfire than answer the hard questions. Sniveling bastard!

(A WAITER comes over.)

WAITER. How are we doing?

CARTER. You have to stop the restaurant.

WAITER. I can't stop the restaurant.

CARTER. Who can?

WAITER. No one.

CARTER. It can't go on forever!

WAITER. In seven years I've never known it to stop.

CARTER. Disadvantaged peoples are attacking my car!

WAITER. This is why we encourage valet parking.

CARTER. Dear God. Please bring me a phone. *(The WAITER leaves.)* If they mess with my car-phone I'll get a gun and blow their brains out and teach them a lesson they'll never forget.

EVIE. Carter, you've never shown this much passion for me, even in bed, even drunk in bed. I'll be damned if I'll compete with a car, not at my age.

(The WAITER brings them more drinks.)

CARTER *(staring at the drinks)*. That isn't a telephone.

WAITER. All the phones are in use. These drinks are on the house.

CARTER. Do we look like we need more drinks?

EVIE. We need therapy.

CARTER. We need to rescue my car. Here it comes!
(Looks out.) Oh, God, they're burning it.

EVIE. Please, Carter, if you love me you've got to look at me and listen to me, because I feel like I'm disappearing.

CARTER. I need to get to a phone.

EVIE. Don't leave me. Please!

CARTER. I'll be right back.

EVIE. Stop! *(As CARTER starts to leave, EVIE plunges her clam fork into his hand.)* Oh my God, oh, Carter. Look what's happened to you.

CARTER. It didn't just happen. You did it.

EVIE. Let's not quibble, not now. I am not a violent person and here you've got me putting clam forks through your hand. I honestly don't know how you did this. *(A moan from CARTER as lights fade.)*

SCENE TWO

(Lights up on Duncan's house. CAITLIN is at the table wearing her coat. DUNCAN sets down two plates.)

CAITLIN. Oh, Duncan, it looks almost good enough to eat.

DUNCAN. But?

CAITLIN. I'm only allowed to smell it. They told me to imagine each bite as a large, glistening eye, staring at me with contempt. Wine?

DUNCAN. You know I can't drink.

CAITLIN. Oh, right. Sorry. *(CAITLIN pours herself wine. DUNCAN eats, CAITLIN drinks.)*

DUNCAN. You aren't cold, are you? I could splurge and turn up the furnace.

CAITLIN. Oh, no, I've got mittens if it gets colder.

DUNCAN. Eating would warm you up. You have to eat sometime. I learned that before I dropped out of med school.

CAITLIN. Seven more pounds, and why are you being so judgmental? If I choose to stop eating I'd like encouragement, not criticism.

DUNCAN. I get concerned. I finally found the love of my life, it would be such a disappointment if you died.

CAITLIN. You're tense. What's going on?

DUNCAN. Evie was supposed to call. I wanted her to call before you got here so we could talk about Jack.

CAITLIN. You oughta cut her some slack. She just needs to live a little.

DUNCAN. You mean after being married to me for fourteen years?

CAITLIN. She needs to kick up her heels, sleep with a whole bunch of guys and maybe two or three women, experience everything she missed, then maybe she'll come back.

DUNCAN. I don't want her to come back. Do *you* want her to come back?

CAITLIN. Duncan, you have to admit our relationship was so much better when you were married. It was sexy and dangerous, sneaking around Evie.

DUNCAN. But this is what I've wanted for so long. The two of us spending the whole night together *without* sneaking around.

CAITLIN. Don't you feel like something's missing?

DUNCAN. Yes. What's missing is deceit.

CAITLIN. Maybe when you take that away from us, there just isn't much left.

DUNCAN. Caitlin, what's wrong with letting the world know about us?

CAITLIN. It's all so easy for you. You get a divorce and you're free and clear, but for me it's just a whole lot of pressure. I have to be everything to you because Evie isn't around to pick up the slack. I've never even met Evie and yet I miss her.

DUNCAN. I want to tell her about us. She told me as soon as she met that jerk Carter she's sleazing around with.

CAITLIN. Don't you dare tell her! It will make it so much harder for the two of you to get back together.

DUNCAN. You honestly believe the key to our relationship is me getting back with my wife?

CAITLIN. I certainly wouldn't rule it out. And I plan to fight for what we have. That's why I sent her flowers.

DUNCAN. You sent Evie flowers? From me?

CAITLIN. But we've *both* got to work at this, honey. Which means you keep lying to Evie. Don't you trust me?

DUNCAN. Of course I trust you, Caitlin. We'll sneak around as long as we can. (*DUNCAN embraces her as lights fade.*)

SCENE THREE

(*Lights up on a spa. EVIE is on the phone while getting a massage from RAMON. CARTER enters in a robe. His hand is bandaged.*)

EVIE. How are you feeling, Carter?

CARTER. Look, I don't need that kind of pressure right now. I thought we were here to relax.

EVIE. And we will, if Duncan ever picks up. I can't believe it. He isn't home.

CARTER. Know what happens when somebody lets *me* down? They become a colorless, odorless vapor drifting over the ocean, about a thousand miles out. They never get a chance to let me down a second time.

EVIE. I don't have the vapor option with Duncan.

(*Lights hold on EVIE as she waits on the phone, and lights come up on Duncan's house. DUNCAN and CAITLIN are snuggling under a blanket. DUNCAN answers the phone.*)

DUNCAN. Hello?

EVIE. Were you asleep?

DUNCAN. We said eight o'clock.

EVIE. It is eight o'clock.

DUNCAN. Not here. It's eleven o'clock.

EVIE. I'm the one doing the calling, Duncan, I assumed it was *my* eight o'clock.

