

Published with TVTimes Jan. 22, 1981

# Family scene

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IT'S A SOMEWHAT incongruous scene: Gareth Hunt, the racy ex-Avenger, and his wife Annette, ex-girlfriend of Keith Moon, The Who's hell-raising drummer, sitting in a quiet backwater of Surrey surrounded by ladders and pots of paint.

The family home on the fringe of the stockbroker belt near Guildford, with a view over an acre of back garden to the rolling Surrey Hills, is only 50 years old. But with its black beams, tongued-and-grooved panelling and whitewashed walls, it looks far older. The atmosphere inside is like that of a 200-year-old farmhouse—cosy, intimate, and full of character.

For Hunt it is his bolt-hole at the end of the day, whether he has driven from London after rehearsals in the Victoria Drill Hall or across country from Southampton after recording a forthcoming ITV comedy series before a live audience. It's a place where only close friends are invited, and where they take him as they find him.

For his beautiful blonde wife Annette, it is her hideaway in the country. And worlds away from the crazy, heady days when she was Swedish model Annette Walter-Lax, for three years the steady girlfriend of the late Keith Moon, labelled "Moon the Loon" for his crazy antics with The Who rock group.

And for their six-month-old baby, Oliver, known for some inexplicable reason as "Ferret", it is simply a very big house with two very big dogs who must look like monsters. He appears to be the most contented baby in the world.

When I called, Mr. Blunder, the massive black Great Dane, and Mr. Moon, an

# OUR MARRIAGE —by the racy ex-Avenger and the model swapped hell-raising for the quiet

by V

equally formidable black German Shepherd, were baying their hearts out in the converted store-room where they live.

Hunt answered the door, in chunky white sweater and faded jeans, gear several steps down the sartorial ladder from the slick blazer and the flannels with the knife-edge crease he wore as Mike Gambit in *The New Avengers*. Young Oliver, totally oblivious to the commotion, gurgled contentedly in

his carry-cot propped on the kitchen floor, the L-shaped room that has become their temporary living-room.

"Sorry about the mess," Hunt apologised, leading the way on a conducted tour through a labyrinth of workmen's ladders, paint pots, rolls of wallpaper, buckets and rags. "The place looks a bit rough. But when we've got it all sorted out it's going to be great."

It is, too. The master bedroom upstairs has an open brick and copper log fireplace which carries the warmth into the neighbouring bathroom, heating both rooms at once. It was Hunt's idea. A do-it-yourself enthusiast, he designed many of the plans, chose the wallpaper, and even put up a lot of it himself.

"It's just a junk heap at the moment," he said. "Total annihilation. But eventually I'll have a vast mirror along one wall of the lounge downstairs, bay windows looking out on to a patio, a conservatory, and perhaps a pool. Even cow-horn lights on our antique brass bedstead! It's going to be a special place . . ."

You sense it has come along at the right time, for both of them.

Hunt, 37, met Annette, 24, in a disco in Mayfair last year when their personal lives were both at a low ebb.

Wild man Moon had died of a drugs overdose, and Annette was feeling totally lost. "I'd had three years with that mad crowd," she says now.

"I was very young when I met Keith. It was at some party, and I just stayed with him after that. Those years were total hell-raising—smoking joints, drinking, in with people taking drugs, everything. Looking back now, sometimes I can't believe I actually did it.

"After Keith died it was very difficult to adjust and in fact it took me eight months to slow down once I met Gareth."

Their first meeting with Hunt's own three-year relationship with girlfriend Carrie on the rocks—ended at Annette's hotel . . . playing cards all night with a group of friends.

"It wasn't immediate love," says Annette. "We were both trying to sort out our lives, and we had a lot to talk about. I was lucky to meet him, and lucky that I hadn't suffered from all the extremes of those three years.

"Gareth and I had a good time before we got married. I enjoyed each other very much. It's important for a couple to have a good time before they get married."

"He's very relaxed and more tranquil than I am. I like it. In the end, we'd jump out of the car and notice and judge each other."

"Down here, I like to be in the country. I like to be in the country."

Oliver's a bit of a character. He was born in St. Mary's. He weighed 6lb. Hunt and Annette moved to Guildford when Oliver was 10 months old.

"You have a bit of a character," Hunt says. "I'm in the kitchen with him. I don't think I've ever discussed it with him. I simply never thought of it."

"We love each other very much. It's a matter of time before we get out of it."

