

REVOLTING CHARACTERS

By Kristyn Leigh Robinson

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CHARACTERS

Jill Frank	a novelist
Dexter Hamilton III	a character in her novel
Tamara Harrington	Dexter's romantic interest
Jeeves	Dexter's butler
Hunter Parkerson	Tamara's former suitor

Setting

This play takes place in a writer's office. There should be a desk, a typewriter (or computer) and a chair.

Production History

Wilmington Drama League
Curtain Call Theatre

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AT RISE: Jill sits at a typewriter. Crumbled pieces of paper surround her on the floor. A half-completed script sits on the table next to her. She types a sentence, reads it, groans, then pulls the paper out of the typewriter and balls it up, throwing it on the ground. She types another sentence, then reads it aloud.

JILL: “The chambermaid crossed the room slowly, seductively. As she began to slide her soft, pale hands up Dexter’s hard, muscular, hair-roughened chest, he grabbed hold of her delicate wrists and roughly pushed her away.” *(SHE groans again and yanks the paper out of the typewriter, crumbles it up and tosses it over her shoulder.)* Why is this so hard? *(collecting herself)* Okay. Okay, Jill, you can do this. You’ve pulled rabbits out of hats before, and you can do it again.

(SHE types a couple more sentences. As SHE types, JEEVES enters and looks over her shoulder. HE begins to frown. JILL is unaware of his presence until HE speaks; however, when HE speaks, SHE does not seem surprised by him.)

JEEVES: You can’t do that.

JILL: What?

JEEVES: You can’t have Miss Harrington meet Mr. Hamilton in the barn when you’ve had him in the house in the previous scene, which is supposed to have taken place only a moment earlier.

JILL: *(beat, then, exasperated)* You’ve lost me.

JEEVES: The house is quite large, is it not?

JILL: Yes, it is. It’s an eighteenth-century British mansion.

JEEVES: And the prior scene takes place in Mr. Hamilton’s study, does it not?

JILL: Yes...

JEEVES: And Mr. Hamilton’s study is connected to his sleeping quarters, is it not? Which would, presumably, be on either the second or third floors of the house. How, then, would it be possible for him to rid himself of the troublemaking female servant in enough time to make it to the barn before Miss Harrington flees –

JILL: *(interrupting)* Oh! Right. Darn. I forgot about that.

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JEEVES: If I might suggest something? It would be far better for him to encounter her in the hallway.

JILL: Right! Because if he does that, then the argument could take place in the hallway. That way, I don't have to have the ballroom scene. And that's always been a bit of a sticky scene anyway.

JEEVES: No, you have to include the ballroom scene.

JILL: Why?

(Neither of them notices as TAMARA enters)

JEEVES: You're forgetting the marriage proposal. He obviously wouldn't propose to her immediately after she catches him in the arms of another woman.

JILL: Yeah, but nothing happened.

TAMARA: Oh, that's it, I can't take it any more.

JILL: Who are you?

TAMARA: *(shocked)* Who am I? You know who I am, my dear, *you* created me. Don't you even recognize the characters in your own novel?

JILL: But how – ?

JEEVES: Miss Harrington, what are you doing here?

TAMARA: I've had enough. I'm going to tell her.

JILL: Tell me? Tell me what?

(DEXTER enters, holding a velvet ring box)

DEXTER: *(looking around)* What's everyone doing here? I went to the ballroom for the proposal scene, and there was no one there.

TAMARA: *(to JEEVES)* You were supposed to remind him to be here.

DEXTER: Be here? For what? *(remembering)* Ohhhh! I'm awfully sorry. I forgot. I thought it was time for the proposal scene, and I didn't want to be late.

TAMARA: *(with obvious contempt)* Is that the ring?

DEXTER: Yeah. Er – yes, my love, this is the symbol of my vow to you.

TAMARA: Let me see. *(opens box)* It's empty! Some symbol. *(tosses the box back to him)*

DEXTER: Well... *(indicating JILL)* She hasn't described it yet.

TAMARA: Figures. No attention to detail, that one. Which reminds me...

DEXTER: *(interrupting)* Tamara, my love –

TAMARA: Forget it. I'm not marrying you.

DEXTER: What?

JILL: What?

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TAMARA: I'm not marrying you. You were just kissing the chambermaid in your study.