DUNCAN. Of course, why would you give a hoo-hah about anyone else's eight o'clock?

EVIE. Why should it be *your* eight o'clock?

DUNCAN. This is *our* eight o'clock. You're the one who left it for another eight o'clock. (*Hears EVIE moan at the massage.*) What's going on? You appear to be moaning.

EVIE. My moaning is officially outside your bailiwick, Duncan. To say nothing of your time zone. Did Jack tell you the trouble he's in?

DUNCAN. It sounds like harmless fun to me.

EVIE. It may be "harmless fun" to you, but the state of New Hampshire considers it a crime. Luckily, the school's protecting him.

CARTER (*doing stretching exercises*). He needs discipline.

EVIE (*on phone*). Carter thinks he needs discipline.

DUNCAN (*on phone*). What the hell does Carter know about it?

EVIE (*to CARTER*). Duncan wants to know what the hell you know about it.

CARTER. Tell Duncan I am the living product of a whole shitload of discipline.

EVIE (*hesitates, then*). Duncan, I'm concerned that I go away for a little vacation and Jack gets in trouble.

DUNCAN (*on phone*). Like it's my fault, Evie? (*CAITLIN starts to get dressed. DUNCAN motions for her to stop.*)

CAITLIN (*whispers*). I have to go.

DUNCAN. No! Stay! Sit!

EVIE (*on phone*). Did you get a dog, Duncan?

DUNCAN (*on phone*). No.

EVIE (*on phone*). Who's there?

DUNCAN (*on phone*). A friend dropped by.

CAITLIN. Duncan! Don't tell her! You promised!

EVIE (*on phone*). What kind of friend, a girlfriend? It's all right, you're entitled. Is it serious? Or just some cheap, slutty one-night stand? It doesn't matter, what matters is I'm happy for you. (*DUNCAN is trapped between EVIE on the phone and CAITLIN getting dressed.*)

DUNCAN (*on phone*). Can you hold on, Evie? (*Covering phone.*) Caitlin, I thought you were going to spend the night.

CAITLIN. You shouldn't make assumptions like that. (*Kisses him.*) Call me?

DUNCAN (*covering phone*). Let me get rid of Evie and we'll talk.

CAITLIN. I don't want you to get rid of Evie!

DUNCAN (*on phone*). Honey—I mean, Evie—I have to go. (*CAITLIN finishes getting dressed and goes to the door.*)

EVIE (*on phone*). Look, I'm more involved with Carter than you are with your little tramp *du jour*, but I'm making time to talk about our son!

DUNCAN (*on phone*). Evie, just give me a goddamn second here! (*Rushes to door, yells.*) Caitlin! Don't leave! (*Goes back to phone, defeated.*) Fire away, Evie, I've got all night.

EVIE. Well I *don't* have all night. There are men here and I'm practically naked. (*EVIE puts away her phone. Lights fade on DUNCAN.*) I don't know how I stood it

so long. All yours, Carter. (*EVIE gets up, leaving the massage table for CARTER.*)

CARTER. Where's Iris?

EVIE. Unavailable. Ramon is nice enough to pinch-hit.

CARTER. They promised me Iris.

EVIE. You don't even know Iris. Do you?

CARTER. I just think for the money we're spending we should get a little goddamn follow-through. (*CARTER anxiously knots the cord around his robe.*)

EVIE. Oh, boy, money money money money money. Ramon, do you know what's wrong with Iris?

RAMON. Iris took a header in the Eucalyptus Room. Ruptured her spleen, dislocated her shoulder. It made her irritable.

CARTER. Jesus, this place scares me. I'll skip the massage.

EVIE. Carter, this is my treat and you are very tense.

CARTER. I'm not going to get promised Iris and settle for Ramon. Nothing personal, Ramon.

EVIE. Does Ramon disgust you? Nothing personal, Ramon.

CARTER. No!

EVIE. Do you find him attractive?

CARTER. "Attractive?" Am I *attracted* to Ramon? Jesus Christ, Evie.

EVIE. Then you're simply afraid to be touched by a man, is that it?

CARTER. No, that is not it.

EVIE. Why are you cowering?

CARTER. I'm not *cowering*.

EVIE. Believe me, I've seen men cower and you, my friend, are a textbook case. Ramon does men all the time, don't you, Ramon?

RAMON. Yes, sure, I do many men.

EVIE. And *they* don't have a problem with it. Look, you've tied the most amazing knot in your robe. Are you *that* afraid of your own sexuality?

CARTER. Ramon, you can leave.

EVIE. Don't you *dare* leave, Ramon. This is my gift to Carter and he *will* accept it.

CARTER. Get out of here, Ramon! Nothing personal. (*RAMON starts out.*)

EVIE. Please don't abandon this man, Ramon. He's lost faith in the world because of the evil way he was treated by his wife. (*RAMON hesitates.*)

CARTER. I just don't want this guy touching me, okay?

EVIE. Nothing personal, Ramon. (*To CARTER.*) It's fear, sweetie, and it's holding you back. Which means it's holding *me* back. How can you do that to someone you say you love?

CARTER. All right. I'll have the goddamn massage to shut you up. (*CARTER maneuvers his way to a facedown position on the table.*)

EVIE. I'm proud of you, honey. Sometimes the first step of the journey is the hardest.

CARTER. Well let's get this sick little journey over with.

RAMON (*starts the massage*). Let me do the work and you relax.

EVIE. You might as well ask him to fly.

CARTER. I can relax. I can relax as well as the next guy.

EVIE. See? He even makes relaxing a competition.

CARTER. I'm not going to keep fighting you, Evie. (*Music is softly playing as RAMON massages CARTER.*)