



TWO

OF US

STORY BY Rosamund Burton PHOTOGRAPH BY Elesa Kurtz

Stuntmen Steve Morris (left), 54, and Dean Gould, 50, met 25 years ago on a film set and immediately hit it off. In the decades since, they have both “died” numerous times, to the consternation of their loved ones.

STEVE: Dean and I met in 1994 on the Gold Coast on the film *Street Fighter*. He'd come from NSW and needed accommodation, so stayed in my house in the garage. He shoved rags into the cracks in the door to keep out the cold. Every day from home we would carry boxes of gas canisters and air rams – used in stunts to propel people – to and from work, as Steve was looking after all the equipment. The busybody across the road thought we had a drug lab, and sent the police!

As well as doing stunts, Dean has been directing action scenes as a stunt co-ordinator for the past 13 years, so he's my employer. You've got to be prepared if you're working for him. He's a larrikin. He always dresses up the dummies and gives them names, and there will be a leg hanging out of the back of his ute.

But there's a serious edge about him. He gets frustrated if there's not enough time to do a stunt and he'll fight for what he wants. He gets angry and I have to calm him. He's a true professional and has had an amazing career. He's doubled for Russell Crowe, Heath Ledger and Richard Roxburgh, and he's put the frock on and doubled as women.

When we were working on the Gold Coast in 1994, we were invited to a drag party. I went as a Doc Marten-wearing tough chick. Dean wore

pink stockings and a pink dress and looked ridiculously cute. In his handbag he had this egg timer with pink sand, and he'd turn it over and say to people, “You've got a minute to impress me.” Dean's a big character. We'll go to a karaoke night, and he's straight up to the microphone, and so am I.

Recently, on this new '80s-style slasher film called *The Furies*, Dean was action director and I played a character called RotFace and another called PigFace, and wore these revolting prosthetic heads. At one point, I hacked off a female character's face with an axe. It was technically difficult and required training. But every stunt that Dean co-ordinates is broken down and rehearsed so well that it came off without a hitch.

Stunts where you're worried about your spine or your neck are challenging. I prepare and then do it, thinking, “Wow, I've just been run over by a car”, or “I've just jumped off an 80-foot high cliff.” I've been doing stunts for 30 years. I was a panel beater by trade and got into this because of my martial arts training. Of course I get scared, and sometimes my legs are like jelly, but – touch wood – neither of us has had any bad injuries. I had more injuries when I was playing rugby league.

I got married for the first time last October in France and we now live on the Gold Coast. Dean

was coming but due to a huge job had to cancel at the last minute. I totally understand that.

Every morning when we're working together, we're cracking each other up at breakfast. It's the start of a really enjoyable day. I think we'll always work together.

DEAN: As a kid I loved heights; I'd climb pine trees and spend days at the massive local dam just north of Sydney, sometimes jumping from 80 feet up into the water.

My sister's best friend married a stunt co-ordinator, and 30 years ago he was looking to hire a young guy. Being a stuntman in the movies sounded a bit far-fetched to me, but he said, “I'll have you on a film in a month.” Four weeks later I'm in a jet boat with Carl Weathers from the *Rocky* films, speeding through the Surfers Paradise canals firing a Magnum .45 at two boats chasing us.

A few years later I met Steve, and we clicked straight away. We have similar backgrounds. We both grew up on farms with motorbikes and horses, though he has martial arts training: he fought Jackie Chan in a shark tank in the 1996 film *First Strike*.

Our parents see us “die” a lot. I told my sister I was in a car crash in a TV series, so my nieces, then aged 10 and eight, saw me upside down dripping with blood, before the car exploded and I burnt to death. I didn't register that watching their uncle screaming and catching fire would upset them.

Often we mightn't see each other for six months. I was on a plane to Delhi in 2000. I went to the toilet and saw Steve with a big beard. He'd been in East Asia and was travelling around India. I said, “I'm doing a Bollywood action film; come and hang with us.” He did – for four weeks. For that to happen was uncanny, and you know you're destined to be mates.

Marj, his wife, is a cracker. My wife, Linda, and I live on the NSW Central Coast. We're not really social and don't hang out with many people, but I do with Steve, and Linda and Marj get on so well. I was really pleased to make it to Steve's bucks' night, but sadly couldn't attend their wedding.

I've lived with Steve several times, and we've never had a serious argument, which is cool, because I'm bossy. We say what we mean and move on. Sometimes he helps me calm down. One day on the set of *The Furies*, it became a cluster of rushing, losing light and trying to finish a fight scene, and Dean could see the veins on my neck bulging. He took a deep breath, and I could tell from 15 feet away that he was saying, “Get outside and have a breath.” So I walked outside, breathed and refocused.

Steve's an entertainer. He plays the guitar and sings, and is a funny bastard. One night at 2am after a wrap party for a film, the cast and crew were in Surfers Paradise, and Steve whipped out his harmonica and pied-pipered 40 people to a club. Five minutes later he was up on stage jamming with the band.

We have a similar sense of humour. I'll giggle to myself about something and know he's thinking the same. I've never seen him deliberately make someone feel bad. He might say something which hurts my ego, but it's for my own good. I accept that because I know what I'm like. ■

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