DEXTER: But – you *have* to marry me. (to JILL, uncertain, looking for backup) Doesn't she?

JILL: Yes.

TAMARA: Well, I'm not. I'll go back to London. There was a man there who asked for my hand –

JILL: (*incredulous*) Hunter Parkerson?

TAMARA: (*haughtily*) Yes.

DEXTER: (*jealous*) Who is Hunter Parkerson?

TAMARA: A delightful gentleman who –

JILL: Delightful gentleman? Ha! He's rude, arrogant, boorish, boring –

DEXTER: (to TAMARA) And you want to marry this man?

TAMARA: He isn't that bad.

JILL: Oh, yes he is. I should know, I made him up.

TAMARA: Which reminds me... that's why I'm here. (*puts her arm around JILL*) Tell me something, what is it that you did before you became a writer?

JILL: (*frowning*) I... was an actuary.

TAMARA: (*looking at the others for a moment, then back to JILL*) We've been talking, a bunch of us.

JILL: You... have?

TAMARA: Yes. And we've come to the conclusion that perhaps it would be wise to resume your former occupation and just sort of forget this writing thing.

JILL: What do you mean?

DEXTER: I believe she's telling you that you perhaps lack the creative vision necessary to carry out the delicate task of creating an aesthetically pleasing –

JILL: Huh?!?!?

TAMARA: You suck.

JILL: This can't be happening. I mean, you could not have had a conference to discuss my talent. You're characters in my novel!

TAMARA: Exactly! Who would know, better than we do, how talentless you really are?

JILL: Oh, this is ridiculous. (*decides to ignore them and starts typing*)

(HUNTER PARKERSON enters. HE is the quintessential romance novel villain posing as romantic lead. HE is over-the-top in his self-assuredness and his opinion of himself is inflated.)

HUNTER: (looking out toward the audience, one eyebrow raised, as he speaks) I have come to claim my bride.

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DEXTER: You have no bride here, sir. Miss Harrington will marry me.

TAMARA: Oh, Hunter, you have come to save me from the wretched, horrid, cold, sharp claws of marriage to a faithless, disloyal, two-timing cad of a man – *(stops, to JILL, angrily)* Stop that!

JILL: Stop what? It was going well!

TAMARA: Why do I have to be so helpless? Why can't I just hop on a train and go?

JILL: It's a period piece. Women were dependent on men back then.

TAMARA: That is no way to justify your inability to develop more interesting characters.

JILL: My characters are interesting!

TAMARA: Oh, really? *(looks meaningfully at HUNTER, who is admiring his manicure)*

JILL: Well, you're the one who's talking about marrying him!

TAMARA: Because the only option you've given me is to choose from between two stark stereotypes, one who will cheat on me and one who is so in love with himself that it wouldn't occur to him to be unfaithful!

JILL: *(beginning to doubt herself)* Yeah, but Dexter is faithful to you – eventually. You marry him, and you – you catch him flirting, and you leave him, and he travels all the way to America to get you back, and then you live happily ever after.

TAMARA: Too much work. He's not worth the trouble. Besides, I don't want to go to America. They haven't even paved the roads yet. It's much easier to stay here and marry Hunter. He may be boring, but at least he's not going to cheat on me. Plus, he's rich. Maybe I'll take a lover.

JILL: Why? Hunter's okay-looking.

TAMARA: Have you ever had a conversation with him?

JILL: No.

TAMARA: Hunter.

(HE does not respond)

TAMARA: HUNTER!

HUNTER: *(who has been busy "looking handsome")* Mmm?

TAMARA: Stop strutting around and talk to the woman!

HUNTER: Oh. *(strides purposefully over to JILL, who has stopped typing. HUNTER takes her hand, takes a breath, and waits)*

(TAMARA and JILL look at him for a beat, at each other, then back at him.)

TAMARA: What's wrong?

HUNTER: I'm – not certain what to say.

TAMARA: *(looking from him to JILL to the typewriter, then rolling her eyes)* Oh, for goodness sake. Am I the only sane one around here?

HUNTER: *(trying)* I pledge my oath to you, fair country maid, that you and I will take the long journey to the city together, and there we will happily live out our final days in the sacred bonds of wedded bliss, until the last drop of life is drained from us, much like the final sad mewling of a newborn kitten caught under a carriage wheel on a cobblestone street. In... December.

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