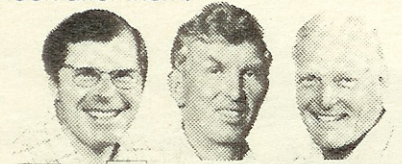
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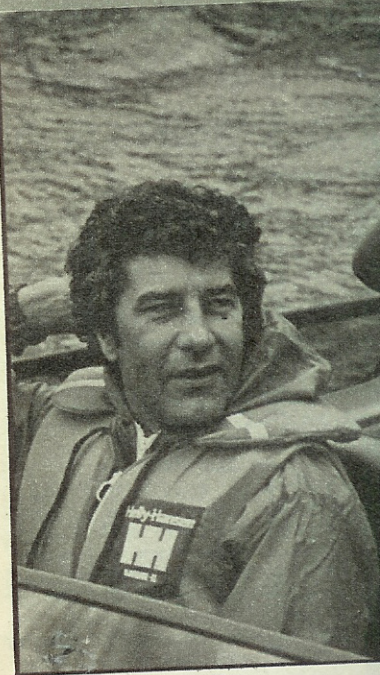
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# OUR MARRIAGE

## by the racy ex-Avenger and the model who swapped hell raising for the quiet life

by William Hall



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"Gareth and I were friends for a long  
time before we became lovers. We just  
enjoyed each other, and I think that's  
important for any marriage to be lasting.

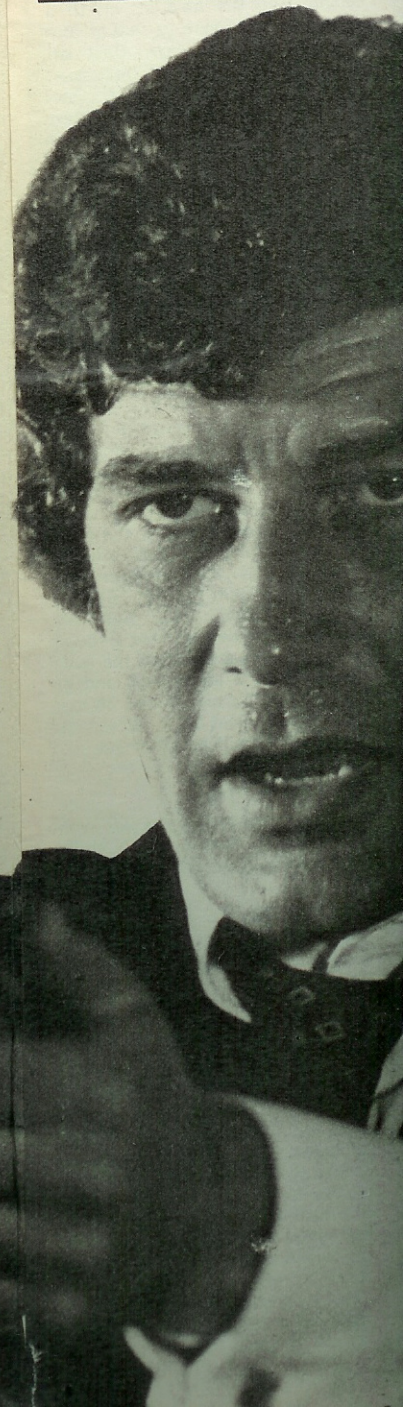
"He's very easy-going. Life is so much  
more tranquil now, and that's the way I  
like it. In the old days with the group  
we'd jump on a plane at a moment's  
notice and jet off somewhere, just for fun.

"Down here I'm not much of a social-  
iser. I like to hide."

Oliver's arrival helped change her life,  
too. He was born in June, in London, at  
St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and  
weighed 6lb. 10oz. Three weeks' later  
Hunt and Annette were married at  
Guildford Register Office—with baby  
Oliver in attendance.

"You have to follow a certain tra-  
dition," Hunt says now, pouring red wine  
in the kitchen and looking down fondly  
at his son. "If Ferret hadn't come along I  
don't think we'd have got married. We  
discussed it before, occasionally, but  
simply never got round to it.

"We love each other. That's all that  
matters. We vaguely thought we might  
get out of bed one morning and go off



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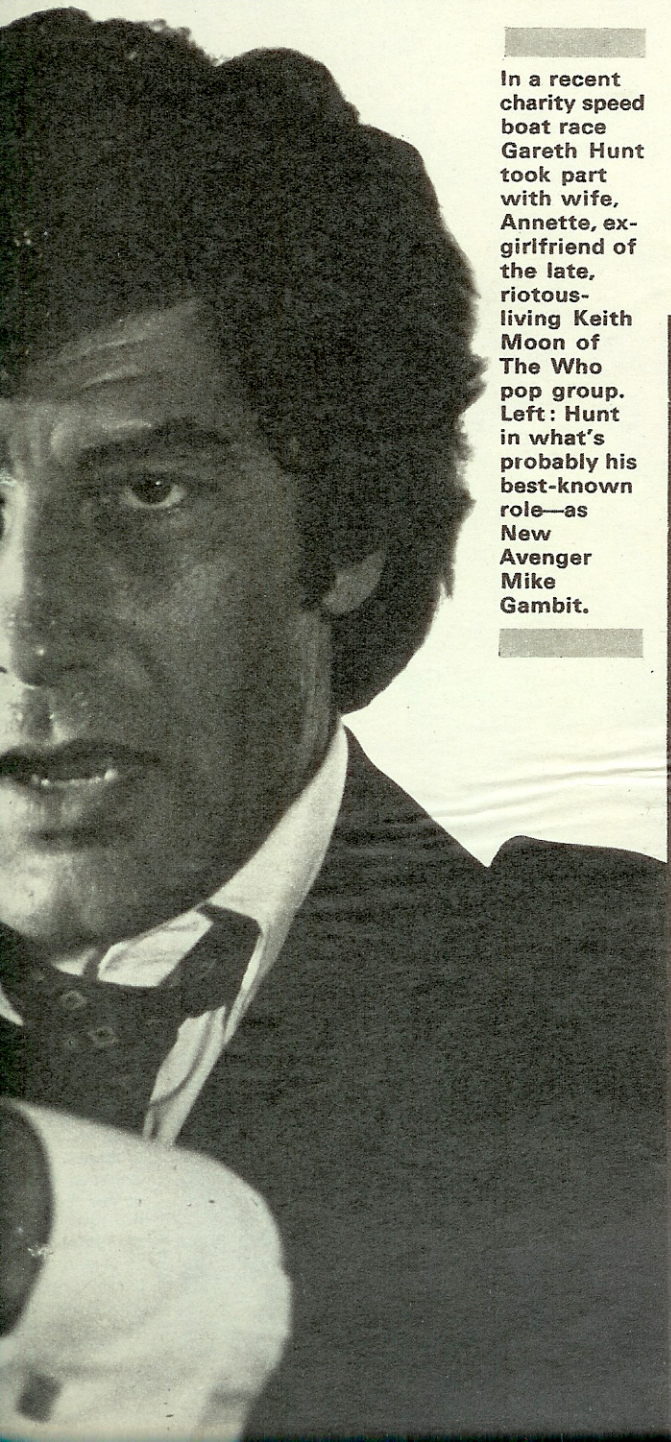
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In a recent charity speed boat race Gareth Hunt took part with wife, Annette, ex-girlfriend of the late, riotous-living Keith Moon of The Who pop group. Left: Hunt in what's probably his best-known role—as New Avenger Mike Gambit.



and get married. In the end Oliver beat us to it. But I'm a family man at heart. And it's something you only know when you've got a family."

In fact, Hunt has a son by his first marriage, to a hairdresser named Carol, a girl he met soon after he came out of the Merchant Navy. "It was a spur-of-the-moment thing, and I was too young. I realised that afterwards," he says.

"Gareth Junior, now 11, lives with his mother in Mitcham, Surrey, and sees his father regularly. There are no tensions, no upsets. That's the way Hunt wants it.

"Let's put it this way: I'm older now; more settled. I've had my flings around the world. It feels right to have the kind of life we've got now."

Hunt's early life could hardly be more of a contrast to his current lifestyle. At 15, he was a seaman, then a butcher, a baker and a vacuum cleaner salesman. He dug up roads as a labourer. He spent three months in jail in Australia for jumping ship. Finally he went to drama school with an £8-a-week grant, and his theatrical career was on the move.

Small parts in repertory and television led on to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre . . . and his role as Gambit in *The New Avengers* that made him a household face in 52 countries.

He starred in the hit stage thriller *Deathtrap* for nine months in the West End of London. And we'll next see him on ITV early this year in a two-part thriller called *The Business of Murder*, in which he plays a police chief inspector.

"Very different from Gambit," he says. "He's a regular chief inspector—not

plodding, exactly, but meticulous, straight and sardonic. I loved it.

"I started out in this business to be an actor, not a personality, which meant that I wanted to do lots of different parts. But if you're in a successful series, people tend to pigeon-hole you in their minds.

"I was two years on *The New Avengers* and I'm not knocking any of it. There wasn't a great deal of money in it for me, to be quite honest. People look at me and nudge me and say: 'Ha, you must be a millionaire.' It couldn't be further from the truth.

"But I got recognised, and it gave me credibility with the public, and I'm grateful for that. It always takes a while to lose an image and work through it."

That's why his new comedy series is so important for him. In *That Beryl Marston*, soon to be seen on ITV, Hunt plays a newly-divorced man whose wife threw him out after he had a fling with a girl called Beryl—the figure in the title.

Actress Julia McKenzie plays the wife who doesn't want to have anything more to do with her errant ex-spouse. "Even though I use every means I can think of to get her back," explains Hunt, "she just doesn't want to know. All the tricks I employ provide the basis of the series."

Will the series shake him out of Gambit's shadow for ever? Gareth Hunt rubbed his forehead, grinned and shrugged. He said: "I'll tell you something: people are more likely to shake coffee beans at me after those commercials I did than say: 'Hi, Gambit!'

"But if that's how they want to know me, I shall remain totally affable . . ."

Ferret, down there on the floor in his carry-cot, seemed to gurgle approval. ●